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RAM  
上海外滩美术馆  
ROCKBUND ART MUSEUM



Still from Shubigi Rao, *These Petrified Paths*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.

## EXHIBITION:

### **Shubigi Rao: These Petrified Paths**

Date: Nov 8, 2023 - Feb 25, 2024

Can storytelling from the margins lead to recollection of a nation's shared identity? When transmitting knowledge, who determines what is worth preserving? What do fossil-fuel extractivism and energy supplies have to do with lost archives and books? These are among the questions that drive artist and writer Shubigi Rao's first solo exhibition in China: *These Petrified Paths*.

Known for her ten-year projects that manifest in film, books, drawing, photographs, etchings, and installations with discarded items and archives, Shubigi Rao considers both present-day and historical subjects, offering alternate viewpoints on contemporary displacement – be it of peoples, languages, cultures, or realms of knowledge. Her work offers a poetic, incisive, and humorous critique of the problematic narrative of civilizations and the western knowledge systems that shape our existence.

This exhibition at the Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai unfolds in four galleries; each refers to a specific term that echoes recurrently in Rao's oeuvre: the "subterranean", the "sacred space", the "margins", and the "action." She has created phylogenetic "trees of knowledge" in the form of a large, three dimensional energy pylon, 12 meters in height, punctuating the heart of the exhibition. (The term phylogenetic tree refers to a graphic diagram depicting lines of genetic descent from a common ancestor.)

Branching across the gallery space are lines of transmission, of knowledge, energy, storytelling and power. By highlighting the obscured transmission of knowledge, experiences, and memories, *These Petrified Paths* is a call to action to celebrate different forms of knowledge and to learn, *from the margins*, how to evolve out of destruction, loss, death, and entropy.

Also at the nexus of *These Petrified Paths* is a newly commissioned feature-length film of the same title. Filmed in September 2022 and spring 2023 amidst the outbreak of the war in Armenia, *These Petrified Paths* weaves tales and recollections of local communities into an enthralling narrative interlaced with memory, written and spoken word, dialogue, terrain, and everyday existence. It poetically delves into Armenia's enduring cultural relics, battles, and fragmented literary richness under duress. As Armenia grapples with the aftermath of conflict, custodians of literature unveil more than just books, with women emerging as conservators of libraries and chroniclers of pivotal moments. In time of crisis, these subtle stories reveal the often behind-the-scenes yet monumental efforts of restoration experts, guides, translators, archivists, and advocates.

*Shubigi Rao: These Petrified Paths* is organized by the Rockbund Art Museum and curated by X Zhu-Nowell, Artistic Director, with Karen Wang, Curatorial Assistant and Researcher.



Still from Tan Jing, *Nook of a Hazy Dream*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.

## Tan Jing: Inlet of Arid Dreams

Date: Nov 8, 2023 - Feb 25, 2024

*Inlet of Arid Dreams* is the first institutional solo exhibition of the artist Tan Jing, a native of Shenzhen, China, known for her experimentation with unconventional materials across the media of sculpture, installation, and moving images. Her work explores the multi-layered narratives between reality and fiction by combining elements of folklore, organic materials, and personal memoirs. For *Inlet of Arid Dreams*, presented on the museum's 2nd floor, Tan Jing presents major new works, including the four-channel video installation titled *Nook of a Hazy Dream* (2023) and the soft fabric scented sculpture *The Souvenir* (2023), both commissioned by the Rockbund Art Museum.

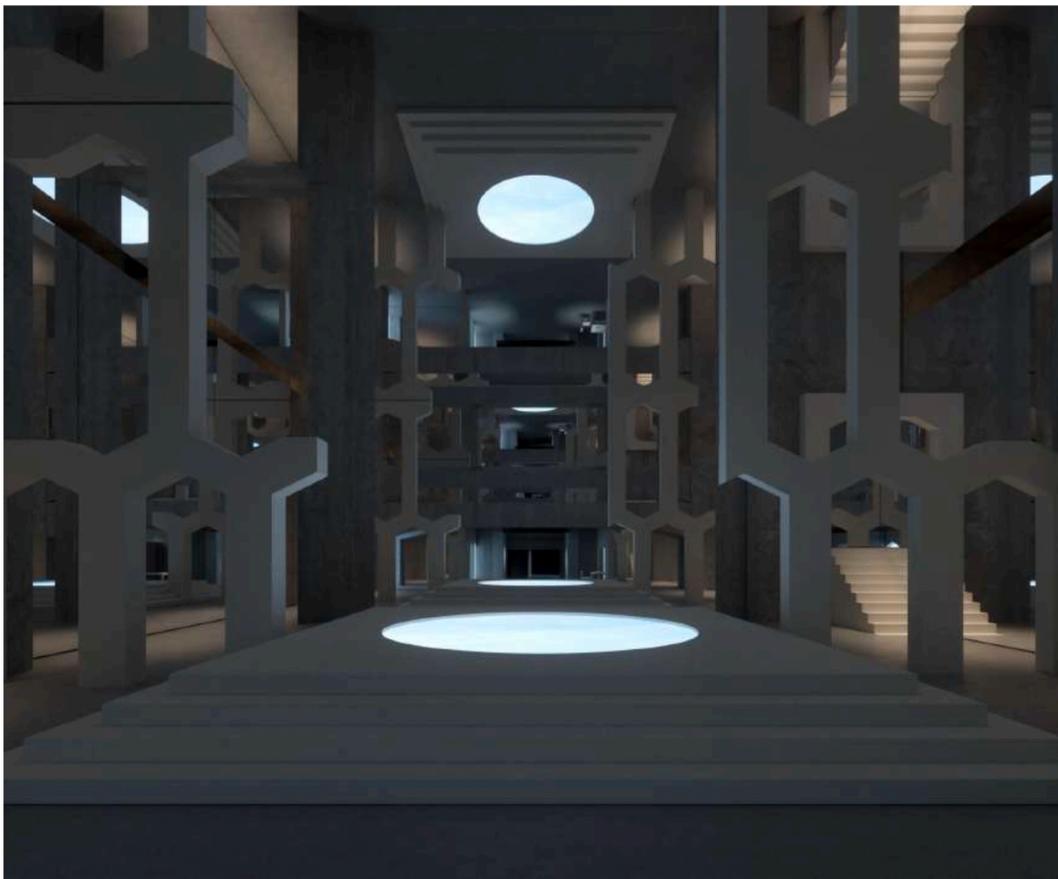
Smell plays a distinctive role in Tan Jing's art. Olfactory memories, unlike verbal recollections, cannot be easily rewritten. She incorporates these sensory memories tied to identity and locality into her sculptural works. Whether it's the pungent aroma recalling Southeast Asian cuisine wafting from green tiles (*Floor Tiles and Flowers*, 2023) or the fragrance of Thai talcum powder, a reminder of grandmothers, emanating from fabric flowers (*The Souvenir*, 2023), the interplay between the olfactory and the visual takes us on a journey from her ancestral Lingnan residence in search of Lap Hung.

Lap Hung is a character Tan Jing has constructed based on her grandfather's persona. In the new four-channel video installation *Nook of a Hazy Dream*, 2023, Lap Hung's spirit returns to his imagined native place. Since 2019, Tan Jing has been visiting her relatives

and the Chinese diaspora community in Bangkok, Thailand, recording the histories narrated by her elders. In this video work, disappearing memories converge in varying languages; they weave dialogues of the past, the future, and the present world, constructing the narrative of the film. The interplay of light and shadow on glass screens serve as windows that open to a dreamscape.

"Inlet of Arid Dreams" is a place name in Tan Jing's imagination. It refers to a transitional realm between arrival and return, reality and illusion. Here, personal desires are stranded in the landscape of memory. The artist aims to fathom these life experiences and pose questions: when dealing with diasporic individuals, how can we comprehend the complexity of their identity and emotions? Confronting traumatic experiences, what are the alternatives to the silent suppression of feelings?

*Tan Jing: Inlet of Arid Dreams* is organized by the Rockbund Art Museum and curated by Xu Tiantian, Curatorial Manager, with Pan Zhen, Curatorial Assistant.



Rendering view of *Six N. Five: Memories of Tomorrow*

## **RAM x TR Lab: Memories of Tomorrow** **Capitol Theatre, ROCKBUND**

Shanghai's historic Capitol Theatre in the Rockbund district reopens with an ambitious immersive installation by digital artist Six N. Five. Co-organized by TR Lab and Rockbund Art Museum, *Memories of Tomorrow* fills the iconic 1920s architecture of Shanghai's first modernist cinema with an existential journey of breathtaking scale and depth.

Argentinian-born, Barcelona-based Six N. Five, aka Ezekiel Pini, is best known for his poetic mirages that combine sculptural, architectural and digital techniques that transform

the viewers' experience of time and space. Structured over four "acts", *Memories of Tomorrow* contemplates the plasticity of perception and memory in the digital age. The narrative unfolds through a series of spatial performances, played out through Pini's rigorous and symphonic studies of light and shadow, symmetry and geometry. Recalling Joseph Kosuth's seminal conceptual gesture, the chair recurs throughout Pini's installation as a motif of human presence and absence, caught between pixels and atoms.

Opened in 1928, the Capitol Theatre was a symbol of Shanghai's golden era, with its dreams of a technological and cosmopolitan future. Almost a century on from that cinematic zenith, we sit at a far more ambiguous juncture, where technology is an ubiquitous, often controlling, force in our lives. Pini's dream-like interventions into the Capitol's architectural surface explore the spectral and existential presence of the digital in shaping our realities, blurring the boundaries between history, memory and dream.

**Ezequiel Pini**, a.k.a **Six N. Five**, is an award-winning Argentinian digital artist and designer based in Barcelona, who has also recently taken on art world representation by Triple X. Over the last decade, Pini has pioneered the use of 3D to create imaginary worlds with his signature clean, modern aesthetic. His work incorporates different mediums to explore imaginary spaces, moving stories and physical works.

*Memories of Tomorrow* is organized by TR Lab and Rockbund Art Museum; curated by X Zhu-Nowell, Artistic Director, Rockbund Art Museum.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAM:**

### **Curatorial Practice in Asia: para-institution**

**Date: Nov 15 - 17 (invitation only); Nov 18 (public)**

Founded in 2018, Curatorial Practices in Asia (CPA) is a platform dedicated to shaping the narrative and charting the future course of curatorial practices in and through Asia and the Asian Diaspora. Throughout the four-day gathering, it will move beyond investigating our practices in the light of specific historical periods and regions, choosing instead to redefine them and challenge the conventional exhibition-centric paradigms in curatorial practices.

This year's edition, organized by X Zhu-Nowell, embraces the theme of 'para-institution.' It focuses on curatorial and artistic imaginations that neither resist nor are circumscribed by cultural institutions. They exist in the liminal realms, often materializing as acts of hacking, self-organization, mutual aid, underground clubs, festivals, and a myriad of other initiatives. By gathering these dispersed practitioners in person for the first time since COVID, we hope to foster a space to learn from each other's experiences and methodologies, trade strategies, and envisage new possibilities for collaboration and mutual support.

In addition to the museum's curatorial and research staff, this year's participants also include: Merv ESPINA (artist and curator based in Las Piñas, Metro Manila); Lantian XIE (artist, curator, and writer based in Dubai and Berlin); Shubigi RAO (artist, writer, and curator based in Singapore); Mijoo PARK (curator and researcher based in Seoul); Alia SWASTIKA (curator and researcher based in Jakarta, and Director of Yogyakarta's Biennale Jogja Foundation); Pongsakorn Yananissorn (curator based in Bangkok); John Tain (Head of Research at Asia Art Archive based in Hong Kong); WANG Weiwei (Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at Center for Heritage Arts & Textile based in Hong Kong); SU Wei (writer, researcher, and curator based in Beijing); XIANG Zairong (Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature and Associate Director of Art at Duke

Kunshan University); ZHANG Hanlu (curator based in Guangzhou); LI Xiaotian (curator, artist, writer, and researcher based in Guangzhou, and Coordinator of Huangbian Station); Hera Chan (curator and writer based in Hong Kong, and Adjunct Curator, Asia-Pacific, Tate).

## **Conference: Hybrid Strategies, Accidental Alliances**

**Date: Nov 19 (public); Nov 20 (invitation only)**

In parallel to Curatorial Practice Asia, we will convene a public roundtable of international institutional thinkers at the intersection of culture, technology and economy, a program organized by 2023 RAM+ fellow Gary Zhexi Zhang.

A time of shifting global narratives calls for aesthetic and organizational strategies beyond the conventional comfort zones of contemporary art. Participants including Nora Khan (writer, editor & co-curator, Biennale de l'Image Mouvement), Aslak Aamot Helm (Co-founder, Primer/Diakron), Victoria Ivanova (R&D Strategic Lead, Serpentine), Ben Vickers (Technologist and Publisher) and Mi You (Professor of Art & Economy, documenta Institute). They will join Gary Zhexi Zhang, RAM artistic director X Zhu-Nowell and the RAM curatorial team in a reflection on their respective interdisciplinary practices and the possibilities of 21<sup>st</sup>-century cultural infrastructure.

## **About Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai**

Inaugurated in 2010, the Rockbund Art Museum (RAM) is a contemporary art museum located on the Bund in Shanghai. The museum is housed in a historic Art Deco building from 1932 that was originally one of the first modern museums established in China. The landmark building was renovated by David Chipperfield.

In considering what it means to be an Asia-based contemporary art museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, RAM, led by Artistic Director X Zhu-Nowell, aims to explore the importance of “archipelago thinking”: connecting to artistic culture across Asia and beyond to gain richer perspectives on today’s challenges, practices, and networks within contemporary artistic practices. We wish to build constructive, creative relationships between multiple localities in Asia and different cultures globally, to create a hub for working with a broad range of artists, researchers, and scholars, and to dive into subtle and dense layers of new experiences with our audience.

With a strong reputation for an innovative curatorial approach, RAM experiments with different models of what an art project can be, from research to alternative learning programs, from exhibition-making to unexpected performative formats. By supporting bold contemporary art practices, we aim to recognize local histories while responding to global art challenges and social change.

RAM regards the role of exchange as an essential process for cultural growth, by building up a network of multi-regional, international, and cross-disciplinary partnerships. Through this process, we aim to cultivate diverse and deep-rooted connection to our audiences and communities and also to different social and cultural organizations. With strong support from our board, patrons, and Advisory Committee, we strive to observe, learn, and pursue opportunities to develop original art projects that explore and engage with the multi-faceted

elements of contemporary life.

[www.rockbundartmuseum.org](http://www.rockbundartmuseum.org)

## **International Press**

For more information and interviews with Shubigi Rao, Tan Jing and RAM Artistic Director X Zhu-Nowell, please contact: Sarah Greenberg, Evergreen Arts: [sgreenberg@evergreen-arts.com](mailto:sgreenberg@evergreen-arts.com) or +44 (0)7866543242.

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