

Upon that River

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Film

4K, Stereo Sound, 28 minutes

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/856231297> Password: dino2023





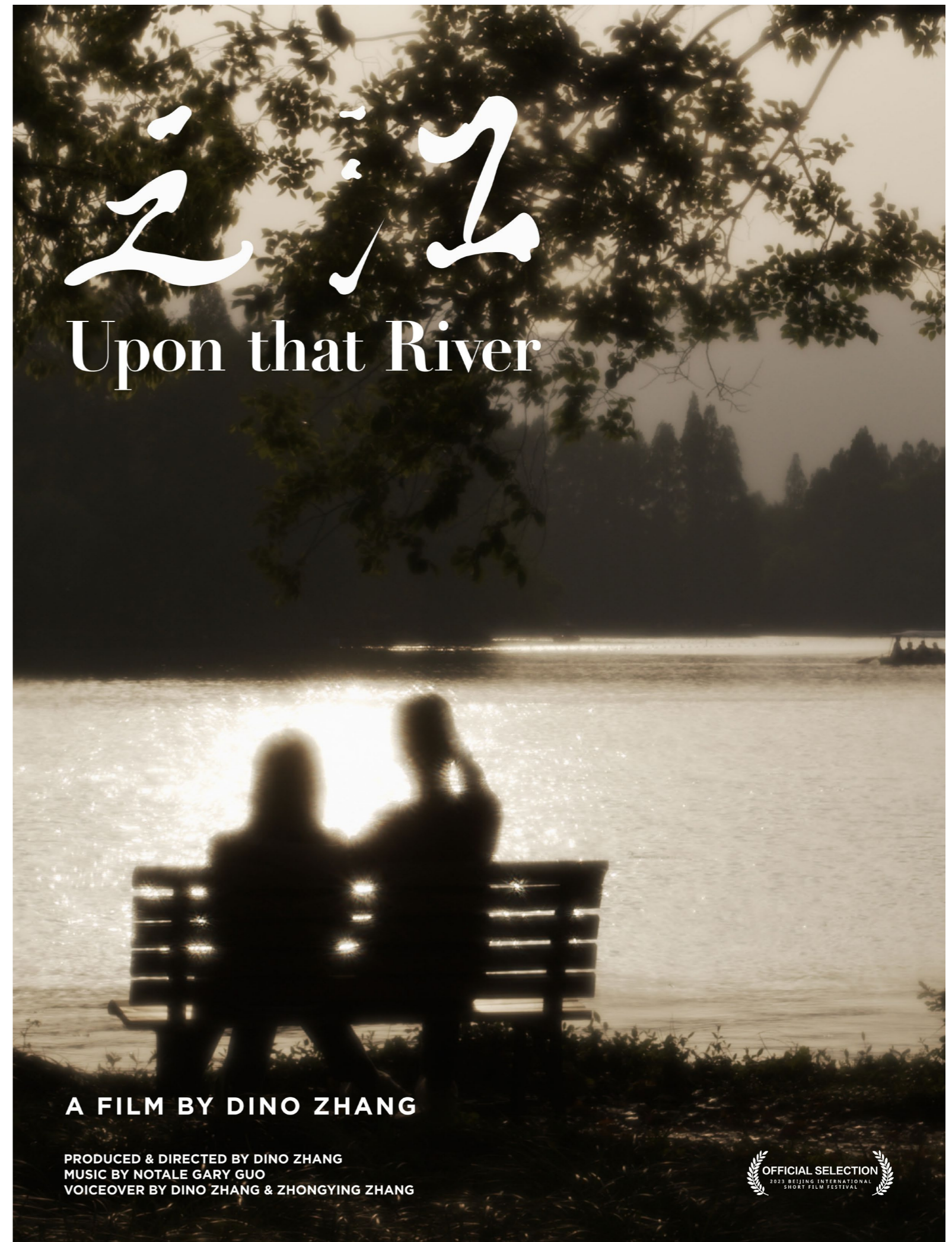
Exhibition View - *The Ruskin 2023 Degree Show*, Oxford

Introduction

Memory is like a phantom mirror. It sometimes shows things too distant to be seen, and sometimes it shows them as if they were here. (Yukio Mishima, *Sea of Fertility*, 1971)

The artist probes into the hidden past of his family within a 28-minute film. By examining an inherited photo album and conversing with a family member, the film reveals a story of a regional migration caused by social changes that happened nearly a hundred years ago. To vision the river as a metaphor for remembrance as well as an imaginative thread to connect time-lapse, the artist revisits the sites where the photos were taken—from the Fu Chun River to the Qiang Tang River, also known as Zhi Jiang.

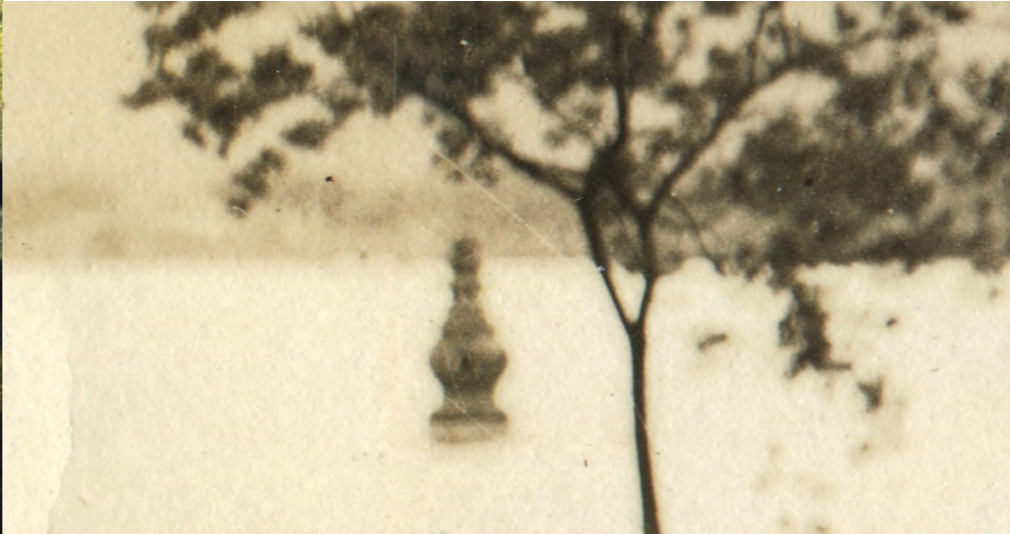
With the act of gazing at historical images, the film interrogates the intimate relationship between the subjecting who is looking and the one being looked at. Floating upon the river in a small boat, the artist sees the charming past in a chain of events, so as the reflection of the sun on the waves. As a raging torrent, the ever-changing memories flow through. In a state of hallucination, the sentimental contemplation of the archive converges with the desire to approach the past.



A FILM BY DINO ZHANG

PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY DINO ZHANG
MUSIC BY NOTALE GARY GUO
VOICEOVER BY DINO ZHANG & ZHONGYING ZHANG

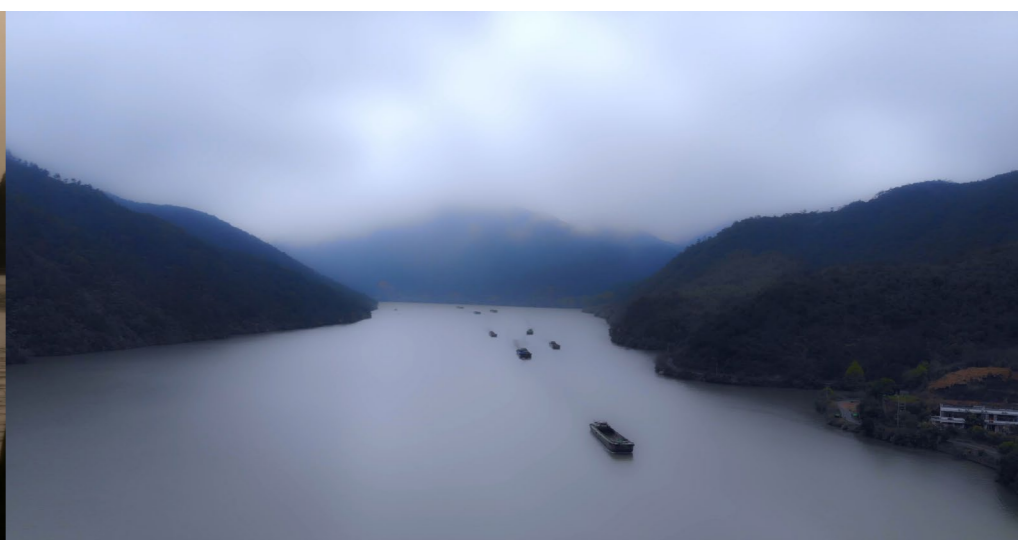




In Autumn of Year 24th of the Republic, I travelled on the West Lake with my four classmates. I use this photo as a memento.

By Ji Mei

留影
 梅意四年秋
 梅之江同学
 游西湖
 自录

The Book of Meng Jiang

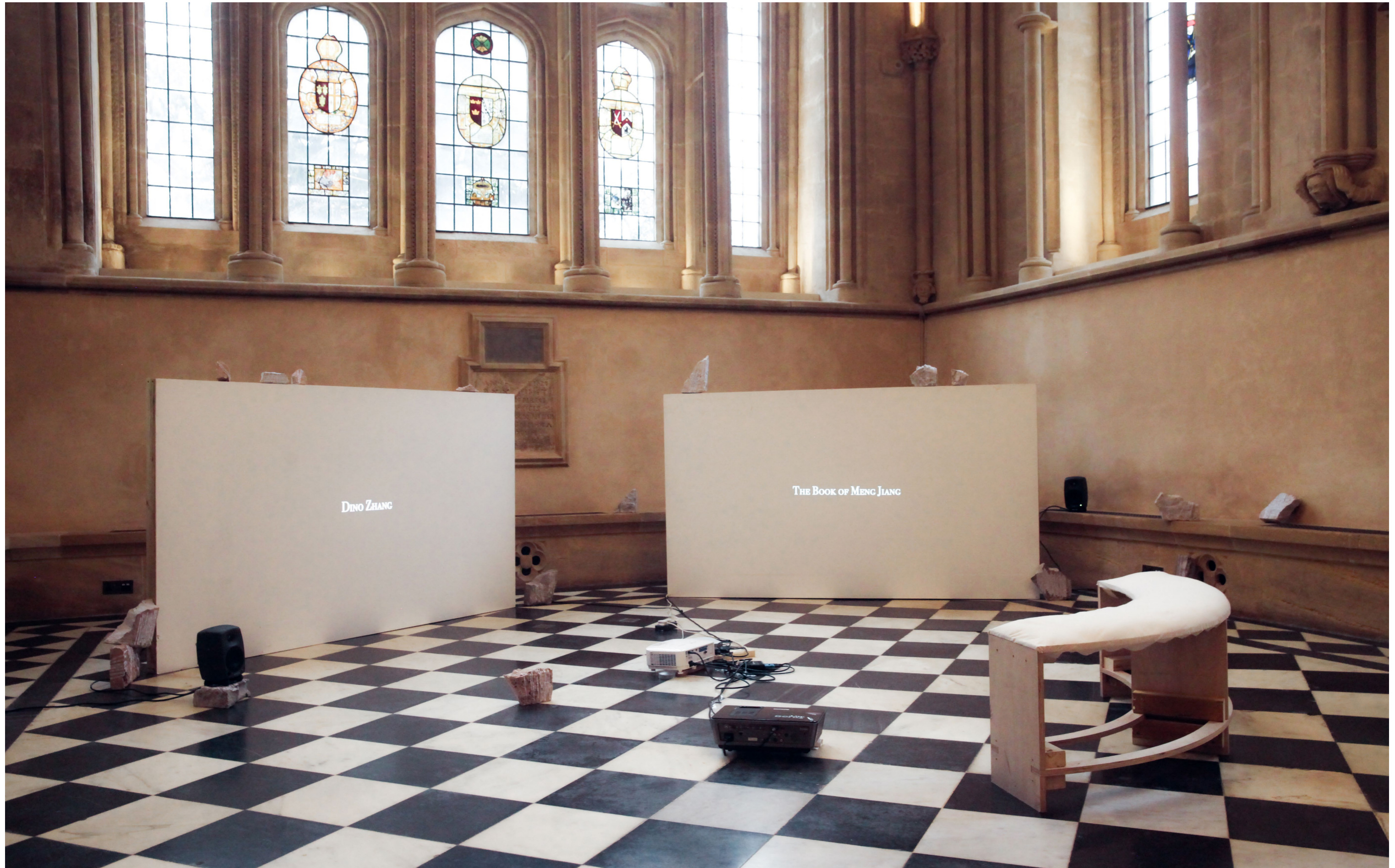
Film Installation

Two-Channel Video 19' 28, Plaster, Paper, Wood

Size Variable

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/835602728>(5 minutes clip) Full film: <https://vimeo.com/834774979> Password: dino2023

The Book of Meng Jiang



Introduction

The Mythological Machine throws us automatically into a loop of infinite forms or mythological versions none of which will drive us closer to the core. In this mechanism, truth is not understood as something we can reach, but rather as an inaccessible answer that teases us with the potential existence of a definite solution. Thus, truth is an infinite series of variables of a dream, all valid, all possible. (Erick Beltran, *The Mythological Machine & The Collective Body*, 2020)

The film focuses on a Chinese mythical character, Lady Mengjiang (孟姜女). Firstly appeared in the chronicle *Zuo Zhuan* during Spring and Autumn Period, the narration has been altered and improvised due to the social norm and political principles accordingly. Within the feudal and patricentric structure, the literates and historians have portrayed Lady Mengjiang with their expectations of a contra-sexual, and divine-like figure in compliance— she wept towards her husband, collapsed the Great Wall, and sacrificed her life by diving into the river. Consequently, by comparing each storyline throughout generations and regions, collectivity in China is thus portrayed by picturing a society reflected in morality, culture, and history.

Project Description

In the film, the protagonist encounters this mythical story in daily life. Under investigation and questioning the connection between the character and herself, the protagonist generally approaches the core of history. With Lady Mengjiang's incarnation in modern society, the film envisions an alternative unscrambling to confront the recalcitrant repetition whilst imagining a female agency capable of infiltrating the myth. By interrogating Mengjiang's representation in myth, the film investigates the possibilities for the protagonist to retrieve her power without falling into a pre-written fate.



Exhibition View - *Grounded, Unmounted*, Christ Church College, Oxford

Sculptures Close-up

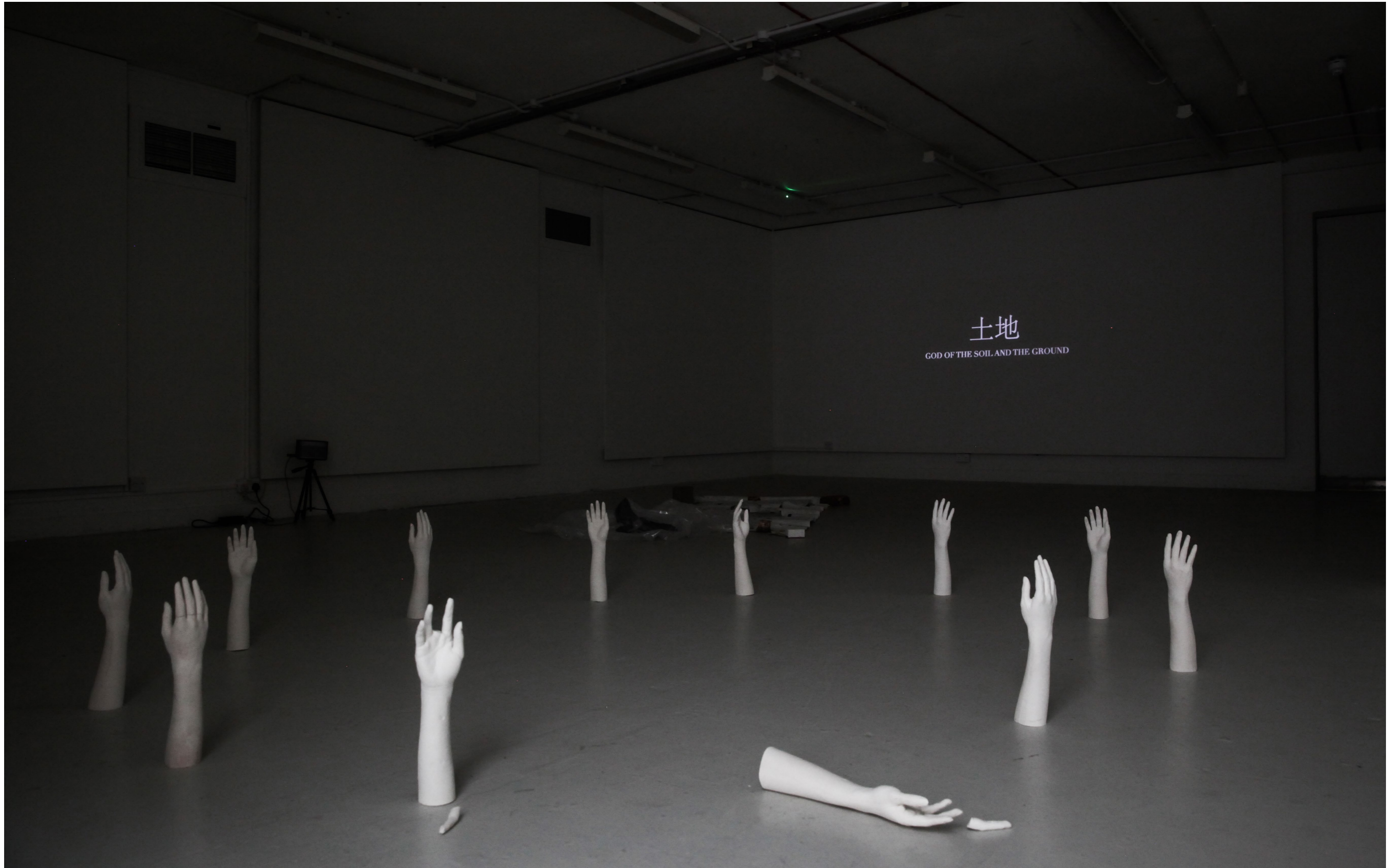


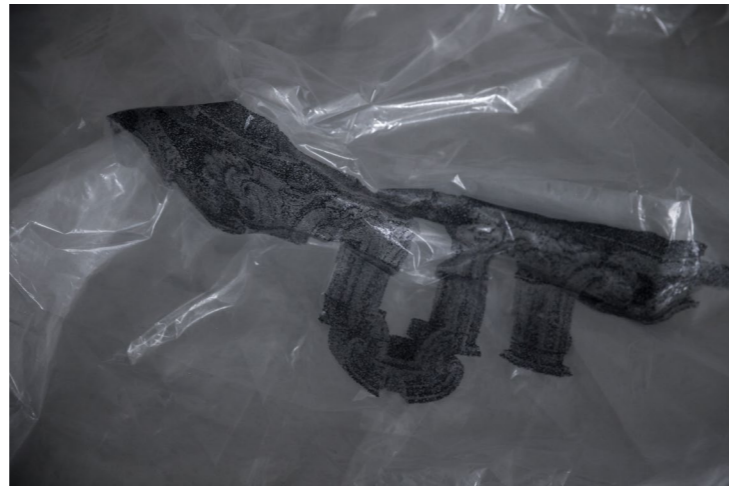
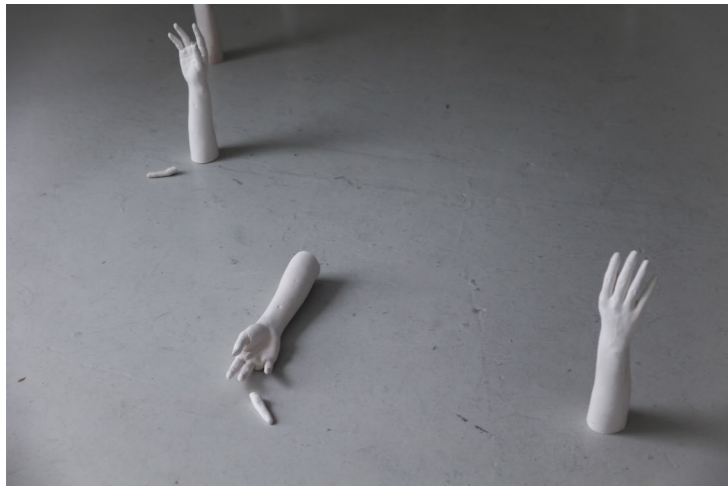


God of the Soil and the Ground

God of the Soil and the Ground
Film Installation
Video 9'45, Plaster, Paper, Plastic Sheet
Size Variable

<https://www.dino-zhang.com/god-of-the-soil-and-the-ground-2022>





Details of the work

Introduction

Consisting of sculptures and video, the work reimagines an alternative original history to replace the authoritarian narration of the past, by questioning and resisting authorities' oppression of the people during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. It case studied Kucha ruins, Yuanmingyuan Palace, and the Great Wall of China, and explores the historical oppression and social degradation of humankind by authority. By creating a courtyard space, the work invites the viewers as participators to inhabit the place where truth for the future can be imagined.

Project Description

In the projection, a figure of a woman who owns the potential to alter reality is created to haunt and disrupt the authoritarian narration of the past. The woman chose to suicide in the ruins, where the ruin of Kucha and Yuanmingyuan Palace made a connection transgressing the time due to their similar fate. She visioned her spirit transforming into a traditionally Chinese character, the God of the Soil and the Ground. Through death, her body made a connection with the earth in this violent incident and escaped linear time by denying the idea of time. Before the woman's death, she remained the role of a conventional woman in feudal China, holding a pounding stick in her hand, in order to restore the fabric of clothes by striking. After her transformation or awakening, it is to be seen as a repetition of the past—she is still pounding the stick, but to destroy the Great Wall of China with her power. The power of the pounding stick is dismantled and overturned by the re-controlling of individual power in resisting authoritarianism.

Right:
Paper sheet made from the book
Five Thousand Years of Chinese Nation





风剥蚀着，雨敲打着
模模糊糊的形象在墙上显
露
残缺不全的胳膊、手和面孔
鞭子抽打着，黑暗啄食着
祖先和兄弟的手沉重地劳
动
把自己默然无声地垒进墙
壁

我又一次来到这里
反抗被奴役的命运
用激烈的死亡震落墙上的
泥土
让默默死去的人们起来叫
喊

-江河



Our body is a receptacle of powers, capacities and resistances. The historic social systems oppress our bodies in form of the law and regulations. The resistance of a body to exploitation is represented through its supernatural link between the physical and spiritual world. The history of humans is thus reconstructed through the body. In twelve casts, arms are seemingly raised from the ground with gigantic energy. These arms of the namelessness appear to reveal themselves in our world and return themselves from the repressed.

In the projection, the body creates a field for reincarnation to happen, transforming finite life into an imaginative infinite

being. The woman's body appears to be as huge as a giant who is overlooking the viewers. Susan Stewart, in her book *On Longing Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, described the giant as "a violator of boundary and rule; an overabundance of the natural and hence an affront to cultural systems". On the paper sheet, pages of the book *Five Thousand Years of Chinese Nation*, a representation of authoritarian history, were torn and rearranged. The paper sheet was left on the ground with a transparent plastic sheet with an image of Yuanmingyuan Palace printed on it. The image signifies that the past is similar to the palace itself, which suffered from alteration of its meaning in commercialization and transformed into a conventional wonder.

Fenghuotai

Fenghuotai
Performance With Sculpture
Balloons
<https://shuxuan-lin39.wixsite.com/mysite-2/dino>

Yaodong
Collabrative Exhibition
Role: Co-Curating
Online
<https://shuxuan-lin39.wixsite.com/mysite-2>

[Home](#) [Introduction](#) [Rooms](#)

Dino's Courtyard

Fenghuotai-Watchtower of The Great Wall, 2020
Balloons and tape, 200x 200cm

▶ 00:00 / 05:19

[Click for information](#)





Introduction

This artwork is an online performance combined with sculpture. The Great Wall, with various passes, including Yang Guan, was the defense system and the country border of ancient China. It was constructed in the 13th century and with the change of the borderline, it was left there unused and unchanged since then. It is generally collapsing and vanishing. The form of this work is created based on the watchtowers. I used my own breathe to fill 150 balloons with the air I exhaled out of my body. The building of this work and the laying of the balloons is similar to the construction of the wall, engaging body and energy. With the music played by Guqin, it is to be presented that the tower was deconstructed generally, indicating the collapse and vanish of the borderline happening at this moment.

The work talks about history and memories. The music is a recall to the past. How important is the past and history? How was it to have different races on each side of the wall? How does it feel to see a vanished border which means a mixture of races? I had a feeling of nostalgia.

Exhibition

Yulin, the destination of our journey, is a small town on the northwestern border of ancient China. It is located on the edge of the desert, creating windy climates and unique geographical landscapes. All ancient traces like the Great Wall, old villages, and temples are gradually being erased and replaced by modern civilization. We were delighted to find many abandoned Yao-Dongs: deconstructed ancient dwellings, and people living in hollowed braes. Its sentimental value also made us contemplate about what we observed and experienced on this journey. Our works included reflecting upon those findings.

This exhibition centers our focus on the constructions of a Yao Dong. We divide into our respective themes and exhibit the works in different "rooms" of the Yao-Dong, aiming to study, understand, and explore human civilization in a certain way, combining our own artistic language and practices to further elaborate.



Performance Description

Yang Guan San Die, or, Three Variations of Yangguan

渭城朝雨浥轻尘，客舍青青柳色新。劝君更尽一杯酒，西出阳关无故人。

The song was composed for a famous poem in the eighth centuries, soon after when it was written. The song became a classic farewell song sung down the centuries, and additional lines were added by others to the song as refrains. The poet, Wang Wei described a scene at the departure at the pass, Yang Guan, which can be understood as the border of country. Here is the translation of the poem: *The morning rain of Weicheng dampens the light dust, the inn is green with the colour of fresh willows. Let's finish another cup of wine, my dear sir, out west past the Yangguan, old friends there will be none.*

I spent two weeks learning this song from my mum. The song was performed on Gu Qin, an instrument invented over 2000 years ago. The music score was inherited from eighth centuries, therefore the song I was playing sounded the same in the past.

Sculpture Description

The connection between contemporary art and historical relics intersect with time and space in my practice aesthetically and theoretically. In this project, I travelled to Yulin, Shanxi, China to research for my practice. I focused on the landscape, traditional culture and historical heritage of the area. Since it is a region close to the ancient border of China, various cultural and geographical features can be observed and researched in personal perspectives.

Fenghuotai means the watchtower of the Great Wall which became a focal point in this practice. Since they were used to protect the invasion from Mongolia in 1600s, the formation of local villages has originated because of the troops who guarded the watchtowers.

In the exhibition, as a form of cyberspace, the website

is similar to a rhizome which simulates the outside world from the inside with a non-linear structure. The term Yao Dong was used in order to give a hint while being a recreated virtual space as a simulation of the actual. In the exhibition, viewers can travel freely between each cave by clicking on "next random room". The images of Fenghuotai were arranged in sequence and the viewers needed to scroll down to see each one, metaphors old Chinese drawings mounted on scrolls.

Menshen
Sculpture
Plaster, Concrete
Size 30 x 30 x 170 cm (Each)

Menshen





Introduction

Symptoms in history are meaningless traces that can only be constructed retroactively. The past is present in the form of historical tradition and the meaning of these traces is not given. (Slavoj Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 1989, p56)

With the transformations of the interpretation of the

past, each historical rupture retroactively changes the meaning of the entire history. The reality of history is not a sublime truth, but the unity of the history and interpreter. The image of Menshen, which means threshold guardians, appears widely in daily life in China, which provides a dimension of appearance for transference, which means the projection of emotions.

The subject of the audience is placed in the centre of the work, transcending perceived interpretations of history through the illusion of transference, and moving towards the hidden core of the reality of history.

Project Description

In history, the changes in the presentation of Menshen's characters and costumes have carried the changes in historical traditions over thousands of years. Digging into traditional Chinese aesthetics and cultural background, this art work reshaped the image of Menshen in modern China, referencing the stone steles and brick walls in Han Dynasty tombs. The broken, repetitive, and stretched image of Menshen symbolized the historical rupture, the de-territorialization and symbolization of history and culture by the mass media in modern society.

In China, Menshen posters are displayed on the doors of every household, thus the image of Menshen appears widely in daily life, which provides a dimension of appearance for transference. The transference here tends to replace an authoritarian narrative of history by an individual narrative of history orienting from imagination and personal emotions. By looking at the sculptures, historical and cultural memory joins itself with the subject by the disappearance of authoritarian historic orientation. A fictional past in one's imagination is thus to be implied with Nietzschean euphoria and exaltation from a linear connection of the memory of past and subject. A linear connection between the memory of the past and the subject is implied through the simulation of the image of real Menshen.

