



Installation view of HAN MENGYUN's *The Pavilion of Three Mirrors*, 2021, polished metal sheet, steel, and paintings, dimensions variable, at the 2021 Diriyah Biennale, Riyadh, 2021. Courtesy the artist.

Han Mengyun

LONDON/WUHAN

In India, kite-flying is a spiritual activity that connects humans with the divine. This longing for the sky and the origin of the universe is captured in Han Mengyun's multimedia installation *Logic of the Ether* (2021), which comprises a three-meter-tall wooden structure and a video installation featuring the Sanskrit Hymn of Creation from Rigveda and the kite festival in Jaipur. Swaths of patterned fabric, printed by Han with wood blocks collected in Jaipur, unfold in layers within the wooden structure and evoke the caisson ceilings found in both ancient Chinese timber-frame buildings and Indian temples. At the top of this installation, a flower emerges. For Han, these designs and motifs are products of our collective consciousness and share a spiritual language.

Han began searching for a visual language that speaks to her inner world while at New York's Bard College. Initially fascinated by abstract expressionism, she returned to ink paintings and calligraphy, dived into Taoism and Buddhism, and became drawn to folklore, religious art, and ancient publications. Taking inspiration from illustrated Islamic manuscripts, her painting series *Jewels of Impermanence* (2020-) treats the canvas as an open book, incorporating motifs of death, printed patterns, and Arabic texts. Similarly, her latest oil paintings displayed around the mirror-and-steel structure *The Pavilion of Three Mirrors* (2021) depict fables from different cultures and highlight the visual features of language itself. In the triptych *Fortress of Passion* (2021), for example, the Arabic script for Persian words "nightingale" and "rose" are trapped in prison cells, their wings fractured, before they break free.

Furthering her explorations in language, Han has been writing and presenting poetic imageries through moving images. Her latest video-poem *Night* (2022) is a cinematic sequence accompanied by the reading of verses including, "The full moon clouds do not sleep/moths surrounding the streetlights do not respond." In a disturbing scene, a nearly dead moth is trapped in a sink, resonating with the fate of a Xuzhou mother of eight who was found chained in a hut in January. Through her own poignant and sharp language, Han communicates universal experiences of yearning and suffering.

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