



Shanzhai Lyric
Munich, September 6, 2023

Workshop

Babel and Babble On: a (mis)translation workshop with Shanzhai Lyric / 3-5 pm

The workshop will be a collective experiment in translating *shanzhai lyrics*, the evocative experimental english often found on *shanzhai* (counterfeit) clothing manufactured in China and proliferating around the globe as an object of both desire and derision. The group of participants will discuss the politics of official and nonofficial languages, and the possibilities for translating a nonstandard tongue. How might we translate the absurd and subtle nuances of bootleg t-shirt text into German, or into other languages and mediums? How do we translate the apparent "errors" of nonstandard spelling, punctuation, and lettering? How do we translate nonsense?

Following a period of discussion and writing exercises regarding approaches to experimental translation, the group will select individual garment-poems to translate. We will share these together and offer feedback and adjustments before thinking about design possibilities available within the resources of the art, design, and activist community. Students will be asked to expand their notions of poems, translation, and design as these forms meet and morph in graphic and sculptural interventions.

short break

Lecture

Shanzhai Lyric "Art is a way of Survival" / 5.30-6.30

Established in 2015, Shanzhai Lyric investigates global trade networks, informal economies, and the poetics of counterfeit goods. 山寨, or "shanzhai," translates to "mountain hamlet," but also means "counterfeit" in contemporary Chinese usage. The group takes inspiration from shanzhai t-shirts produced in China that circulate globally, often emblazoned with non-standard English phrases expressing a radical disregard for the norms of branding. Shanzhai Lyric notes: "There is a delightful humour in the unexpected collisions of meaning, but what really resonates with us about these garments is how deeply we can be moved by apparent nonsense, how it actually seems to describe with poetic precision the experience of living in an utterly nonsensical world. With devoted irreverence, shanzhai poems highlight the arbitrary line between real and fake—designed to exploit and criminalize the many for the gain of the few."

Recent presentations include MIT School of Architecture and Planning, MoMA PS1, Henry Moore Institute, SculptureCenter, Amant, Canal Projects, Abrons Arts Center, Women's Art Library, and Artists Space.