

# 缓慢的归乡

## The Long Way Around

策展人 | Curator

孙文杰  
Sun Wenjie

×

艺术家 | Artists

胡伟  
Hu Wei

项恺阳  
Xiang Kaiyang

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ShanghART  
香格纳画廊

2021.12.18 - 2022.02.18

Opening 18 December, ShanghART Beijing is pleased to present "The Long Way Around", an exhibition curated by Sun Wenjie, showcasing a series of works by two emerging artists—Hu Wei and Xiang Kaiyang. The exhibition title comes from a novel of the same name by renowned Austrian writer Peter Handke.



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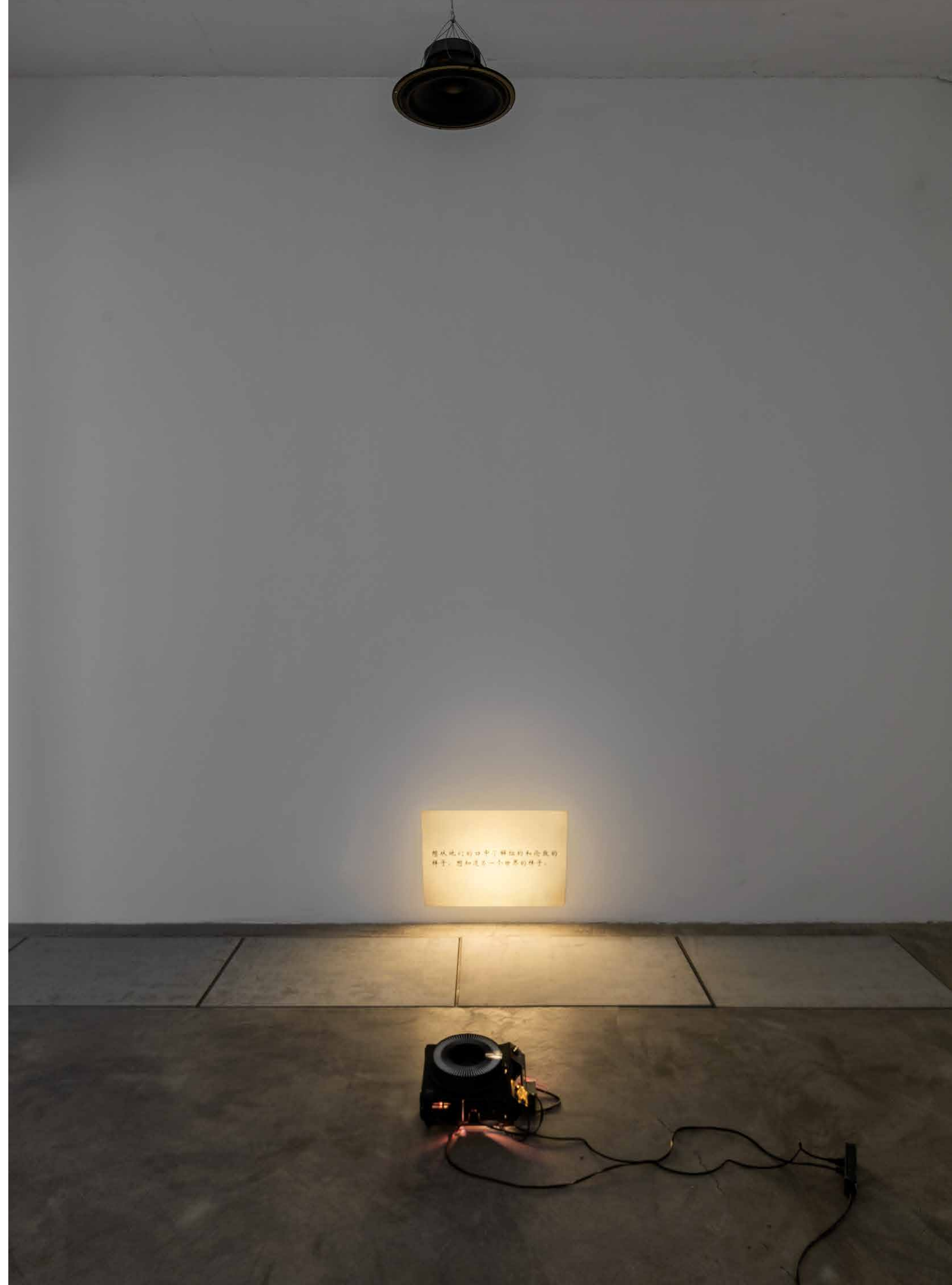


The artist begins the exhibition with a realistic and heartfelt letter in a mixture of Malay, southern Filipino and Bajau dialects, inviting viewers to listen to the narrative of a stateless person living in exile on an island.

Hu Wei | Letter | 2021

Sound installation, sound speakers, Kodak 1500 projector, 80 reversal films

13 mins | Ed.1+1ap





Hu Wei | Offshore | 2020

Archival lightbox film, low-reflective  
acrylic, black flannel, monitor, led light,  
aluminum alloy frame

29.5x42.5x5cm | Ed.5+1ap

“Offshore” simulates the rhythm of flickering lightbulbs due to the island’s unstable electricity supply. The looming lighting makes visible the dense forest and rivers in the dark, which is the only route for islanders to reach the mainland.







Drawing from (possibly) fictional mythology to bioarchaeology, references to the stateless in Malaysia and techno music, Hu Wei constructs the overall structure of this project, while his non-paradigmatic, dynamic, and variable series of works reveals even more details: the legendary creature “Capricorn” is superimposed on the Bible story about a whale’s belly; the three-channel video “Long Time Between Sunsets and Underground Waves” offers an insight into the interplay and struggle between human activity and nature from the perspective of island; the scattered installation series “Aquatic Invasion” flows in the form of transparent, coloured alien creatures.



Hu Wei | Long Time Between Sunsets and Underground Waves | 2021

Three-channel video Installation, colour, mixed stereo

9 mins 8 secs | Ed.1+1ap



Hu Wei | Long Time Between Sunsets and Underground Waves | 2021

Three-channel video Installation , colour, mixed stereo

9 mins 8 secs | Ed.1+1ap

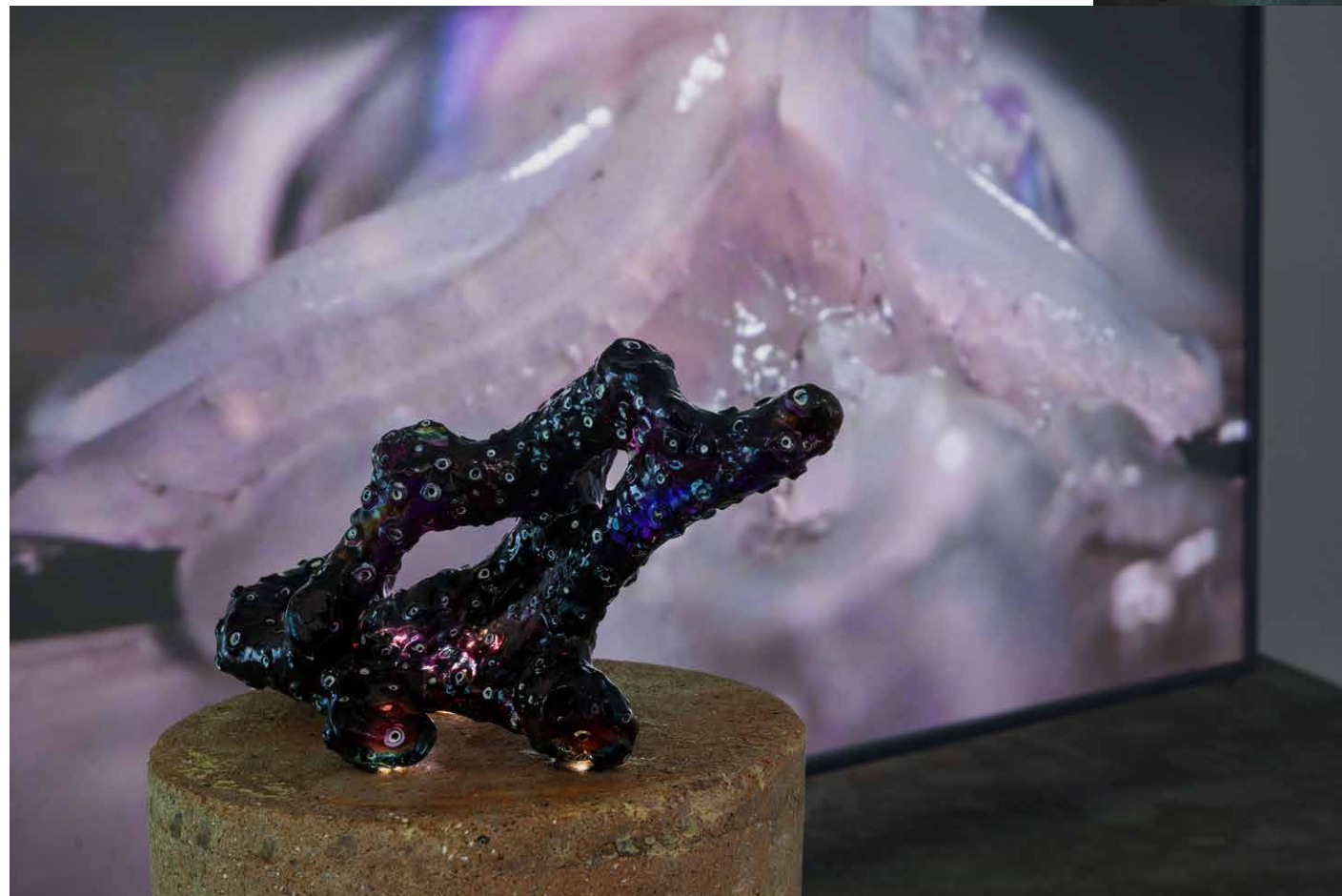
This work offers an insight into the interplay and struggle between human activity and nature from the non-human perspective of an island, and explores the intertwined relationship between marine culture, legend, island and biopolitics in a semi-documentary, semi-fictional way. The island in the film seems to be a closed-off, circular ecosystem, with ghostly fires and visions appearing at night in the dense forest, perhaps from the spirits of inhabitants who were slaughtered during the war. Beneath the sea surface, legends and superstitious beliefs about mythical creatures and the nomadic Bajau people still circulate—as do the second-generation immigrants who are scattered across the Malay Archipelago without identity or nationality, seeking a place to live in the “undercurrents”, far from the mainland, separated by choice or by force.



Hu Wei | Aquatic Invasion No.1 | 2021

Glass, crystal powder, refractory sand, clay, glaze, black iron,  
mineral pigments, LED light

71x25x25cm | Unique



"...Island is the second origin. Only on the island can people feel that they are detached from the world." Hu Wei's investigation into the marine culture can be considered as a pursuit of "home", which evokes our imaginations of the "sea nomad (human & non-human)" by blending maritime myths and legends. Whether these "sea nomads", in the artist's words, are "the stateless, territoryless seafarers; 'survivors' thrown into the sea during colonisation and human trade; or evolved animals migrating from the land to the sea as well as the legendary complex of land and sea monsters..." The fusion of "sea nomad" and the closed, circular ecosystem of island/sea is what Handke considers "well hidden among the objects of the landscape". Due to the open, mysterious and expansive properties of ocean, the layered texture of Hu Wei's work is embraced and stretched in this exhibition.





"Aquatic Invasion" is a series of glass, crystalline installations. In the early works of techno band Drexciya, they imagine an underwater kingdom established by people who were thrown into the sea during human trade, and it thus reminds Hu Wei of Turner's depictions of slave ships and drowned human limbs in sea storms. The artist infuses "historical spirits" into his collection of unidentifiable sea creatures, plants and skeletal fragments, imagining their structures in a planktonic connection to the human body (remains), and how they can generate a kind of body horror backwards. The origin and birth of "Aquatic Invasion" are combined with "body horror" and replaced by a mutated allegory.

Hu Wei | Aquatic Invasion No.1-6 | 2021 | Unique  
Glass, crystal powder, refractory sand, clay, glaze, black iron, mineral pigments, LED light





"In the Belly of the X - Double Headed" borrows the Bible story of Jonah and the Whale, suggesting one's meditation and rebirth in the monster's dark body. Inside the belly is Capricorn, a fictional sea-creature often found in Southeast Asian literature. It combines the characteristics of multiple species in various legends, revealing a clear confrontation between land and sea. In terms of both religion and politics, Capricorn has become a complex and intertwined image of identity. Evoking imaginations of the "sea nomad", the artist develops a narrative based on mythology and bio-archaeology and hopes to find a intersection between human and particular creature.

Hu Wei | In the Belly of the X - Double Headed | 2021

Brass, bronze, stainless steel, photosensitive resin, crystal, chemical heat colouring

22x72x30.5cm | Ed.3 + 1ap







For Handke, art has impacted the literariness of his work in many aspects. When looking at Cézanne's landscape paintings, Handke realises that the pine trees and cliffs overlap each other in the picture, forming an interrelated, singular hieroglyph as well as a complete integration of "thing-image-script". He sees them similar to cave paintings: "They were things, they were images, they were script; they were brushstrokes—and all these were in harmony."







The Word painting series by Xiang Kaiyang, starting with a group titled "Flowers Bloom and Fade", is a typical example of Handke's viewpoint. The artist presents his consistent preference for words onto the canvas, while this body of the work points to the transformation of text into imagery for him. The role of text can be symbolic; it can be written; it can be pictorial. His repeated use of reduplication not only strengthens the painting's inner harmony, but also explores the spiritual qualities beyond the text itself, featuring a fresh interaction beyond the conventional aesthetic relationship between word and image.





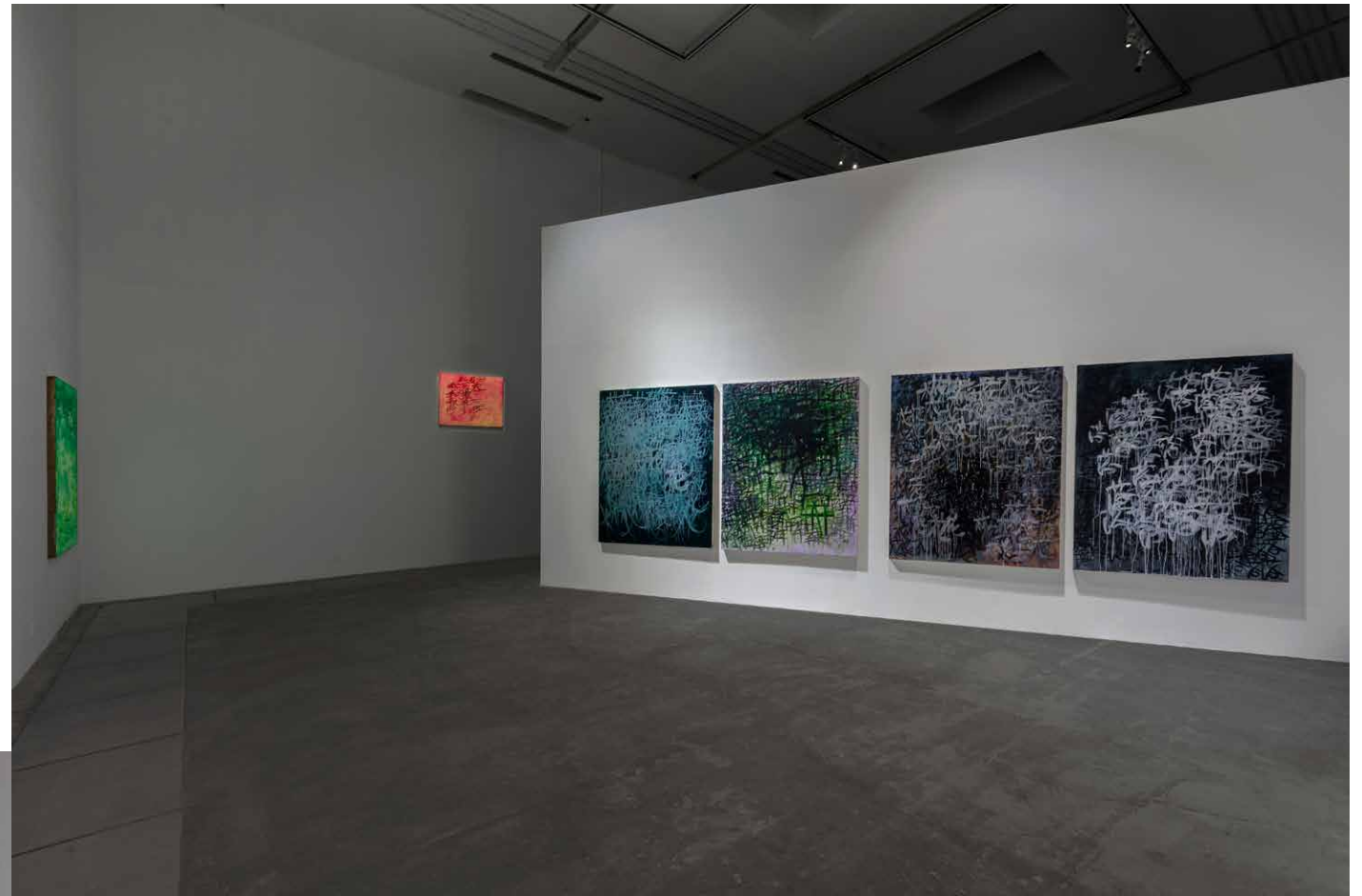
"After constantly repeating the word 'flower', I find it looks just like the word 'death'. Interestingly, this corresponds exactly to my previous research on the idea of poetic repetition. It is a visual transformation, not in the literal sense, but in the pictorial sense, which surprises me."

Left: Xiang Kaiyang | Flower No.2 | 2021  
Watercolour on wood | 180x144cm | Detail

Right: Xiang Kaiyang | Expire | 2021  
Watercolour on wood | 80x100cm



"Language is a big concept, word is the content and tool that has many different characteristics in the process of communication. For example, a poem has to be split into lines, as it's about reading and the rhythm of sound. This rhythm will go on to reinforce and change the perception of meaning. In my works, I use this characteristic to examine the relationship between text and picture."



Xiang Kaiyang | Word painting series | 2021 | Watercolour on wood

Memories are often triggered by synaesthesia: there are certain moments when colour becomes a vehicle for memory, and I have been in such colours for a while. “Green” is reminiscent of summer afternoons that I snoozed at the Orchid Pavilion, with traces dappled on the monuments, lotus ponds and tree shadows dancing quietly in the sultry sun. “Green” and “Blue” undoubtedly demonstrate the artist’s subjective vision of colour, but it also allows audiences to project their personal views that maintain enduring stability in terms of imagery. It seems to me that they no longer mimic nature, but portray depths through appearance, or render the greatness of life in a precise language.



Xiang Kaiyang | Green | 2021  
Watercolour on wood | 120x80cm

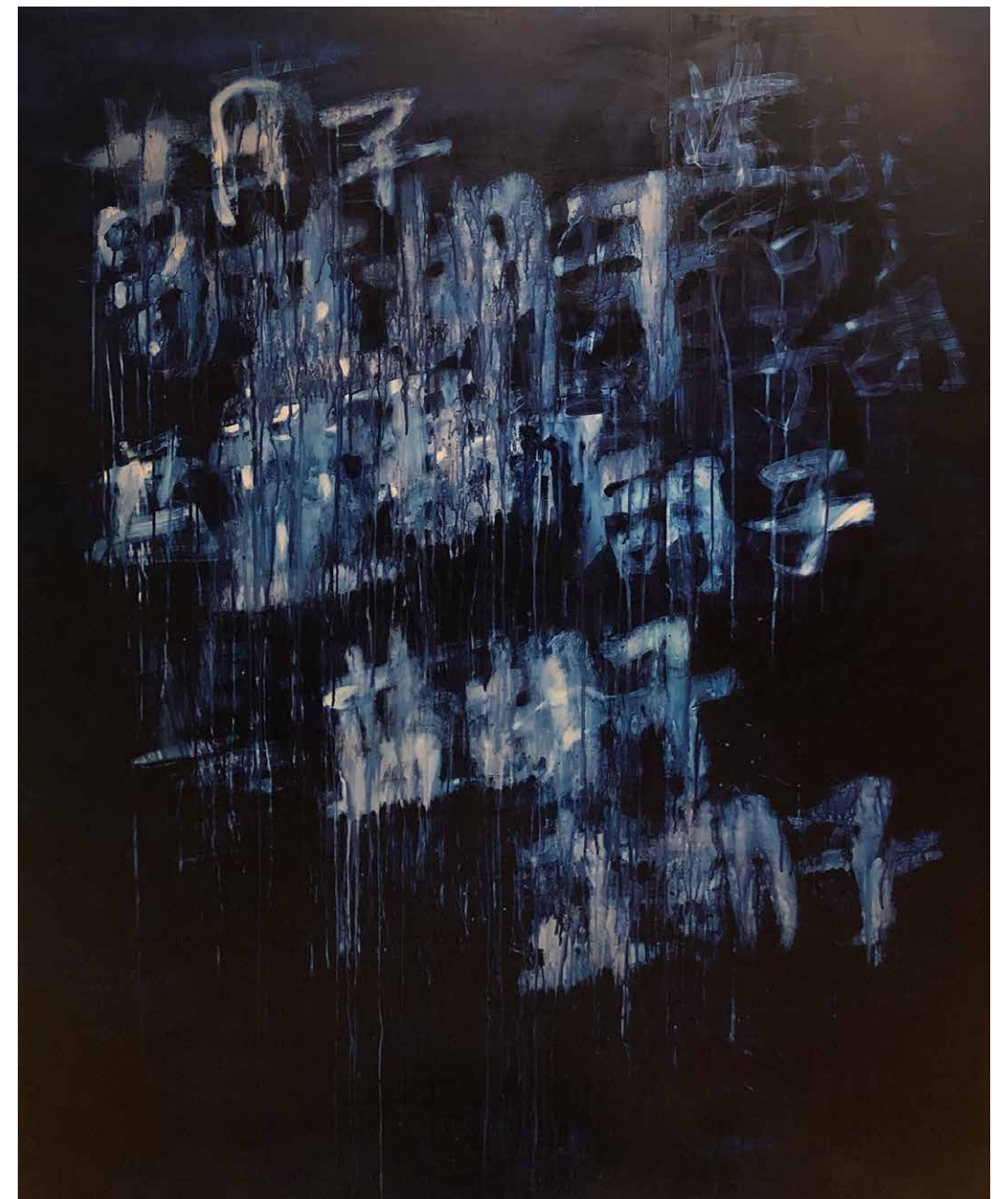




"The words I have chosen are based on a notion of ph value. For me, not all words can be used to create a work. Taking 'dragonfly' and 'butterfly' as an example, I prefer 'dragonfly', which appears more calm and clear, while 'Butterfly' is too fancy and pretty. Words that provoke too much of a reaction from the viewer at both levels are out of my consideration."







Xiang Kaiyang | Bluebeard | 2021  
Watercolour on wood | 160x128cm



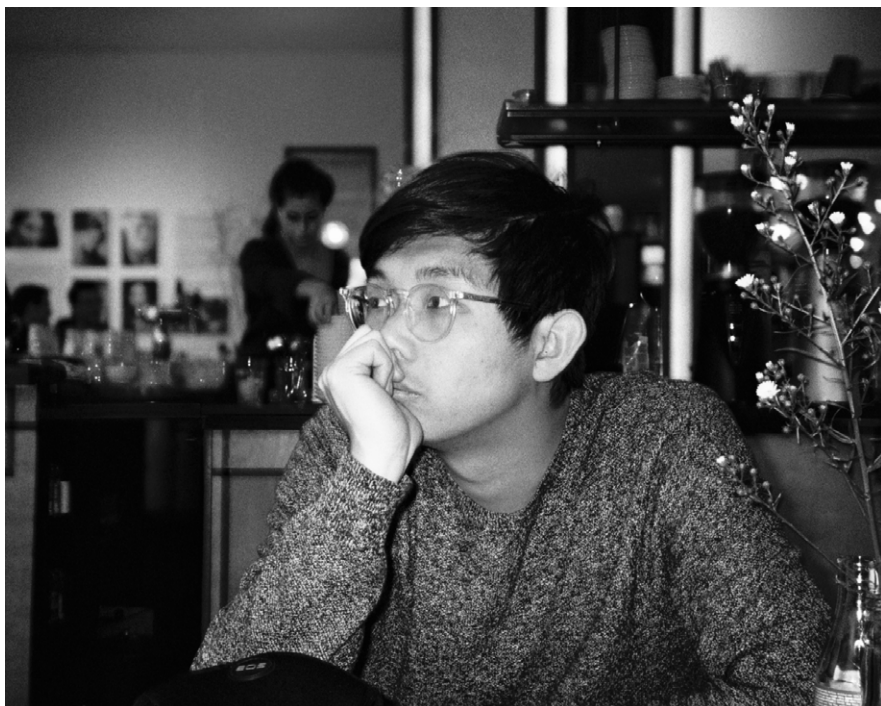




Sun Wenjie, born in 1989 in Dalian, lives and works in Beijing. She is a curator and writer. Sun studied at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), and later at the Goldsmiths College, University of London, where she received her MFA in Curating. Sun joined the Red Brick Museum in 2016 and has held the position of Head of Exhibitions at the Museum since 2017. The exhibitions she curated solely and jointly include: Call and Response: Judy Chicago x Stanley Whitney, Longlati Foundation, Shanghai (2020); Escape Routes - Bangkok Art Biennale, Bangkok, Thailand (2020); Chen Zihao: 2.5 D, Tang Contemporary Art, Bangkok, Thailand (2019); Andres Serrano: An American Perspective, Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing (2017); Wen Pulin Archive of Chinese Avant-garde Art of the 80s and 90s, Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing (2016); Re-coding, CAFA International, Beijing (2016); An Exhibition on Exhibiting, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing (2011), etc.



Curator Sun Wenjie



■ Artist Hu Wei

Hu Wei, born in 1989 in Dalian, lives and works in Beijing. In 2012, he graduated from the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Oil Painting Department, and obtained his MA in Fine Art at Dutch Art Institute in 2016. Working in a variety of media including film making, installation, printed images, performance and drawing, Hu Wei explores the precarious relationship between labour, affect, and value judgments in different political and economic environments, technological conditions, and events. Recent exhibitions include: Space Oddity, UCCA Dune, Hebei (2021); The 8th Huayu Youth Award Exhibition: A Long Hello, UCCA, Beijing (2020); Future, Future—curated by Yang Fudong, Centre for Experimental Film, Shanghai (2020); Study of Things, Times Museum, Guangzhou (2020); Sunset on a Dead End, Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2019); Happy People, Inside-out Art Museum, Beijing (2019); Toward the Emergence of Resistance, Taikang Space, Beijing (2016), etc. His works have also been exhibited in Korea, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Iran, America, and Mexico.



Xiang Kaiyang, born in 1991 in Wenzhou, lives and works in Beijing. In 2015, he graduated with a BA in Fine Art from the Goldsmiths College, University of London, and later in 2020 received his MFA in Oil Painting at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, the 5th Studio. Xiang Kaiyang’s creative art form assumes a fundamental synthesis of texts and drawing. His passion during his student era centered on Chinese poetry writing, leading to his themed artistic experiments with texts and words during graduate school. Xiang grounds his artworks on Chinese words, phrases, poetry, and texts, explicitly or implicitly presenting them through intricate yet delicate brushwork in his paintings. How to effectively and accurately convey the roles of these Chinese characters through visual representation, transforming them into imagery signals, is the focus of his experiment.



Artist Xiang Kaiyang

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