

Robert Zhao solo exhibition

THE DIVINE IN THE TRASH STRATUM

11 Jan - 23 Feb 2025



ShanghART Singapore, 9 Lock Road, #02-22, Gillman Barracks, Singapore 108937

ShanghART
香 格 纳 画 廊

Robert Zhao Renhui: The Divine in the Trash Stratum

赵仁辉：垃圾层里的神圣

*The symbols of the divine show up in our world
initially at the trash stratum.*

– Philip K Dick

ShanghART Singapore is pleased to present The Divine in the Trash Stratum, a solo exhibition by Robert Zhao Renhui featuring his latest photographic works. The exhibition highlights the profound transformations that emerge from layers of waste and decay, as the artist invites us to reimagine the relationship between humanity and nature.

A series of photographs of various creatures on a fallen Albizia tree trunk welcomes visitors into the space. These strange scenes depict how a site of destruction has transformed into one of regeneration and life. Mysterious images of precious gems are in fact created with remnants of human activity such as glass shards and discarded fragments, manifesting them as symbols of how forest processes and human histories intertwine.

Opening 11 January 2025 ahead of Singapore Art Week, the exhibition coincides with the Singapore Art Museum's presentation of Seeing Forest, first shown at the Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, extending Zhao's ongoing explorations of ecological resilience.

“神圣的象征最初出现在我们的世界中的垃圾层。”

– 菲利普·K·迪克

香格纳新加坡荣幸呈现赵仁辉个展《垃圾层里的神圣》，展出他最新系列的摄影作品。通过展览里呈现出来从废弃物及腐烂过程中产生的深刻变化，艺术家邀请我们反思并重新想象人类与自然界之间的关系。

进入展览空间，迎来观众的是上不同生物在倒下的合欢树干上活动的一系列摄影作品。这些奇异怪诞的场景描绘了一个被摧毁的环境如何转变成为重生与新生之地。一些看似珍贵宝石的神秘图像实际上是由人类活动的残余物（如玻璃碎片和丢弃的碎片）制成的，象征着森林进程与人类历史相互交织的紧密联系。

本展览将于新加坡艺术周开始之前，2025年1月11日开幕，届时与新加坡美术馆的《见·森林》展览同期举行。《见·森林》最初展于威尼斯双年展的新加坡馆，延续了赵仁辉对生态恢复力的探索。









Everything the Forest Remembers

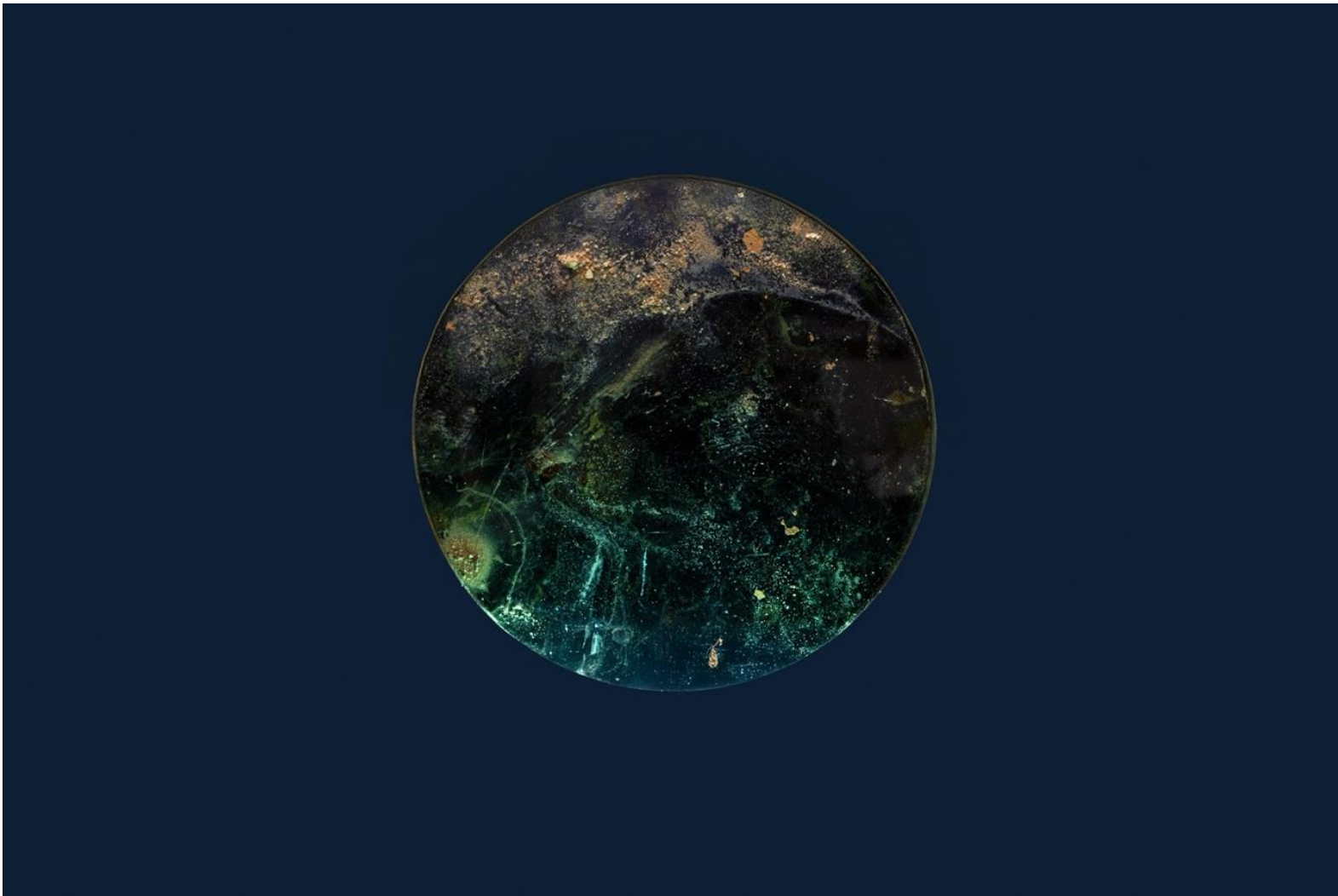
森林所记得的一切

In Gillman Forest, small glass shards, some as tiny as 2 centimetres, lie scattered on the ground. Over time, rain and water have weathered these shards, softening their edges and dulling their surfaces. Among the undergrowth, Albizia trees have grown around and over these fragments, integrating them into the forest floor.

This series of images documents this ongoing transformation, capturing the interaction between discarded materials and the natural processes of erosion and growth. The shards, once remnants of human activity, now exist as part of the forest ecosystem, slowly blending into the environment shaped by rain, roots, and time.

在吉门营房的森林里，地面上散落着一些小玻璃碎片，有的只有 2 厘米。随着时间的推移，这些碎片经过雨水的风化后软化了边缘，也使它们的表面变得暗淡。在灌木丛中，合欢树生长在这些碎片周围和上方，将它们融入森林地面。

这一系列图像记录了这种持续的转变，捕捉了废弃物品与侵蚀和生长的自然过程之间的相互影响。这些碎片曾经是人类活动的残余物，现在作为森林生态系统的一部分，慢慢融入被雨水、树根和时间塑造的环境中。



Shard 46 | 碎片 46

2024

Archival inkjet print

收藏级喷墨打印

2 pieces | IMAGE 1 100(H)*150cm | IMAGE 2 20(H)*30cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_6705





Detail, Shard 46
细节图, 碎片 46



Shard 43 | 碎片 43

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*180cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_4582



Shard 40 | 碎片 40

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*180cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_5892



Detail, Shard 43
细节图, 碎片 43



Detail, Shard 40
细节图, 碎片 40



Shard 37 | 碎片 37

2024

Archival inkjet print

收藏级喷墨打印

100(H)*100cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_5269



Shard 39 | 碎片 39

2024

Archival inkjet print

收藏级喷墨打印

100(H)*100cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_3525



Shard 28 | 碎片 28

2024

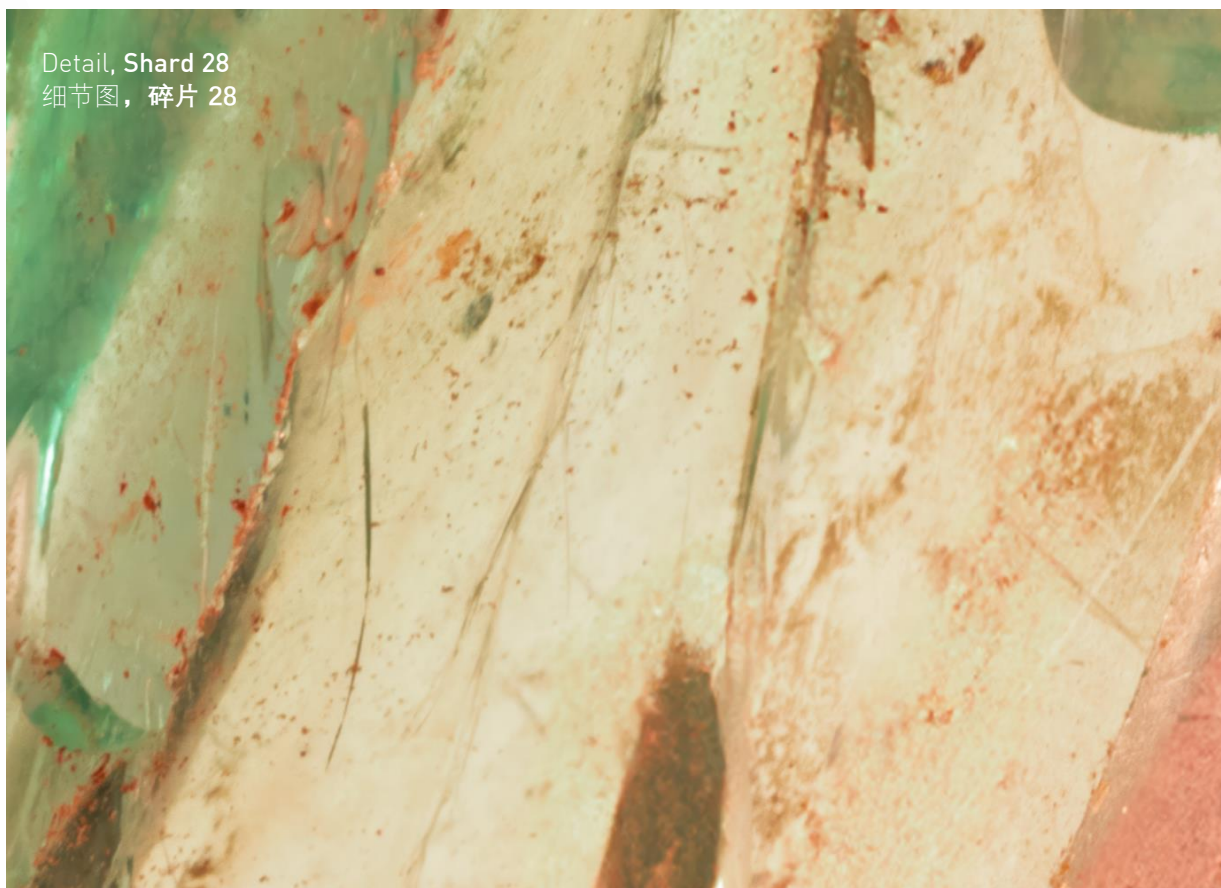
UV print on acrylic, laser cut

亚克力板 UV 打印，镭射切割

171(H)*74cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_0691



Detail, **Shard 28**

细节图，碎片 28



Shard 42 | 碎片 42

2024

Archival inkjet print

收藏级喷墨打印

80(H)*120cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

ZRH_0936

Shard 44 | 碎片 44

2024

Archival inkjet print

收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

Edition of 3 + 1AP

ZRH_1511



The Centre of All Things

万物的中心

On September 7th, 2020, a 28-meter Albizia tree fell following a storm in Singapore. The Institute of Critical Zoologists (ICZ) initiated a study to monitor the fallen trunk, aiming to observe its ongoing interactions with the surrounding environment and its contributions to the ecosystem as it decomposes. The project's goal is to document the trunk until it fully integrates into the soil.

Although the main trunk has detached and died, the remaining stump, still rooted, continues to exhibit signs of life, likely sustained by interconnected root systems with neighbouring Albizia trees.

A motion-sensitive instant camera connected to a network has been positioned near the stump to send daily updates and images, recording any movements or changes in the environment. The ICZ publishes the newspaper routinely from the perspective of the tree, providing insight into the quiet, persistent changes within this landscape.

2020年9月7日，新加坡一场风暴后，一棵高28米的合欢树倒下了。批判性动物学家研究所（ICZ）发起了一项研究，对倒下的树干进行监测，旨在观察它与周围环境持续的相互作用，以及它在分解过程中对生态系统的贡献。该项目的目标是记录树干，直到它完全融入土壤。

虽然主干已经脱落并死亡，但剩余的树桩仍然扎根于土壤，并继续显示生命的迹象，这可能是通过与邻近的合欢树相互连接的根系维持的。

研究所在树桩的附近安装了一个与网络相连的动作感应即时相机，每天发送最新信息和图像，记录环境中的任何动静或变化。ICZ 定期以这棵树的角度刊登报纸，对这个安静、持续变化的景观提供了洞察。



Day 4 | 第 4 日

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_5755



Day 29 | 第 29 日

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_0080



Day 36 | 第 36 日

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_1912



Detail, Day 36
细节图, 第 36 日

Day 18 | 第 18 日

2024

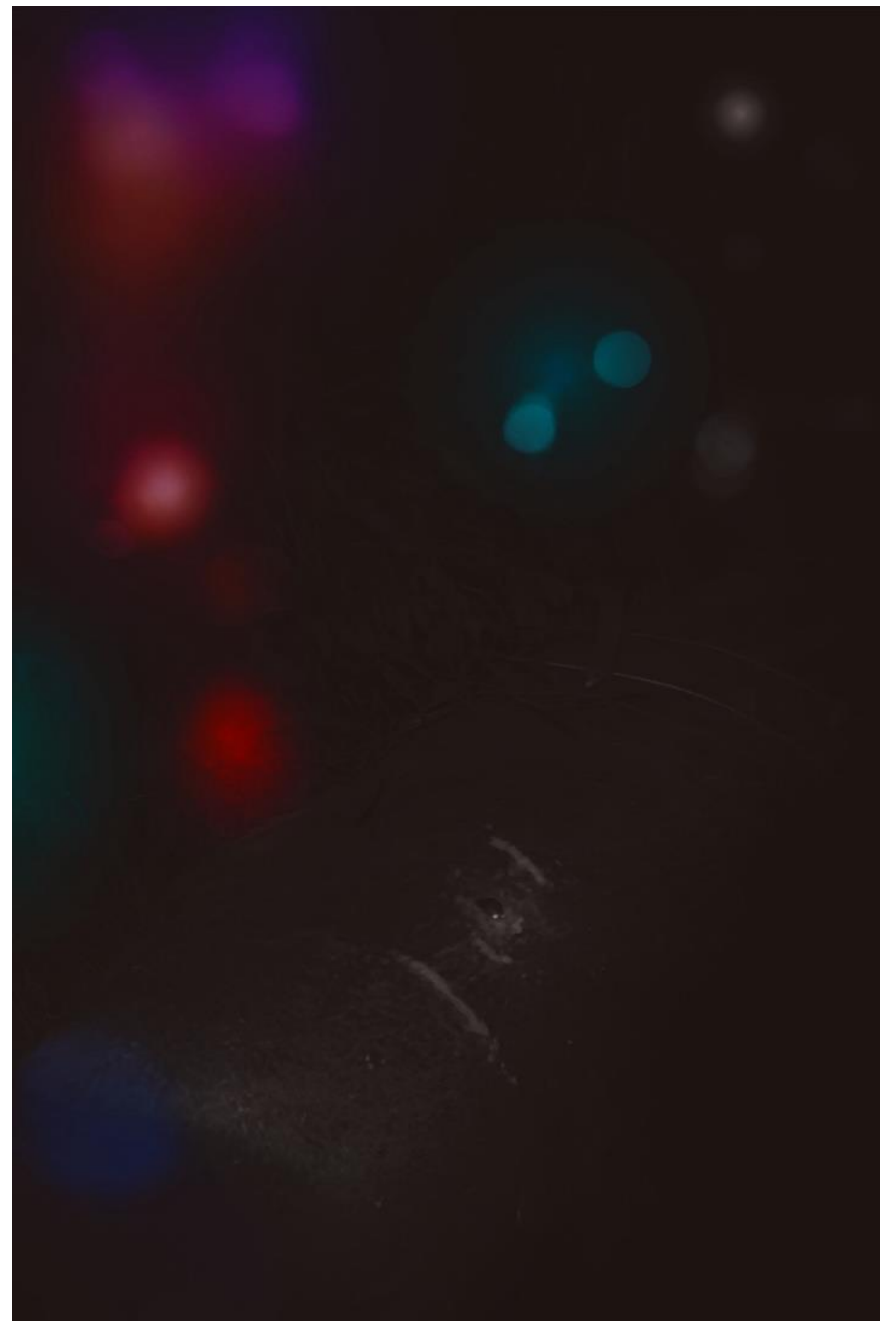
Archival inkjet print

收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_1557





Detail, Day 18
细节图, 第 18 日

Every Tree is its Own Universe

每棵树都是自己的宇宙

The Albizia tree (*Albizia moluccana*), originally from the Maluku Islands in Indonesia, has quietly woven itself into Singapore's landscape, embodying both utility and resilience. Far from being an accidental presence, *Albizia moluccana* was intentionally introduced for its rapid growth and ability to thrive in disturbed soils.

In the Maluku Islands, Albizias often populate areas shaped by both human and natural disturbances—lining roadsides, taking root in abandoned plots, and even flourishing in lands affected by volcanic activity. There, *Albizia moluccana* acts as a pioneer species, rewilding spaces impacted by various forces. In Singapore, Albizias echo this resilience, finding new purpose in vacant and forgotten lands, where they form small stands resembling islands amid urbanised surroundings. These isolated green pockets challenge traditional perceptions of what is considered natural or invasive.

This series of images documents five Albizias: four from different parts of Singapore—Tampines, Punggol, Jurong and Woodlands—and one from the Maluku Islands. It examines how human actions have shaped their contexts, exploring the blurred boundaries between native and non-native, natural and artificial, and how Albizias, despite often being considered undesirable, perform a subtle but powerful role in rewilding disturbed spaces. Through these observations, the works invite a re-evaluation of resilience and adaptability within Singapore's ever-changing environment.

合欢树 (*Albizia moluccana*) 原产于印度尼西亚摩鹿加群岛，现已悄然融入新加坡的景观中，体现了实用性和韧性。合欢树的存在绝非偶然，而是因为其快速生长和在受干扰的土壤中茁壮成长的能力而被有意引入。

在摩鹿加群岛，合欢树经常生长在受人类和自然干扰影响的地区——排列在路边，在废弃的土地上扎根，甚至在受火山活动影响的土地上繁衍生息。在那儿，合欢树作为先驱物种，在受到各种力量影响的情况下重新野化空间。在新加坡，合欢花呼应了这种弹性，在空置和被遗忘的土地上找到了新的用途，它们在城市化的环境中形成类似于岛屿的小树林。这些孤立的绿色区域挑战了人们对自然与侵入性的传统观念。

这一系列图像记录了五株合欢树：四株来自新加坡的不同地区——淡滨尼、榜鹅、裕廊和兀兰，一株来自摩鹿加群岛。它探讨了人类行为如何塑造其环境，探索本土与非本土、自然与人工之间的模糊界限，以及合欢树如何在重建受干扰的空间中发挥微妙但强大的作用，尽管合欢树经常被认为是不受欢迎的。通过这些观察，作品引发人们对新加坡不断变化的环境中的复原力和适应性进行重新评估。



Every Tree is its Own Universe 1 | 每棵树都是自己的宇宙 1

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

210(H)*140cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_3337



Every Tree is its Own Universe 2

每棵树都是自己的宇宙 2

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_3494



Every Tree is its Own Universe 3

每棵树都是自己的宇宙 3

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

120(H)*80cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_6130



Every Tree is its Own Universe 4 | 每棵树都是自己的宇宙 4

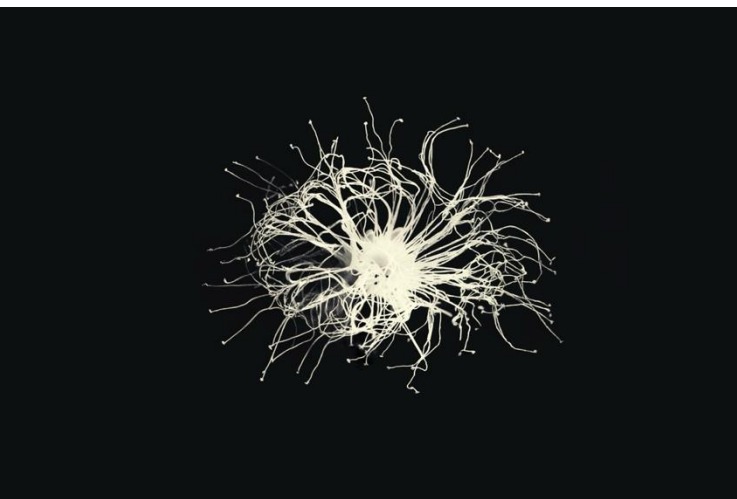
2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

40(H)*60cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_6790



Every Tree is its Own Universe 5

每棵树都是自己的宇宙 5

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

80(H)*120cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_4753



Every Tree is its Own Universe 6

每棵树都是自己的宇宙 6

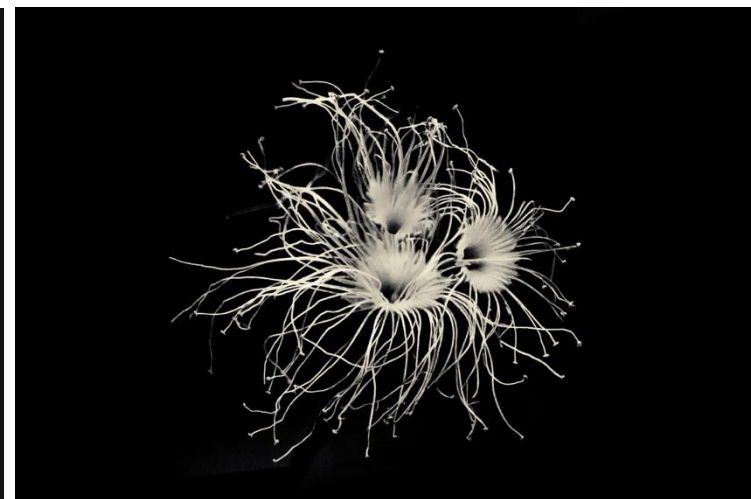
2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

80(H)*120cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_1572



Every Tree is its Own Universe 7

每棵树都是自己的宇宙 7

2024

Archival inkjet print | 收藏级喷墨打印

80(H)*120cm

3 + 1AP

ZRH_1394



Detail, **Every Tree is its Own Universe 5**

细节图，**每棵树都是自己的宇宙 5**

A Crown in the Ruins

废墟中的王冠

2025

Single-channel video installation, UV print on acrylic,
found glass fragments and objects, wooden frame
单频录像装置, 亚克力 UV 打印, 玻璃碎片, 现成物, 木制框架
290(H)*140*150cm

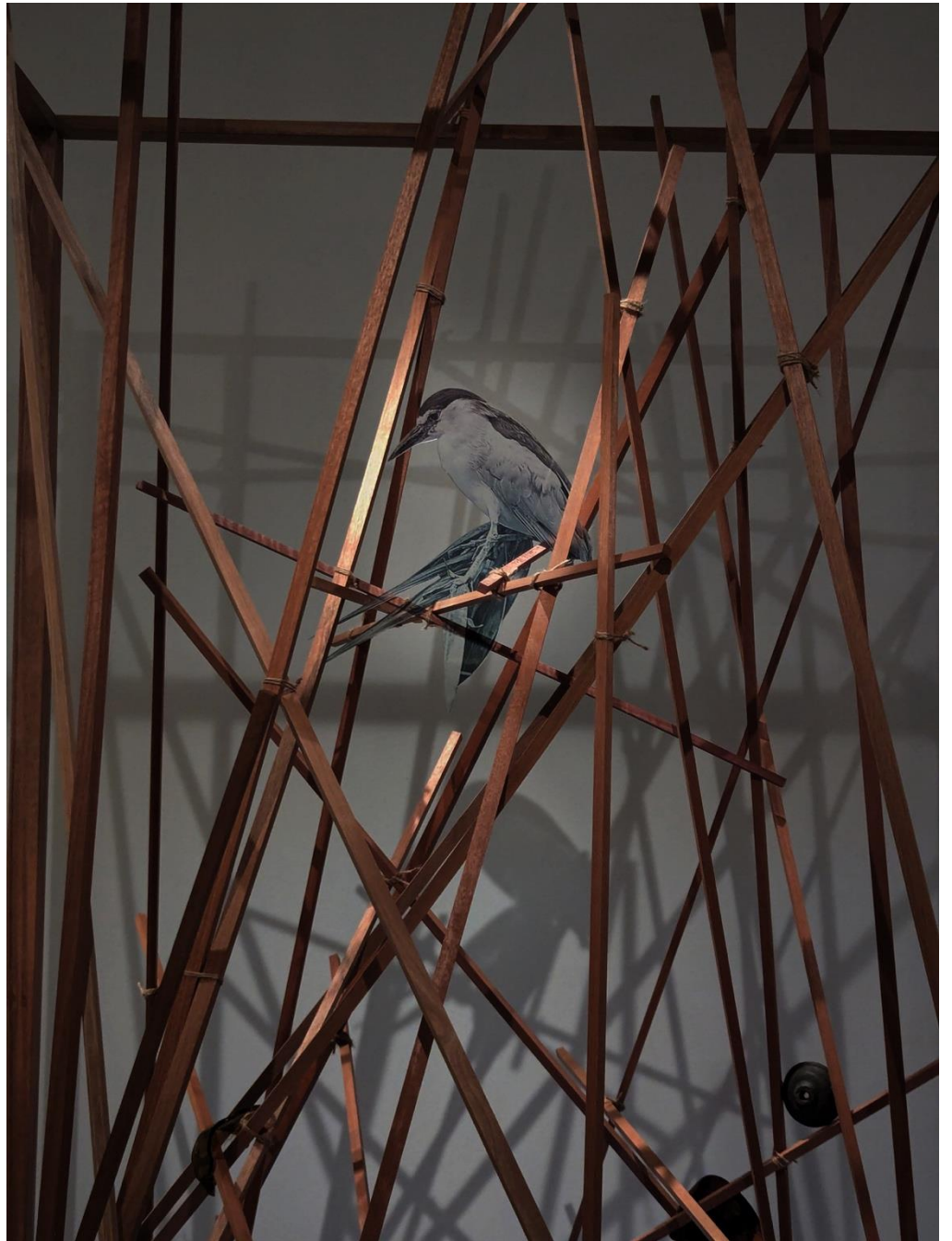
Video projection 15m 37s
ZRH_9529

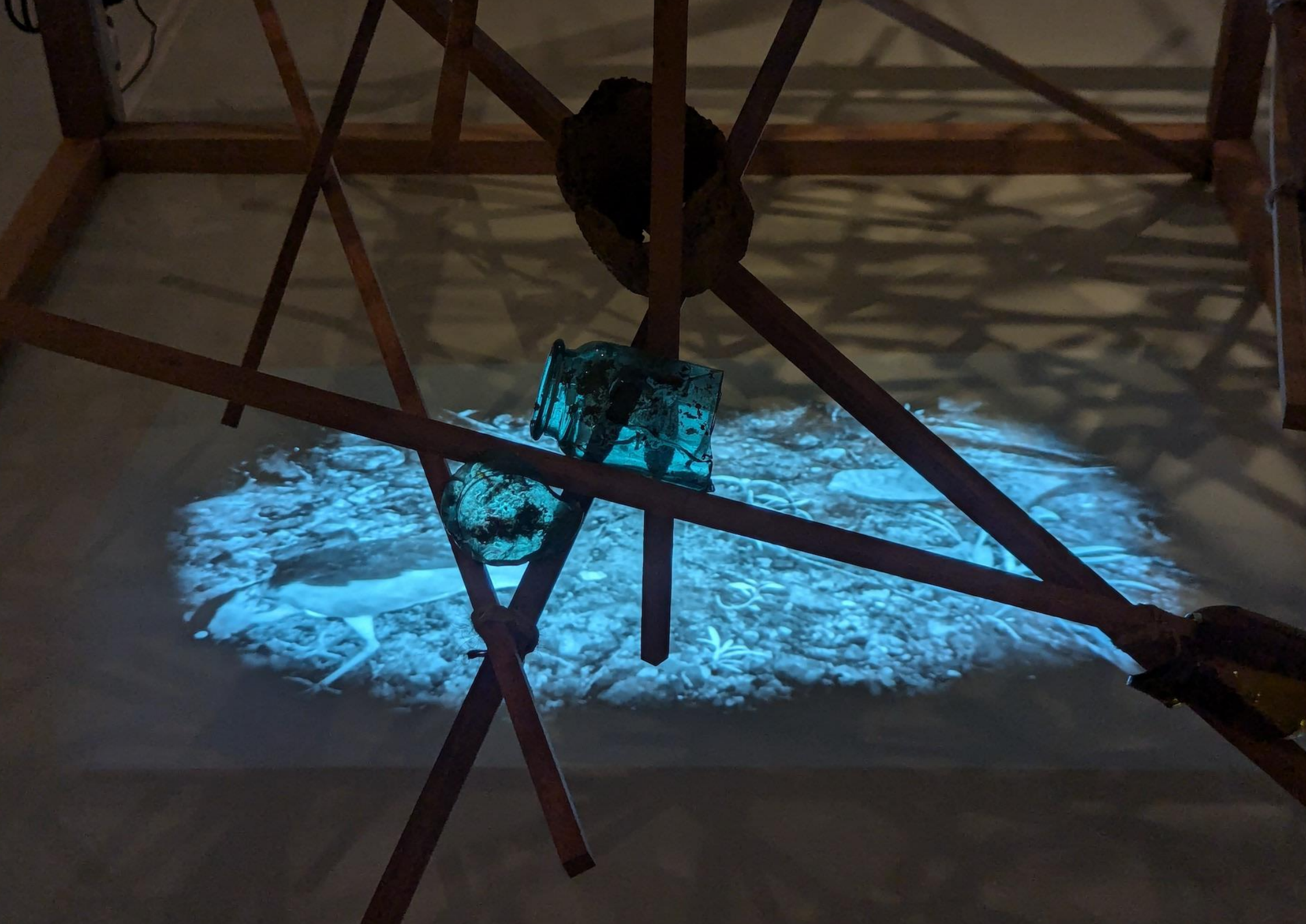
A lone black-crowned night heron stands above a deconstructed cabinet of curiosity, surveying an assemblage of historical fragments—glass bottles, ceramics, and remnants of the past. Below this installation, a video traces the heron's life over five years, documenting how it has grown and learned to hunt within the confines of a cement drain built in 1935 over a once-natural stream. The bird appears here only once a year for a single week—where it goes for the rest of the time remains a mystery.

Black-crowned night herons have long demonstrated an ability to thrive in urban environments, adapting to artificial waterways and human-altered landscapes. This work brings together two layers of history: the heron, a living remnant of a landscape transformed, and the objects, traces of lives that once occupied this space. A Crown in the Ruins reflects on survival, persistence, and the quiet negotiations between nature and the built world.

一只黑冠夜鹭独自站在一个被拆解的珍奇柜上方，俯瞰着一堆历史碎片——玻璃瓶、陶瓷器以及往昔的残余。在这装置下方，记录了它如何在一条 1935 年修建但曾是天然溪流的水泥排水渠中成长并学会捕食。这只鸟每年仅在此停留一周时间，其余时间去了哪里仍是个谜。

黑冠夜鹭长期以来一直展现出在城市环境中繁衍生息的能力，适应人工水道和人类改造过的地貌。这个作品将两层历史融合在一起：夜鹭，是这片被改造过的土地上留存下来的生物；物件，是曾经占据这片空间的生命所留下的痕迹。《废墟中的王冠》反思了生存、坚持以及自然与人造世界之间的无声默契。







The Symbols of the Divine Show Up in our World Initially at the Trash Stratum 神的象征最初出现在我们的世界的垃圾层

2025

Single-channel video installation, found glass
fragments and shards, black sand, wooden frame
单频录像装置，玻璃碎片现成物，黑沙，木制框架

100(H)*140*150cm

Video projection 2m 14s

ZRH_1156

Scattered across a table, glass fragments unearthed from the forest floor at Gillman glisten under shifting light. These shards—remnants of past lives and forgotten histories—have long been buried beneath the growth of a secondary forest, absorbed into the land as time erases their origins. Yet, despite this entanglement with the past, life finds a way to persist.

Projected from below, a video of the simpoh ayer in bloom illuminates the fractured glass. A pioneering species, the simpoh ayer is among the first to take root in disturbed landscapes, its large yellow flowers sustaining the forest's earliest inhabitants. It is a harbinger of renewal, signaling the quiet transformation of abandoned spaces into thriving ecosystems.

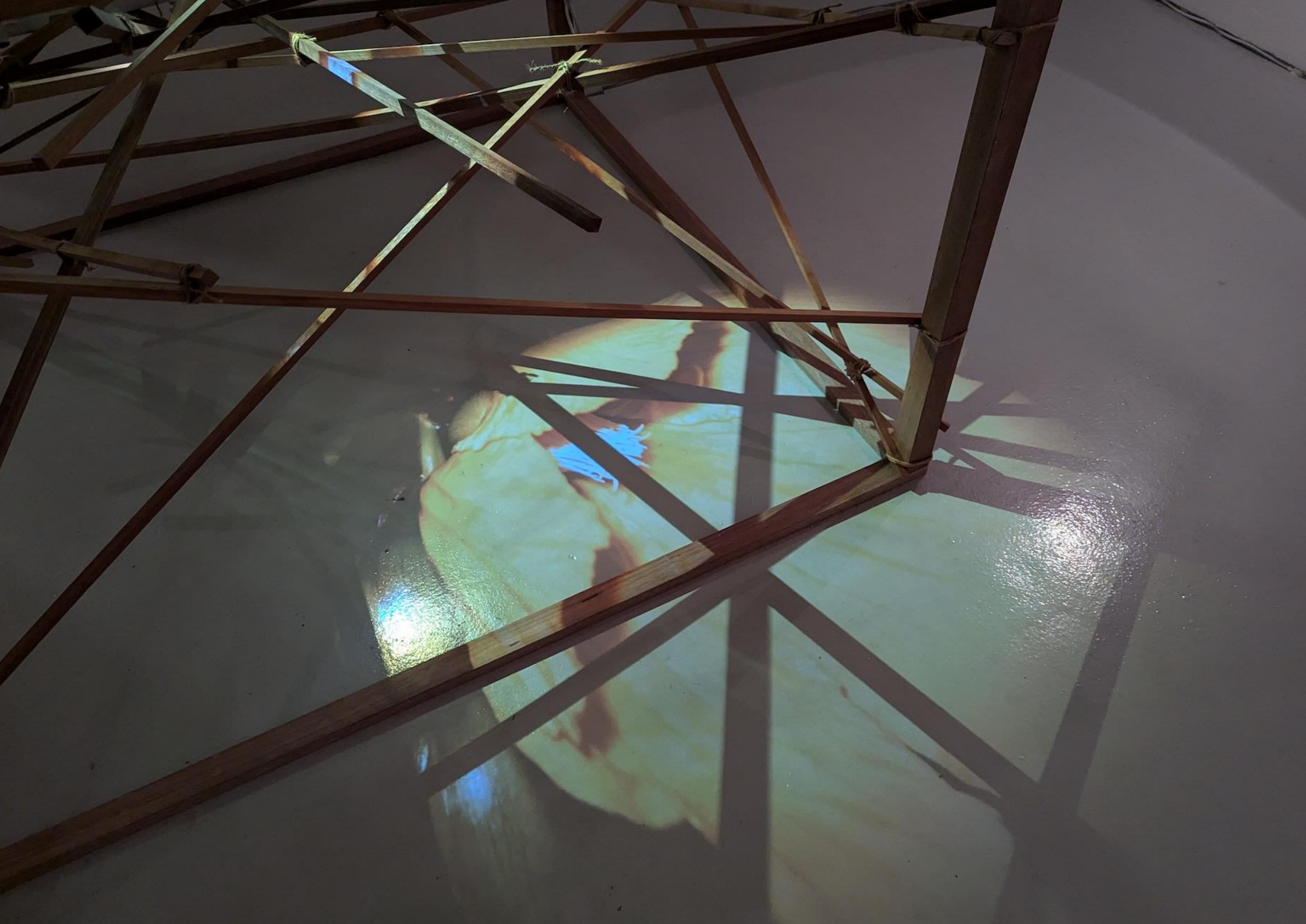
This work considers the layered histories embedded within the landscape—how remnants of human presence become intertwined with cycles of natural regeneration. The glass, once discarded, now reflects the emergence of new life. In the overlooked strata of the past, the symbols of the divine reveal themselves.

散落在桌面上的玻璃碎片是从吉门森林地表挖掘出来的，在摇曳的光线中闪烁着光芒。这些碎片——往昔生命的残余和被遗忘的历史——长久以来一直埋藏在次生林的生长之下，随着时间的流逝，它们的起源已被土地所吸收。然而，尽管与过去纠缠不清，生命却总能找到继续前行的道路。

从下方投射出一段视频，画面中是盛开的星果木的花朵照亮了破碎的玻璃。星果木是一种先锋物种，是最早在受干扰的环境中扎根的植物之一，其硕大的黄色花朵使森林的早期居民得以维系生命。它是新生的先兆，预示着废弃之地悄然转变为生机勃勃的生态系统。







ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI

b. 1983, works and lives in Singapore

Singaporean visual artist Robert Zhao Renhui works chiefly with photography but often adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, presenting images together with documents and objects in the form of textual and media analysis, video and photography projects. His artistic practice investigates man's relationship with nature, utilizing convincing narratives to invoke doubts in its audience towards the concept of truth and its portrayal. His works has been exhibited globally, including solo exhibitions in Singapore, China, Japan, Australia, Italy, and U.S.A., as well as participating in various biennales and photo festivals.

He represented Singapore in their national pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024. Recent exhibitions include 14th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju (2023); The First Beijing Biennale, Beijing (2022); The Forest Institute, Singapore (2022); Busan Biennale: Words at an Exhibition, Busan (2020); Singapore Biennale 2019, Singapore (2019); The Lines We Draw, Yalu River Art Museum, Dandong (2019); Effect, Orange County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2019); Observe, Experiment, Archive, Sunderland Museum and Winter Garden, Sunderland (2019); The 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane (2018); Taipei Biennial 2018, Taipei (2018); JiWA: Jakarta Biennale 2017, Jakarta (2017); 7th Moscow Biennale, Moscow (2017); 20th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney (2016).

His works have been awarded The United Overseas Bank Painting of the Year Award (Singapore) in 2009 and The Deutsche Bank Award in Photography by the University of the Arts London in 2011. In 2010, he was awarded The Young Artist Award by the Singapore National Arts Council. He was also named as a finalist for the Hugo Boss Asia Art Award 2017 as the only Southeast Asian artist, and the 12th Benesse Prize 2019 for his work in the 6th Singapore Biennale. Most recently, he was awarded the inaugural Silvana S. Foundation Commission Award in 2020 and Excellence Award in the 44th New Cosmos of Photography competition in 2021.

赵仁辉

出生于 1983, 工作和生活在新加坡

赵仁辉是新加坡籍视觉艺术家,他主要以摄影进行创作,同时采用多学科方将影像与实物并置呈现。他的作品主要探讨人类与大自然的关系、仁义与道德的课题,同时也关注人类的态度和观点如何影响我们对大自然的认知。他在世界各地举办过个展,包括新加坡、中国、日本、澳大利亚、意大利和美国,亦多次参与各地的双年展和摄影节。

他被委任为 2024 年第 60 届威尼斯双年展新加坡馆的代表。近期的展览包括:第 14 届光州双年展,光州 (2023); 第一届北京艺术双年展,北京 (2022); 森林研究所,新加坡(2022); 釜山双年展:文字展览会,釜山 (2020); 2019 新加坡双年展,新加坡(2019); 界线,鸭绿江美术馆,丹东 (2019); 影响; 橙县艺术博物馆; 洛杉矶 (2019); 观察,实验,归档,桑德兰博物馆与冬季花园,桑德兰 (2019); 第九届亚太当代艺术三年展,布里斯班 (2018); 2018 台北双年展,台北 (2018); JiWA: 2017 雅加达双年展,雅加达 (2017); 第 7 届莫斯科国际当代艺术双年展,莫斯科 (2017); 第 20 届悉尼双年展,悉尼 (2016)。

他的作品在 2009 年荣获了大华银行年度之画(新加坡),在 2011 年则赢得了由伦敦艺术大学举办的德意志银行奖。2010 年,他被授予由新加坡国家艺术理事会颁发给青年艺术家的国家最高奖项青年艺术家奖。2017 年,他更以当届唯一东南亚艺术家的身份入围了 Hugo Boss 亚洲新锐艺术家大奖。2019 年,他凭第六届新加坡双年展的作品入选第 12 届贝尼塞奖。近期,他在 2020 年荣获了第一届 Silvana S. 基金委托奖以及 2021 年第 44 回写真新世纪的优秀奖。

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