

The image features a textured, yellowish-gold background with a fine, horizontal ribbed pattern. Overlaid on this background are several black outlines. A large, irregular, winding shape dominates the left and center, resembling a coastline or a path. To its left, there is a smaller, roughly oval shape with a single black dot in its center. On the right side, there are several thin, vertical, slightly wavy lines. The text 'SILENT NARRATIVE' is positioned in the middle-right area, between the large winding shape and the vertical lines.

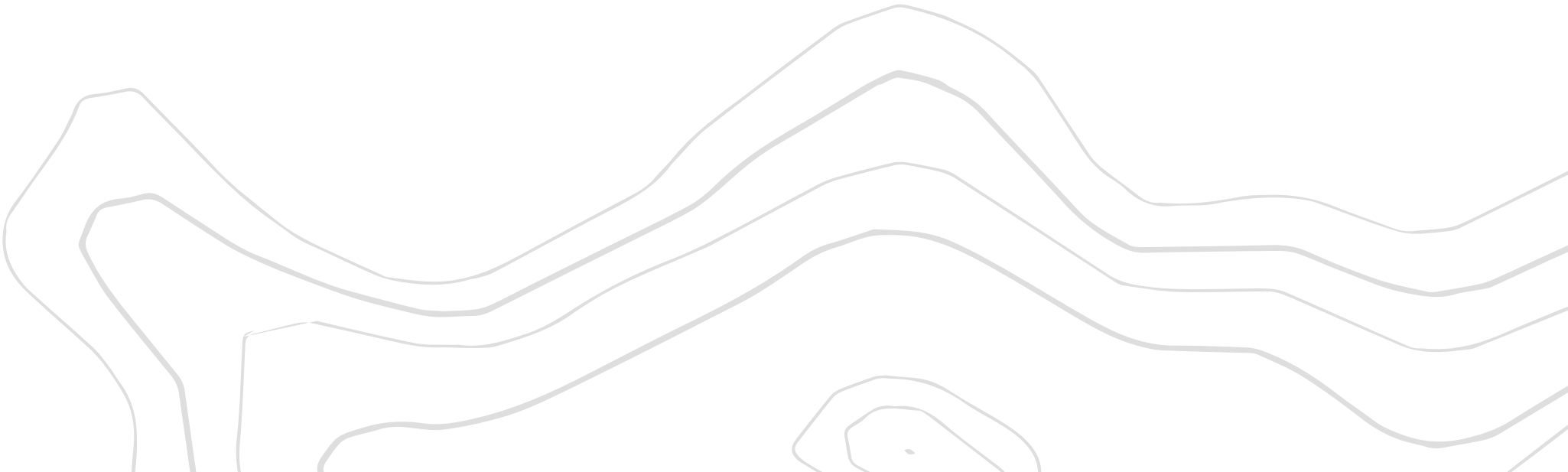
SILENT NARRATIVE

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**Silent Narratives
Curatorial Concept**

Mei Huang

Preface

Running broadly from the sparkling Mediterranean Sea to the burning eastern coast of the Black Sea, continuing to the cold Himalayas, we can see the lands that were formerly crossed by the ancient Silk Road. Of high relevance in the past, people rarely mention this part of the world positively today. When people talk about this region, it can be described as an area that is now home to states that evoke the exotic and the isolated. It is a region associated with regimes that are unstable, violent and a threat to international security due to political and religious scandals. It seems to be a barren area of desert, home to a series of failed or failing states, uncivilized areas or locations struggling to find efficient systems of governance. The media often represent it with scenes such as bloody bombings, dirty streets and crowd protests whenever this area is mentioned. Hollywood blockbusters have also shown it as a chaotic place crying for help from

Western powers. However, the reality is that this area was formerly identified as the Garden of Eden, the place “planted by the Lord God with every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food”, which was widely thought to be located exactly in these rich fields between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This is not the “evil land” of the more recent stereotypes, but the bridge and the heart between the East and the West, often referred to as “the heart land of the Silk Road”.

Countless civilizations and metropolises such as the Persian Empire and Babylon have been established here over the past 5,000 years, with a sophisticated sewerage system that would not be rivaled in Europe for thousands of years. It is the melting pot where language groups such as Indo-European, Turkic, Caucasian and Sino-Tibetan competed. It is also where the world’s great religions burst into life, where Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism jostled with each other. Here, the

heart of Asia connected the East and West, which for centuries used to be two mutually unknown civilizations. According to Peter Frankopan, the reason why the Eurasian continent took the lead in economic and cultural development, compared to the African and American continents, was that it greatly benefited from the Silk Road: an efficient channel that exchanged culture, aesthetics and commerce. Such a statement can be supported by pottery figurines, refined silks and painted wooden coffin drawings of ancient caravans along the Silk Road, regarded as the epitome of world trade at that time¹.

The Silk Road (Seidenstraße), named by Ferdinand von Richthofen, a German geographer at the end of the 19th century², had also been a contested place since ancient times because of its rich and fertile resources, in addition to its flourishing trade and wealthy cultures. From the battles of faith between Rome, Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire, Israel

and Palestine, to the trade wars between the Romans and the Persians, the wars for resources during the World Wars and the Cold War, and the asymmetric wars and terrorism of more contemporary times, the path of the Silk Road has always been a focus of attention in international affairs. With successive wars and disasters, either natural or man-made, the Black Death, malaria, violent killings and deaths have spread like rugged vines along this road full of glory and history. The world is neither good nor evil, nor is human life, while ancient trees are evergreen in the soil of corrupt flesh. History always carries irresistible dangerous charm due to this complexity. One story in particular, has set Peter Frankopan on the path to look at the world’s past in a different way. Greek mythology explains that Zeus, father of the gods, released two eagles, one at each end of the earth, and commanded them to fly towards each other. A sacred stone, the omphalos -the navel of the world- was placed where they met, to enable communication with the divine. As a young man,

¹ Peter Frankopan, The Silk Roads, 2016

² F. Von Richthofen, “über die zentralasiatischen Seidenstrassen bis zum 2. Jahrhundert. n. Chr.” , 1877

Frankopan couldn't sleep at night thinking about the place where the two eagles met. He found that the Navel of the World might not be in the Mediterranean, which is regarded as the cradle of mankind in the West, but in the center of the earth, the heart of Asia. This is the beginning of another possible narrative, a more de-westernized story of ancient civilizations³.

William Michael, said in his book *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, that the development and transformation of history always occurs when human beings think about the past or establish contact with strangers having different and more advanced technologies⁴. This is an incomparably contradictory human emotion. On the one hand, people look forward to catching up with and possessing others' technology, culture and means of production. On the other hand, as this contact with the new culture impacted the intrinsic values and cultural system that used to bring them

a sense of security and belonging, people began to feel anxious -this brought about active or passive cultural, technological and artistic change. The development of culture, art, politics and society cannot be separated from their own history, its reflection of the present and the gradual processes of learning and connecting with foreign cultures. Behind a seemingly single narrative, there is always a huge hidden network of history and culture. When the ancient Silk Road brought interactions between information, culture and economy, it also brought tremendous changes to the countries along the road. Large-scale capital flows have had far-reaching effects and have hugely stimulated the economies of the countries along the commercial routes. Economic growth extended its butterfly effect outwards along the Silk Road, mega-buildings and cities sprung up one after another, even kilometers away. When discussing the origin of Western civilization, Christopher Coker devoted a great deal to describing the Eastern influence on Greek art,

³ Same as 1

⁴ William Michael, *"The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community"*, 2001

culture and politics⁵. He asserted that the "Greek spirit", sought after by many people and considered the earliest ancestor of European civilization, did not develop independently. Similarly, during the prosperous time of the Tang Dynasty in ancient China, the inclusiveness of culture can be seen from women's clothing; the gold, silver or jade plates; and the small statues that were inspired by the Middle East regions and Europe. What about contemporary society? What is the connection between the history of the ancient Silk Road and the countries along the routes in this contemporary world? And how is this connection presented in an artistic way? This is also a contemporary issue discussed in this exhibition, *Silent Narratives* in the above-mentioned macro historical context.

The title *Silent Narratives* was taken from Chaim Potok's novel *The Chosen*, in which he explains: "I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension

⁵ Christopher Coker, *"The Rise of the Civilization State"*, 2019

⁶ Chaim Potok, *"The Chosen"*, 1967

all its own.⁶" The exhibition displays the archive of ancient artifacts of the Silk Road in the same space as the contemporary works of 25 artists from various countries along its route, such as China, Iraq, Israel, Iran, Palestine and Lebanon. The exhibition makes the cultural and historical exchanges possible between ancient and modern work silently, ignoring the limitations of time and space. Chantal Mouffe, a Belgian political thinker, believes that everything has something to do with politics and always will be⁷. Do the works of art also show the social and political contexts in which they have been made? In relation to this, political scientist Wang Hui talks about the discourse of "De-politicized Politics" that shapes contemporary societies⁸. For Wang Hui, social and political struggles become silent as public space is deprived of its conflictual nature as the political and the social are trying to be constructed as two separated spaces. In this way, *Silent Narratives* also represents those silent social and political narratives present in artifacts and contemporary art

⁷ Chantal Mouffe, *"Agonistics - Thinking the world politically"*, 2013

⁸ Wanghui, *"De-politicized Politics - The End of Short 20th Century and the 90s"*, 2007

works. In addition, the image itself shows image complex⁹, that is, the image's own value and display value in the museum. If the artifacts, visual arts, pictures from news reports or the internet are being displayed in the museum platform out of their own contexts, their significance will be changed according to the discourse (The exhibition project Forensic Architecture, which was nominated for the Turner Prize last year is a great example), which adds diversity and attractiveness to the exhibition itself.

This exhibition is divided into three chapters: The Greater China: Hall 1 and Hall 2, The Middle East: Hall 5, Western Europe: Hall 6. In the Greater China chapter, we mainly discuss two parts: "The Traditional Art and Culture of the Silk Road in China" and "The Relationship Between Traditional Art and Contemporary Art". The Middle East chapter describes the two main issues of "Glorious Past" and "Isolation and Separation". The last chapter, the

Western Europe section discusses "Eurocentrism", "Colonialism and Post-Colonialism" and "the Far-right wing's rise in Europe".

Chapter One

Traditional culture has a profound impact on China. For example, in all kinds of events, whether they are public or private, there will always be statements such as "since ancient times", while the modern part is rarely mentioned. If you read the ancient work "The Twenty-four Histories", it seems that "since ancient times" can be found more than a thousand times¹⁰. Ancient people often used this statement to define the eternal truth when they discussed the subtle issues of heaven and earth, the people and the nation. In the field of art, traditional arts such as the visual language of Buddhist culture, philosophical ideas from various schools of thought, or landscape painting and weave patterns also affect the creation of many contemporary artists.

⁹ Meg McLagan and Yates McKee, "Sensible Politics - The visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism", 2012

¹⁰ Liu Xiaoyuan, "Frontier Passages", 2016

Talking about the traditional art and culture of China's Silk Road, the first things that come to mind are the various kinds of beautiful silk, porcelain figurines and brilliant Buddhist art in Dunhuang, Gansu Province. Traditional brocade and silk were important works of art that linked East-West trade. From the 1st century B.C. to the 8th century A.D., the upper classes of the Roman Empire had become obsessed with Chinese silk. Cities such as Venice, Rome, Naples and Sicily became the important consumer cities of Western Europe to form a cross-cultural link with China. According to historical data, as early as the 5th century B.C., the statue of Athena in the Temple of Athena Nike in Greece wore thin silk clothes, thus some Western historians speculated that silk flowed into Greece through the Silk Road early in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. Ge Chengyong mentioned in his article "On the Starting Point of the Silk Road of the Han and Tang Dynasties" that the textile discoveries in the Han and Tang Dynasties were mainly from Xinjiang, Gansu,

Qinghai, Shaanxi and Inner Mongolia¹¹. With the development of trade along the Silk Road, the artistic styles of China were greatly influenced by foreign art, and the unearthed wool fabrics also have obvious Western theme patterns. Western Asian weaving patterns such as linked-pearl, pig's head, peacock, lion, camel, winged horse, merchants and knights from the Region of Ancient Hu (which nowadays are countries in the Middle East) have been discovered by archaeological studies successively. Porcelain and figurines also symbolized the favorite luxuries of the upper nobles. In a group of still objects in front of the Dutch oil painter Johannes Vermeer's work, Girl reading a Letter at an Open Window, careful observers can find a plate of Chinese blue and white porcelain. Religions such as Buddhism, Nestorianism, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism were introduced into China by foreign monks and businessmen with the flourishing of trade, which were mainly spread among Hu people after entering China from Central Asia. The quote by Ji Xianlin from

¹¹ Christopher Coker, "The Rise of the Civilization State", 2019

Volume 12 of Shi Sengyou's Hong Ming Ji, "All the disciples of Buddha are Hu people" is the evidence of it¹². Foreign monks and businessmen had close contacts with each other, who later worked with Chinese followers to create many Buddhist grottoes and murals in China, among which Mogao Grottoes were included. Mogao Grottoes integrated foreign Buddhist art with Chinese traditional culture and left numerous artistic treasures. On the walls of Mogao Caves, traces of the Silk Road caravan can also be found.

Liu Xiaoyuan once put forward: "Today, when the rise of China is talked about with great attention, an increasingly concerned question is: after the collision with the West, what changes have been brought to China's concept, behavior and even existence by the transformation of China's state and society since modern times?¹³" We can borrow this question regarding the development of the traditional art of the ancient Silk Road and contemporary art at

present as well. How does the contemporary art of China merge and develop with traditional art in the era of rapid rising and integration with the world after the transformation into a modern society? In the first chapter of the exhibition, the Great China, three of the most representative arts about the Silk Road, brocade, ceramics and Buddhist arts are selected and presented in the form of artworks together with the works of eight contemporary Chinese artists. While appreciating traditional arts, audiences can also rethink and compare the differences or associations between traditional art "since ancient times" with modern social, political and international theories and contemporary art works: where did they originally come from and how did they connect to each other?

Chapter Two

Seldom can people truly witness the historic relics of Middle Eastern civilization, even if they do, they can only see them in the glass display cases

¹² Ji Xianlin. "Merchants and Buddhism". Ji Xianlin Anthology, Vol. 7, 1998

¹³ Same as 10

of museums in Britain and France. For example, in the British Museum, the ancient Persian Empire is really admired: the giant Sphinx statue with long curls and beards, the stone walls recording hunting and sacrifice activities - the muscles of men's backs and calves and the vigorous movements of animals, not to mention countless gold and silver jewelry and glassware. The memory of these objects, which are out of context in a western museum, can help people imagine the glorious past of these ancient civilizations. The Persian Empire, with a developed economy and culture, where everything people at that time used was extremely sophisticated. In 1400, Simi Nishapuri, a librarian in Mashhad of eastern Iran, described in detail Persian scholars' taste in paper selection: paper elsewhere was too rough, mottled and hard to preserve. The best paper for calligraphy should come from Damascus, Baghdad and Samarkand. It was better to dye paper crimson before writing, as masters' calligraphy works are usually written on crimson papers¹⁴. Persia

¹⁴ Al-Muquddasi, Ahsanu-ttaqsim fi ma'rifati-l-aqalim", B. Conllins, 2001

¹⁵ Same as 1

also presented itself as a beacon of stability and fairness¹⁵, as a trilingual inscription hewn into a cliff face at Behistun demonstrates. Written in Persian, Elamite and Akkadian, it recorded how Darius the Great, one of Persia's most famous rulers, put down revolts and uprisings, drove back invasions from abroad and wronged neither the poor nor the powerful, for justice and fairness are the bedrocks of the kingdom. Tolerance of minorities was legendary, with Cysus II, the founder of the empire who was referred to as the "Messiah", and the one whom the "Lord, the God of Heaven" had blessed, as the results of his policies that included the release of the Jews from their Babylonian exile¹⁶. The prosperity of the Middle East has gradually penetrated into the lives of Chinese people through the Silk Road as well. From the small statues of cultural relics, we can see that they are typical of the tri-colored glazed pottery of Hu people with their horse-riding and hunting figurines in the second year of Emperor Zhongzong of Tang Dynasty (706 A.D.) and the

¹⁶ H. Rawlinson, "The Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistun, Deciphered and Translated", 1894

statues of golden dressed ladies in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), which are well-dressed and colorful, and the high-waist skirts are obviously not the native style of dress in Sui and Tang Dynasties, but the long-standing style of dress of the Western regions. It demonstrates the prevalence of imitation of the Central Asian culture among middle and upper strata in the Tang Dynasty.

However, the glorious history of Iran has been smoothed by storms like sand in the desert. Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Palestine, whether having suffered from religious wars or civil wars, or the hunger and thirst of foreign enemies for resources, shared the same fate. Endless wars and blood have touched the land that created golden civilizations. Tourism in most Central Asian countries has basically stagnated nowadays. The unstable situation has prevented international tourists with curiosity from experiencing the history of these civilizations. The glorious hotels of the past have become empty ghost

towers. In the streets of the ancient city of Jerusalem you can see 19-year-old soldiers with AK47 rifles talking and laughing together. The immigration of first-class or bottom-class refugees to the West has resulted in fierce cultural and religious conflicts, which has also stimulated the rise of conservatives in the West. The term 'Middle East' seems to have become a dangerous connotation, which potentially prevents the communication and dissemination between cultures. Relatively speaking, conservatism and exclusion of religions also created more barriers to its cultural understanding and acceptance.

The second chapter The Middle East of Silent Narratives shows the works of a group of young artists from the Middle East but living or studying in the West, whose average age is around 30-45 years old. In their works, the symbols and fragments of the ancient Middle East culture can be seen, and audiences can also comprehend their thoughts of their own history, culture and wars, and their struggling

for self-identity. Most documentation of artifact exhibits in the hall are Chinese pottery figurines that were deeply influenced by the artistic attainments and culture of Hu regions during the Tang Dynasty, which were excavated in the regions along the Silk Road. This has constructed an in-depth conversation with the contemporary paintings, installations, video and photographs displayed. Most of the portraits are female statues, the display positions of which echo the works of female contemporary artists. This part of the archive and contemporary works of art also analyze the rise and fall of civilization in the Middle East regions along the Silk Road from a feminist perspective.

Chapter Three

Greek culture has been regarded as the origin of European civilization. Edith Hamilton's *Greek Spirit*¹⁷ has been one of the first books in attracting attention in China about issues such as fairness, democracy,

virtue and art, philosophy, religion, political system and literature. This so-called Greek spirit has deeply influenced the construction of European civilization. With the restructuring of the world after World War II, Western ideology seems to have become a synonym for this spirit, being exported to many different places in the world and, hence, becoming hegemonic. However, this hegemony seems to be contested nowadays as Western liberal democracy sees how its inner and outward enemies are growing. Edward W. Said already addressed the birth of extreme right conservatism some decades ago in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, "...in each instance respectively so much has been made of the dangers of 'un-Americanism' and the threats to 'Arabism'. Defensive, reactive, and even paranoid nationalism, is, alas, frequently woven into the very fabric of education...¹⁸". In opposition to right-wing conservatism, the left seems to be also willing to join alternative discourses. The term, "Baizuo", or left-wing political correctness, has become a

¹⁷ Edith Hamilton, "The Greek Way", 2014

¹⁸ Edward W. Said, "Cultural and Imperialism", 2003

derogatory word in various Chinese contexts, remediating its original Western meaning. In contemporary Europe, examples of far right populism are amplifying: the referendum on Brexit was led by Britain's conservatives, and the far-right leader Marine Le Pen is an equal-power rival of Emmanuel Macron, Germany's far-right Party is rising again as Chancellor Angela Merkel has announced that she would not run for president next year. Although the basic social system has not been shaken too much, the chandeliers in the ceiling of the magnificent palace of the sturdy art dome seem to have been shaking, showing the trend of crush and separation.

The European art circle seems to be hanging on and remains unaffected by these political and social trends, but the massive cuts in art budget have brought many institutions that rely on government funds to the brink of bankruptcy, leaving many art practitioners unemployed. Facing the declining large international exhibitions compared with the

past, we have also heard a lot of doubts about the diversity of "eurocentrism": we are used to analyzing international issues from the Western perspective, but is this exactly the only criterion for judging things?

In the third chapter, Western Europe, we take a fresh look at the Europe: the rise and fall of European history, culture, social politics and art through the eyes of Chinese artists and artists from the Middle East. The artists have rich international experience and global backgrounds, who use visual arts to discuss various acute social, political and cultural issues in Europe today, such as colonialism and post-colonialism, eurocentrism and self-identity. At the same time, this chapter also presents a lot of precious literature and maps of monetary and trade exchanges between China, the Middle East and Europe along the ancient Silk Road.

Epilogue

I personally appreciate what Roberto Mangabeira Unge has stated in *The Self Awakened*: "Any social theory that would escape the illusions of false necessity without surrendering to the fantasies of an unrestrained utopianism must make sense of this clash between the self-fulfilling prophecies and the recalcitrant facts."¹⁹ The exhibition, *Silent Narratives* is not only related to the past, but also takes the present into account. The ancient Silk Road is just an introduction, which invites us to view the world from the perspectives of the history, culture and politics of globalization. Both ancient literature and today's visual arts are narrated by artists from their own points of view, either micro or macro, which also offers the possibility for visitors to interpret the history from multiple perspectives.

¹⁹ Roberto Mangabeira Unger, "The Self Awakened", 2007

Silent Narratives: A Polyphony Of Stories And Journeys

Dr. Laia Manonelles Moner
University of Barcelona

*When I look back at my experiences, my heart starts beating and I start sweating. Exposed to constant dangers, I never took care of myself, since I had before my eyes a clear goal that I pursued undaunted and from which nothing could stop me. And this in spite of death, almost inevitable because of the innumerable risks, and that the hope [of a safe return] seemed very small.*¹

Faxian, the first monk, for whose trip to India in 399ad there is information, recounts his experiences on the mythical Silk Road in the style in first person narrative, narrating illusions and expectations as well as risks and dangers. The legendary Silk Road, described by merchants, Buddhist pilgrims, Christian missionaries, researchers, travelers and adventurers, over the centuries, has become a mythical land, a crossroads of commercial and cultural activities that have enriched and stimulated the growth of Empires while also being the scene of archaeological plundering, battles and wars.

The German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen, created the term “Silk Road” in his book Old and New Approaches to the Silk Road (Viejas y nuevas aproximaciones a la Ruta de la Seda) in 1877. Although it is a road defined by him, it is important to remember that there is not just one road but several routes, both land and sea, which have been the backbone of economic and cultural relations from antiquity to the present day, opening new routes for exchanges between China and Europe. This network of roads led to connections, encounters, reciprocal relations but also confrontations. The Silk Road not only transported goods from China to the Middle East until they finally reached the European continent through mountains, deserts, steppes, villages, fortresses and cities, what is more important is that in the return journey, apart from the economic achievements, it also brought about exchanges of different religious cultures and thoughts.

Silent Narratives proposes rethinking the Silk Road

¹ Thomas O. Höllmann. La ruta de la seda. Alianza Editorial, 2008 p. 41.

from different perspectives, collecting the work of 25 artists born in countries that have been part of these commercial routes, such as China, Iraq, Israel, Iran, Palestine and Lebanon. These artists focus on the diverse realities of a scenario where the global and the local intersect, meet and question each other without ceasing. Huang Mei, who is one of a new generation of curators working in a transnational context, claims the Silk Road as a bridge and as the heart that makes up the backbone of the relations between the “East” and “West”. The curator presents a route based on three chapters articulated from “The Greater China,” “The Middle East” and “Western Europe.” In these sections, there are transversal axes that reflect on tradition and modernity, putting contemporary creations into dialogue with reproductions of historical works that directly nourishes the imaginary of contemporary art. The memory of glorious periods is approached from nostalgia and also from critical reflection. Likewise, treasures, traces of the past, destruction

and ruins coexist with hope and the will to think of other ways of acting and doing things. Within these themes, it must be stressed that the last section of the exhibition journey warns of the asymmetrical relations between the “West” and other cultural frameworks, questioning the colonial and post-colonial dynamics still in force today.

Art can become an instrument that helps to illuminate - in a globalized context - diverse transnational problems, although it is necessary to bear in mind that there are still certain difficulties in relation to the circulation of artistic works: “The old Silk Road has multiplied opening ways by land and sea, extending at first sight the global circulation of goods and labors, but it seems that in the artistic scene the tax issues have increased in inverse proportion.”²

Silent Narratives connects macro-history with micro-tales, reality with fiction and fantasy, giving the floor to emerging artists who - from different experimental

² Menene Gras Balaguer. “El giro cultural de la geografía y las nuevas Rutas de la Seda. Cartografiando sistemas de significados y asimetrías derivadas del auge del arte contemporáneo asiático”.

Revista de Museología: Publicación científica al servicio de la comunidad museológica, nº 65, 2016, págs. 94-104, espec. 98.

artistic languages - create communicating vessels between the private and the public, between personal and collective experience. Several of the artists taking part in the exhibition referred to their migratory and intercultural experience, reflecting on the intersections and “in-between” spaces created by migration between their countries of origin and the new cultural frameworks in which they live and develop their artistic projects. The exhibition proposes other narratives and a story that goes beyond the Eurocentric perspective that has established a relationship with the “other” from the exclusion or fascination towards the exotic. These stories are woven from different enclaves, from different social, economic and political contexts, promoting decentralized, polyphonic, multifocal narratives that collect what has been omitted, what has not been pronounced and what has been silenced, in order to give the floor to and to listen to other stories that allow us to think of other cartographies.

The left page features a large, abstract graphic composed of thin, grey, irregular lines that resemble topographic map contour lines. These lines are scattered across the page, with some forming small, concentric loops and others creating more elongated, winding shapes. The overall effect is a minimalist, organic pattern that frames the central text.

Interview on the Exhibition Silent Narratives

Wang Hui

The first thing I want to express is that I've read your article (the Curator Huang Mei). In fact, I think you possess a good concept as it is rare to see domestic curators that hold such an international vision, which is not merely a traditional outward looking at the world. It is a connection built that includes both China as well as the whole world. I think I should extend my congratulations to you for this. In the past, a lot of experiences in Chinese contemporary art are basically acquired on an imitation of western modernism and postmodernism. We've learned a lot, yet what exactly is a world view or a conception of history behind it, how to build self-understanding, how to comprehend the world with this kind of self-understanding, are questions that still need further discussions. In a word, I'd like to congratulate you for carrying out such a great job.

Secondly, what has impressed me most was

that the whole exhibition took the Silk Road as a trail of communication. The interesting part here is that the trails do not develop along a single line, namely it is not a simple route from China to Europe, but they develop in multiple lines at the same time. So every part has its own focus, which I assume is very important: change happens in the way that people view the world.

If we see the Silk Road as a journey from one place to another, the origin to the destination, while the destination is the aim of all the actions, this narrative is typical of a teleology that the destination must be the west and must be in Europe. Yet in this exhibition, we see a communication process, the mutual infiltration of each place is presented to visitors, which is particularly important from my point of view. If we present or salvage the history of countries along the Silk Road, such as Iran, Iraq and Turkey, to some extent, it belongs to an

archaeological work. When we refer to it as an archaeological work, we are not saying it does not exist. Contemporary archaeology is to salvage what might often be omitted or ignored from our historical memory or narrative, let them present themselves and let people understand that this is not a general amnesia problem: in today's world, severity lies not in our amnesia, but in our ignorance.

So I remember that when Samuel P. Huntington wrote the Clash of Civilizations, Edward Said responded with a title that said it's not a clash of civilizations, it's a clash of ignorance. Today we face such a situation that the concept, the clash of civilizations seems to come back again to our lifetime. Yet the essence behind it is not the clash of civilizations, instead, it's the clash of ignorance. We have become ignorance to this knowledge that is closely linked with our history and even in some way shapes again

our civilization. We have become ignorant to the contents of our own culture, which is also a question of how to open up our historical memory in addition to breaking our superstition of the West.

For example, there is an exhibition hall where I saw the photos of the tri-colored glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty. In fact, the tri-colored glazed pottery and the blue and white porcelain, which later become the most important inventions of our Chinese civilization and art, are all closely connected with the Silk Road. The configuration and materials of the tri-colored glazed pottery are often related to Central Asia and West Asia, as we all know, related to the art of the Hu people (the Northern barbarian tribes in ancient China). Even the color blue in the blue and white porcelain that we later thought as a typical symbol of China, was called hui qing back then. The earliest material of hui

qing came from Persia. Part of the composition of the blue and white porcelain was actually developed from Persian silverware. Of course, a lot of integration can't simply be regarded as being influenced by Persia. In turn, Chinese art has influenced other cultures. If we look at the connection between the Persian miniature and the Chinese brush painting, the mutual influence is quite obvious, even though I haven't done specific research about it.

It's an important question concerning the conception of history. Here is an example from the study of history. Fernand Braudel, as we all know, was a great historian of Mediterranean Civilization and a leader of the Annales School. I admire him very much. Yet when I read his book The Mediterranean, I found that he wrote well in the parts about France and Spain for he could easily read the documents and materials of his own language. But when his pen moved

into Turkey and Asia, he had to deal with a lot of second-hand materials. His understanding of the cultural language of the region had to be interceded with a different narrative, thus it was not as fluent as his understanding of the Western part of the Mediterranean Civilization.

One of his students, Carles Bonnie, was 80 years old when I first met him. He lived in Bologna, Italy more than a decade ago. There is a museum of textile technology in Bologna. This man wrote a book called The Industrial Revolution Before The Industrial Revolution in Italian. It's a book about the changes in textile technology along the Silk Road. For the first time, I noticed that a Western scholar's study of the Silk Road didn't simply take China as the destination, nor did it end in Venice or Florence. On the contrary, he conducted a study of the textile technology, which was improved at every place along the Silk Road. A lot of innovation was created locally, in

Persia, Turkey and other areas, it got advanced in every place, perfecting the overall textile technology. We all know that Britain's industrial revolution started from the textile industry. So in his book, he expressed that the development of the textile industry was not merely generated by coal, steam engines, cotton or other inventions, it was also because the early textile technology along the Silk Road had reached a high point. This history might be familiar to us, that is to say, the author has provided another possibility in the narrative of history. What I find interesting about this exhibition is that it has given me such a sense of possibility.

The third impression, which I think is very clear, is that this exhibition is a combination. The artists are not merely expressing their feelings towards the past, although the exhibition has made a historical archaeology as the background. Yet the exhibition shows that the works of art were

created by the contemporary artists along the Silk Road, and they focused on contemporary issues, while the history of civilization was produced in the process of intervening in contemporary problems. That is to say, as we all live in our own society, our focus on the global and regional issues is inevitably related with our own tradition, the historical civilization and the historical reality. For example, one work of art used the broken line as a medium (Arghavan Khosravi) during the exhibition. What is a broken line? There is no line on the earth that can be said to be absolutely broken or continuous. We are always connected on the earth, either in a broken or continuous line, but in a certain sense, artificial.

The broken line symbolized more the violence of history which made it broken, and that was clear from Mesopotamia. Expanding to Xinjiang, China, and Central Asia, West Asia, part of

South Asia, the region used to be the birthplace of civilizations, a few major civilization, not only Babylon, the Egyptian and even a pass-through to north Africa; the birthplace of many languages and religions; and the birthplace of one of the oldest civilizations in the region. However, today, it seems to be a symbol of war, rupture, violence, and tragedy. We need to enter into the process and reconstruct it. I think this is the other side of the exhibition.

It actually broke up the early civilization from the 16th century, more recently from the 19th century, and even from the long colonial history, so that the original culture naturally formed in the history was re-divided by modern cartography, geography, surveying and mapping. What is the meaning of such a thing today? I think it has a very important connotation. We Chinese started to ponder about this region, probably after 1840, as Gong Zizhen wrote Suggestion on

Establishing Administrative Province in Western Regions. While Wei Yuan, since that time, suffered the oppression of the European powers in southeast China and began to think about the connection of various regions. I used to conduct research about Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan. When Gong Zizhen talked about Xinjiang in 1820, he found that it wasn't until the Qing Dynasty that people started to notice the region of Xinjiang, for the vision of the Han people has long been limited to Central China. By the late 18th century and the 19th century, there was a possibility that these areas that were previously blocked might open up in some way. Until then, he realized that the distance from Xinjiang to Beijing is farther than it is to the Arabian sea and the Indian Ocean. That is to say, as part of China, the distance of the region to the Arabian sea and the Indian Ocean is shorter than it to Beijing, which is the center of the earth. For the first time, Chinese people started to take into

account another sea not located to its East, but to its West.

The question of the sea came with colonialism, so he wondered if there was a path to the Western sea in Chinese civilization. Today, we are able to reach the Indian Ocean and the Arabian sea. In fact, this path has always been connected through the Silk Road in history, unfortunately, modern history is used to blocking it. So the question of broken line is also a question about our history. These areas today have experienced countless wars. Afghanistan may have no idea about the early colonialism of Britain back to early 70s, yet until today, modern "colonialism" has never stopped there. The Iran-Iraq War and all the issues between the two countries seems to be endless. As well as Pakistan, from the early 20th century, the Ottoman Empire to the restructuring of the regional powers; the penetration of Russian Empire in this region and


its restructuring followed; the Mongolia Empire in this region and its reconstruction. All these historical cultures are closely related to China in history.

My hometown is Yangzhou. Back to the Song Dynasty, a man named Puhading who was believed to be the 16th descendant of Muhammad, came and lived in Yangzhou. A large number of Persian businessman and Islamic monks came to Yangzhou at that time, and their behavior then penetrated the local culture. There were also lots of Hui people in Yangzhou, and their accents were also integrated into local dialects. To this day, these buildings from the Song Dynasty, such as the Tomb of Puhading and Crane Mosque are all well preserved. This is our history, but had been nearly forgotten over the past century. We rarely thought about it on our conscious level. Especially in the past 40 years, we tended to sense this region with less empathy.

In the past, when we were kids, we used to watch the news and get to know Yasser Arafat, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Israeli problem, the Palestinians and their fate, and the conflict in the Middle East. These issues are relevant to us, as the Chinese people have suffered this kind of history from the late 19th century to the 20th century which was part of our historical memory. It is a physical feeling, and I can still remember to this day the place where they were under siege in Pakistan, where Arafat was under siege, and what we saw on TV every day. For us, we were deeply affected as if we had experienced it ourselves, but the younger generation has had no feelings or knew little from the Western news agencies that had nothing to do with it, nor do they have any relations with it. In fact, they forgot that the history of our Chinese has a quite close connection with it. This creates a huge gap in our self-understanding. Our self-understanding is partial and broken. We tend to aggregate

ourselves, nothing more than to build a Western "other", where we are little "other" affiliated to it. So we aggregate ourselves in this framework for self-understanding, and we are now thinking in the way of catching-up while all of our attention is focused on this. We tend to forget the history. But we should realize that they are not history but living realities which are closely connected with us.

By visiting this exhibition, if the Chinese contemporary art circle could mobilize such consciousness again, reconstruct the perception of the world from the new configurations and the knowledge of history, and reshape our feelings of history, I believe the results will be significant. Because it is not only the problem of knowledge, it is also about feelings. The strangeness of these things is far higher than those Western works we appreciated at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the British Museum, which might be



quite familiar to us. When we see these works that were supposed to be close to us, they turn out to be remote and strange, which caused self-shadowing of understanding. I've come to feel that, frankly, this is a huge problem for the Chinese intellectual circle, the art circle and Chinese society in terms of self-understanding.

This is a topic I've discussed for years. Yet even for myself, I am still limited by the topic for I have very limited understanding of these areas. So I believe this exhibition, especially when it is held in Ningxia, a very unique region, can set a good example and exert a good influence. The exhibition should be promoted in Beijing and Shanghai, instead of simply being regarded as exotic. I hope that when people visit this exhibition, it is no longer an exotic one but a part of our daily life and a part of the world. If all the feelings of our body can be stimulated by such an exhibition, I believe that our Chinese

self-understanding will begin to change. I think this is not a problem that occurs in a certain aspect today, it is the problem faced by many. Art, in a sense, the sensitivity of which is ahead of the times, can follow up with more discussions in the future.



CHINESE
HALL

Wu
Guanzhen



Title: Lacquer Thread Memory Dimensions: Variable Material: Chinese Lacquer, Ramine Year: 2018

Title: Memory Fragments 1
Material: Chinese Lacquer, Ramine, Gold Foil, Silver Foil
Dimensions: 147×147cm
Year: 2018



Title: Daydream 2
Material: Chinese Lacquer, Ramine, Gold Foil, Silver Foil
Dimensions: 147×147cm
Year: 2018



Title: Memory Fragments 3
Material: Chinese Lacquer,
Ramine, Gold Foil, Silver Foil
Dimensions: 147×147cm
Year: 2018



Title: Memory Fragments 15
Material: Chinese Lacquer,
Ramine, Gold Foil, Silver Foil
Dimensions: 147×200 cm
Year: 2018





Title: Sketch in Dun Huang 2 **Dimensions:** 23×32cm
Material: Chinese Lacquer, Ramine **Year:** 2017

Title: Sketch in Dun Huang 3 **Dimensions:** 23×41.5 cm
Material: Chinese Lacquer, Ramine **Year:** 2017



Title: Lacquer Thread Memory **Dimensions:** 23×31.5 cm **Material:** Chinese Lacquer, Ramine **Year:** 2017



Title: Container Dimensions: Variable Material: Porcelain Year: 2009-2016





Title: Enlightenment 18 8 26
Material: UV Curable Resin
Dimensions: 60×40×36 cm
Year: 2018

Title: Enlightenment 18 10 5
Material: UV Curable Resin
Dimensions: 50×26×36 cm
Year: 2018

Title: Enlightenment 18 2 5
Material: UV Curable Resin
Dimensions: 120×6×10 cm
Year: 2018

Title: Enlightenment 16 9 1 **Dimensions:** 100×34×12 cm
Material: UV Curable Resin **Year:** 2016

Title: Enlightenment 18 7 1
Material: UV Curable Resin
Dimensions: 200×116×69 cm
Year: 2018

Title: Enlightenment 18 10 1
Material: UV Curable Resin
Dimensions: 60×15×28 cm
Year: 2018

Title: Enlightenment 19 3 6
Material: UV Curable Resin
Dimensions: 60×42×26 cm
Year: 2019





Title: Truth
Material: Installation,
Photograph, Video
Dimensions: Variable
Year: 2014





Title: Inhabit Dimensions: Variable Material: Various Year: 2019



Title: Enter the Mural
Material: Photo Printed on
Hahnemühle
Dimensions: 180x150 cm
Year: 2016



Title: Xing Tian's Sadness
Material: Photo Printed on
Hahnemühle
Dimensions: 120x90 cm
Year: 2014





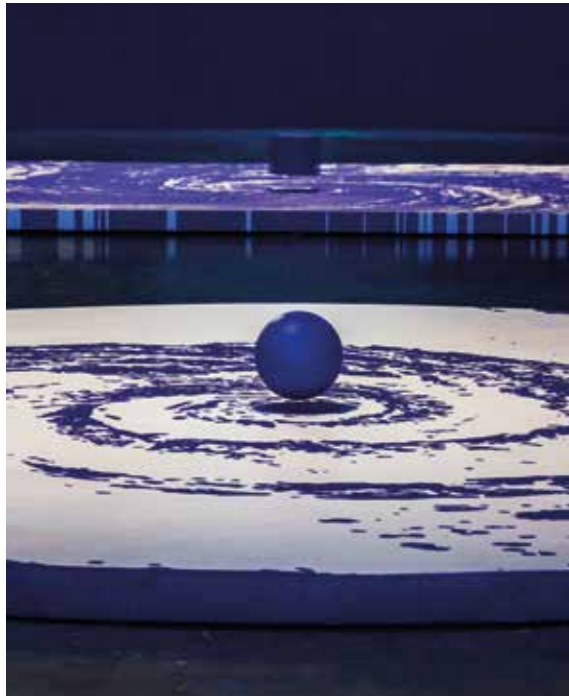
Title: Vulcan burns me
Material: Photo Printed on
 Hahnemühle
Dimensions: 120×90 cm
Year: 2010

Title: Bewitched
Material: Photo Printed on
 Hahnemühle
Dimensions: 140×180 cm
Year: 2016



Ding
Shiwei

Title: Fragments of Civilizations
Material: Single Channel Video
Installation
Dimensions: 160×280 cm 5'26"
Year: 2017



Title: Emerging Knowledge
Material: Magnetic Levitation,
Painting on Canvas
Dimensions: 187×187×20 cm
200×200×20 cm
Year: 2018

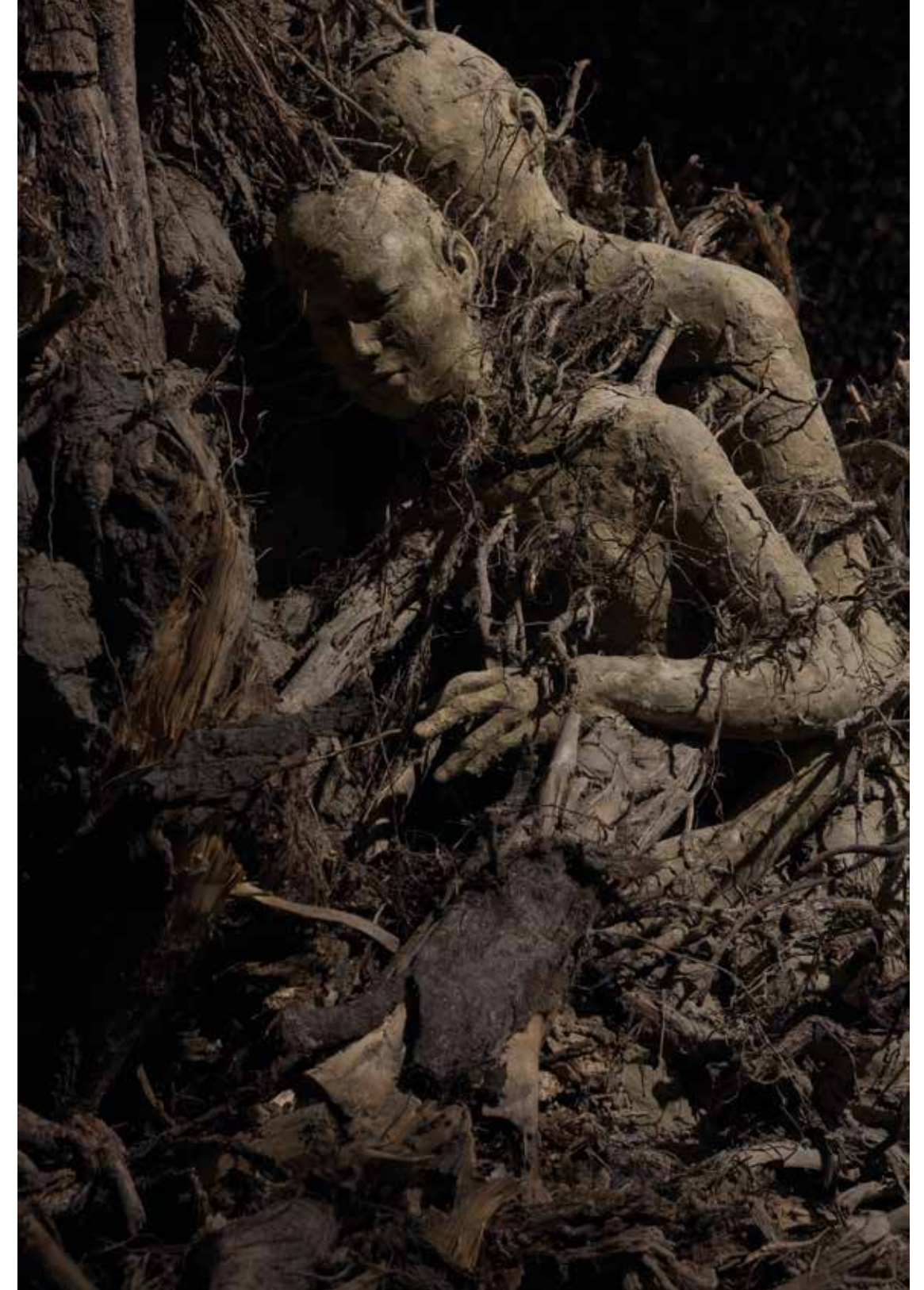


Title: Frozen Time 1

Material: Sculpture with
Earth and Root

Dimensions: 138×116×98 cm

Year: 2015



Title: Frozen Time 2 **Dimensions:** 228×218×130 cm **Material:** Sculpture with Earth and Root **Year:** 2016



Title: Frozen Time 3
Material: Sculpture with Earth and Root
Dimensions: 148×230×159 cm
Year: 2015



Zhu
Zhengming

Title: Wit
Material: Ink and Color on Silk
Dimensions: 197.5 × 128 cm
Year: 2018



Title: Instant
Material: Ink and Color on Silk
Dimensions: 97 × 74.5 cm
Year: 2018



Title: Water in Dripping
Material: Stainless Steel
Dimensions: Variable
Year: 2012-2019





MIDDLE EAST
HALL

Arghavan
Khosravi

1.

Title: Ensemble

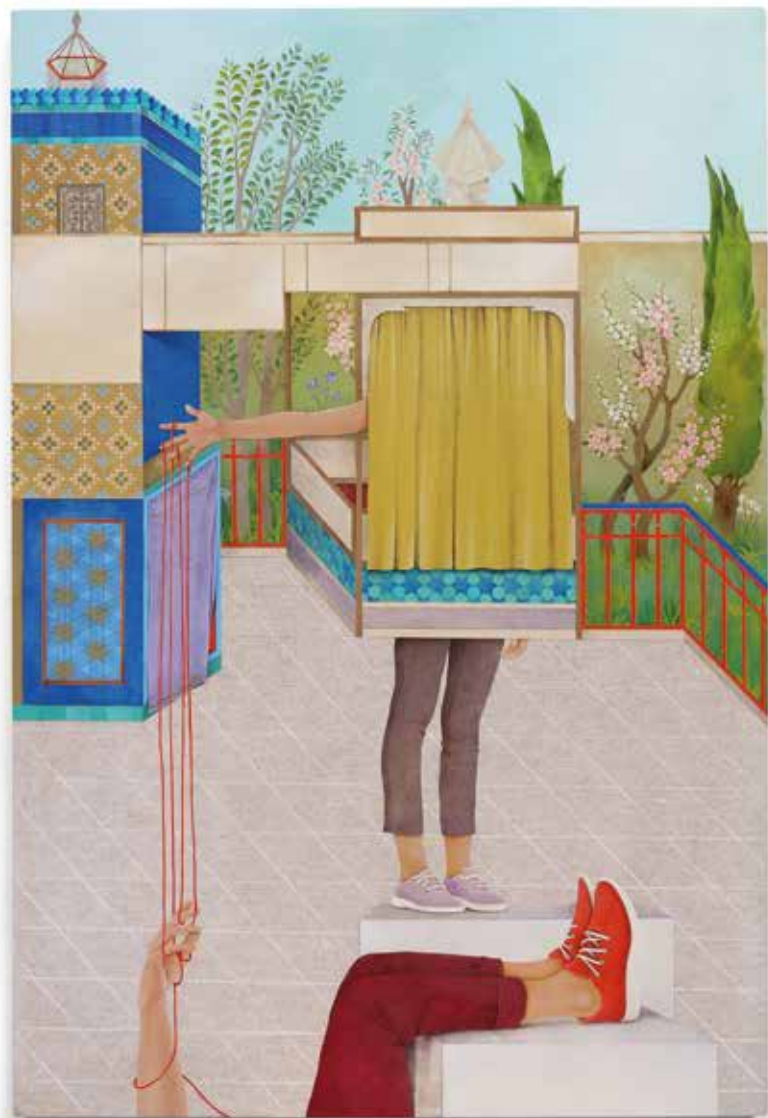
Material: Acrylic Metallic Spray
Paint and Glass Bead on Unprimed
Linen on Wooden Panel

Dimensions: 78.84x154.94 cm

Year: 2018



2



3



2.

Title: Every Morning News from Home

Material: Acrylic on Linen Wood on Wood Panel

Dimensions: 78.84×154.94 cm

Year: 2018

3.

Title: The Gaze

Material: Acrylic on Linen Wood on Wood Panel

Dimensions: 60.96×76.2 cm

Year: 2018

4.

Title: The Limbo

Material: Acrylic on Linen Wood on Wood Panel

Dimensions: 71.12×157.48 cm

Year: 2018

4





Title: Construction Site **Dimensions:** 45x60 cm **Material:** One Channel Video/Sound Installation **Year:** 2006



Title: Green Mouse **Dimensions:** Variable **Material:** One Channel Video/Sound Installation **Year:** 2008



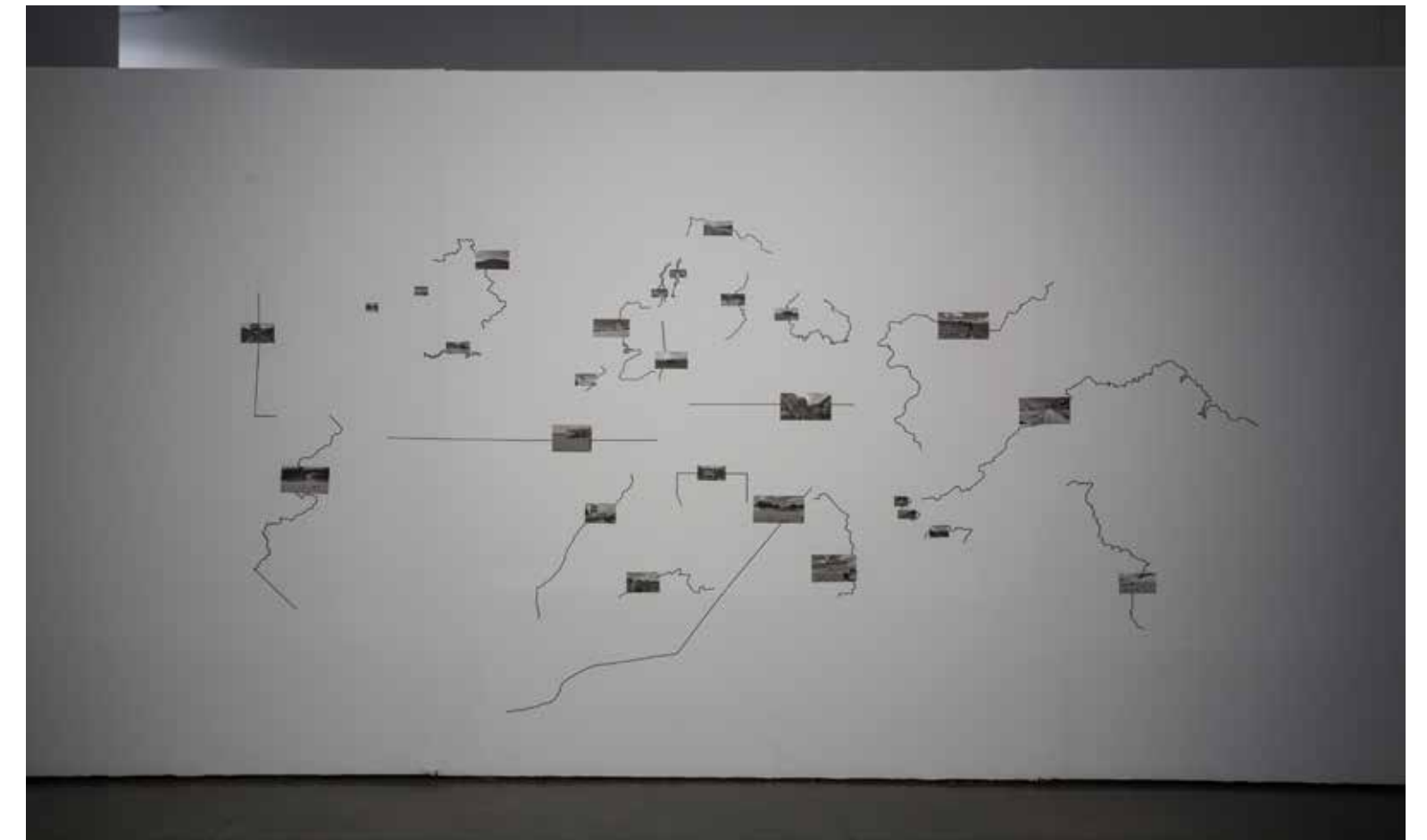
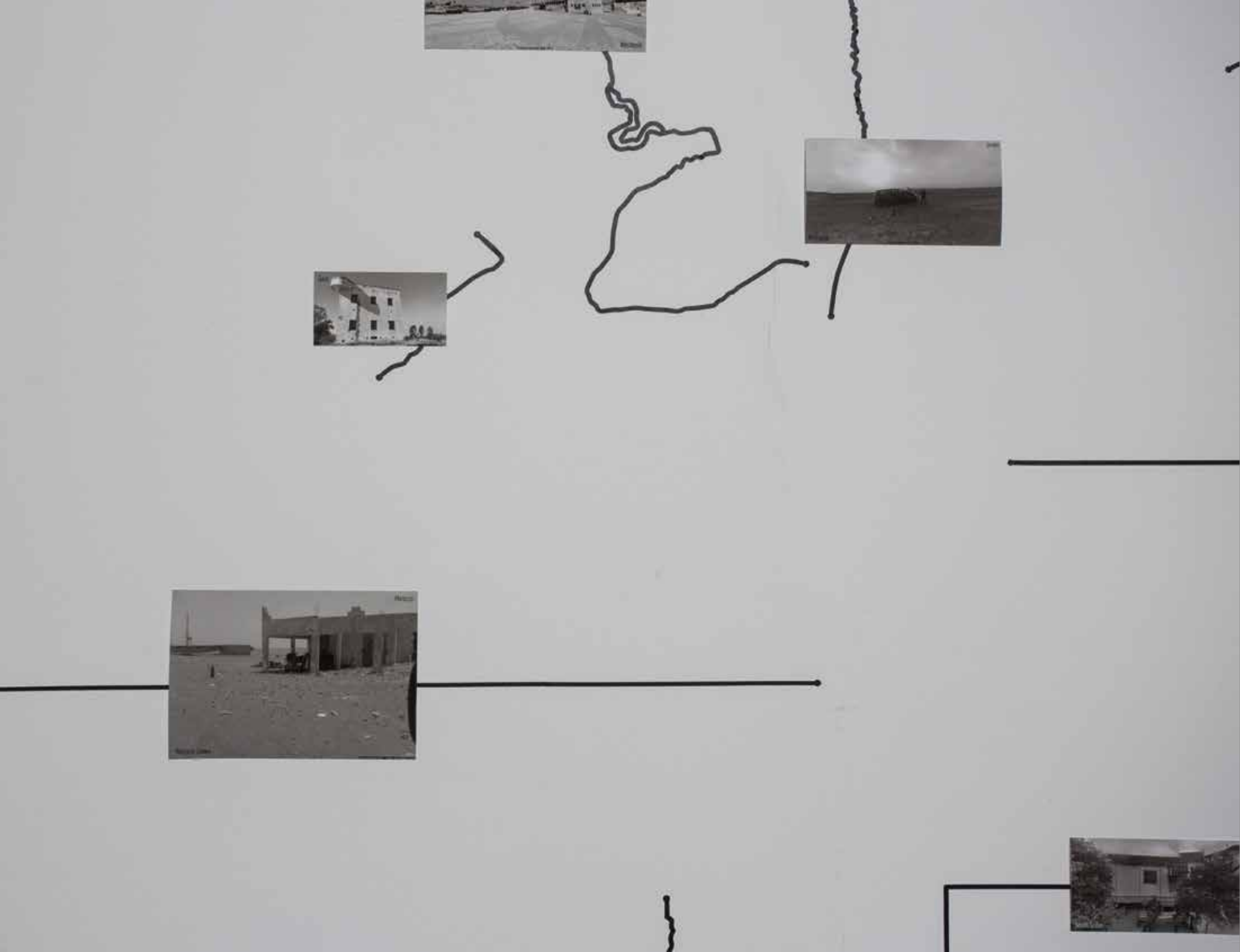
Title: Memorial **Dimensions:** Variable **Material:** Three Channels Video/Sound Installation **Year:** 2006



Anca Benera &
Arnold Estefan



Title: Citrus Tristeza **Dimensions:** 15'14" **Material:** One Channel Video/Sound Installation **Year:** 2018



Title: Conflict Lines **Dimensions:** Variable **Material:** Installation(Cut-Out Metal, Prints on Paper) **Year:** 2018

1.

Title: Revolution (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 40.64x50.8 cm

Year: 2015



2.

Title: The Shah (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 48.26x60.96 cm

Year: 2019



3.

Title: Men-Women (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 40.64×50.8 cm

Year: 2016

4.

Title: Becoming (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 48.26×60.96 cm

Year: 2019

5.

Title: Cycle (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 40.64×50.8 cm

Year: 2016

6.

Title: Enlightenment (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 48.26×60.96 cm

Year: 2017

7.

Title: Flag (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 40.64×50.8 cm

Year: 2015

8.

Title: Elastic (Victorious Secret)

Material: Color Pencils

Dimensions: 48.26×60.96 cm

Year: 2017



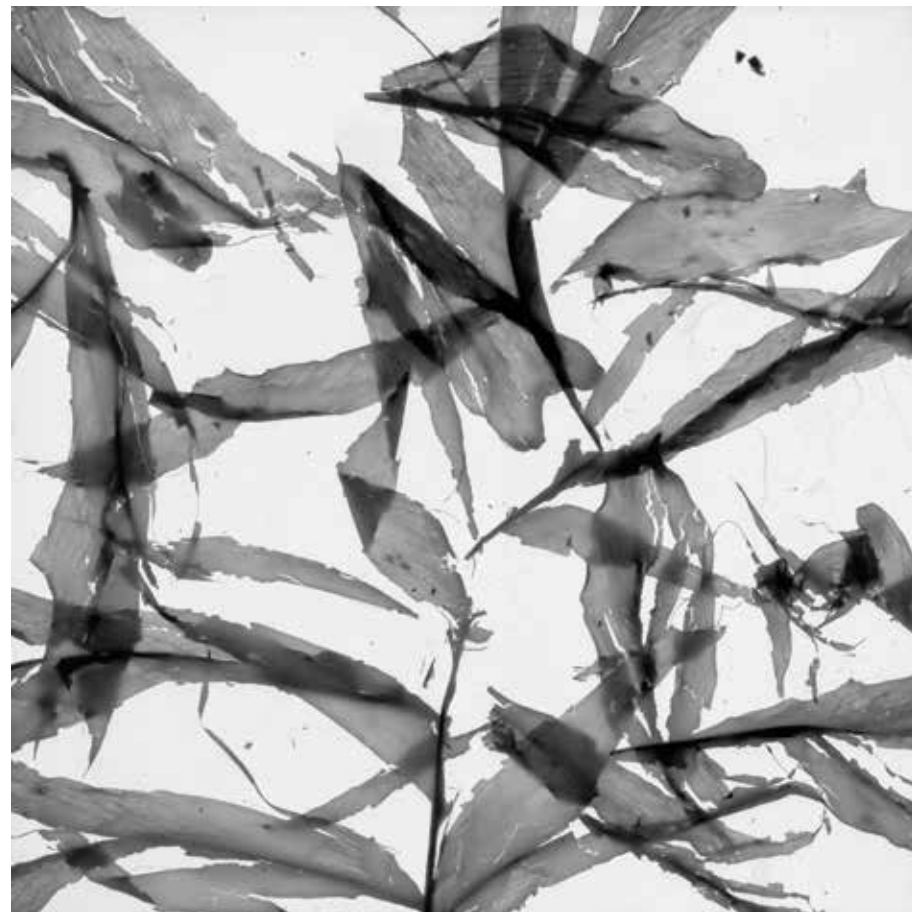
Title: Cycle
Material: Mixed Media
Dimensions: 35.56×33.02×10.16 cm
Year: 2017



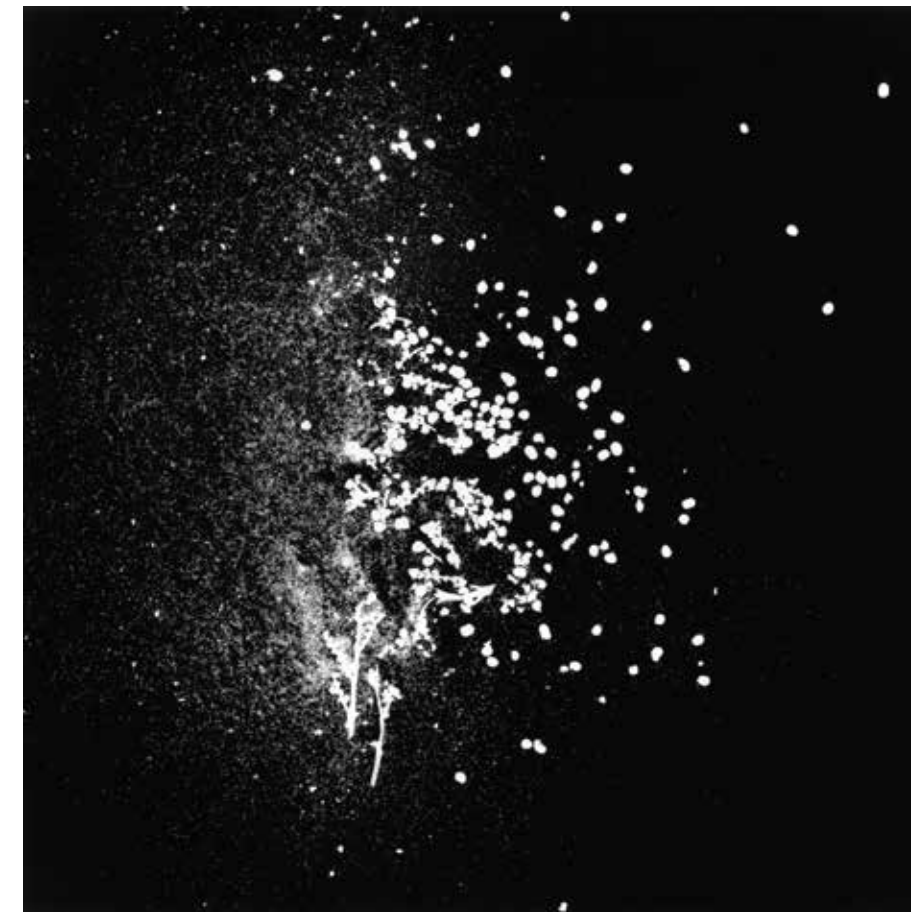
Title: Egg
Material: Mixed Media
Dimensions: 33.02×30.48×10.16 cm
Year: 2017



Title: Still Life 11
Material: Photo Printed on Hahnemühle
Dimensions: 120×97cm
Year: 2017



Title: Still Life 3
Material: Photo Printed on Hahnemühle
Dimensions: 120×97cm
Year: 2017





Title: Home 1 **Dimensions:** 120x80 cm **Material:** Photo Printed on Hahnemühle **Year:** 2017



Title: Home 2 **Dimensions:** 120x80 cm **Material:** Photo Printed on Hahnemühle **Year:** 2017



Title: Home 3 **Dimensions:** 120x80 cm **Material:** Photo Printed on Hahnemühle **Year:** 2017



Title: Home 4 **Dimensions:** 120x80 cm **Material:** Photo Printed on Hahnemühle **Year:** 2017



Larissa
Sansour



Title: Nation Estate Dimensions: 9' Material: Video Year: 2012

Zeina
Barakeh



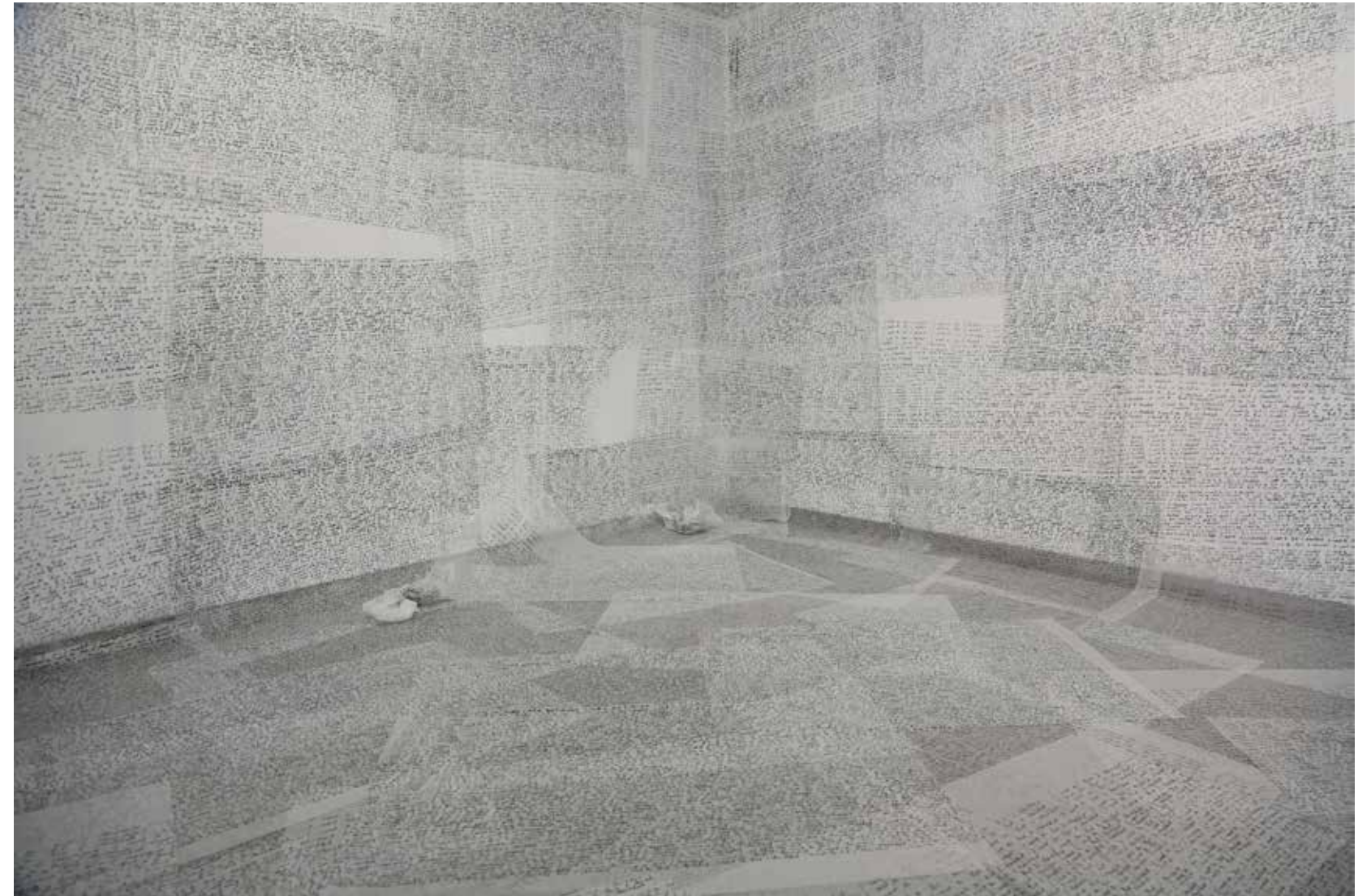
Title: Homeland Insecurity Dimensions: 9'47" Material: Animation Year: 2016

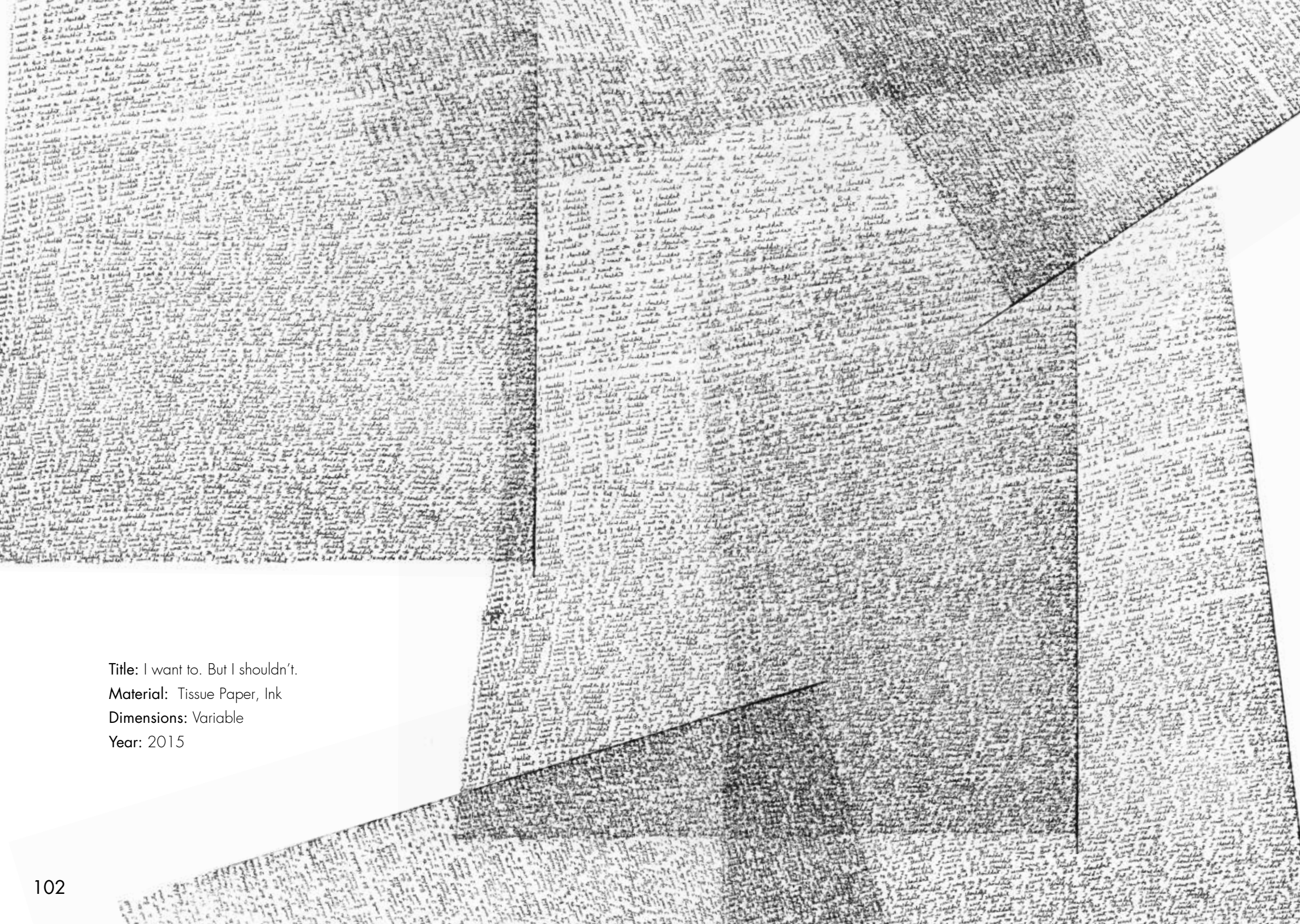


Title: Slam Bang Blue Dimensions: 7'10" Material: Animation Year: 2018

EUROPEAN
HALL

Yu
Feifei





Title: I want to. But I shouldn't.

Material: Tissue Paper, Ink

Dimensions: Variable

Year: 2015

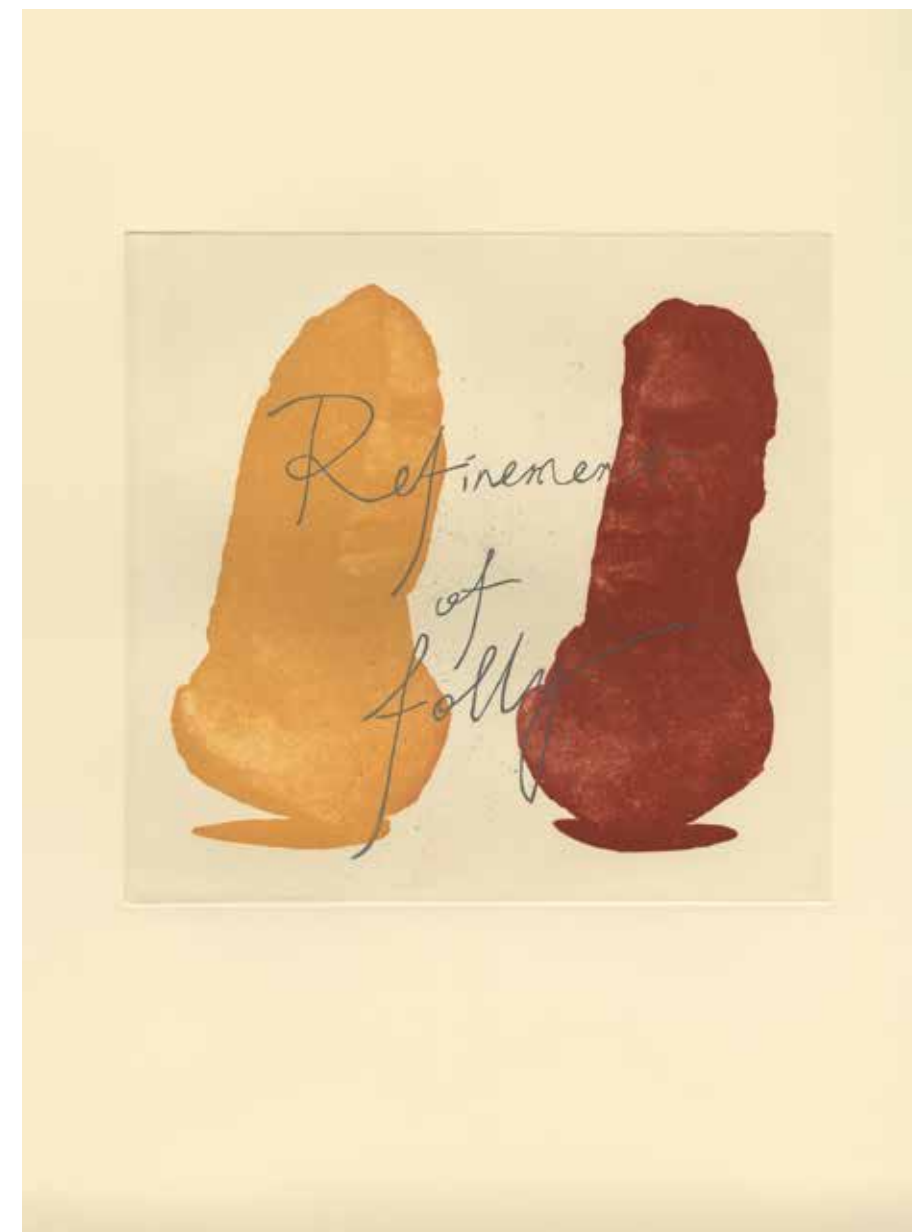


Title: Refinement of Folly

Dimensions: Variable

Material: Aluminium

Year: 2016



Title: Study of Refinement of Folly No.2

Material: Intaglio on Cream Colour Somerset Paper

Dimensions: 300x400 mm

Year: 2014



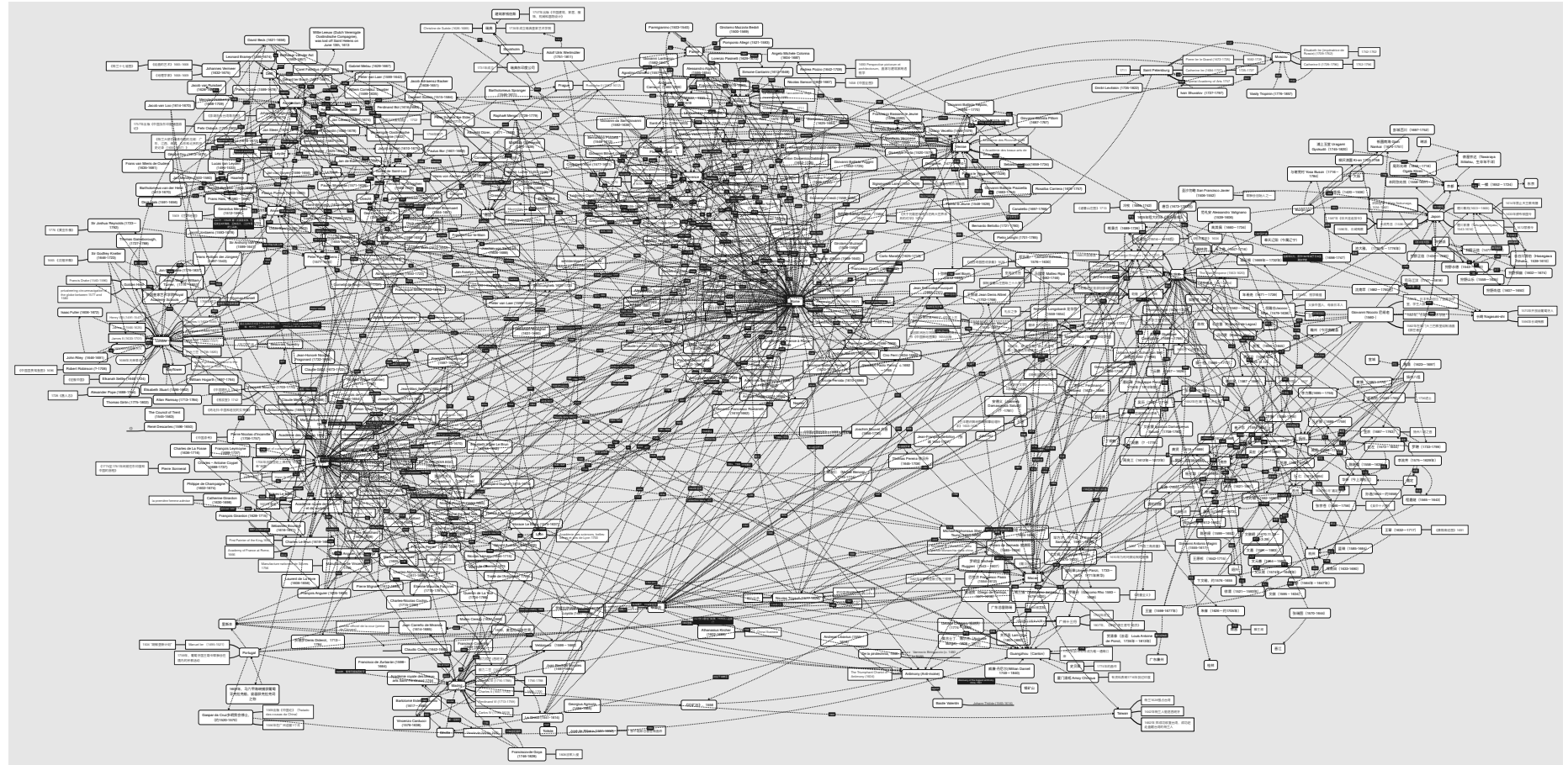
Title: Lovers' Eyes **Dimensions:** Variable **Material:** Lithography Printing, Handmade Bookbinding **Year:** 2016



Title: Collage Studies of Lovers **Material:** Mono Screen Printing, Mixed Media Collage on News Print and Cream Colour Somerset Paper **Dimensions:** Variable **Year:** 2016



1. **Title:** Nicolas on the Cost of the Red Sea **Dimensions:** 8'08"
Material: Projection of 3D Animation **Year:** 2017
2. **Title:** Victoria and Nicolas **Dimensions:** Variable
Material: Book **Year:** 2017
3. **Title:** Red Sea of Guangzhou **Dimensions:** Variable
Material: Oil Painting **Year:** 2017
4. **Title:** Painter, City and Travel **Dimensions:** 3x6.13 m
Material: Ground Printing **Year:** 2017
5. **Title:** Temporary Relationship between Antimony in Tin Mine and A Chinese Man with Only English Name
Material: Antimony Slab, Tin Mine of Lengshuijiang City, The Question of Hu, Jonathan D. Spence, Original English Version **Dimensions:** Variable **Year:** 2017
6. **Title:** Sea in the Eyes of HU **Dimensions:** Variable
Material: 3D-Rendered Ocean View, Date Originated from The Question of Hu **Year:** 2017
7. **Title:** An Unsent Letter to Phillip **Dimensions:** Variable
Material: Letter in Paper **Year:** 2016





Cheng
Ran



Title: Before Falling Asleep, Part 1 : The River and The Pond Dimensions: 5'55" Material: Video Year: 2013



Title: Before Falling Asleep, Part 4: The Butterfly and The Flower **Dimensions:** 4'53" **Material:** Video **Year:** 2013

Mounir
Fatmi



Title: Where Does the Wind Come From? **Material:** Video, Tires, Clothes, Blue Leather Pad **Dimensions:** Variable **Year:** 2017

Tamir
Zadok



Title: Art Undercover
Material: Video
Dimensions: 27'
Year: 2017

Ma
Wenting

Title: "Everything" Series
Material: Simulated Crow,
Building Bricks
Dimensions: Variable
Year: 2017





Title: Chasm
Material: Oil Painted on Canvas
Dimensions: 200×280 cm
Year: 2017



Title: Nowhere to Locate
Material: Oil Painted on Canvas
Dimensions: 100×120 cm
Year: 2017



Title: Transparent Marry Material: Video Dimensions: 100x65 cm Year: 2018

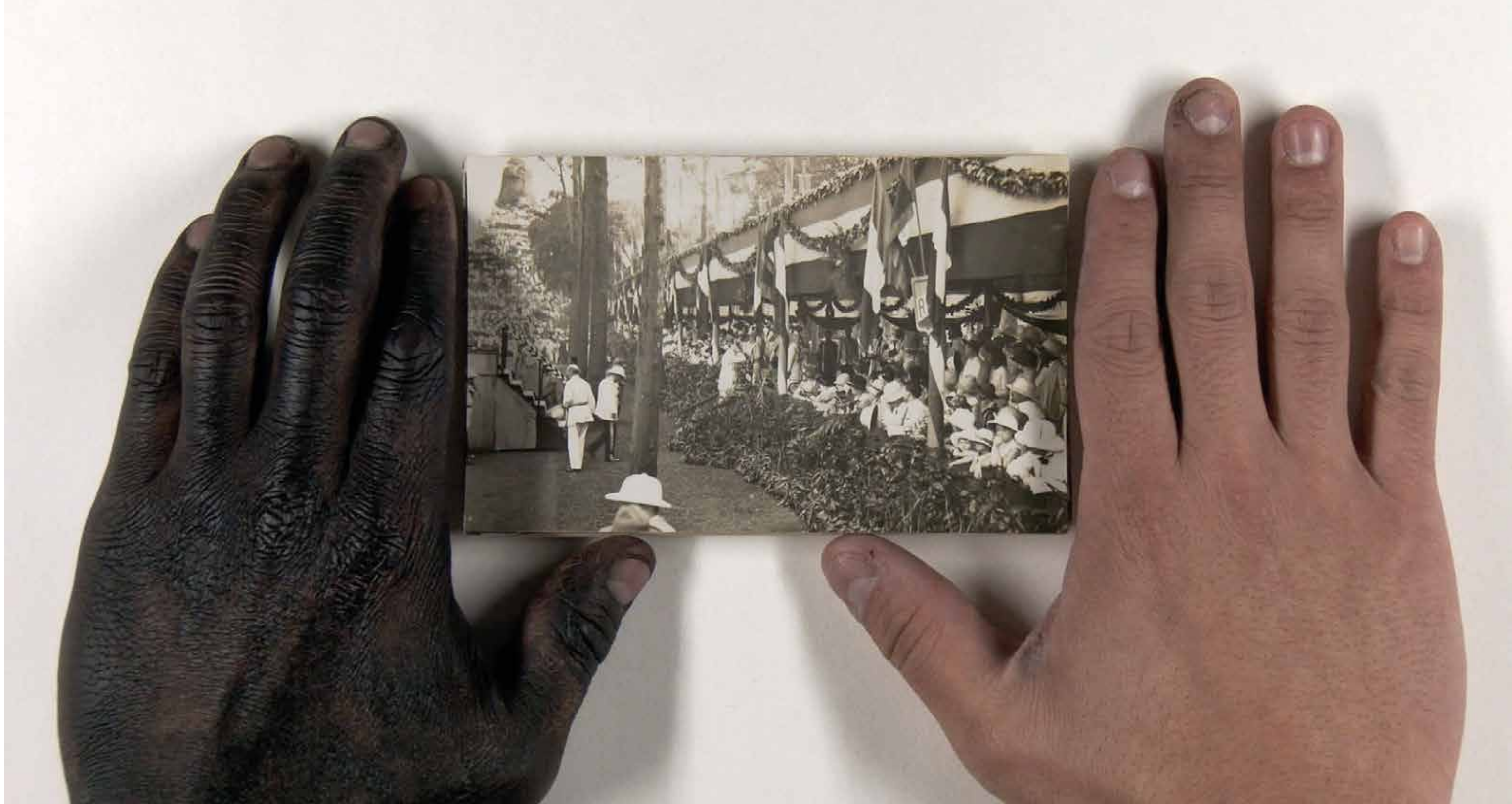


Pu
Yingwei

Title: Atlas-Fetish About Exotic Culture
Material: Collection Level Print
Dimensions: 10x7 mm
Year: 2016



Title: Geo-Mapping Journey
Material: Acrylic on Wood, Ink on Paper, 19th Century Stamps
Dimensions: 46x198 cm
Year: 2018



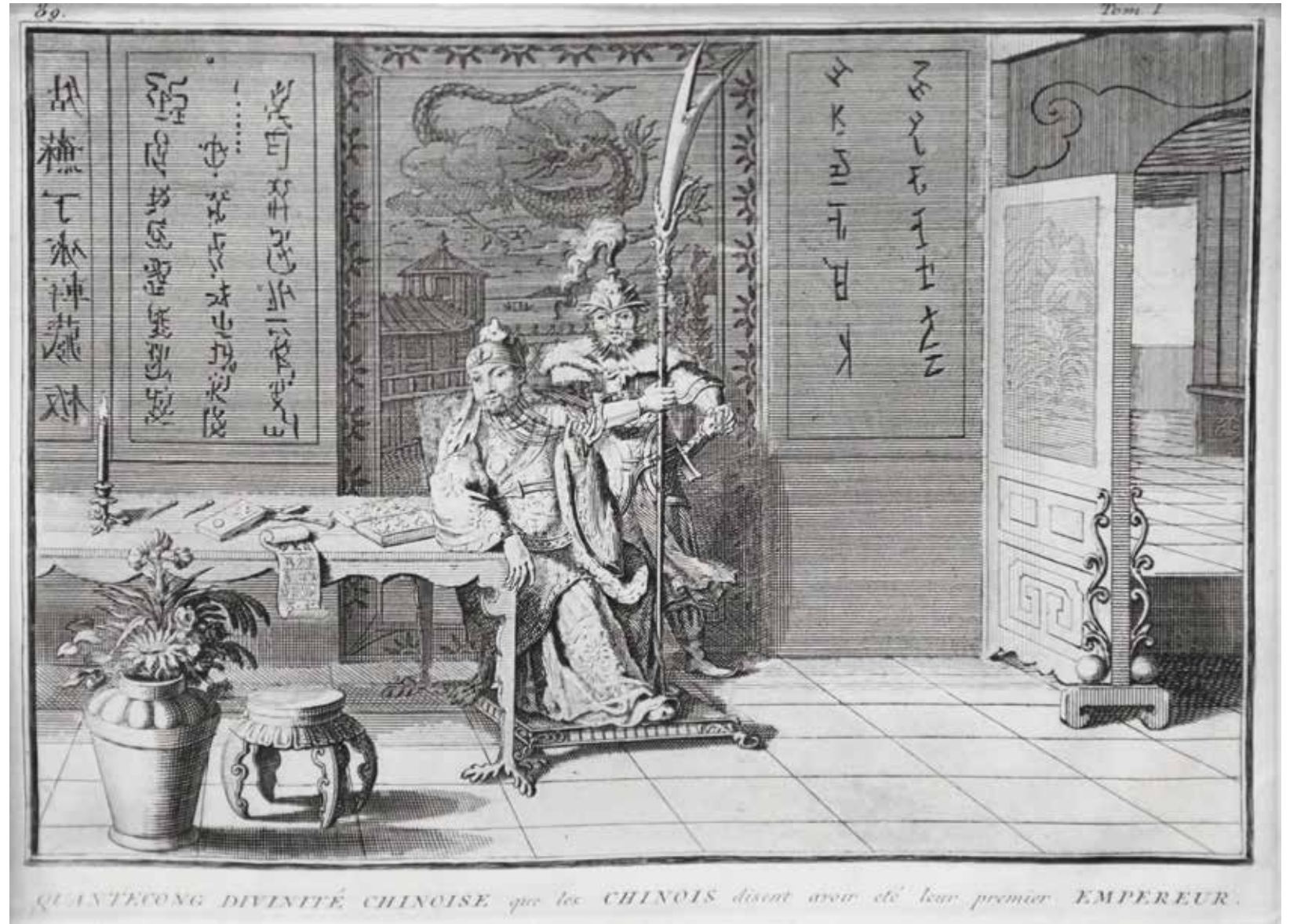
Title: Montage of the Photos -
Symptom of the Memoir
Material: HD Color Video,
No Sound
Dimensions: Variable
Year: 2017



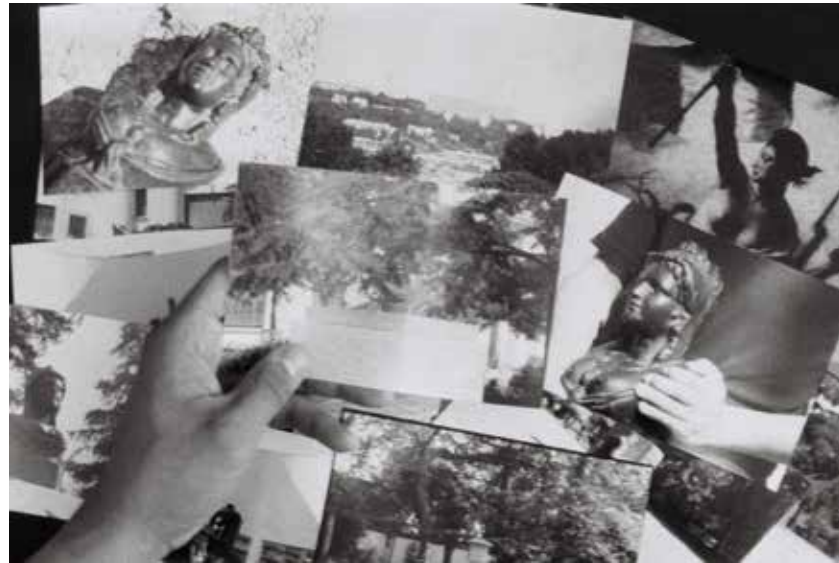
Title: French Film 1
Material: HD Color Video with Actual French and Chinese Subtitle
Dimensions: 30'
Year: 2017



Title: French Film 2
Material: HD Color Video with Actual French and Chinese Subtitle
Dimensions: 30'
Year: 2017



Title: Prints Depicting the Chinese Living Room in the 19th Century
Material: Copper-Print Papera
Year: Unknown
Dimensions: 20x30 cm



Title: Memory Video – Ballad of Contour
Material: Single-Channel Video, Colour, Sound
Dimensions: 5'51"
Year: 2017



Title: The Western Guest, Marianne
Material: Black Iron Sculpture
Dimensions: 40x20x 20 cm
Year: 2017





Title: Reconstruction Series-My Songs From Heart

Material: Wood, Concrete Iron, Iron Sheet, Animal Specimen, Human Skeleton, LED Lights, etc.

Dimensions: Variable **Year:** 2019



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