Iron Man, 4 minutes, 35 mm film, 2008

A poster from the Cultural Revolution entitled “To Live Like Such A Person” refers to the appreciation of being a brave, honest, and heroic person. In our childhood, we have been taught how to live and why to live in politic classes. These heroes were taught to as great models to emulate and to live up to as we grew up.

However, the real world is very tough, stifled with conflict, war, violence, strife, controversy, fight, combat… People have to face up to all these severe situations. To be a hero means a lot of suffering, bravery, insistence, all sorts of skills of stamina to combat against the unexpected disasters.

In “***Iron Man***” (2009), Wang Qingsong created a hero in his own image affectionately referred to as “Iron Man”. This term “Iron Man” refers to an oil worker hero (Qingsong worked in the oil-fields for over eight years) who dedicated his life to developing Chinese oil industry in the early 1960s. In this video this strong-minded hero has been beaten up by a lot of fists but always straightens up his head facing sideways as if “Taking Death As Merely Going Back Home”. He avoids the fist by playing Chinese “Tai Chi” (a Chinese body-exercise system of slow meditative physical exercise designed for relaxation, balance and health). Finally, though losing hair and teeth in the course of the beating, he still smiles at his opponents. Is it a fact of life or an absurdist satire against all forms of violence? Or what is “Iron Man”?