

Casa Regis

Center for Culture and Contemporary



PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

Land/Mind/Scapes

(Physical and Mental Landscapes from China)

Curated by Yiwei Lu and assistant curator Jason Chengtian Yu

March 19 - June 11, 2023

Casa Regis - Center for Culture and Contemporary Art is thrilled to announce the opening of *Land/Mind/Scapes, (Physical and Mental Landscapes from China)*, a photography exhibition featuring the works of seven exceptional Chinese photographers: Ye Wenlong, Huang Jianxiong, Wang Xin, Yan Jingsong, Ye Tingting, Zhang Qingxiu, and Zheng Xiaolin. This exhibition is proudly supported by Yiwei Gallery in Los Angeles, and curated by Yiwei Lu and her assistant, Jason Chengtian Yu.

Despite living in different parts of the globe (China, Italy, and the U.S.), the curators, artists, and director of Casa Regis, have worked tirelessly together for six months to bring contemporary Chinese photography to the 17th C., ex-monastic art space of Casa Regis. The insightful photographs on display offer a window into the rich and complex culture of China, where the visitors are invited to explore themes such as identity, tradition, and modernity. However, the power of this exhibition goes beyond the art -- it is an admirable collaboration in the time of a politically polarized environment.

This exhibition showcases the variety of pictorial styles of these seven nationally recognized artists. Drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese aesthetics and philosophy, the artists have skillfully incorporated contemporary techniques and approaches to their work. Within the exhibition, some of the artists delve into the ancient and revered concept of Shan Shui (山水), which speaks to the harmonious interplay between humanity and nature. Through their lenses, these artists present a stunning visual interpretation of this timeless concept, inviting viewers to become fully immersed

in the tranquil and awe-inspiring majesty of the natural world. Meanwhile, other artists within the collection boldly push the boundaries of traditional photography, experimenting with a range of materials, formats, and techniques to create innovative, original work.

A “Shanshui painting” (Literally translates as mountain and water painting) is more than just a mere depiction of a landscape; it is an embodiment of the artist's personal feelings, thoughts, and aesthetic understanding of the world. The term "Yi Jing" is used to describe this duality, with "Yi" representing the artist's subjective reflections and "Jing" representing the objective representation of the landscape itself. This exhibition presents a modern interpretation of traditional Chinese Shanshui paintings through the medium of photography. **Ye Wenlong's** photographs merge contemporary lighting techniques with traditional aesthetics, resulting in large scale-vertical scrolls that capture the essence of the Eastern black-and-white pictorial style in every landscape. By incorporating strobe lights to capture the beauty of falling snow, reducing perspective, and encouraging the viewer to contemplate nature's beauty in a peaceful and meditative manner, Ye's work is both visually captivating and emotionally evocative. Regardless of the location, his photographs always fuse "Yi" and "Jing," reflecting both his personal emotions and the natural scenery in perfect harmony. Similarly, **Wang Xin's** images evoke the stillness of introspection and tranquility of traditional ink paintings, drawing attention to the subtle details and textures of the natural world. Her photographs encourage the viewer to slow down and appreciate the beauty of the moment, much like the experience of viewing a traditional Shanshui painting.

Throughout this exhibition, a recurring theme is the use of minimalist aesthetics. The photographers skillfully rely on simple and uncluttered compositions, using a restrained palette of colors to create stunning images that evoke a sense of calm, tranquility and introspection, reminiscent of traditional ink landscape paintings. **Zheng Xiaolin's** photographs are a prime example of this approach, featuring landscapes from Inner Mongolia that are spare and uncluttered, with an endless horizon and sky that transport the viewer to a place of pure serenity. Negative space (留白), a fundamental element in traditional Chinese art, is also used effectively in photography to convey balance, harmony, and provide context. Additionally, it can evoke a sense of mystery or ambiguity. Inspired by the natural world's wonder and awe, **Huang Jianxiong** distills scenes down to their essential elements, capturing the fundamental aspects of a scene. His work

seamlessly recreates the flowing, delicate lines and gradual blending of shades that appear in ink paintings.

For centuries, nature has played a central role in Chinese philosophy and spiritual representation. Mountains and rivers have been regarded as symbols of the divine, and their beauty has been seen as a manifestation of the spiritual realm. **Zhang Qingxiu's** autobiographic series creatively incorporates natural elements such as water, wind, and fire to express her understanding of the impermanence of the material world. Her images embrace these natural phenomena and convey her commitment to coming to terms with the passage of time, specifically triggered by her 50th birthday. **Yan Jinsong's** incredibly detailed, lengthy horizontal silk scroll prints (measuring 7 meters) exemplify the profound connection between the natural world and spirituality. They reflect his deep admiration for the devotion of Tibetan Buddhist practitioners as they make their way toward the sacred snow mountain. Yan aspires to capture the same lofty temperament as the ancient inhabitants of this place, using photography as a medium to connect with their legacy. **Ye Tingting's** photographs capture the intricate floral patterns on fabrics found in Chinese traditional alleys of Beijing (Hutong), revealing the antique aura that lingers in historical architecture. Her work not only showcases the exquisite beauty of these patterns but also connects her personal experience to the collective memory of social change. Through her photography, Ye Tingting reaffirms and solidifies her own identity while exploring her relationship with her surroundings.

The Land/Mind/Scape exhibition underscores the potential of photography to delve into the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. Let us hope this sparks ongoing dialogues about our relationship with nature and the power and beauty that lies therein.

Yiwei Lu
Jason Chengtian Yu
L. Mikelle Standbridge

INFORMATION

About Yiwei Gallery: Founded in 2019 by curator Yiwei Lu, Yiwei Gallery is a dynamic contemporary art space that showcases the work of artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Nestled in the vibrant heart of Venice Beach in California, the gallery provides a platform for underrepresented voices in the art world and fosters a sense of inclusivity and diversity. With a commitment to showcasing thought-provoking and boundary-pushing contemporary art, Yiwei Gallery hosts pop-up exhibitions around the globe, bringing its unique vision to audiences far and wide.

About the curator: Yiwei Lu is a curator and filmmaker based in Los Angeles who has curated exhibitions around the world, including in the U.S., France, Italy, and China. She is deeply committed to cultural exchange and has a particular passion for photography. Yiwei strives to support artists from diverse backgrounds and creates meaningful and transformative experiences because she believes that art has the power to effect positive change in the world.

About the Assistant Curator: Jason Chengtian Yu is an artist and curator who holds an MFA degree from the ArtCenter College of Design. His diverse body of work encompasses paintings, abstract moving images, and large-scale installations. Rooted in a deep love for East Asian culture, he thrives to combine eastern spirit with western ways of artistic expressions, both in artistic practices and writings.

About Casa Regis: Casa Regis, a non-profit association, has the mission of revealing the special qualities of the Piedmont hill towns and connecting this pristine region with the rest of Italy and the international community through the presence and exchange of artists working in contemporary art.