

# 22 Sleepwalker Archives

## Vol.2: The Theater of Reality in Contemporary Art

written by Aobing Wang



The theme of Sleepwalkers' second event is The Theater of Reality in Contemporary Art, and we chose the classic film The Truman Show as the main medium of the event. We will think about the question of who is controlling the reality of this film. This makes me not just watch the film, but with a kind of examination and disassembly eyes, to observe how some of the design and details in the film affect people's perception of "reality". After watching, we divided into two groups for discussion. The task of my group b is to analyze why "we" think the world is real from the perspective of the audience, and to extract a keyword as the theme of observation. After the group discussion, we gathered for a deeper discussion: Is Truman free? Have we ever been in the Truman show? What's the difference between us and Truman now? On the first question, most people think that Truman was not free before, but he may have been free after he escaped the set world. But an objection was raised: Even if he left the studio, he might still enter the next "reality" where everything was set. For the second question, someone shared social media big data that they had trained themselves by repeatedly searching for

keywords to prove that their status on social media was actually a "Truman's world." For example, after watching a video about pets, social media algorithms will continue to push similar content, forming a user's preferences as the theme of the information cocoon, so that users mistakenly believe that the world's mainstream wind is what they see. On the third question, we had a heated discussion. Some argue that our current situation has more options than Truman's, but others argue that Truman at least has the option to escape, and that we can only passively accept it, even if we are aware of the existence of the information cocoon.

The key word I wrote for the movie is "scripted life." When life has a script, is the truth in people's eyes just an unexposed lie? The Truman Show made me think about the reality of certain actions and things in everyday life. Truman's life in the behind-the-scenes "world" is similar to that of modern humans: we already live in a "real" world made up of algorithms, consumer symbols, and media narrative lights. We are used to creating a "human set" on social media to construct a nearly perfect self that is different from reality. This self-symbolic behavior is undoubtedly stepping into the curtain and becoming the initiative of Tulu Men. But the film also conveys a message that reality is not something that exists objectively, but human resistance to false consciousness. When Truman chose to come out of the "blue sky" of falsehood, he proved by his actions that "truth" exists in the questioning of falsehood. In today's deluge of AI-generated content, maintaining the ability to question fake content could be the real thing.