



Mission Statement

M Art Foundation: The Art of Possibility, The Art of Metamorphosis

M Art Foundation (MAF) is an artist-driven organization founded to support, nurture, and realize the aspirations of leading and emerging contemporary artists pursuing concepts and practices across borders and boundaries.

Acting outside of existing institutional formats but maintaining the highest quality and rigor, MAF helps artist find new possibilities in both research and production by matchmaking constellations of cutting-edge positions. We turn ideas into realities.

Derived from the initials of the founders, "M" signals metamorphosis.

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Foreword

ZONG HAN

In 2021, the M Art Foundation emerged as a pivotal force in the art scenes of Shanghai, China, and Hong Kong SAR. Its mission is clear yet bold: to provide support to contemporary artists through direct funding and resources. This initiative was born in response to a stark paradox. Despite a robust art market in China, buoyed even in the face of a global pandemic and a decade-long “museum boom,” stagnation lurks within the institutional landscape. The proliferation of so-called ‘museums’ often masks a lack of enduring programs and permanent collections, owing to varied legal and registration frameworks. It also stands apart in an era where many foundations are emerging with a sole focus on collecting art, particularly from international artists. By prioritizing non-collecting and artist-centric approaches, the M Art Foundation sets a new standard in nurturing contemporary artistic practices.

Prior to the launch of the M Art Foundation, the co-founders were already active figures in the art world, known for their art collections and patronage. Their involvement in contemporary art had progressively evolved towards a more formal, institutionalized model. They were recognized for their substantial support of major art institutions, both in China — with notable contributions to UCCA in Beijing, Beidaihe, and Shanghai — and abroad, such as the New Museum in New York, USA. Their support was not limited to acquisitions and their pre-existing institutional roles but extended to backing various artist-led initiatives. Leveraging their experience as successful entrepreneurs, they identified the need for a more structured, enduring, and organized approach to support a generation of artists. This led to the establishment of the M Art Foundation, an innovative entity aimed not just at collecting art but at holistically nurturing and sustaining artists and their practices.

Embodying the transformative essence of its name ‘M’, derived from the founders’ initials and their Chinese names symbolizing ‘emergence’ and ‘innovation,’ the M Art Foundation is a crucible for artistic metamorphosis. This ethos is visually represented in its logo, designed by Les Suen from *wondullful*. Featuring six lines in a cosmic arrangement, it forms an abstract ‘M’ or ‘MAF,’ reflecting on artistic practice that reveals its boundless potential within the vast and ever-changing realms of contemporary art and society.

The M Art Foundation serves as an arena where contemporary artists bring their artistic visions to life, utilizing diverse forms, materials, and media. It further champions the multifaceted realm of contemporary artistic practice, emphasizing its confluence, where global influences, cultural diversity, and technological advancements converge. In this context, the Foundation's commitment is clear: to nurture, support, and collaborate with artists in realizing the boundless possibilities of their artistic practices, thereby fulfilling its mission to empower artistic transformation across borders and boundaries.

At the beginning, the M Art Foundation occupied and operated out of a three-story Bauhaus building with a courtyard in the former French Concession in Shanghai. This architectural space, once inhabited by Christopher Moore, founder of "Randian," a bilingual magazine of contemporary art based in China, and later became the first gallery space for Lucien Tso's Gallery Vacancy, was deeply intertwined with the foundation's activities and the art practices it supports. The Foundation's endeavor to integrate the space with the residential area across the alley was directed at blurring the sociological boundaries between public and private spheres. This space also bears the memory and the lineage of the evolution of Shanghai's semi-public and semi-private art spaces. During the concession era, global elites congregated in The Cloister Apartment's salon in Concession française de Changhaï, while left-wing intellectuals, including artists, frequented Lu Xun's Uchiyama Bookstore in Shanghai International Settlement. In the 1990s after China's reopening, the Swiss Lorenz Hebling launched ShanghART, a pioneer contemporary Chinese art gallery, in the Portman Hotel's hallway, while the Italian Davide Quadrio and the Belgian Katelijn Verstraete co-founded BizArt Center, Shanghai's first non-profit art space, which organized programs in various temporary locations. These informal spaces fostered some of the most groundbreaking artistic practices across generations.

The M Art Foundation's trajectory was significantly altered by the Covid lockdowns in Shanghai in 2022, which forced the organization to give up its physical space, evolving into not only a non-collecting but also a non-space entity. This transformation brought into sharp focus the critical nature of the foundation's programmatic approach and its core philosophies. This period of transition spurred a reevaluation of the limitations inherent in physical collections and spaces, the resilience of artistic practices during adversary times, and the necessity of establishing an informal transnational dialogue framework and network. These reflections propelled the foundation into a rapid transformation in its second year. The M Art Foundation implemented all re-envisioned projects, not just in Shanghai, but globally and across digital platforms. This instance of turning misfortune into a fortune (losing physical space but gaining much larger space for future development) allowed the foundation to, in a way, emulate contemporary artistic practices. It then moved to transcend any borders and boundaries, as its mission states, embracing a more interconnected yet informal global art ecosystem.

In just three years, the M Art Foundation has significantly evolved, showing resilience and adaptability in navigating the complex global art scene and geopolitics. It has reinforced its intent, establishing key pillars like Annual Artist Projects, Initiatives, Thematic Programs, and Special Artist Projects. The Foundation also integrates a writing program that interweaves with all programs, enriching the foundation's intellectual pursuits. Approaching its fourth year, the Foundation is establishing its presence in Singapore, while introspectively planning its future. This reflective phase has birthed a comprehensive book that goes beyond chronicling history; it encapsulates the Foundation's adaptability and vision, responding to the dynamic art world and global politics, thereby affirming its commitment to advancing contemporary artistic practices. Coinciding with ART SG's second edition, where the Foundation is a cultural partner, the book launch marks a significant moment. During Singapore Art Week, this initiative facilitates a dialogue spanning local, regional, and global contexts, enabling the Foundation to connect transnational, cross-cultural narratives.

Zong Han
Director
M Art Foundation

Annual Artist Projects

The Foundation's goal is not focused on acquiring physical art pieces; instead, it emphasizes supporting the "abstract" aspects of artistic practices. This includes the entire development of an artist's work, from the initial conception, research, and preparation stages, to the creation and realization of an art series, project, or individual artwork. Each year, the Annual Artist Project dedicates its funding and resources to assist one artist in bringing their most recent practice to fruition. In the past three years, artists He Xiangyu, Zhou Tao, and Yu Ji have been beneficiaries of this program.

Flesh in Stone

YU JI

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA
2023 - ONGOING

This research and residency project is supported by the M Art Foundation.

Yu Ji's art is driven by an ongoing exploration of specific locations, intertwining geography and historical narratives. Her works, deeply rooted in field research and daily life, express a keen interest in the interaction between the body and particular spaces. Starting with the materiality of her chosen media and focusing on sculpture as her core medium, Yu Ji has cultivated a unique artistic vocabulary. Her performances, occurring alongside sculpture exhibitions, transform art spaces into arenas where the delicate presence of humans and objects in their everyday surroundings is reflected and moderated.

Over the past decade, Yu Ji's research has centered on Cambodia, exploring ruins, bodies, and civic spaces. Her engagement with Cambodia since 2011 culminated in a two-month residency at Sa Sa Project, Phnom Penh in 2017. During her time in Cambodia, Yu Ji immersed herself in the observation of people, food markets, and the unique cultural offerings. These experiences heightened her focus on the realistic meaning of fragments and the restoration of the past.

In her six-month residency in Cambodia in 2024, supported by M Art Foundation, Yu Ji will mainly reside in Phnom Penh to learn about Cambodia traditional dance, and develop her long-term sculpture series, *Flesh in Stone*. She also intends to engage in cultural and artistic education for children, researching the local NGOs in Cambodia for education, to experiment with language and its absence, nurturing creativity, and promoting environmental awareness.



Reference images courtesy of artist.

The Axis of Big Data

ZHOU TAO

CHINA

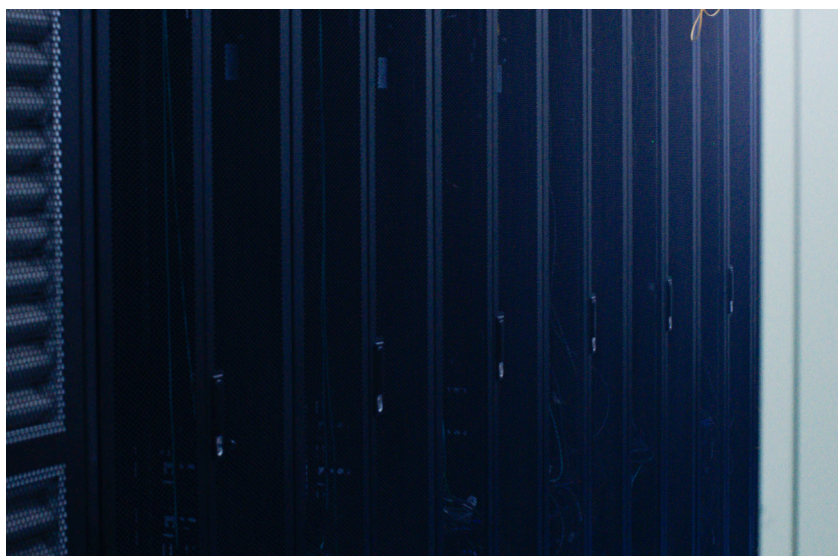
2022 - 2023

This film was co-produced by the M Art Foundation and premiered at the Taipei Biennale 2023, Taipei.

The Axis of Big Data explores the surroundings of a big data center in the mountains of Guizhou. Rather than placing the data center itself at the forefront, the film delicately weaves through the mountainous terrain that cradles the facility. It captures the essence of the landscape, showcasing the diverse tapestry of life activities occurring in close proximity and beyond. The subjects of the imagery span the immediate surroundings to the distant horizon, seemingly disparate yet harmoniously united in the cinematic portrayal of this unique environment.

The film unfolds, offering an initial glimpse into the inner sanctum of the data center's computer room. The camera, seemingly meandering yet purposefully observant, captures machine noise resonating with profound calculations about human life. Continuing its exploration, ambient sounds of nature permeate the space, guiding viewers into encounters with individuals traversing the mountainous terrain. The tapestry of mountain life gradually unfolds. In response to the undulating contours of the mountains and terraces, the camera employs a scattered panning technique, capturing intertwined and parallel moments in diverse spaces. Throughout this process, the digital camera confronts extreme challenges as it collaborates with the photographer to document its ephemeral daily existence. Mountain dwellers' activities imprint the passage of time on their bodies amidst clouds and mist, tourists, nightly lights, pheasants, and black goats. The camera eye interconnects all scenes within the mountains, revealing nuances imperceptible to the naked eye. In the film's culmination, an elderly figure emerges, exuding calm and fortitude, allowing us to grasp the true essence—the soul—of the mountains.

As the camera returns to the data center's interior after its explorative journey, a subtle realization emerges—a newfound connection between humanity and nature, a baptism. The unfolding narrative around the concealed big data center in the mountains, meticulously captured by the camera, weaves into an expansive tapestry of human life. Resembling a non-traditional Chinese Shanshui painting, it unfurls in multiple dimensions, with its core supplanted by a novel 'home in memory' embodied by the data centre. This replacement—where moving images transform into spaces meeting and intersecting—creates an indescribable contemporary allegorical ambiance. The film unfolds as a parallel performance of two 'lives on the clouds,' beckoning us to reflect. It presents an enigmatic contemporary life landscape, fostering a profound comprehension of the intricate relationship between Big Data, preserving life's activities on Earth, and Shanshui (the majestic mountains and rivers).



Film stills. *The Axis of Big Data*. 2023. Single-channel 4K HD video, 16:9, colour, with sound. 57' 34".
Images courtesy of artist.

Mia & Elephant

HE XIANGYU

BERLIN, GERMANY

2021 - ONGOING

This work is made possible by the M Art Foundation and was featured in the 4th Mario Merz Prize Finalist's Exhibition at the Fondazione Merz in Torino, Italy in 2022.

He Xiangyu's sculpture *Mia & Elephant* draws on the animal's complex and layered significance within Chinese culture. Imposing in stature and form, with the potential to enact violence, the elephant's depiction as a solemn and docile creature implies the taming of its power by an outside force. These dynamics find commonalities with human morality, where frequently the individual ego is controlled for the greater good of civilization. The distinctive outline of the elephant derives from ancient Buddhist sculptures situated in today's Gansu Province, China; notably, in the Beishiku Temple and Nanshiku Temple, which were originally built between the 6th and 7th centuries and were later restored during the Song dynasty. However, the ears of the elephant are shaped in the manner of Han dynasty sculptures. Therefore, *Mia & Elephant* paraphrases the animal with images from different historical periods. Each of the representations reflects references to models and sometimes the artisan's imagination.

Standing hesitantly on top of the elephant is the figure of a young girl of mixed Chinese and German descent, modeled after a colleague's daughter. After an extended period of living abroad, He Xiangyu re-examined and gained a deeper understanding of the Asian community in his surroundings, inspiring him to create a series of sculptural portraits based on his close friends. While her position would traditionally be one of triumph, she appears disoriented and confused as her eyes turn downward and her gesture appears to grasp at something unattainable. The elephant below remains peaceful and quiet, suggesting the often fraught power dynamics between an individual and tradition, as well as history and the present. By inverting time and space, the sculptures invite viewers to look back at the present from the near future and ask: Is the current identity dilemma merely a self-imposed restriction? How should we establish profound networks across cultures?



Installation view of *Mia & Elephant* at Fondazione Merz in Torino, Italy. Image courtesy of artist.

Initiatives

During the pandemic, a time defined by widespread isolation in Shanghai, other parts of China, and globally, the Foundation came into existence. This era was marked by weakened institutional structures and a noticeable absence of artist-run or alternative art spaces in China. With a yearly emphasis on specific discourses, Initiatives aim to address vital areas overlooked by existing public and privately funded institutions. Its primary discourses include the intersection of art with ecology, technology, and materiality. By supporting the Para Site Hong Kong exhibition, the Foundation embarked on a project that merges these three discourses. This initiative also aligned with a change in the institution's directorship and a renewal of its programs.

signals... 瞬息

PARA SITE

HONG KONG SAR
18 MAR - 29 SEP 2023

This exhibition was supported by the M Art Foundation.

Curated by Billy Tang and Celia Ho, *Signals* marked the first chapter of the new direction for Para Site, Hong Kong's leading contemporary art centre. It featured a series of commissions and existing works in dialogue with an experimental display structure that transformed throughout the exhibition.

In the context of the exhibition, *Signals* represented modes of kinetic art, communication, actions, and interventions that created a chain of reactions. Participating artists made use of cues, including sound, smell, movement, and smoke, to interrogate complex issues related to dispersed communities, migratory flows, and the intersection of technology, science, and architecture.

The exhibition unfolded over three phases over six months: *signals...storms and patterns* (18 March–28 May), which focused on self-organization and the politics of space in contemporary artmaking; *signals...folds and splits* (10 June–30 July), reflecting on the temporality of artworks and alternative economies of time; and finally, *signals...here and there* (12 August–29 September), exploring dispersal as a strategy to think about contemporary global issues through the lens of Hong Kong.

Taking inspiration from the seminal gallery and art salon Signals London (1964–1966), a cross-disciplinary meeting point for a group of postwar European, Latin American, and Asian artists who joined around an expanded concept of kinetic art, the exhibition represented strategies to reconnect with the global community from the pivot point of Hong Kong in a post-pandemic world. It was conceived to evolve and remain dynamic beyond its opening, with the reconfigurable display system serving as an ongoing spatial investigation as artworks/happenings rotated, unfolded, fragmented, or dissolved throughout the exhibition period.

Over three chapters spanning six months of onsite experiments, curators initiated 'atmospheric interventions' parallel to the exhibition. Culminating in a publishing project edited by Wing Chan, it connects local writers in Hong Kong to diverse places like Borneo, Istanbul, Kinshasa, London, Manila, Sheffield, and Sumatra. The writings explore the meaning of pausing and accessing power in terms of electricity, energy, land lights, and workers' rights. The result is an 88-page publication with texts by artists, art historians, and cultural workers, including C&G Artpartment (Clara Cheung & Gum Cheng Yet Man), Lesley Anne Can, Wing Chan, Lyra Garcellano, A. X. Ledesma, Eileen Legaspi Ramirez, Di Liu, Lani Maestro, Arianna Mercado, Cedrick Nzolo & Dominique Malaquais, and Michelle W T Wong. Also featured is a quote from Luke Ching Chin Was and photography by South Ho Siu Nam.

Participating Artists

signals...storms and patterns

Christine Sun Kim, Linda Chiu-han Lai, Candice Lin & P. Staff, Pratchaya Phinthong, Printhew, James Richards, Wing Po So, Mika Tajima, Tang Kwok Hin, Truong Cong Tung, with atmospheric interventions including a publishing project by Wing Chan featuring photography by South Ho, and a broadcasting project by Wan Ing Que, Elaine W. Ho, and Kunci Study Forum & Collective with the School of Improper Education in collaboration with Hong Kong Community Radio

signals...folds and splits

Doreen Chan, Sara Flores, HASS Lab, Linda Chiu-han Lai, Jaffa Lam, Carolyn Lazard, Ghislaine Leung, Li Yueyang, Candice Lin & P. Staff, Pratchaya Phinthong, Wing Po So, Mika Tajima, Tang Kwok Hin, with atmospheric interventions including a publishing project by Wing Chan featuring photography by South Ho

signals...here and there

Doreen Chan, Merv Espina, HASS Lab, Kulagu Tu Buvongan, Billy HC Kwok, Linda Chiu-han Lai, Jaffa Lam, Leung Chi Wo, Ghislaine Leung, Berenice Olmedo, Nibha Sikander, Wing Po So, Takis, Tang Kwok Hin, with atmospheric interventions including a publishing project by Wing Chan featuring photography by South Ho



Installation view of *signals...storms and patterns*, at Para Site, Hong Kong SAR. Image courtesy of South Ho.

The Language of Mushrooms

CAO SHUYI & LONG PAN

CHINA

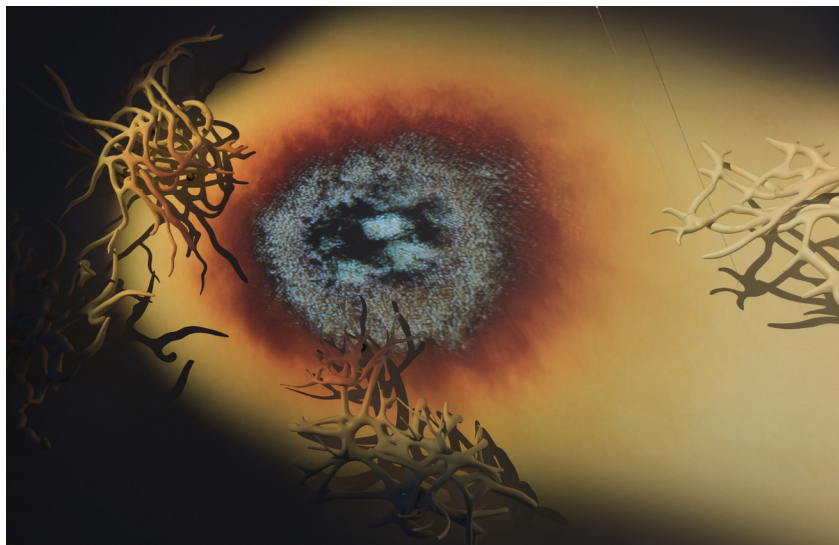
2022 - ONGOING

These works were produced with the support of M Art Foundation and presented at *The Language of Mushrooms: The Interspecies Internet* at the Contemporary Gallery of Kunming, Kunming, China.

Cao Shuyi's work is inspired by a strain of fungus, discovered in the laboratory of Peter Mortimer at the Kunming Institute of Botany, with the ability to digest plastic and latex. Using this as a basis to explore the co-evolution of organic species and inorganic matter, she focused on plastic's transformation into geologic formations like plastiglomerate to develop an installation of 3D-printed sculptures and a two-channel video depicting mycelium's ceaseless wandering beyond predetermined limits. By drawing the connections between the fungal speculation in bodily forms and machine training and learning, the work posits forms of life and intelligence that span boundaries and transgress categories.

Long Pan's project, *Matsuke Rain*, involves extensive research on the cultivation and trade of matsutake mushrooms in Yunnan, offering a nuanced understanding of this ecosystem. It includes diverse activities such as active participation in the annual Matsutake Festival in Shangri-La, comprehensive documentation and harvesting expeditions in the region's mountains and forests, and insightful interviews with traders at key marketplaces, including Gezan Township and Shangri-La. The exploration of the Matsutake market in Shangri-La and the Shuimuhua wild mushroom market in Kunming, Yunnan, further enriches the investigation. A significant aspect of the project involves capturing the fascinating phenomenon of matsutake spore spraying in the woodlands of Shangri-La, where the spores descend like a gentle rain shower. Through these activities, the artist narrates the intricate story of the summer, highlighting the significance of matsutake mushrooms in shaping the region's cultural and ecological landscape.

The Language of Mushrooms: The Interspecies Internet was presented at the Contemporary Gallery Kunming in Yunnan from 28 August to 28 November 2022. Curated by Ye Ying, the exhibition was a journey of discovery in nature, art, and science. It brought us closer to the world of mushrooms in diverse, unimaginable ways, showing us the roles mushrooms play in the natural world, and how mushrooms influence our consciousness, reshape our understanding of life, and teach us the wisdom of interspecies symbiosis. Weaving together mycology, ecology, sociology, art, and literature, the exhibition showcased contributions from 34 individuals and groups spanning diverse fields and nations. It challenged anthropocentric notions, prompting a reconsideration in the face of global crises.



Top: Installation view of Cao Shuyi's work in *The Language of Mushrooms* at the Contemporary Gallery Kunming, Yunnan. Bottom: Long Pan's documentation of Matsutake mushroom in the process of opening. Images courtesy of artists.

Matsutake Rain: Narrating the Entanglement and Connection between Humans and Forests in the Matsutake Supply Chain from the Perspective of a Spore

LONG PAN

This research essay was commissioned by the M Art Foundation.

In recent years, matsutake has received widespread attention as the subject of anthropological and global supply chain research. Intrigued by its symbiotic relationship with pine trees or attracted by its skyrocketing price driven up by human desire, fanatical “gold diggers” from different regions become connected through matsutake. The same is happening in Yunnan, China. The trade route of Matsutake connects Kunming, Chuxiong, Diqing, and Dali. People from various ethnic groups take on new identities and contribute to the transportation of matsutake mushrooms out of the forests¹. Through the works of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and other anthropologists, we have already learned about the matsutake supply chain from a global and multispecies perspective. Is it necessary to retell the story of Yunnan? The answer is yes, because times have changed. How has the supply chain changed? How is the story of China different from other places? In particular, what is the connection between the abnormal fluctuation of the matsutake market in 2022 and climate change? These questions all warrant further investigation.

Since 1873, China has only issued 17 red alerts, three of which were issued in the summer of 2022². This June even witnessed the highest temperature recorded since the late 1850s³, with the global mean surface temperature (GMST) reaching $1.15 \pm 0.13^{\circ}\text{C}$ above the pre-industrial baseline (1850-1900)⁴. According to a report by journalist Huang Yanhao published in the Caixin Weekly, “With the uncertainty in climate change colliding with the uncertainty in matsutake production, 2022 is expected to see a sharp drop on the fluctuating yield curve of matsutake... The decline in matsutake production is but a small annotation on the global heat this year”⁵.

However, in the world of matsutake, it is not just an inconspicuous “annotation”. Matsutake is not a passive victim threatened by extreme heat, but a co-creator of nimbostratus clouds. While mushroom spores are as light as a puff of smoke, they can act as condensation nuclei that accelerate the transformation of water vapor into water droplets, thereby inducing precipitation⁶. In this matsutake carnival taking place in human society, we see various players such as matsutake hunters, traders,

gourmets, and sporocarps for sale. What is absent here? The mycelium beneath the soil and the dust-like spores, which are not easily detectable, but are the origin of matsutake's existence and growth, the secret network of the pine forest. Therefore, we have to introduce a non-human narrative from the perspective of spores, allowing the absentees' voices to be heard.

The floating and drifting of spores in air is not visible to the naked eye, but it is a real phenomenon. Observed at a microscopic scale, spores fall like rain in the forest, with a hint of sadness. Due to human intervention, the spores embarked on a new journey, which has changed the destiny of matsutake as well as the lives of "hunters". Therefore, in my project "Matsutake Rain", I filmed the moment when the spores were ejected. In the atmosphere set by a rain of spores, various encounters on this journey slowly unfolded – that is, narrating the entanglement and connection between humans and forests in the matsutake supply chain from the perspective of a spore.

Under the soil, the mycelium is deeply intertwined with the root system of pine trees, providing the plants with water and mineral nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, while the plants providing carbohydrates in return⁷. As the fruiting body of mycelium, the sporocarp of matsutake plays a similar role to that of a reproductive organ, responsible for dispersing the spores from the mushroom cap to further locations in order to build new connections and obtain more nutrients. However, according to the grading system of the matsutake trade, only mushrooms with unopened caps qualify as high-grade. Therefore, during the matsutake harvesting season, countless treasure hunters rush to dig up every intact matsutake button they come across. Such a pursuit of unopened cap has led to the absence of spores in the matsutake growth cycle, because the fruiting body as the reproductive organ never matured enough to eject spores.

Sporulation is not easy. Although it takes less than a week for a pin to fully grow and the spore release only takes place during the last few days of pileus expansion, matsutake mycelium prefers growing on the roots of pine trees over 20 years old, and it takes more than three years for the first pin to be produced⁸. After a long growth period, the spores that should have been dispersed across the forest

by wind were forced to change “course” due to their involvement in the human system of trade and commerce. Instead of air flows, the spores are now carried by human logistics services. Highly developed road networks and logistics systems not only help transport wood and minerals out of the mountains, but also facilitate the delivery of matsutake mushrooms to the dining tables around the world in the shortest time possible.

The fruiting bodies of matsutake decay quickly after harvest. Eating before they spoil is the key to preserving their value. This is why many suppliers advertise guaranteed 48-hour delivery. In just 48 hours, the embodiment of the forests will be delivered to you from some distant mysterious land, without the need to personally climb a thousand mountains and survive all the dangers along the way. In a tea house in Hangzhou, the chef takes a cold matsutake mushroom out of a gift box as if it's a freshly delivered organ. With a sharp knife, he then cuts it into the iconic thin slices. From the slices, you can see the mushroom cap is still curled and folded, perhaps with some spores still stored on the gills. Here matsutake transforms into the embodiment of a distant “fairyland”, a “sacred object” that connects the city dwellers with the forests, and a “dream-making” tool of the consumer market. The spores, on the other hand, eventually fell into oblivion behind the fabricated illusion of the forests and ceased to grow.

For hunters, matsutake is a precious gift from the mountain gods, a bridge that connects people. Every family in the village knows an area of the mountains particularly well, and the location of fungal colonies is often passed down as a family secret. Sharing the location of fungal colonies with others and helping identify the type of fungus is an excellent way to gain others' trust¹. Matsutake mushrooms are like fairies that can only be encountered by chance. They love to play hide and seek with the hunters in the forest – matsutake mushrooms change where they grow every year. Harvested matsutake mushrooms will be delivered to the bulkers' field agents by noon every day, who are not allowed to pick and choose, so that the risk and uncertainty caused by the lack of standardization of matsutake can be shared equally. Even at late night, the matsutake trading markets in Shangri-La and the wild mushroom trading markets in Kunming are still filled with bustling crowds. The bulkers' shops are constantly packed with field agents whom they have known and worked with for years. The trust they have built accelerates the transactions, makes grading and pricing more efficient, and thereby gives humans an advantage in the race against time before the harvested matsutake mushrooms spoil.

This investigation into the circulation of matsutake mushrooms includes visiting the annual Matsutake Festival in Shangri-La; mushroom recording and picking in the mountains and forests; in-depth interviews with traders at the Matsutake Wholesale

Market in Geza Town, Shangri-La Matsutake Trade Market, and Shuimuhua Wild Mushroom Trading Center in Kunming, Yunnan Province; first-hand experience at forest-to-table Tibetan restaurants located near matsutake mushrooms' natural habitats, as well as that of Zen-inspired matsutake feasts served in high-end clubs in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces... These stories were vividly narrated from the perspective of spores, because just as Robert Macfarlane writes in *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, "Maybe, then, what we need to understand the forest's underland is a new language altogether – one that doesn't automatically convert it to our own use values... Perhaps we need an entirely new language system to talk about fungi... We need to speak in spores."⁹

Translated by Zoe Xi

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2. State of the Climate: 2022 on track for a summer of extreme heat, ZEKE HAUSFATHER, Carbon Brief, July 25, 2022.
3. Blue Book on Climate Change in China, National Climate Center of China Meteorological Administration, Science Press, Beijing, 2022.
4. WMO Provisional State of the Global Climate 2022, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Published by WMO, 2022.
5. Decline in Matsutake Production: A Bite of Climate Change, Huang Yanhao, Caixin Weekly, August 2022
6. Mushrooms as Rainmakers: How Spores Act as Nuclei for Raindrops, Maribeth O. Hassett, Mark W. F. Fischer, Nicholas P. Money, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0140407>. October 28, 2015.
7. *Entangle Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds & Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures*, Merlin Sheldrake, Random House, 2020.
8. *The Life History and Cultivation Methods of Matsutake*, Yasuto Tominaga, Translated by Tan Wei, Sichuan Institute of Edible Fungi at Sichuan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, 1992.
9. *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, Robert Macfarlane, Translated by Wang Rufe. Wenhui Publishing House, 2021.

Art, Technology & Philosophy Symposium

ONLINE
2022 - ONGOING

This program is made possible with the support of the M Art Foundation.

This two year public research program of the Times Museum Media Lab in Guangzhou titled *Cybernetics for the 21st Century* aims to reconstruct the history of cybernetics, from the perspectives of different geographical locations, political projects and philosophical reflections; and secondly to ask what might be the contribution of the cybernetic movement to the new form of thinking that is urgently needed to understand and reorient our digital earth.

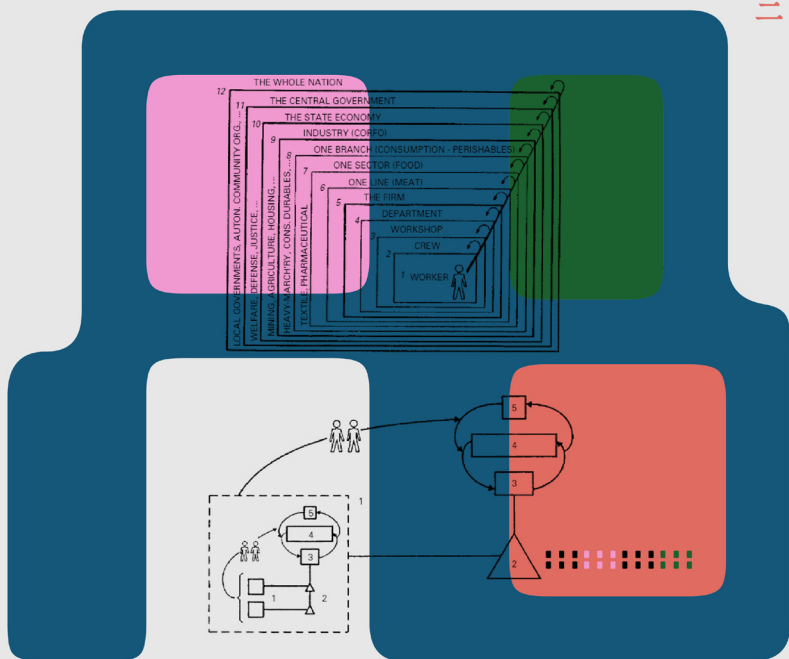
Curated by Yuk Kui and curated by Jianru Wu, the first edition of the program, which took place online throughout 2022, consisted of eight lectures and two symposiums featuring presentations by philosophers, historians of science, and sociologists, including Andrew Pickering, Katherine Hayles, Brunella Antomarini, Slava Gerovitch, David Maulén de los Reyes, Michal Krzykawski, Mathieu Triclot, Daisuke Harashima.

"Today cybernetics has already been absorbed in almost all engineering disciplines as well as in art and humanities, and realized what it has promised as a universal method. The significance of cybernetics remains to be questioned and taken beyond what has been characterized as control and surveillance. More than ever, we are living in an epoch of cybernetics, however, we still fall prey to the dichotomy of nature and culture without understanding the significance and the limits of cybernetics. Cybernetics brought forward a digital earth, where one finds the end of nature and the beginning of ecology. We, moderns, are alcoholics, who failed to get out of the positive feedback of progress, like what Nietzsche describes in the Gay Science, the pursuit of the infinite leads to the realization that nothing is more frightening than the infinite. A new recursive epistemology in the sense of Gregory Bateson, which inherits cybernetic thinking while seeking to overcome its intoxication, is needed for the program of re-orientation."

- Text from the Times Museum, Guangzhou, China

二零二二年
十月至十二月

艺术、技术与哲学
二十一世纪的系列论坛之二
地缘构建
的控制论



2022.10-12

002

ART, TECHNOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYMPOSIUM (II)
CYBERNETICS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

ARTS
FACULTY

Research Network for
Philosophy and Technology

金林林
JIN LIN LIN

FOUNDATION

科學與人類學系發展研究中心
Department of Science and Human Studies Development Research Center

香港中文大學(深圳)
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen)

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五洲

DEEPEM

DEEPEM

Art Materials Collaborative

SHANGHAI, CHINA
2022 - ONGOING

In 2022, the M Art Foundation and MACHANG, an art group in Shanghai, announced the launch of Art Materials Collaborative (AMC), a new initiative to implement their shared mission of supporting contemporary artistic practice and art production in the context of the sharing economy and sustainable development.

Manifesto

- AMC aims to recycle, research, reserve, redistribute and reallocate the used materials in contemporary artistic practice and art production.

AMC believes materials to be fundamental to artistic practice and art production. Selected, transformed, reorganized and represented by artists, materials embody ideas and concepts in the process of art making. Thus, art is conveyed through objects to be viewed, discussed, analyzed, and circulated. However, when the objects' function as artworks terminates, materials are detached from the artistic value. How can we re-imagine the afterlives of materials?

- Material as agency

The captions of artwork always limit our understanding of materials to the composition of substances. AMC takes materials as an agency to raise our awareness of the dynamics of materials concerning their provenance, production, representation, and circulation:

1. How do materials undergo sensory and transformative changes through contemporary artistic practice and art production?
2. How to evaluate the observability of materials to the viewer?
3. How do sharing and recycling of materials facilitate interdisciplinary studies in the contemporary world?

- Knowledge circulation: a library of materials

In the warehouse of MACHANG, one of the initiators of AMC, used materials arrive every day. Each material has a unique history of being selected, transformed, used, and, eventually, forgotten. The staff at MACHANG sorts those materials by categories, gradually building up an archive that epitomizes the commonly-used materials in contemporary artistic practice and art production around Shanghai and the Yangtze River delta region.

AMC aims to systematically organize this archive and develop a new mechanism to recycle, reserve, research, redistribute and reallocate the materials. A library of materials of contemporary art will emerge from this process, facilitating the generation and circulation of knowledge on material science and practice.

- Alternative economy in the material exchange

When materials are deformed and de-contextualized from the environment in which they constitute the body or parts of contemporary artworks, they become useless objects of 'non-art' in the current economic system. Through the initiative of AMC, those materials can be reformed and re-contextualized, thus re-entering into artistic practice and art production, and become works of art again.

In the process of redefining the usefulness of materials and turning 'non-art' into art, AMC intends to create an alternative economy that liberates practitioners of contemporary art from fixed production costs and gives new value to the used materials, prompting the 'rebirth' of art.

AMC calls for all contemporary art practitioners' participation to build a new model of sharing and collaboration, challenging the status quo of the supply-demand chain of materials in the current economic system of contemporary art.



Reference image of materials from Art Materials Collaborative.

Thematic Programs

Thematic Programs are based on a specific theme each year. In 2022, although the Foundation was hugely affected by lockdowns and subsequently lost its long-term space, it still launched numerous projects under the theme of “Interdisciplinary”, covering topics such as the philosophy of education, architecture, artificial intelligence, ethnomusicology, cinematography, and economics and finance. Thematic Programs included the first-ever exhibition by the sound practitioner Xu Siwei and the first film work by artist Michael Ho. In 2023, the Foundation focused on the “Performative” as an important artistic practice in contemporary art.

Scale Figures

PAN DAIJING

BERLIN, GERMANY

2022 - 2023

The development of this work was supported by the M Art Foundation, and was presented at the 14th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea.

Developing on her compositional and spatial research, Pan Daijing conceived sonic and architectural interventions for the Gwangju Biennale Hall Bridge and the Octagonal Pavilion located in Jungwoe Park. An ensemble of loudspeakers in each site creates what the artist describes as a “live work”.

As if rehearsing a daily encounter, *Scale Figures 2022–3* rehashed the role of infrastructure as at once facilitator and enforcer, connector and barrier, by bringing visitors’ encounters with it into sharp relief through the sonic experience. Mediating the transit between inside and outside, the bridge and the Pavilion offered imaginary ingress into two opposing but dialogical modes of being in the world: the forceful and the vulnerable.

On the bridge, infrastructure resembled obligation, the violent feeling of having “no way out but through”, and the inescapable back and forth between vitality and stillness that is often evoked in Pan’s body of work. Arriving at the Pavilion dissolved this tension by allowing a fleeting moment of serenity, where the violence of compulsory transit was replaced, in the face of the expansive Amphitheatre, with openness of a chance encounter.



Installation view of *Scale Figures 2022-3* at the 14th Gwangju Biennale Hall Bridge & Jungwoe Park.
Images courtesy of artist.

Performance as Process

DELFINA FOUNDATION

LONDON, UK
2023 - ONGOING

This program is made possible by the M Art Foundation.

In 2023, Delfina Foundation in London organized a season of public and internal programs around the fifth iteration of their *Performance as Process* series titled *Cyphering, Vibrating*, hosting 8 international artists-in-residence and 2 UK Associates.

In street dance practices, a cypher is a space for practice and performance created by the momentary gathering of dancers together in a ring. In this collective endeavor, participants take turns to enter the center of the ring and perform – improvising, sharing, playing, experimenting, responding – and to support on the side – providing encouragement, feedback, and drawing inspiration. Energy bounces and vibrates as one shifts between the roles of performer and audience.

The season drew on the culture and methodology of the cipher. Bringing together eight artists whose practices engage with performance – from Brazil, China, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Vietnam, alongside two London-based practitioners – the residency and emergent public program seek to operate as cyphers: a space of incubation, generation, exchange, and collectivity. Whilst promoting individual growth, this approach attempts to weave together supportive and fluid social structures – conducive to deeper connections and resonance.

The M Art Foundation supported three artists-in-residence:

Michele Chu (Hong Kong SAR) furthered her exploration of intimacy, loss, and grief through mediums of food and multisensory performance.

Yewande YoYo Odunubi (UK) continued her exploration of the ‘interior as a location of agency’ and, through the guide of movement, what attuning into this space offers in providing (re)new(ed) ways to think about the body/self relating to one’s desires, dreams, intuitions and reflections.

Chris Penty Alvarez (UK) delved into the creation of illegal bodies in the Latin American political landscape and the embodied trauma they carry.



Top: Michele Chu, *into tears, into salt*. at *Cyphering, Vibrating, Emanating*. Event by Delfina Foundation, at Young Space, London. Bottom: Chris Penty Alvarez at *Cyphering, Vibrating, Emanating*. Event by Delfina Foundation, at Young Space, London. Images courtesy of Delfina Foundation.

Don't Kill Me, I am in Love!

HUANG XIAOPENG

CHINA

2021 - ONGOING

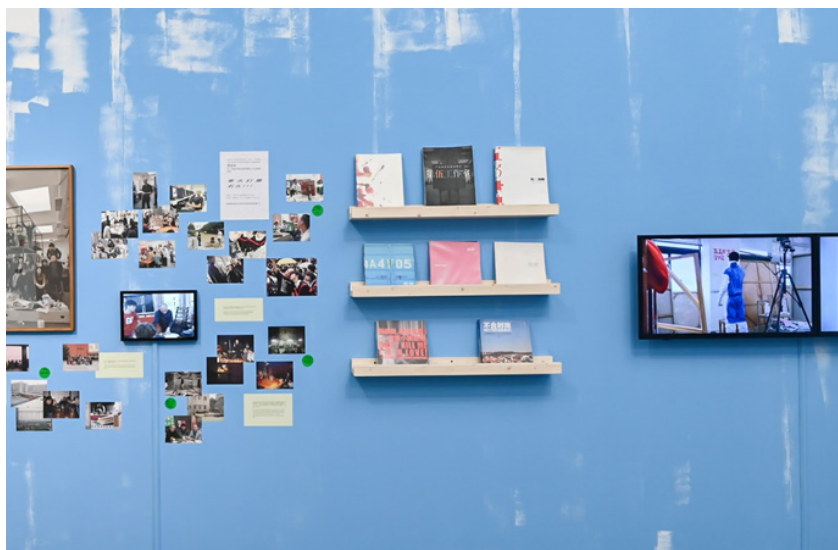
This research and publication endeavor is supported by the M Art Foundation.

Huang Xiaopeng (1960–2020) was a renowned artist and educator who resided and worked in various cities, including Shantao, Guangzhou, London, and Berlin. He received his education at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and the Slade School of Fine Arts in London during the 1980s and early 1990s. Throughout his career, Huang's artistic endeavors, particularly his installations, videos, and banners in the later phase, garnered critical acclaim and were exhibited worldwide. As an educator, he spearheaded projects such as the 5th Studio at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and Huangbian Station, which nurtured numerous artists in Guangdong.

In the autumn of 2021, the Times Museum Guangzhou organized an exhibition titled *Don't Kill Me, I'm in Love – A Tribute to Huang Xiaopeng*. The exhibition featured major works by Huang, newly commissioned works by his students, and relevant archives. Building upon the research conducted for this exhibition, the Asia Art Archive has established an individual archive dedicated to Huang, which is now accessible to the public.

As a tribute to Huang's significant contributions, his students and colleagues formed an independent art initiative known as the Huang Xiaopeng Art & Education Society. In 2022, the Society, in collaboration with the Times Museum Guangzhou, initiated a research and publication project centered around Huang Xiaopeng.

The project aims to showcase Huang's exceptional artistic and educational achievements while exploring key themes such as Chinese artists in the UK, contemporary art education in China, and the art scene in the Pearl River Delta region. Leading this project is Anthony Yung, a Senior Researcher at the Asia Art Archive.



Archival materials of Huang Xiaopeng. Images courtesy of the Huang Xiaopeng Art & Education Society.

New Model Village

CUI JIE

SUSSEX, UK

2022

This publication was supported by the M Art Foundation.

Accompanying Cui Jie's 2022 solo exhibition *New Model Village* at Focal Point Gallery, this publication presents an international view of pioneering modernist architecture and art in Essex through newly commissioned paintings and prints, establishing connections between these practices and the worker towns and villages of Shanghai.

The publication showcases Cui Jie's research and interest in Essex's New Towns, specifically Harlow and Basildon, and the public sculptures commissioned during that time. Jie also draws connections between these developments and the history of Caoyang New Village in Shanghai, built in the 1950s as China's first workers' village.

Designed by Alexander Conway and Fraser Muggeridge Studio, the publication features insightful essays by Dr. Wenny Teo, Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art, and Zhou Jianjia, the founding partner and principal architect of YeArch Studio (YEAS) and PhD candidate at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University. An interview with the artist and Katharine Stout, Director of Focal Point Gallery, is also included. With images of new works and installation views, archival material, and essays by Wenny Teo and Zhou Jianjia, this publication documents Cui Jie's first solo institutional show outside of China.

ISBN: 9781907185281



Installation view of *New Model Village* at Focal Point Gallery, Sussex. Images courtesy of artist.

A Project About a Project

ZHOU JIANJIA

This essay was commissioned by the M Art Foundation for the exhibition publication *Cui Jie: New Model Village*.

A Project being Constructed

On an early spring afternoon, my friend and I visited Cui Jie's studio, situated in an artists' complex in Songjiang, Shanghai. Units with red bricks facades in gradient patterns and giant curving roofs fill this area, sitting next to each other. Artists active in Shanghai have gathered here together in this location, making this campus a prominent art landmark. In 2019, when preparing for a solo exhibition in London, Cui Jie received an invitation from Focal Point Gallery to visit some twentieth century urban developments in Essex during her trip, in preparation for a first institutional exhibition in the UK. 'I went to Essex for one visit but was not able to fulfill the planned residency because of the pandemic, and so I had to get information through documentation,' Cui said. 'Even if I could have stayed there, it would still have been tough for me to get the sense of ideology as well as cultural background of this place.' Essex occupies an interesting position in the history of modern British architecture, while Cui Jie's works to date have mainly been based on contemporary Chinese urban and architectural landscapes. This essay explains this collaborative project and why I am interested in Cui Jie's work and her exhibition, 'New Model Village' as an architect and researcher.

The experience of living in Shanghai, studying in Hangzhou, and working in Beijing, mobilised Cui Jie's sensitivity to the constantly changing urbanscape around her. Extracting, interweaving, and mutating these urban fragments has become a continuous theme in her project. What drew her attention in particular are the buildings constructed between the 1980s to 2000s; buildings that were never considered 'beautiful' in a common sense. People of the same generation who witnessed the phase of urban development, such as myself, would give a tacit smile: we know only too well what these years meant to Chinese cities. The architectural theories and forms poured in as China opened its doors to new urban developments, the good and the bad. Various architectural styles were appropriated in the heat of rapid design and construction, overused even misused. On the other hand, with the advancement of urbanisation, these banal buildings converged and constituted the matrix of daily life, which fascinated Cui Jie. (Fig 1) 'I kept asking myself what exactly constructs my visual experience, and this is how I precepted these architectures. 'People of the same generation share this feeling: the repeated construction, demolition, then re-construction that has shaped our ways of seeing and feeling our environment. Cui Jie captured it and made it her project.

'I could not get any closer to Essex, so the only way is to imagine.' Cui Jie continued, 'Among the research materials from Essex, I was especially interested in Silver End and the Bata Factory and Estate; the modernist architecture that evoked working together, living together. A film clip from the Bata Factory documented the worker's sports meetings. The intimacy between individual and collective shown in the film immediately reminded me of my days living in the workers' new village as a child. It is the counterpart I found for my imagination of Essex, I guess.' Next to the table where we talked stood a whiteboard with small, square photos of architectures from Essex on one end (Fig 2) and on the other end photos depicting life in Caoyang New Village, the other protagonist of 'New Model Village.' They look just like newspaper clips that are no longer available from this era. For the first time in her practice, Cui Jie included the theme of the workers' new village in her project. It is an imaginative journey back to the workers' new village where Cui Jie grew up via a modernist project far away from her, in the sense of both geography and history. Like the clippings pinned on the whiteboard, landscapes from Essex, and life in Caoyang come together, floating in an endless white sea.



Fig 1. Cui Jie, Green Glass Apartment Building, 2018, courtesy Antenna Space

A Project that was Modelled

In terms of planning and construction chronology, the area where Caoyang is located, Huxi (West Area of Shanghai), is closely related to Hudong (East Area of Shanghai), where Cui Jie grew up. There were two main industrial bases in Shanghai decades ago. In 1951, the Shanghai Municipal Government established the 'Shanghai Workers' Housing Construction Committee' to solve the housing scarcity faced by three million industrial workers. Caoyang New Village (No. 1 Village,¹) marked 'the beginning of a larger-scale construction of workers' housing in the future.' (Fig 3) Built in 1951, Caoyang New Village occupied 94.63 hectares. It provided an integrated residential area accommodating 167 units and 1002 households, with a living area of four square metres per person. Instead of being in the city's centre, the site of Caoyang was in the northwest of Shanghai, a suburban farmland near the industrial zone, overgrown with ditches and weeds.



Fig 2. Cui Jie, Green Glass Apartment Building, 2018, courtesy Antenna Space



Fig 3. Birdview of Caoyang New Village. Image source: Zhu Xiaoming, 'Planning, Design and History of Shanghai Caoyang No.1 Village', Housing Science, 2011

The planning of Caoyang New Village was exemplary. (Fig 4) Its chief designer, Wang Dingzeng (1913–2014), published 'The Planning of Caoyang New Village Residential Area in Shanghai' on Architectural Journal, the nation's most influential journal in the field, in February 1952. According to Wang, the plan was divided into three hierarchical levels: neighbourhood, cluster, and village. Each cluster had its nurseries, kindergartens, and primary schools, located at independent sites within a 10-minute walking distance. (Fig 5) Community facilities such as co-op shops, post offices and banks were at the centre. At the same time, commercial establishments included markets at the periphery to keep daily life undisturbed. The street system in the village was laid out in a flexible pattern to accommodate the natural environment of the site. Wang's attitude was complex when introducing the neighbourhood unit ('The master plan of the new village cannot be denied to be affected by the idea of neighbourhood units'), mainly because of criticism from the Soviet advisors. Soviet advisors sought to transplant the superbloc scheme (*dajiefang*) in terms of residential design, which later became prevalent in Chinese cities. With four- to six-story flats arranged around a quadrangle with public facilities in the centre, the superbloc scheme emphasized strong symmetrical axes, grandeur façades, and location in the city centre. 'According to the principles of the Stalin era of construction,' Wang wrote in his article, 'the idea of neighbourhood units in a capitalist country is in complete opposition to superbloc schema, which is the 'organic component of Soviet cities...with all the most economical and superior methods of construction.' (Fig 6)² Another point of criticism was the 'Garden City' tendency shown in Caoyang due to its low rise, low density, and friendly environment, which was also sensitively considered by the British architects who visited the village in 1953, and who later introduced Caoyang as a typical case of Garden City in an British architecture magazine.³ The site of Caoyang New Village was another point that was criticized by Soviet advisors for being far away from the city centre. The choice was intentional and endowed with symbolic meaning. Workers were taken away from the hardship of living in overcrowded streets, then reaccommodated on a 'blank slate' to form a new community.



Fig 4. Master Plan of Caoyang New Village.
Image source: Wang Dingzeng, 'The Planning of
Caoyang New Village Residential Area in Shanghai',
Architectural Journal, 1956

Caoyang New Village became a benchmark for reshaping the beliefs of the working class, a way of living for the most outstanding workers. Hua Lanhong (1912–2012), one of the most famous first-generation architects in China, commented, ‘It is very difficult to imagine what life would be like in a socialist environment, especially at this point of turning’.⁴ Wang Dingzeng and the planning team understood this hope and provided an exemplary real example. A picture of buildings with red tiles, white walls and lattice with traditional Chinese decorative patterns, freshly red-painted flooring (Fig 7), and meandering paths leading to the waterfront. When completed, the 1002 units in Caoyang New Village were allocated to the workers from 217 textile mills and hardware factories from several districts by the government. That meant each factory could only get four or five houses. Priority was given to the best workers, and there was a saying, ‘one person who moves into the New Village honors the whole factory’. Those workers moved into Caoyang with great enthusiasm and showed their colleagues a bright future. ‘The establishment of Caoyang marks the beginning of building workers’ housing. The government will continue the project in Hudong, Huxi, and other places’, said Pan Hannian, the vice mayor of Shanghai on the inauguration ceremony of Caoyang New Village.⁵

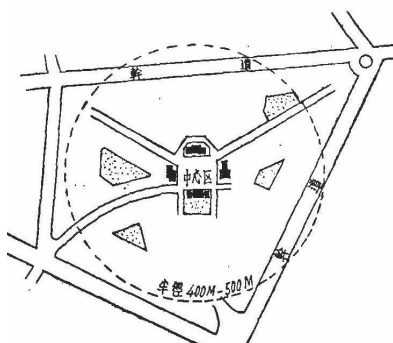


Fig 5. Neighbourhood Unit drafted by Wang Dingzeng. Image source: Wang Dingzeng, ‘The Planning of Caoyang New Village Residential Area in Shanghai’, *Architectural Journal*, 1956

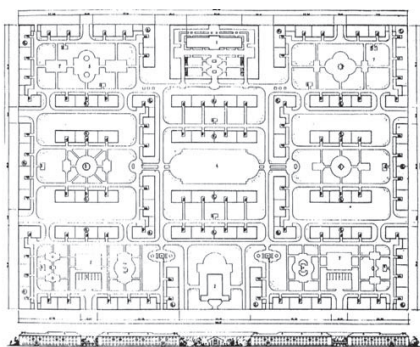


Fig 6. The 1955 award-winning residential design proposal based on the Soviet superblock schema. Image source: Lu Duanfang, ‘Travelling Urban Form: the Neighbourhood Unit in China’, *Planning Perspectives*, 2006

Caoyang New Village soon became well-known in China through the circulating images actively promoted to show the new life. The August 1952 issue of *China Pictorial* published a series of photographs of life in Caoyang Village, taken by a famous former-field photographer, Yu Chuangshuo⁶. These photos show the healthy, smiling young couple and their family of four moving into the unit and the pleasure of collective life. (Fig 8&9) For a country rising from the ruins, the images of a new life were undoubtedly evocative. One photo shows the couple decorating the house by hanging up the family photo, and the other shows a worker installing a clock with the gate of Caoyang as a backdrop. (Fig 10) These images sent a clear message: a new era has begun, and life is in the workers' hands. The subsequent films *How They Live* (1957) and *My Day Off Today* (1959) set in Caoyang, further reinforced the norms of what new life should look like. These were the golden days of Caoyang.



Fig 7. Workers walking on the lawn of Caoyang New Village



Fig 8,9,10. Photos of Life in Caoyang New Village by Yu Chuangshuo

A Project to be Finished

When laying the planning ideas, overall layout, and buildings of Caoyang New Village alongside those of Silver End and the Bata Estate in Essex, the similarities and differences are equally evident. Wang Dingzeng absorbed the idea of 'Neighbourhood Unit' and 'Garden City,' while the Czech-born founder of the Bata Factory, Tomáš Bat'a, was influenced both by the 'Garden City' concept from England and the standard assemblage line from the US. He had Le Corbusier take part in the international competition of workers' housing designs⁷ and later exported the whole Bata concept to its branches in Europe, including the Estate in East Tilbury. If Caoyang and Bata in Essex were two parallel lines on different planes, almost crossing at certain angles, Cui Jie's 'New Model Village' provides a moment for them to meet. In her drawings, the buildings, sculptures, and landscapes from Shanghai and Essex intertwine, indistinguishable from each other, until they come together to create a new object. The circumstance of public housing and the related collective life being considered as a cultural field is not an accident. It is the field in which everyday life is constructed, which also contains the inherent contradictions of modernity. They are both the experiment in how to give a form to the future, or to take modernity as a programmatic project.

Reading the history of twentieth-century architecture, this commitment to an egalitarian, enthusiastic, and orderly life was conceived and practiced everywhere. The slogan of 'one person who moves into the New Village honors the whole factory' in Caoyang New Village, or 'Work Collectively and Live Individually' in the Bata Factory, drew a utopian vision of collective life.⁸ The decline of this new model life was also witnessed. Unlike Bata's fortunes going up and down, the decline of Caoyang New Village came at a slow pace but with no less pain. As the political aura faded over the decades, the people and their younger generations had to face a drastic drop in living conditions. Since the restructuring of the industry since the 1990s, a considerable number of workers were laid off, which was particularly evident in the textile industry. It also means the decline of a stable working class. The glory of the first generation of residents in Caoyang New Village became a thing of the past. Now after thirty years, the memory of its origins is no longer recognizable from the current Caoyang New Village, just as the country villages and farmland on which it was built were erased with ease. Even though Cui Jie grew up in Shanghai, and even though 2021 marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of Caoyang when many houses and landscapes were restored, she has never visited. She believes that Caoyang New Village is a place that 'could not get any closer' and 'only can be imagined.' I prefer to regard the delicate strokes on two large, black paintings in the 'New Model Village' series as a way of weaving. (Fig 11) The horizontal and vertical lines reminded me of the fine warp and weft in

textile factories and the stitching in shoemaking. In Cui Jie's painting, the disparate relationship between the individual and the collective, the past and the present, is interwoven into a large building suspended, ready to escape at any minute. Bata Shoes has seen turmoil in the last few decades; with its factories in Essex and other European cities ceasing to function, so that Europe is no longer the major production centre for the company. With the advent of globalization, the footwear industry has been moving to places including India, Vietnam, and China is among them. In celebrating the 70th anniversary of Caoyang New Village, an elevated linear park was built on a former railway track that is to the east of the New Village, which was also part of the project to connect the industrial bases in Shanghai together. Walking all the way along the park, one can find a large palace-like shopping mall. It is the liveliest place in the West part of Shanghai. What Wang Dingzeng had foreseen in the pre-planning phase – that the city centre in the 1950s would eventually expand into the suburban farmland of the industrial area – is verified here. Caoyang New Village has silently witnessed the rising skyscrapers and commercial centres. On the ground floor of this grandiose shopping, you can find a shop with a sign in flowery font, 'Bata'.



Fig 11. Detail from Harlow Town Hall, 2021

1. There are nine villages in Caoyang New Village. In most cases, Caoyang New Village refers to the first one, No. 1 Village.
2. Wang Dingzeng, 'The Planning of Caoyang New Village Residential Area in Shanghai', *Architectural Journal*, 1956.
3. Ibid. 2.
4. Zhu Xiaoming, 'Planning, Design and History of Shanghai Caoyang No. 1 Village', *Housing Science*, 2011.
5. *Local History of Putuo*, Vol. 26, 'Caoyang New Village'.
6. Yu Chuangshuo (1911–1991) was a famous Chinese photographer. He worked as battlefield photographer during wartime, and documented a lot of historical moments.
7. Jane Pavit, 'The Bata Project: a Social and Industrial Experiment', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 1994.
8. Jonna Smith, '"Work Collectively and Live Individually": The Bata Housing Estate at East Tillbury', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 2008.

Jungle

AT GROUP

BEIJING, CHINA

2020 - 2022

This work was supported by the M Art Foundation and exhibited in the China Pavilion of the 59th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy.

AT Group is a collaborative endeavor involving emerging talents from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Institute of Sci-Tech Arts, and the Tsinghua Laboratory of Brain and Intelligence.

In their 2022 work *Jungle*, plant-shaped mirrors were strategically distributed throughout the China Pavilion exhibition hall, creating a vegetal environment. The mirrors' fronts were adorned with prints of plant images, creating an illusion of real plant photography. However, these images were not conventional captures but the result of artificial intelligence's (AI) plant learning. The AI, through deep learning processes on plant images worldwide, generated lifelike plant representations, blurring the line between truth and uncertainty. This conceptualization of plants and nature from the perspective of nature, the projection of reality onto AI, and the fantasy of the virtual world formed the crux of the installation.

The plant-printed mirror installation seamlessly projected both the outdoor natural environment and the indoor artificial space. Viewers, projecting their images onto the mirrors adorned with plants, actively participated, completing a synthesis of different fantasies. The artwork weaved together discussions on collective memory and machine learning, the interplay of artificial and natural elements, and the dynamic between reality and fantasy. This amalgamation offered a thought-provoking projection into the potential future relationship between humanity, technology, and the environment.



Installation view of *Jungle* at the China Pavilion, 59th Venice Biennale. Images courtesy of Contemporary Art Library.

Open a Window

XU SIWEI

SHANGHAI, CHINA

2022

This exhibition was organized by the M Art Foundation.

Xu Siwei has been practicing field recording for the past 10 years, mostly collecting the environmental sounds among plateaus and folk music by the Northern nomads, far from urban cities. Many recordings served research and archival purposes, each meticulously documented with method, location, subject, song titles, and lyrics, despite the time-intensive process. Documentation included elaborate details due to the challenges of reaching geographical areas and uncertainties about the elders' future. Xu also collaborates with ethnomusicologists, sharing his scholarly approach to multiculturalism, which empathizes with and accommodates cultural differences. He sees endless possibilities in the synchronization of behaviors, particularly when navigating the subtle boundaries between urban and nomadic lifestyles, the built environment, and nature. This potential extends to accommodating the diverse facets of industrial histories and cultural traditions.

During the lockdown, Xu Siwei redirected his recording practice to urban areas, where the territories of non-human species visibly expanded as humans retreated indoors. The evolving interpersonal and human-nature relationships prompted Xu to reconsider the ambiguity and complexity inherent in the human-nature boundaries. In the traditional urban lanes, the fixed physical distance between neighbors and social relations tainted by generations of co-living experiences became apparent. Plants growing between residents entangled communal efforts and care, with grapevines and loquats naturally connecting adjacent families. In Xu's recordings, casual banter among lane residents could evoke a room full of memories and tender feelings from that time.

In 2022, at a seasonal exhibition space of the M Art Foundation, Xu Siwei transplanted the sense of places. Inspired by the Mandala, he organized speakers and benches in a square, placing a borrowed plant in the center. As the sound recording played in a clockwise order from the speakers, Xu staged a simplified Buddhist ritual in the exhibition room, offering an orderly listening experience. The audience had the option to open a window, hence the exhibition's title, allowing urban sounds to blend with the played recordings. Oscillating between control and the uncontrolled, it became a practice of active listening on one's own.



Installation view of *Open a Window* at M Art Foundation Seasonal Space, Shanghai. Images courtesy of artist.

Sound as a Method: Juxtaposing Time and Space

SHEN YIREN

This essay was commissioned by the M Art Foundation for the exhibition *Xu Siwei: Open a Window*.

Xu Siwei is moved by many sounds and melodies. The sound of water coming out from five pipes of different sizes and hitting the concrete floor is just as beautiful as Bach's fugues to his ears. Obsessed with String Theory, Siwei believes that string vibrations form the universe. Meanwhile, he remains curious about sound and sociality and their relationship with local ecology.

Since 2012, Siwei has been to Ngari Sakü in Tibet, the Tibetan area in southern Qinghai, the mountains of the Min River Valley, Qiandongnan Guizhou and Xilingol Grassland, among many other places. Similar to American anthropologist Steven Feld, who recorded the voices and chants of people's daily lives as well as ambient sounds in-situ in Bosavi Mountain, Papua New Guinea¹, Siwei's recordings are all-encompassing. He considers himself a field recorder, promptly capturing sounds that flow naturally. In addition to the sounds of thunder and waves and the chirping of insects and birds, Siwei documents folk songs, musical instruments, farm work and rituals across China. Prior to the exhibition 'Open a Window', his focuses were mainly on ethnic minorities and nomadic peoples, such as how local people use sound as a medium while tilling the land, ramming the earth, and making offerings to express and communicate in everyday life.

Indeed, in classic anthropological discourses, 'field' often has the attributes of 'elsewhere' and 'outside'. An anthropologist conducts fieldwork through living with the locals whose cultural background is different from his or her own and gathers first-hand information and materials by means of participant observation, qualitative interviews and other methods. These attributes and a structured research framework are closely related to the sordid history of the discipline in the West. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Britain, France and other imperial powers faced difficulties in expanding their territories because of the utterly alien language, logic, belief system, and cultural context of the 'other'. They quickly realized that it was essential to systematically train scholars to study local ethnic groups so that they could colonize and rule the community more effectively. In other words, imperialism directly laid the foundation for establishing 'anthropology' as a subject. While countless objects were stripped from their original contexts, controversial terms were coined: as opposed to mature, advanced, and modern, 'primitive culture'² and 'exoticism'³ satisfy the curious mind, as the latter is different to the rationality, aesthetics and normality that are valued highly in a Eurocentric society. Such comparative frameworks form

a cultural hierarchy based on a Western perspective, isolate the 'others', artificially create temporal and spatial distances, and ignore the contemporaneity⁴ of the research subjects and researchers. However, it would be unfair to neglect that these foreign investigators have provided the locals with the possibility of culture clashes. Hal Foster pointed out in 1995 that it is impossible to remain 'pure outside' on the premise of globalization⁵. There is also no absolute formula on the spectrum of 'serving the other' and 'othering the self'. In fact, in the past eight years of field experience, Siwei has long been accustomed to the routine of traveling with tape recorders, microphones, cameras and film, and he often felt that he became the apparent 'other' or 'intruder' in the lives of his subjects.

Currently on display at the M Art Foundation in Shanghai, 'Open a Window' marks the first time Siwei presents his sound practice in the form of an exhibition. It consists of 30-minute-long sound work, a plant, an exhibition wall, and a documentary made by his friend, who invited Lan Ze, a herdsman, to film the life on grassland. On the wall facing the window are publications selected by Siwei for this exhibition, as well as the sheepskin drums and mouth strings of the Qiang people, the corbel-shaped bowed lute used by the Dong people, and the cowbells from Tibet. They are the source of the sound in the work, and the listeners (audience) are encouraged to activate these sound generators. Lan Ze's documentary symbolizes Siwei's vision. He hopes that one day, he can also discuss the archives with local people through a convenient tape recorder, and try dialogue editing, so that he can understand their ways of listening and thoughts about their own recorded voices. After all, making selections and determining the sequence of sounds is also an act of editing⁶ time and space. The process can be visualized as a quadrant. Starting from the raw materials, a vertical axis of audio tracks that can be superimposed layer by layer, and a horizontal axis of sound that is continuously compressed, forming a combination of infinite possibilities. The intimacy at the scene, chance factors, and relationship between the recorder and the speaker are all condensed or amplified through editing⁷.

The exhibition project began in the spring of 2022. During the nearly-two-month lockdown due to Covid-19, Siwei, who was self-isolating at home, sorted out the previous field recordings. Meanwhile, he started recording the sounds outside the window with the equipment he purchased just before the lockdown. It was his first attempt to switch gear from a distant field to the city, which set the scene for his fieldwork at the alley of No. 19 Urumqi Middle Road after Shanghai lifted the lockdown. It is an ordinary alley in central Shanghai, with a total length of 20 to 30 meters. After undergoing rectification, it was paved with asphalt concrete.

People often look for familiar objects to form a bond with an alien environment. For Siwei, the relationship between humans and nature has always been the core of his exploration. Therefore, when he first visited, he naturally noticed the lush plants lined up along the alley and the vines climbing the roof. Under the guidance of the plants, he got to know their caretakers – Mr. Wang and Ms. Shen from the ‘source community’.

Although Mr. Wang was not born in Shanghai, he has lived in this alley for decades. No matter when you come in, you can always run into him. With just one cigarette, he can recount several anecdotes about the alley. Mr. Wang’s daughter-in-law is an amateur gardener. Under her careful arrangement, there is a wide variety of potted plants in the alley, and her children have reached the age where they can help turn the soil around. The grapevine in the alley was planted by Ms. Shen’s mother more than 30 years ago. It grew from a grape seed to the top floor of the three-story house. For Shanghainese, who are used to hang their clothes outside the window, this plant seems to have encroached on their ‘private airspace’. Nevertheless, when Ms. Shen asked if the vines needed to be pruned, the upstairs residents felt that seeing the green shade is more important than drying clothes – clothes can also be hung on branches or moved downstairs and dried on hangers in the alley.

It reminds us of *Village Bells*, in which the social historian Alain Corbin observed the church bell’s function in the French countryside in the nineteenth century⁸. The bells dominated the villagers’ daily rhythm, permeating all aspects of religious and secular activities. People pray, gather, and celebrate festivals according to the ringing bell, and also experience life and death, marriage and separation in the company of the bell. The bell ties the temporal knots in history, and then forms planes which further creates spaces. For the community living in this alley, plants also seem to be the nodes connecting neighbors, and linking the past and the present. These plants not only trigger social behavior, but also weave social networks as agents.

Even if Mr. Wang and Ms. Shen were not physically in the alley, they are embodied by the presence of plants. At the end of the fieldwork, Siwei exchanged a chime with Mr. Wang for a pot of eggplant and placed it in the center of the exhibition space. To echo the cowbell, Siwei asked Mr. Wang to hang the chime on the plants outside his house. The wind passing through is manifested by the bells, connecting the alley with the exhibition space. Siwei regards the chime as the wind’s interpreter. It resonates with his other fieldworks and forms a sonic thread connecting different times and spaces. Moreover, in exchanging the plant with chime, Siwei and the residents, M Art Foundation and the alley also created social bonds, coexisting and interacting through ‘gift exchange’.

Xu Siwei believes that Murray Schafer's 'soundscape'⁹ has opened up a new horizon for his listening practice, empowering him to identify how each sound is connected to the present. The sound work begins with the birdsong from nature and the chimes created by people to interpret wind, accentuating human's endeavor to mimic and recreate nature. It facilitates a dialogue between 'natural sound' and 'artificial sound', chance and deliberation, improvisation and choreography: the 'Song for the Rain' is mixed with thunder, transitioned to the sound of machines in a textile mill, songs of sheep and shepherds intertwined with corbel-shaped bowed lute, waves and the sound of blowing conch shell... Siwei combined the recordings collected from distant fields, the chatting sounds of neighbors in the alley, and the overlooked everyday sounds that became audible again because of the silence during the Shanghai lockdown, and played them through four speakers to create a soundscape. Although people may feel that, unlike appreciating visual artworks by which they can decide the duration of gaze, one can only be the passive recipient of fleeting sound, the fluidity and flexibility create a sound space for 'listening' and 'communication'.

Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*¹⁰ emphasizes the use of everyday sounds rather than compositional notations that require professionals to perform. Even though the final melodies may deviate from the source itself and erase traces of daily life, the accessible sound is still closer to Siwei's creation in essence. These 'ready-made sounds' that occur in everyday life and physical experience, similar to novels and movies, are the key to 'Open a Window' of an unknown culture, juxtaposing the time and space of the past, the present and the future.

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Echoes from the Void

MICHAEL HO

LONDON, UK

2022

The film was commissioned by the Film and Video Umbrella (FVU). The work also received support from, and was acquired by the M Art Foundation.

Michael Ho's film *Echoes from the Void* re-examines the formula of the popular children's game Chinese Whispers, in which one person whispers a message to another, passing it through a line of people until the last player announces the message to the entire group. Through the retelling of the story, errors typically start to accumulate, leading to an erosion of truth. Chinese Whispers not only discuss moral values or how facts get turned into fiction, but also reveal the complex social-political issues underlining the nature of storytelling and its manipulation within our realities, whilst also alluding to racial connotations.

In doing so, *Echoes from the Void* acts as a cultural criticism and aims to discuss East-Asian diasporic experiences through the exposure of the mechanisms underlining contemporary storytelling within a time of a resurgence of the Yellow Peril. It riffs through different subject matters, linking and morphing truths to fictions, past to present, Eastern ideologies to Western ones and ultimately surfaces the true problematic scale of misinformation and the ways in which mis- and disinformation are produced, disseminated, and consumed today.



Film stills from *Echoes from the Void*. 12' 25". Images courtesy of Film and Video Umbrella.

Echoes from the Void

Gary Zhexi Zhang

Michael Ho's *Echoes from the Void* began as an impressionistic film treatment written at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which rumour, conspiracy, and powerful uncertainty pervaded all aspects of social existence. Lives were not only unmoored by the virus itself, but also the way in which it connected individual anxieties with worldly conditions, heightened by experiences of isolation and the cacophony of information and media. As the planetary drama unfolded at pace, globalisation manifested as an acute psychological, temporal and physical state of being, perhaps for the first time in most of our lives. In particular, Ho reflected on how the toxic atmosphere of fear and suspicion quickly turned into acute racism against the East Asian diaspora, a resurgence of the 'yellow peril' at the turn of the 20th century, in which the spectre of the East was imagined as a malignant other, an existential psychic threat to the Western subject.

Almost two years on, the resulting film is a ghostly, meditative work, more introspective than directly political, with undertones of gothic horror and Chinese folklore. Inspired in part by Alvin Lucier's seminal 1969 sound piece, *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969), in which the composer's speech is re-recorded until the sound of his words dissolve into the resonant frequencies of the room, *Echoes from the Void* centres its drama on the dissolution and distortion of language and meaning. But Ho is less interested in the formal qualities of sound than in the emotional and psychological space of discourse.

Reminiscent of the enigmatic, densely foliated paintings that the artist made with his late collaborator, Chiyan Ho, *Echoes* features a nameless figure in a twilight forest landscape. *Echoes* was shot between two of England's ancient caves: Ash Hole Cavern in Devon, and Thor's Cave in the Peak District, which have both borne witness to human inhabitation since at least the Bronze age. In a film of few 'characters', it is not the human figure (played by Ho himself) but the vibrant aliveness of these time-worn caverns that becomes *Echoes'* protagonist and narrative agent. A camera creeps over the cave's baroque gnarls and crevices—at turns jagged, vermicular and soapy-smooth—observing not a monolith but a body in amorphous fluctuation over geological time. The philosopher Michel Serres once imagined another camera, just across the English Channel from Ho's cave, with its lens trained on the rocky coast of Brittany over millions of years: "we would see a flame".

The figure in the forest shouts into the trees. "Covid is a hoax! ... The vaccine alters your DNA! ... The media never tells the truth!". Standing alone in silhouette, his expressions are more functional than dramatic. His voice sounds with urgency but his body remains curiously impassive, calling out his theories to no-one in particular — into the titular void. Does he seek to provoke a response? Does he believe anyone is really listening? Is this resignation or catharsis? Despite the futility of his situation, the void sounds back with a cascade of echoes and imbuing his words with an ominous resonance. The reverberations shiver from the depths of the cave out into the forest, before merging into the haunting frequencies and metallic chimes of Flora Yin Wong's soundtrack. As if triggering an avalanche, white pearls begin to emerge from the stone, first in a trickle, then in their dozens, spilling out of the cavern, fresh as anything against the mottled ground. The camera is drawn to the cavern's manifold orifices, as pearls secrete from their depths and skitter along their rims. They tumble down the walls and scatter into the forest floor, glistening like moths' eggs in spawning season under the light of the moon. In Chinese folklore, the brightness of pearls and moonlight often intermingle, with the latter thought to be the source of the pearl's brightness, and the lunar phases a result of a dragon eating the moon, typically represented by a pearl. As with his work on the canvas, Ho's painterly symbolism is at once heavy and cryptic. All the while, a dense fog intrudes on the scene, oozing through the caverns and washing over the foliage, reminding us that we are firmly in the Zone, that eerie, sentient place where landscape is seduced by metaphor.

Ho's adoption of a folkloric, hallucinatory register — with shades of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's ghost stories, wuxia (martial arts) forest scenes and of course, Tarkovsky — to explore contemporary belief and suspicion suggests a reality that is already powerless to the untethering of truth from fiction. His final cry, "The moon doesn't exist!", evokes a deeply poetic solipsism while also recalling that classic amongst 20th century conspiracy theories, the faking of the moon landing. The allegorical language of *Echoes from the Void* alludes to the possibility of a denouement — a moral, perhaps, of this fable — but no such resolve appears. The fog emerges from the darkness, drifts over the dusky forest, and clears again, leaving the moonlit pearls to their infestation.

The media scholar Lars Ole Sauerberg coined 'the Gutenberg Parenthesis' to propose that late 20th century media (culminating with the web) represents a return to a pre-modern, pre-print oral culture which follows the 500-year reign of the book. In other words, as Sauerberg and medievalist Tom Pettitt suggest, "the future is medieval". Fundamental to this pre- and post-Gutenberg culture is the folkloric mutability of information and narrative: where the printed book represented a container of meaning which could be mechanically reproduced en masse, an oral culture subsists on an extensive game of Chinese Whispers, where stories are rewritten every time they're told. As narratives percolate through the memetic cultures and algorithmic networks of social media, every reader is also a writer of proliferating collective narratives. Like the orality of pre-literate times, contemporary 'writing' across digital media partakes in a powerful if transient flow of language and feeling. (It is unlikely, after all, that anything that exists on the internet today will outlast a printed volume.) After the parenthesis, the undoing of stable containers of meaning heralds a media culture that favours resonance and reverberation over fixed points of reference, a diversity of opinion coalescing around innumerable claims to truth.

In Latinate languages, lunacy is a state of mind attributed to the waxing and waning of the moon. The angsty cries of the film's solitary figure are met with a cacophony which serves only to heighten his isolation. He looks a little lost, like Orpheus shouting mindlessly into the mouth of the underworld, to which his lover has long been lost. In *Echoes*, the looming fog and invading pearls allude to the arrival of a sinister presence, but it is the scarred, molten forms of the caves they move through which remind us that, perhaps, there was no stable structure to begin with, only a network of interlinked voids shaped in time.

Text commissioned by the Film and Video Umbrella as part of the release of *Echoes from the Void* by Michael Ho, commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella as part of BEYOND #2.

MATCHPOOL

PAYNE ZHU

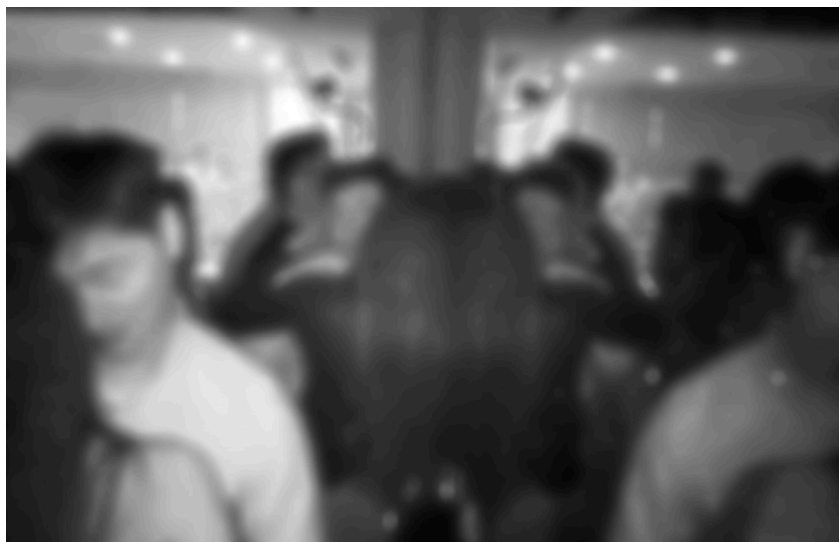
SHANGHAI, CHINA

2021 - ONGOING

This publication is supported by the M Art Foundation.

Rooted in the simulation of dancing parties on the dance floor as a mechanism for matching supply and demand, *MATCHPOOL* by Payne Zhu delves into the intricate relationship between cooperation and competition, exploring the deeper nuances of the matching process. Within the context of a pitch-dark dance floor, the bodies, faces, and the dance floor itself transform into grayscale fluids in the visual narrative. In this realm, moving images, akin to the currency referenced in the accompanying song, serve as intermediaries available for exchange, perpetually generating a dynamic and exhilarating force.

An exhibition publication was published to accompany the exhibition, meticulously assembling the artist's most recent creations showcased during the exhibition, along with comprehensive research materials on key works from Zhu's career. It features critical reviews of Zhu's artistic practice and its contextual background, presented by curator and writer Yuan Fuca and Hanlu Zhang. Dialogues between Zhu and scholar Zairong Xiang enrich the publication.



Top: Installation view of *MATCHPOOL* at OCAT, Shanghai.

Bottom: Film still. Payne Zhu. *MATCHPOOL*, 2021. 4-channel HD video, black and white, with sound. 16' 50". Images courtesy of artist.

The Financialized Cosmos:

A Conversation with Xiang Zairong and Payne Zhu

This conversation was commissioned by the M Art Foundation for the exhibition publication Payne Zhu: *MATCHPOOL*. The text is excerpted from several conversations with annotations added during the editing process.

XZR: I wrote down three key words. The first is “finance”; and second, “the body”, which is pertinent to topics such as gender, labor and exploitation. The third one is a bit implicit: lately you refer to it as “derivation” (as in *Potlatch of Derivatives* (2023), and it can also be called “evolvment” or “yi” (changes and transformations). When these key words are juxtaposed, something interesting emerges. For instance, “fakeness”. On the one hand, it could refer to economic forms, like the shanzhai (copycat) economy in *LIKE series* (2017), pyramid scheme in *Each is a Corporate, and Each is a Product* (2015), and the livestreamer and Rinpoche in *Doppelganger* (2015). They are all related to the concept of “fakeness” in one way or another. On the other hand, the Chinese character jia 假 (“fakeness”) could also mean “to borrow from”, which gives your practice another layer of meaning. And it is in this sense that *Potlatch of Derivatives* (2023) becomes pertinent to topics like finance and derivatives.

PNZ: “Finance,” “the body,” and “derivation” are three topics that I’ve consistently been focusing on. The notion of “transdualism”¹ you wrote in your works resonates greatly with my approaches of practice. For me, it’s hard to work from one single and straightforward stance. Instead, I prefer to explore within multiple, even opposing dimensions, to foster their intertextuality. I tend to resort to the methodology we share, that of Yin-Yang, and to make observation through “yi” (changes).

XZR: You work mainly with video and installation as a way to present such observations. Could you elaborate a bit on the question of “form”?

PNZ: My way to produce video also follows the logic of “yi”. At the beginning I used cell phone and webcams, the most common and democratic means, to create earlier works such as *Doppelganger* (2015) and *Each is a Corporate, and Each is a Product* (2015). During that period, I placed an emphasis on the body and performance. Later on I developed a computer program and created performance through it. *Make Bad Cookies* (2016) was an example. The flickering screens seemed to be the results automatically generated by date program. *LIKE series* (2017), on the other hand, was more like a mini movie team production. At first I chose to use a filming drone, but the images it captured seemed too much like NIKE commercials. So I replaced the drone with a self-made action camera. Back then the image stabilization technology was not that good; and the cameraman

had to run on the very uneven ground of the industrial wasteland at the same speed with the players to chase and capture the images. After that I decided not to use any cameras and went back to computer manipulation. *Ladder System* (2018) reminded viewers of the competitions between Esports pros. Images in *CACA Investment* (2018) were a sort of fiction in Excel forms. It reminded me of a tweet I once read: "The most popular software for fiction writing fiction isn't Word. It's Excel."² Alas, I believe every accountant who once cooked the books would agree with it. They fabricated figures and made them look very real. It was until the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 that I once again picked up a camera in the hope of understanding a cat. Through night-vision sensor, I made *Economics of Loneliness: Service and Management* (2020). And from there I integrated generative AI technology into my practice and presented *Matchpool* (2021), *Mismatch* (2021) and *Prematch* (2022). The production of the "match" series was like the process of alchemy. And before it was completed in the alchemy furnace - in this case the AI - the images were hard to control. Nowadays it takes almost no qualifications to make moving images. It seems to send out invitations to each and every one. Similarly, contemporary art also sends out this kind of invitations implicitly. I was one of those who felt that I received and accepted the invitation. My first encounter with contemporary art was at the Shanghai Biennale. I was just a visitor at that time. I started to think I could also try to make some artworks.

XZR: In your view, what's more accurate when describing the nature of the work of artists?³ Is it more like the work of Rinpoche, somewhat mysterious, unworldly and almighty? Or is it more close to the flat democracy of "everyone is an artist" that contemporary art has always been advocating (be it true or not)? There's also the question of realness and fakeness: real artists vs. fake artists, real Nike vs. fake Nike, real pyramid scheme and fake pyramid scheme (Some pyramid scheme does sell real things).

PNZ: There's no pyramid scheme more real than the real estate industry. That's why *Each is a Corporate, and Each is a Product* (2015) took place in a scenario of real estate selling. Back in 2015, people were utterly confident and optimistic. Developers were just like Ximen Qing who believed money was almighty, even giving him the power to rape Chang'e.⁴

XZR: Could you elaborate on the relation between Ximen Qing and the real estate pyramid scheme?

PNZ: We can see a kind of financial element in Jin Ping Mei (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*), which is made possible through medicine. Medicine on the one hand

strengthened Ximen Qing's sexual power; and on the other, accelerated the course of his life. Medicine allowed an overdraft on life of the next thirty years; and it therefore also accelerates the arrival of death. Ximen Qing met a foreign monk from the Western Regions who gave him the medicine, essentially some aphrodisiac. After taking it, his fortune increased further. So he was in a state of utter confidence about financial expansion. It's a state very similar to that of the Chinese real estate developers in 2015 to 2018. Back then there was the possibility of curbing the sector's high leverage and high debts. But many real estate companies failed to do so. Financial regulators also failed to do so. Instead, due to policies like "monetary housing compensation" and "de-inventory by rising the price", housing prices all around the country witnessed another dramatic surge. More and more so-called urban middle-class chose to borrow money from banks as people were optimistic about the possibility that their future income growth would repay the debts.

XZR: Aphrodisiac gave him a false impression that he was almighty, right?

PNZ: Yes, an illusion.

XZR: You called that overdraft. You believe there's a cosmic equilibrium behind all these, right?

PNZ: Yes. If assets on the left hand and debts on the right hand, they need to reach equilibrium. You want your asset value grow faster than your debts, just like you hope the antidote will dissolve toxicity faster than it accumulates. In 2008, we took the medicine of finance for the first time, and the effect was gratifying: global economic recovery was achieved with the help of debts. Back then what we had was a young and growing body. In 2018, we felt that the same medicine could still be used. But now no matter how much we take, the medicine seems not effective enough. Moreover, we're now faced with greater burden of the side effects of the medicine.

XZR: There're two issues here: cosmic equilibrium and interference with the cosmos to recode it. While curating the Shanghai Biennale "Cosmos Cinema" this year, I proposed that if we put cinema and the cosmos on the same table for discussion, then cinema or "the cinematic" could embody certain flat democracy. It's somewhat similar to what you just said about filming by mobile phone which required no official qualifications. This so-called democratic form has been fully realized as everyone could shoot and edit videos. Everyone is director and therefore "everyone is artist." Douyin/Tiktok and Kuaishou are both evident proof of that. There's another very interesting aspect about the relationship between cinema and the cosmos. But I'm not sure if this relationship is an illusion or it really exists. Let's discuss this. Cinema provides people with a technological possibility to recode the

cosmos. In the pre-cinema era, the interferences with the cosmos were mainly through religious theories and esoteric practices such as Yin and Yang, the Eight Trigrams, feng shui and fortune telling. Behind these was the desire to recode the cosmos. The most straightforward technology in cinema is montage. Through montage, the real world could be recoded to reach a somewhat magical effect. For instance, a person could be in London this second and in New York the next, or fly to the lake on the opposite side through the window. All these are quite impossible in the real world. That's the power of superman and no ordinary human could ever do that. You compared the real estate bubbles to the effect the aphrodisiac has on Ximen Qing. Under the influence of the medicine, he was hallucinated that he was almighty. On the other hand, could we also say that the overdraft disturbed cosmic equilibrium and it gave us the temporary illusion that the cosmos was indeed recoded? Or should we say during the process of recoding or even "derivation", it generated something new and real? Or did it generate more illusions?

PNZ: First of all, it's a state where realness and fakeness are mixed together. But the "fakeness" provided by illusions could produce real effects. In other words, fakeness could yield in real effects. Ximen Qing believed in his almightiness after taking the medicine; that's an effect. And on his deathbed, his wife Pan Jinlian accelerated the arrival of his death by using medicine; that's another effect. These were both effects produced by fake illusions, like some kind of temporary manifestation of the two effects of Yin-Yang. From 2021, when I produced Matchpool, to now, generative AI technology has become more and more sophisticated and widely used; and images produced by it are constantly and persistently breaking the real boundaries. In the future, I believe it would be ridiculous to try to tell whether an image is AI-generated as AI-generated images will be virtually everywhere. Today it would be ridiculous if we're still discussing whether or not we need loans as loans are everywhere. For instance, Huabei is in nature a virtual credit card. Consciously or unconsciously, we use to many financial loans. When the medicine is everywhere in the air, to take it or not is no longer a valid question.

XZR: Well, illusion could access the real world; it could transform or predict the real world. It's the same case for cinema. Earlier movies, for instance those 1920s movies we screened in New York this time about space travel and moon exploration seemed totally a fantasy to the audience of that time. But soon they became reality and part of the real history.

PNZ: Yes. And it would affect the way people imagine.

XZR: Yes, it affects how people imagine. But let's go back to the metaphor you draw: the aphrodisiac could generate almighty power. It has real effects. But we also need to add a temporal dimension, don't we?

PNZ: Yes.

XZR: Time is elastic.

PNZ: And it keeps collapsing.

XZR: A fleeting moment of pleasure, and then he died, right?

PNZ: Right.

XZR: Let's go back to your works and ideas. In *Matchpool* (2021) you wrote: "all matches are in essence mismatches." Here's a question I've never asked you before: what would be a "right match"?

PNZ: I'm afraid there's no "right match". The reason for the current economic system to work smoothly is that we all pretend to believe it's a perfect match. Or say, even though we know it's a mismatch, we decide to ignore it so that the system could work. When I order a takeaway, the system will match me with a delivery man. Such a match cannot stand scrutiny as the delivery man is the one who takes on more risks. This match is unequal. Also, you should not really look deep into your partner as the two of you are definitely not a perfect match. To keep the match going, we have to ignore that it is a mismatch.

XZR: So what is "mis-" in "mismatch" is the hierarchical structure the two sides find themselves in?

PNZ: It's imbalanced, unequal, or say, malposed.

XZR: Not as a mistake, but a misposition.

PNZ: Right. There's a song in *Matchpool* (2021) called "Rent Seeking", in which a lyric line goes "seedless watermelon chases skinny ponies". When writing this line, I thought of "literati" and saw them as "seedless watermelon". It was a derogatory term with an erotic implication. It implied that the old men had lost their reproductive capacity. I coined this derogatory term to match "skinny pony". The co-called "Skinny Ponies of Yangzhou" referred to a very brutal way of training young girls in ancient China. And "pony" in itself was derogatory. That's why I used "seedless watermelon" to match "skinny pony". This mismatch has always been embedded in our culture. Old men with power and wealth seek for beautiful young girls. In a way, you can also interpret the Sino-US relationship from this perspective. How could the two countries become so close and form the so-called Group of Two (G2) years ago? It's all because of mismatch.

XZR: But sooner or later the mismatch will ...

PNZ: Watermelon will wither, and skinny ponies will get old.

XZR: European debts are also a mismatch.

PNZ: Right. There're also mismatched structures between young productivity and old financial rent-seeking within each and every economic entity.

XZR: Let's go back to "seedless watermelon" and "skinny pony", which are both references rich in sexual implications. My question is about the relationship between sexuality and exploitation. Generally speaking, sexual desire or sexuality itself is seen as containing some kind of naturally liberating power that breaks through all social barriers. It's beyond the control of public order and morals; it's what Freud calls "Trieb" (sexual drive). Last year, Kang Wenqing published an article on the sex life of male homosexuals during the Cultural Revolution. It showed that even during the period of extremely intensive surveillance, sexual activities still existed extensively. Moreover, in places with the most strict religious prohibition of sex, there are still plenty of sexual activities everywhere. In your work, I feel sexual desires have become more like something to be exploited rather than a liberating force against exploitation.

PNZ: I don't see it that way. I always see sexuality or more precisely eroticism as a very important liberating force. But the contexts vary. For instance, *Doppelganger* (2015) explored taboos that had been broken through in the transitional period of internet regulation and censorship. Eroticism cannot be stifled, and it will always find interstitial spaces to escape. In *Economics of Loneliness: Service and Management* (2020), I tried to understand scatophilia, a sexual fetish unacceptable to most people, from a different perspective. If we see it from a de-anthropocentric perspective, or say the perspective of the bacteria, then it's not a fetish about excrement, but about bacteria. If the human body is deemed as an ecosystem of bacteria, the fetish could be interpreted as an attempt of the bacteria of one living entity to get close to those of another. In *Potlatch of Derivatives* (2023), "sounding" is hidden in a dish and will directly point to Ximen Qing. I resort to Ximen Qing's background and finance to demonstrate the liberating force of sounding. As a matter of fact, you're the one who give me the inspiration. You said man also have holes, not just in anus but also in the penis. It gives out a reversed imagery, which seems to imply the Taoist principle that things will develop in the opposite direction when they reach their extremes. It gives us a brand-new perspective, or say a yi perspective, to understand the penis as something that can also be penetrated as it also contains an orifice, a hole.⁵

XZR: Ha! Could you give us some scoop on *Potlatch of Derivatives* (2023) concerning sounding?

PNZ: One of the dishes is called "Red Dates as Booster". Each time before and after Ximen Qing takes the medicine, he would eat red dates. The red date is like a medium to enhance or relieve the effect of the medicine. Red date plays a prominent role in Jin Ping Mei. The place where this story takes place also abounds in dates. Ximen Qing's most important business is the medicine store. In the novel, Ximen Qing once puts some aphrodisiac into the hole of his penis (known as "the urethra"). This is probably the earliest writing about the act of sounding. Moreover, red date looks very much like glans. I use a stirring rod made from sounding rod and insert it into the dessert made of red dates and put it in a cocktail glass. "Red Date as Booster" refers to Ximen Qing's usage of aphrodisiac, and the fact that penis can also be penetrated.

XZR: It is written in The Orderly Sequence of the Hexagrams that "things cannot have free course or be unblocked forever". Neither can the human body. And if one is thoroughly unblocked, one would die. In a very serious scenario, diarrhea is a form of "unblockedness", which could eventually cause death. In Chinese Medicine, some drugs are forbidden to be used by people who practice Taiji. These drugs are meant to "unblock" the body; but Taiji players don't need to be further "unblocked", otherwise it would be excessive for them and cause total disintegration. Lastly let's talk a bit about Yinyang. The concept of Yin and Yang appears constantly in your works and statements. And just now you also mentioned the notion of "transdualism" that I coined.

PNZ: Transdualism is a state of constant changes. It's not fixed, bipolar, antagonistic or stiffed. It is always in motion. Yin can become Yang, Yang can become Yin, and they can also become other states. I've never managed to theorize these ideas. After I read your works, I feel I have a clearer idea. I want the multiple relationships and notions in my work to be presented in a state of motion so as to generate intertextuality. Intertextuality will often lead to a third meaning.

XZR: This is also montage. Montage puts different entities side by side to create new meaning.

PNZ: Yes, a third meaning.

XZR: This third meaning is greater than the sum of the first two.

PNZ: Yes.

XZR: Greater than or less than. But anyway it's not the same than the simple addition.

PNZ: Yes, there'll be difference.

XZR: Each individual element is a montage. In other words, there's not a purely unidirectional and pre-montage individual state. Any so-called "individual" element is always already a combination a montage; and through re-combinations it will generate new meanings.

1. "Transdualism" was first proposed by Xiang Zairong in *Transdualism: Toward a Materio-Discursive Embodiment*. (TSQ vol.5 no.3, 2018) Transdualism derives from Yin and Yang, one of the foundational concepts in Chinese philosophy, and offers an alternative perspective to think about "dualism" and the underlying "dualistic" thinking in the common critiques of dualism. "We could summarize dualistic thinking spatially in terms of 'either/or' and temporally in terms of secessionism (before/after) through, the production of 'turns': the linguistic turn, the visual turn, the affective turn, the ecological turn, the ontological turn, the decolonial turn. Transdualism attempts to critique dualism without reproducing a dualistic model of 'either/or,' one that pretends to move beyond, to overcome or overthrow dualism, but always locked in a temporal secessionism within a seemingly linear Euro-American-centric genealogy. I want to use transdualism as a critique that moves below the logic of secessionist 'either/or' and may be captured with the pairing 'either - and.' 'Either' marks their distinct 'identities,' qualities, and tendencies in time and space; 'and' marks their dependency and entanglement, their propensity for running into and becoming each other, which therefore renders the distinct 'identities' frangible and evanescent." See *Transdualism, or the A/history of Yin-Yang*, by Xiang Zairong.

<http://www.heichimagazine.org/en/articles/1067/oracle-from-2018-zairong-xiang-transdualism-or-the-a-history-of-yin-yang>.

2. The most popular software for writing fiction isn't Word. It's Excel. Tweet by @brianalvey, 1:25 AM, Jun 22, 2011, p29, CATASTROPHE TIME!, Gary Zhexi Zhang.

3. Be it overwhelming artistic talent or ordinary labor, what matters is the process. Moreover, I believe in the life energy embedded in the work itself. By stretching the timeline to transcend the time length of finance and of the artist's career life, a work will be salvaged again, leaving behind the people and environment that have fostered it and reconnecting with a new period of time.

4. Chapter 57 of Jin Ping Mei (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*): Ximen Qing said with a laugh: "The grounds (in the western realm of the Buddhist patriarch himself) were paved with gold; and that even in the Ten Courts of the Underworld, something in the way of paper money is required if one is to survive. As long as I expend this property of mine in the doing of extensive good works, even if I were to rape Chang'e, fornicate with Weaving Maid, kidnap Xu Feiqiong, or abduct the daughter of the Queen Mother of the West, it would do nothing to diminish the Heaven-splashing wealth and the distinction that I now possess."

5. In *Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic: Question Fundamental Nature*, it wrote "the kidney opens at two Yin". Here the "two Yin" refers not to the sexual organs of man and woman but the "front Yin" and "back Yin". Penis and clitoris are known as "front Yin", one of the nine openings on human body. The anus is another opening known as "back Yin". Concerning the arguments on "two Yin", see Qian Zhongshu's interpretation of "Tai Hexagram" in *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters*. As to the inspiration of "the kidney opens at two Yin" on contemporary body theories, see Xiang Zairong's *Unterhalb des Menschlichen: Über Porosität und Durchdringung* (*Human after Man*, edited by Marietta Kersting and Susanne Witzgall, published by Diaphanes) and *We Need to Talk about the Penis* (*philoSOPHIA*, vol. 13, Spring, 2024).

Special Artist Projects

Certain projects, challenging to categorize within Initiatives or Thematic Programs, find their place here. Nonetheless, these projects and the artists' practices maintain a strong connection to the Foundation's overarching narratives. Special Artist Projects also nurture potential future developments. Originally intended to be presented in the Foundation's space, set amidst the colonial architecture of Shanghai, China, Dahn Vo's project marked the Foundation's debut in Singapore. Subsequently, while the Foundation started to set roots in Singapore, Tawatchai Puntusawasdi became the first Southeast Asian artist to be included in its program.

Haumea

TAWATCHAI PUNTUSAWASDI

CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

2023

This work was acquired by the M Art Foundation and donated to the Singapore Art Museum.

Tawatchai Puntusawasdi devoted three years to exploring the dimensions of Earth's shadow, delving into the rationale and assumptions that shape the theory of spheres in distorted dimensions. The genesis of his artistic journey can be traced back to the creation of "Earth's Shadow at 3 pm" in 2010, where he initially conceived the idea of Earth's shadow based on the world's spherical form. Prompted by the question, "If the Earth's core is distorted, what shape would the Earth take? What would its shadow look like?"

Driven by curiosity, Tawatchai embarked on a quest to determine the proportions of a sphere along the X and Y axes when subjected to distortion. Within this transformation, an intriguing challenge emerged. Tawatchai adhered to the "invariant" principles of numbers and calculation as guiding forces, directing the placement of points, lines, and degrees within this new, distorted sphere. Iteratively altering and reducing the proportion of symmetry scale at a 1:1 ratio, he meticulously crafted a sketch of the novel and distorted sphere on paper.

Inspired by his distinctive concept, Tawatchai manifested the image of Earth's "shadow" leaning logically towards the Earth, creating a two-dimensional representation that intertwined the Earth's shape with its shadow. Expanding his imaginative exploration, he envisioned that the shadows cast on celestial bodies, visible from a distance as flat and dark, possess their own dimensions, curvature, and depth corresponding to the shape of the respective planet. This led to the transformation of the shadow's shape from the initial sketch of 'Earth's Shadow at 3 p.m.' into the three-dimensional sculpture Haumea, standing over 2 meters tall. Constructed by assembling thousands of metal sheets with diverse shapes, Tawatchai meticulously arranged and defined the degrees of each metal piece in advance, culminating in a perfectly distorted sphere.

Tawatchai's sculpture may not convey emotion overtly, but it encapsulates his thought process and perspective on the state of objects, reality, and the potential for shaping them through calculation. He emphasizes the transformative capacity of objects by turning flat dimensions into larger, more complex shapes or by bringing their sides or corners together. The resulting internal space is filled with air, while the external form is shaped by this meticulous thinking, design, and creative process.

While the concept of object transformation is not new, Tawatchai's unique approach involves leaving his "thinking result" in the form of equations, numbers, and proportions meticulously calculated on paper. This guiding principle ensures the "invariant" nature of his artworks, allowing for potential adjustments in size while preserving the integrity of his creative vision. Tawatchai's artistic interests extend beyond the mere creation of shapes. Infusing his sculptures with artistic aesthetics, imagination, and an appreciation for beauty, he introduces an element of uncertainty into the audience's perspective. The distorted degree and seemingly unstable placement of the sculpture on the ground evoke curiosity and uncertainty, contributing to the overall appeal of the artwork.



Installation view of *Incommensurable* at Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand. Image courtesy of artist.

Untitled

DANH VO

BERLIN, GERMANY

2022

This work was co-presented by the M Art Foundation and Vitamin Creative Space at the 5th edition of SEA Focus, *a world, anew*, Singapore.

It was featured in the inaugural "Collaborations" section of SEA Focus 2023 at Tanjong Pagar Distripark in Singapore. Functioning as a fertile ground to encourage institutional and cross-industry collaborations, this initiative empowers artists and galleries to realize more daring and expansive works, seeking to unlock new possibilities and reinvigorate the broader art community.

"Danh Vo's life's journey has given him a broad range of experiences to draw on as he examines questions of significance and purpose. In the process, the artist has continuously explored how the practice of contemporary art can elucidate the relationship between art and life.

Three works featured—*Untitled* (2021), *Untitled* (2020), and *Untitled* (2012-2022)—together hint at the relationship between ideology, craft, and the changes over time in art mediums. They represent a richly significant journey through time, from the Roman Empire to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—the rise of "Modernity"—and on to the present.

The forms of these objects and their particular materiality derive from the combination of the collective consciousness of different periods of time and the changes in techniques that took place amid them. Ideological evolution (from ancient Roman religion, Christianity, and humanism to colonialism and capitalism) is deeply imbedded in the formal characteristics of these sculptures. Intriguingly, over the course of two millennia, the materials available to artists have grown evermore light, from marble to wood to inexpensive cardboard. Thus do we enter into a labyrinth of time and space, seeking direction amid the complex relationships that humans have constructed between bodies and ideas, ideologies and techniques.

To Danh Vo, the most shareable public space is in fact located within each individual's physical body. When these three sculptures are considered together, Danh Vo's artistic practice draws us in with powerful momentum, forming an expanding field and a distinctive public space that invites us to contemplate, confront, and explore the hidden dimensions of our lives. If each unique individual is able to grasp some of the various aspects of this invitation, then we are all able to glimpse the artist's distinctive vision of the meaning of freedom."

- Text from Vitamin Creative Space



Installation view of *untitled* at SEA Focus 2023. Images courtesy of artist.

Infinite Game

CHEN ZHOU & MAO HAONAN

SHANGHAI, CHINA

2021

This work was commissioned by the M Art Foundation.

When the game becomes infinite, there is no ending, no winning or losing. Where is the boundary? Why play the game? If a pause is introduced, it comes with stillness, marking the end of gaming. Will the game be forgotten? In this blurry situation of the game, will it be expanded, discovered, explored, or pondered?

Infinite Game by Mao Haonan and Chen Zhou is based on James P. Carse's 1986 book "Finite and Infinite Game." Initially conceived as a conceptual trailer for a commercial game still in development, the artists enjoyed complete creative freedom in developing their works into films.

Mao Haonan's work unveils a sequence of computer-generated scenes, blending surreal and natural elements that occasionally blur perceptions of scale. The virtual camera explores robotic machinery against futuristic backdrops, interrupted by dazzling aerial views of a flowering prairie, all devoid of human presence.

Maintaining a cinematic approach, Chen Zhou explored infinite possibilities in crafting a live-action tableau vivant with an ensemble cast. In his work, dynamic characters sprawl across blue stairways, featuring a skeletal ghost, hikers, an office lady, Sisyphus, engineers, witches, and various figures from wuxia genres.

This contrast in the the artist's approaches highlights the potency of the game world as a reincarnation of "total art," with the potential to capture attention in unique ways.



Top: Film still. Mao Haonan, *Infinite Game*, 2021, animated video, 1' 41"
 Bottom: Film still. Chen Zhou, *Infinite Game*, 2021, video in colour, with sound, 4' 55".
 Images courtesy of artists.

World Building, World Expanding

XIN WANG

This essay was commissioned by the M Art Foundation to accompany *Infinite Game* by Mao Haonan and Chen Zhou.

If, like many other artforms that came before, video games once attempted to imitate life--through ever more hyper-real or fantastical graphics, sophisticated modeling, and immersive world building, we have curiously entered the evolutionary stage with the medium where the reverse is happening. The subtle yet comprehensive gamification of life is evident in language learning apps like Duolingo and investment tools like Robinhood, both propagating a more fun, less daunting navigation—if not mastery—of complex systems such as new languages or the stock market, or in the silly yet profound ways in which tiktokers choreograph their gestures to simulate the distinctly awkward movements of NPCs (non-playing characters) from franchises like Grand Theft Auto, or how live-broadcasts of the FIFA World Cup introduce players in the same animated sequence as does FIFA video games. Game worlds have become so engrossing and all-encompassing that they have paved ways for systems such as metaverses, promising both escapism and radical inroads back into organizing our lives.

Artists have long been there, ahead of the curve, both exploring new forms of agency inherent to the medium's built-in interactivity and subverting gameplay as a conceptual strategy. Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Lorna* (1984), widely considered the first interactive video art using LaserDisc technology, allows viewers to inhabit the life of the agoraphobic protagonist Lorna by making choices for her (through clicking through selection menus on the screen), eventually leading either to the character's suicide or emancipation from her fears. Two years later, the first Super Mario Bros game would enjoy its US debut, later prompting artist Cory Arcangel to hack into the game's cartridge and remove everything but the scrolling clouds (2002). In more recent years, the lines between thoughtfully crafted indie games and video games made by artists in earnest continue to blur: in Ian Cheng's *BOB (Bag of Ideas)* series, which revolves around the potency and threat of artificial lifeforms, the artist has developed a special app for viewers to create and modify offerings in a digital shrine; Lu Yang's video game *Great Adventure of Material World* (2019) have collapsed Buddhist cosmology, mythological tales and creatures from his own creative universe.

Then there is the crucial genre that philosophizes the game and ponders its meaning for human society and mechanisms of imagination—a prime example of this being Farocki's *Parallels* (2012-14), a series of essay films that traced the history, structure, and makeup of game worlds, examining its representation, borders, and glitches. More than a still evolving artistic medium for aesthetic—and even political—experiment, games also offer an expanding ground for philosophical reflections. It is in this very context that we can consider two recent short films—created by artists Chen Zhou and Mao Haonan—through a commissioned collaboration with the M Art Foundation, itself hailing from the game making industry.

Initially developed as a conceptual trailer for a commercial game still in development, the artists nevertheless had full free rein in their creative decisions, except the original versions of the films would be accompanied by a soundtrack featuring excerpted passages from *The Finite and Infinite Games—A Version of Life as Play and Possibility*. Written in 1986 by the religious scholar James P. Carse, the text has found a particular resonance among tech founders in China. As the game for which the conceptual trailers were commissioned went through development and demo stages without becoming a finalized product, the short films themselves became a kind of standalone byproduct and witness. According to the Founder of the M Art Foundation, Wu Meng, the commission was a byproduct of the possibility and uncertainty inherent to the process of creating a game.

Curiously, the two artists adopted almost opposing approaches to the “assignment”. Mao Haonan's video unfolds in a buttery sequence of computer-generated, surreal and natural scenes that sometimes confuse perceptions of scale. Uninhabited by humans, the virtual camera pans around and zooms in on robotic machinery in action against pristine, futuristic settings, occasionally interrupted by dazzling ariel views of a flowering prairie that might not be out of place in game worlds like *The Witcher*. The artist was interested in systems of control and a sense of techno-spiritual sublime, and it is perhaps not surprising that the film's aesthetic parameters evoke the compellingly atmospheric and eerie scenery in games like *Island Non-Place* (2016).

Chen Zhou, who has always maintained a cinematic approach to video art, relishes in the infinite possibilities of creating a live-action tableaux vivant with disjointed, anachronistic characters enacted by an ensemble cast. In less than two minutes, a dynamic group of characters appear sprawling across blue stairways, each with distinct features and actions; the role-play encompasses a skeletal ghost, hikers, an office lady, Sisyphus, engineers, witches, and assortments from wuxia genres—all collapsed into one narrative. One might interpret them as NPCs (given that there does not appear to be a main character)—but ones that defy the usual silly idleness and limited interactivity, coming to life in the most deliriously manner. Chen Zhou was interested in the mal-functioning game: mistakes, glitches, digressions back to filmmaking: the artist also confessed to have used filming an excuse to facilitate a real-life reverie with the cast.

The sheer contrast in the artists' approach illuminates the potency and allure of game worlds as another reincarnation of the "total art", commanding our time and attention in a way few other artforms or mediums could, but also generous in its inspiration. Both artists mentioned the Hideo Kojima-directed video game *Death Stranding* (2019) as a reference—from the perspective of both player and cultural producer. Mao Haonan appreciated the game's immense world-building endeavor, whereas Chen Zhou paid attention to poetic moments such as the upside-down rainbow.

C Thi Nguyen, a philosophy professor at the University of Utah, argues that games are quintessentially an artform of agency, providing controllable parameters of risk, reward, and fantasy to satiate our desire for unbridled adventure; it simultaneously functions to mitigate the vast and volatile behemoth called life. Art as we know it, however, often confront—rather than assuage—such existential tremors; and it is at this juncture that artworks meditating on games can be most meaningful, surprising, and indeed seductive.

ARTISTS' AND WRITERS' PROFILES

ANNUAL ARTIST PROJECTS

Yu Ji (b. 1985, Shanghai, China) is known for a diverse practice that spans sculpture, installation, performance, video and most recently drawing. Much of her work is motivated by the investigation of the concept of place and the capacity for specific loci to be charged with both geographical and historical narratives. She frequently conducts field research, as part of which she has staged temporary interventions in different sites around the world, which reflect upon and interrogate the place of the body within everyday environments. In 2008, she co-founded an art space – an artist-led space in Shanghai, promoting experimentation and exchanges between artists, curators and the public. Obtaining her MA from the Department of Sculpture at Shanghai University in 2011, Yu Ji was shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize Asia Art Award in 2017. Her international exhibitions include shows at the Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa (2023); CCA Berlin, Berlin (2023); Sadie Coles HQ, London (2022); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2021); West Bund Museum, Shanghai (2021); Edouard Malingue, Shanghai (2020); and Beijing Commune (2016). She has also participated in group exhibitions such as The Sigg Prize 2023 Exhibition at M+, Hong Kong (2023); 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2021); Fifth New Museum Triennial, New Museum, New York (2021); and the 58th Venice Biennale (2019). Yu Ji's first artist book, "Wasted Mud," was published in 2021 to accompany her solo exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery.

Zhou Tao (b. 1976, Changsha, China) studied at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Oil painting in 2001 and a Master of Fine Arts in mixed-media studies in 2006. Zhou Tao finds visual and narrative materials for his arresting film works in the places and communities he encounters, and the narration of the film is often developed from the accumulation of the encountered moments. There is no single entry to the practice of Zhou Tao, through often subtle and humorous interactions with people, things, actions, locations and situations, Zhou's videos invite us to experience the multiple trajectories of reality—what he once called the "folding scenario" or the "zone with folds." Although all of his footage captures actual scenes, the poetics of Zhou's visual narratives dissolve the division between fact and fiction. For him, the use of moving image is not a deliberate choice of artistic language or medium, instead the operation of the camera is a way of being that blends itself with everyday life. Zhou Tao's recent solo exhibitions include: Zhou Tao: Winter North Summer South, Times Art Center Berlin, Berlin, 2020; Zhou Tao: The Ridge in a Bronze Mirror, Times Museum,

Guangzhou, 2019; Green Sun, an exhibition by Zhou Tao, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Bangkok, 2014. He has participated in international exhibitions and biennials, including: Viva Arte Viva, 57th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 2017; Sharjah Biennial 13, Sharjah, 2017; Tales of Our Time, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2016; APT8, Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, 2015; "Social Factory" – 10th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, 2014; The 5th Auckland Triennial: If you were to live here....., Auckland, 2013, etc. Zhou Tao has participated in film festivals, including: 21st Jeonju International Film Festival - Expanded Cinema Section, Jeonju, 2020; 72nd Locarno Film Festival - Moving Ahead Section, Locarno, 2019; 47th International Film Festival Rotterdam - Bright Future Section, Rotterdam, 2018; Moscow International Experimental Film Festival, Moscow, 2018; 15th DocumentaMadrid - FUGAS Feature Film Section, Madrid, 2018; 55th New York Film Festival – Projections Section, New York, 2018. He received awards including "FUGAS Feature Film Section - Jury Award", DocumentaMadrid in 2018, the 1st Prize of the Jury of the Ministry, 61st Oberhausen International Short Film Festival in 2015 and the 1st Han Nefkens Foundation BACC Award for Contemporary Art in Asia in 2013.

He Xiangyu (b. 1986, China) is an artist and film director who lives and works in Berlin. Emerging from a generation of artists who have experienced the radical changes in China's society reverberated within the economy and international relations, He Xiangyu's art practice is based on his unique cultural experience. Using a diverse range of media from painting, sculpture, installation, video to publication, his work contemplates and echoes the fatalistic micro conflicts on specific individuals in a time of macro geo-political and historical turbulence, through a series of projects with immense time spans and physical volumes. In He's works, the deliberate dislocation of materials, intimate perception of physical and mental experience and the dispassionate historical perspective are brought into play; this very dynamic balance reflects the self-cognitive dilemma of a generation born from the historical fault line and its constant struggle with it. He analyses and critiques the collision, ingesting and digesting of cultures with a non-linear structure. He's exhibitions span globally, featuring at CAFA Art Museum and Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, TANK Shanghai, Long Museum West Bund in Shanghai, Para Site in Hong Kong, TOP Museum in Tokyo, The Drawing Center, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Smart Museum of Art in the U.S., as well as KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, Centre Pompidou in Paris, and Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art in Turin. His works have also been

featured in the 5th Ural Industrial Biennial, 58th Venice Biennale, 13th Biennale de Lyon, 10th Shanghai Biennale, 5th Yokohama Triennale, and 8th Busan Biennale. He Xiangyu earned acclaim as a finalist for the Mario Merz Prize in 2021 and the Future Generation Art Prize in 2014. His recent interdisciplinary publication, published by Hatje Cantz, won the prize for "The Most Beautiful German Books" in 2020. He Xiangyu is the founder of the Asian Art Association (Asiatischer Künstlerverein) in Berlin.

INITIATIVES

Shuyi Cao is a New York-based artist who received her Bachelor of Laws from Fudan University in Shanghai (2013), MA in Public Administration from Fudan University (2016), and MFA from Parsons School of Design, New York (2018). Her practice explores alchemical approaches to object making and knowledge production through archeological speculation and ecological fiction. Her mixed medium installation synthesizes various organic and inorganic materials, natural and artificial processes. Combining hand-crafted sculptures and digital artefacts, moving images, and sounds, the assemblage suggests heterogeneous material temporality. Her work has been widely exhibited in China and the US, including at the Today Art Museum, West Bund Art & Design Fair, Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Gallery Weekend Beijing, UrbanGlass, Fou Gallery, Shin Gallery, A.I.R. 13th Biennale, among others. She is the recipient of the Today Art Museum Wang Shikuo Nomination Award, The New School Tishman Environment and Design Center Research Grant, Community Outreach Grant at MASS MoCA's Assets for Artists program. She teaches at Parsons School of Design and has presented at Pioneer Works, NEW INC New Museum, Power Station of Art, the University of Applied Arts Vienna, the City University of Hong Kong, and Pratt Institute.

Long Pan (b. 1991, Jiangxi, China) graduated from the China Academy of Art in 2019. Interested in human traces in the natural world, she explores the microcosm to find connections between things, seeking humanity's place in the wider network. Working with fungi and plants, she translates biotechnologies into the language of art. Long Pan's mediums include bio-sculpture, installation, video, and photography, grounded in extensive fieldwork for a deeper basis in reality. Her ecological focus has garnered recognition, including the Beijing Contemporary Art Foundation's Women Artists Grant (2022), the Prince Claus Mentorship Awards for Cultural & Artistic Responses to Environmental Change (2022), and the 2022 SÜDKULTUR FONDS Artist Support Program in Switzerland. In 2021, Wind Bells received the Research Award from the Raiden Institute Youth Support Program, and her mycelium design was shortlisted for the Youth Innovation Award at the 2021 China Sustainable Design Award.

Michele Chu (b. 1994, Hong Kong SAR) in her practice explores intimacy and human connection, specifically the interplay between sensory elements and space to amplify emotional connection between individuals. Her works contemplate what makes us human, through mediums like performances, sculptures, multi-sensory installations and public interventions amongst others. Michele Chu graduated from the Royal College of Art & Imperial College London with an MA/ MSc in Global Innovation Design, and Pratt Institute with a BFA in Communications Design (Illustration). Her works have received coverage in publications including ArtReview, The New York Times, ArtForum and Frieze, and have been shared on global platforms such as TEDx. Her work has been shown at 1a Space (Hong Kong), Negative Space (Hong Kong), and Tai Kwun Contemporary (Hong Kong).

Yewande YoYo Odunubi is an artist, researcher and cultural producer working between movement, research and facilitation. Centering her practice around the core inquiry: “what does the body need to dream?” she is concerned with what can be enacted into space through connecting to intuitive experience and bodily rhythms. Viewing the body beyond the idea of a singular fixed form, identity or function, Yewande is interested in movement, dance, rhythm(s) and music as languages and processes of knowledge production and world-building. Her work often explores how theory and practice can be processed and actioned in the body, experimenting with dance, movement and live and filmed performance as acts of translation and a means of dialogue with the body’s present potentials and imagined possibilities. Alongside poet, curator and friend Rohan Ayinde, Yewande is one-half of the wayward/motile collaborative duo i.as.in.we formed in 2020. Her most recent exhibition and first presentation of Calling the Body to attention (2022), was presented by International Curators Forum (ICF) at Block 336. Yewande was ICF’s Diasporic Curatorial Animateur Fellow, 2021-2022, and she has had residencies with g39 and Yinka Shonibare Foundation. She was a recipient of the Jerwood Live Work Fund 2021. As a cultural producer, she has produced public programs in art spaces and cultural organizations including 198 Contemporary Arts & Learning, BLANK100, CCA Glasgow, Free Word, International Curators Forum (ICF), Now Gallery, Tate, V&A, and Wellcome Collection. Yewande is currently a Project Manager and Producer at ICF and is also a member of Black Curators Collective.

Chris Penty Alvarez is a London-based Latinx artist exploring notions of alienation, identity and imagined history through found-sound and recorded media. As a UK associate at Delfina Foundation as part of Performance as Process in Autumn 2023, Chris will explore the creation of illegal bodies in the Latin American political landscape and the embodied trauma they carry.

THEMATIC PROGRAMS

Pan Daijing (b. 1991, Guiyang, China) is a Berlin-based artist and composer who primarily engages with performance, installation, sound and moving images in her practice. Drawing on the capacity of music to exceed the limits of language and distort the passage of time, Daijing's work seeks to communicate physical, psychological and sonic depths, and to invoke a collective experience of solitude. Often realized as architectural interventions, her work pressurizes the boundaries between forms and between the alive and inanimate to create enveloping, sensory environments to be inhabited. Pan Daijing has presented and exhibited her work internationally at the 14th Gwangju Biennale (2023); Louvre, Paris (2023); Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2021); the 13th Shanghai Biennale (2021); Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin (2020); Tate Modern, London (2019); Biennale of Moving Image, Geneva (2018), among others. In 2024, Pan Daijing will present a solo exhibition at Haus der Kunst in Munich and, as the recipient of the Preis der Nationalgalerie, will also exhibit at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. She has performed at numerous venues and festivals including Barbican Center, London; Kraftwerk, Berlin; Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg; Sonar Festival, Barcelona; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; and National Pantheon, Lisbon. She has released three full-length albums, *Tissues* (2022), *Jade* (2021), and *Lack* (2017).

Huang Xiaopeng (1960 - 2020, Shanxi, China) was an artist from Guangdong, China. He studied at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts (1979-1983) and the Slade School of Fine Art (1990-1992). In an artistic career that spans over four decades, Huang has produced a complex and vigorous body of works. The most well-known are his later video and installation works, which explores inevitable dislocations as a consequence of translating, copying and transforming through the modernization process, to test the boundaries of meaning.

Cui Jie (b. 1983, Shanghai, China) specializes in oil painting, exploring the modernization and development of city landscapes. The unified style of contemporary architecture is a recurring theme in her work, discussing the past and present. Graduating from the China Academy of Art, Cui Jie expresses nostalgia for the past and utopian exploration for the future landscape. She has been featured in Phaidon Press's publication *Vitamin P3* and exhibited in various venues, including Para Site, Hong Kong (2021); Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei (2020); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2020); X Museum, Beijing (2020); and the Center for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester (solo; 2019). Cui Jie's work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, among others.

Zhou Jianjia (b.1990, Nanchang, China) is the founding partner and principal architect of YeArch Studio(YEAS), Ph.D. candidate of College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University. Her Ph.D. research focuses on digital fabrication. Because of her experience growing up and working in the New Village, she also became interested in the New Village as a way of living and social organization then the history behind it. YEAS initiated a series of research on the New Villages in Shanghai, including universities' and workers' New Village since 2016, culminated in drawings and articles. The related outcomes have been exhibited in international architectural events including Busan Architecture Festival and Pingshan Art Museum, Shenzhen. Her papers on New Villages have been accepted by international conferences including Political Matters(2019), INUAS(2019), The Architectural Humanities Research Association(AHRA, 2019). With her teaching experience in Nanjing University, Tongji University, and The University of Hong Kong, she brought the issues of New Villages in design studios. Besides, ZHOU Jianjia is also active in architecture curation. She participated in curatorial work in Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture, Shanghai Urban Space Art Season, and Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center.

The **AT group** was born out of a collaborative research process between the CAFA Institute of Sci-Tech Arts (CAFA Institute) and the Tsinghua Laboratory of Brain and Intelligence (THBI), and its members are committed to exploring and practicing new paths and possibilities for the intersection of art and technology in today's multidisciplinary and multi-disciplinary era, promoting innovation in art development while providing new imaginations and practices for technology. AT is also an acronym for Art and Technology. The combination and collaboration is the result of the thinking and attitude towards the common world of human beings. Collective thinking, discussion, and then practice can make the world a better place. The group will continue to include new members from different fields of interest, depending on the direction of the research and the nature of the project.

Xu Siwei is a writer and a field recorder. Xu has been practicing field recording of folk music and sound landscapes since 2012. He was involved in the writing and editing "A Compendium of Grassland Sounds," which was listed as one of the top ten books of Shanghai Music Publishing House in 2018. He has been investigating the issue of sound ecology and cultural sustainability since 2018. Between 2019 and 2020, XU entered his field recordings into the music education materials for Qiang youth, a Yidan Prize Foundation and Music Garden Space project. He continues tracking and following the project's impact on local sound and cultural ecology.

Shen Yiren is an independent researcher and curator. She is originally from Hangzhou and currently resides in Oxford, working in the field of contemporary art, cultural heritage, and sustainable fashion. She received her BA degree from New York University with honours in Art History, and a master's degree in Visual, Material, and Museum Anthropology from the University of Oxford, where she explored decolonization issues at the Pitt Rivers Museum and conducted fieldwork at the Liangzhu archaeological site. After graduating, she joined a London-based art tech company and served as an overseas consultant for government and corporate projects. Additionally, she contributes articles to art magazines such as Art Re-view, Artnet News, and Noblesse Art Now.

Michael Ho (b. 1991, Arnhem, Netherlands) lives and works in London. Ho graduated from the Architectural Association in 2019. As a second generation immigrant from China, Ho's works investigate the notions of the Chinese diaspora, cultural mismatch, and subsequently cultural rediscovery through his painting practice. He employs a specific technique of painting from back to front, superimposing diluted images with resolved brush strokes, clashing Eastern traditions with Western aesthetics. Ho's critical engagement with the orientalist images and tropes is multifold: from the playful to the political and from the erotic to the domestic. His solo exhibitions and projects include: Grotto Heavens, Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai, 2023 and Tryst, Gallery Vacancy at Frieze London, 2022. Ho's film projects have been screened at Piccadilly Circus, London and at the ICA, London. His newly commissioned video work by FVU, London is part of the group exhibition Hollow Earth: Art, Caves & the Subterranean Imaginary at Nottingham Contemporary, co-organized with Hayward Gallery Touring. Ho's works are in the collections of Asymmetry Art Foundation, London; By Art Matters Museum, Hangzhou; Domus Collection, New York; Labora Collection, Dallas; Longlati Foundation, Shanghai; and X Museum, Beijing.

Payne Zhu (b. 1990) probes into different economic systems and works in between the rheology of finance, competing bodies and the flooding of images. Aspiring to become an exile from within, Zhu manages to create an alternative economics. Often taking unconventional moving images as a point of departure, Zhu's works celebrate the unmatchable nature of the subject through the mismatch of different technological media.

Zairong Xiang, author of "Queer Ancient Way: A Decolonial Exploration" (punctum books, 2018), is a versatile scholar with expertise spanning arts, literature, religion, philosophy, and gender/sexuality studies in English, Spanish, French, and Chinese. As curator of the "minor cosmopolitan weekend" at HKW Haus der Kulturen der Welt (2018) and co-curator of the "2021 Guangzhou Image Triennial," he demonstrates a global perspective. Xiang, currently teaching Comparative Literature and Art at Duke Kunshan University, is completing his second book, "Transdualism." His research on cultural exchanges across the Global South, particularly between China and Latin America since the 19th century, explores the concept of "Shanzhai." With a rich background, he recently co-curated the project "Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)" at HKW Berlin.

SPECIAL ARTIST PROJECTS

Tawatchai Puntusawasdi (b. 1971, Thailand) has come to be known for his refined and elegant sculptures that skew and distort recognizable forms, evoking in audiences a heightened experience of the spaces they inhabit. Beyond a melding of his mathematical mind and painstaking craftsmanship, his work also communicates the artist's own ruminations on the limitations of human perception – our predominant means of apprehending reality. Puntusawasdi offers up a nuanced worldview underscored by the revelation that perspective is always relative to position, and perception is always rooted in circumstance. Tawatchai Puntusawasdi pursued his art education at Chiang Mai University (BFA), and then Silpakorn University (MFA). Puntusawasdi has exhibited locally in Thailand (National Art Gallery, 2007; Chiang Mai Art Museum, 2001), as well as internationally in countries such as: Singapore (ArtScience Museum, 2018; ADM Gallery, NTU, 2016; Esplanade Concourse, 2008); France (Morisot Foundation, 2007); Taiwan (Soka Art Space, 2008 and Shihmen Reservoir, 2004); Japan (Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, 2007); Germany (Artswitcher Kunstwerks, 2000); and Sweden (Edsvik Konst och Kultur, 1999). In addition, he has participated in the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018, Jakarta Biennale 2009, Biennale of Sydney 2006, and the 50th Venice Biennale. He has twice been the recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. He lives and works in Chiang Mai.

Danh Vo (b. 1975, Bà Rịa, Vietnam) is a Danish-Vietnamese artist currently based in both Berlin and Mexico. At the age of four, Vo's family fled Vietnam in a homemade boat, later rescued at sea by a Danish freighter. Raised in Denmark, he pursued his education at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1998-2002) and the Städelschule in Frankfurt (2002-2005). In addition to his artistic pursuits, Vo is actively engaged in a farm-housing project located outside Berlin in Güldenhof. His work consistently explores themes of identity, belonging, authority, ownership, the significance of personal relationships, and other conditions shaping human existence in contemporary times. Danh Vo's major solo exhibitions include "Danh Vo oV hnaD" at The National Museum of Art, Osaka (2020); "Danh Vo: Untitled" at South London Gallery, London (2019); "Noguchi for Danh Vo: Counterpoint" at M+, Hong Kong (2018); "Danh Vo: Take My Breath Away" at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and SMK, Copenhagen (2018); "Banish the Faceless / Reward your Grace" at Palacio de Cristal, Reina Sofía, Madrid (2015-2016); "We The People (detail) 2010-2013" at Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2012); and "Package Tour" at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008). He represented Denmark at the Venice Biennale in 2015 with the exhibition "Mothers Tongue" and has been featured in the 2013 and 2019 editions. Vo is the recipient of the Arken Art Prize, Ishøj, Denmark (2015), Hugo Boss Prize (2012), and the BlauOrange Kunstpreis der Deutschen Volksbanken und Raiffeisen Bank, Berlin (2007).

Chen Zhou (b. 1987, China) is a Shanghai-based multidisciplinary artist exploring cinematic language, painting, and writing, rejecting labels to find freedom in the uncharted territories before definition. His works, ranging from contemplations on death in modern life to humorous deconstructions of existence, orbit themes of imprisonment and liberation, systematically dismantling restrictive structures to unveil the absurdity of labels and the uncertainties of our contemporary world. Notably, his debut feature, "Life Imitation" (2017), received accolades at festivals, including the New: Vision Award at the CPH: DOX Film Festival and the Asian Perspective Award at DMZ Film Festival. Recognized in ArtReview Future Greats 2018, Chen Zhou's solo exhibitions include "The mirror will soon disappear in the world, Chapter I: The illusion in the mirror makes me hardly see the mirror" at Cc Foundation, Shanghai (2020), "Stayed, 7" at Hunsand Space, Beijing (2019), and "Kaufman" at Aike-Dellarco, Shanghai (2014), among others. His work has been featured in group exhibitions like "How Do We Begin?" at X-Museum, Beijing (2020), "Age of You" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto (2019), and "Emerald City" at chi K11 Art Foundation Pop-up Space, Hong Kong, China (2018). Chen Zhou's artistic narrative thrives on the continuous exploration of boundaries, offering viewers an immersive experience into the complexities of the human condition and the ever-shifting landscape of contemporary existence.

Mao Haonan (b. 1990, Nantong, China) resides and works in Shanghai. He completed his BFA at Sichuan Fine Art Institute in 2013 and earned his DNSEP (MFA) from School Fine Arts De Nantes Saint-Nazaire. Mao Haonan employs a variety of techniques, including 3D videos, computer rendering simulators, space installations, paintings, photos, and graphs, to explore themes such as fictions, perceptions, and memories. His recent exhibitions and screenings include "Displaced Belongings" at Phoenix Cinema and Arts Centre, Royal College of Art, BACKLIT in Leicester, London, and Nottingham (ongoing); "IFFR 2020" in Rotterdam (2020); "Ji.hlava IDFF 2019" in Ji.hlava (2019); "Chinese Contemporary Art Yearbook Exhibition 2018" at Beijing Minsheng Art Museum in Beijing (2019); "Extreme Mix-Airport Biennale" in Guangzhou (2019); "Hic Sunt Leones" at 798 Art Zone in Beijing (2019); "Chinese Import Direct" at The Cloud in Auckland (2019); "Light! Heat! Power!" at Fy Foundation in Shanghai (2018); "Continuous Terminus" at ShanghART M50 in Shanghai (2018); "Trente-Deux" and "Tous les Endroit, Tous Les Envers" at the Gallery of ENBANM in Nantes (2018); "Open Window" at le Vêrone in Paris (2017); "30e Grand Prix de Peinture" at the Centre d'animation de la Froge in Renne (2016); and "Evanescence" at Archiculture in Nantes (2016).

Xin Wang is an art historian and curator based in New York. Past curatorial projects include Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China, Metropolitan Museum of Art (2013, New York), Field Meeting of Asian Contemporary Art Week (2014, New York), artist Lu Yang's solo debut in New York: Arcade (2014, New York), THE BANK SHOW: Vive le Capital and THE BANK SHOW: Hito Steyerl (2015, Shanghai), chin(A)frica: an interface (2017, New York), and Life and Dreams: Photography and Media Art in China since the 1990s (2018, Ulm, Germany). Her writing has appeared in E-flux journal, Artforum, Kaleidoscope, Hyperallergic, and Leap. She has lectured widely at art institutions worldwide, most recently at the Para/Site International Conference (Hong Kong, 2017), Conversations at Art Basel Hong Kong (2018), Columbia University (New York, 2018), Tranen Center for Contemporary Art (Copenhagen, 2019), School of Visual Arts (New York, 2019), Queens Museum (New York, 2019), Taikang Art Space (Beijing, 2019) and as the keynote speaker for the "Asia/Technics" conference at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2019). She also served on the jury for the XITEK New Talent Award (Beijing, 2018) and the inaugural open call at The Shed (New York, 2018). Currently pursuing a PhD in modern and contemporary art at Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, Wang also works as the Joan Tisch Teaching Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art and manages the discursive archive on Asian Futurisms at afuturism.tumblr.com.

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