

## Humanistic Nature and Society - An Insight into the Future Humanistic Nature and Society - A People's Biography

The term “*Shan-Shui*” is no longer merely about traditional Chinese landscape painting, mountains, great rivers, and pastoral scenes; “*Shan-Shui*” has become a spirit, which mirrors the ultimate harmony between man and nature. Directly translated as “mountain and water” and symbolizing a spiritual dwelling that is brimming with poetic vision and ideals, it can be traced back to the utopian land that was depicted as Peach Blossom Spring. *Shan-Shui* has always been rooted in the traditional and modern delineation of landscape and can be perceived in the attempts to reflect on and investigate the contemporary context of society.

When the past, the present and the future meet, our perceptions, experiences and imaginations inevitably and intricately intertwine. In the context of contemporary China, the nation’s dramatic development has led not only to material prosperity but also to drastically growing desires, and the disappearance of many existing ways of life. With such a backdrop, what kind of *Shan-Shui* practice is happening today? What kind of *Shan-Shui* society do artists envision as a model for the future?

Unveiled on September 28, 2016 at the Shanghai Himalayas Museum, the *Humanistic Nature and Society (Shan-Shui)* exhibition is curated by Wong Shun-kit and consists of two parts. *Humanistic Nature and Society (Shan-Shui) - An Insight into the Future*, once a Collateral Event of the 56th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia, looks into the future *Shan-Shui* society, while *Humanistic Nature and Society (Shan-Shui) - A People's Biography* focuses on the contemporary practice of *Shan-Shui*. The exhibition will present **images, photography, video, Chinese ink painting, installation, and literature**. Audience members will have the chance to have rich interactive experiences as they view both static and dynamic works of nearly a hundred artists from China and abroad.

“*Humanistic Nature and Society (Shan-Shui) - An Insight into the Future*” features three sections: *Peach Blossom Spring - The Imagery of the Past*, *Metamorphosis - The Imagery of the Reality* and *Shan-Shui Society - The Imagery of the Future*. From the delineation of the natural landscape depicted by Xie Shichen and He Haixia, to the problems commonly faced by contemporary people indicated by Yang Yongliang, Wang Nanming and Yuan Shun, and to the presentation, by Ma Yansong, Chen Bochong and Dai Zhikang, of a humanistic approach with a futuristic touch, the exhibition intends to depict a constantly evolving image that inspires reflection and casts light on the visual art language of the future.

In line with “*All the World’s Future*”, the International Art Exhibition of Venice Biennale’s theme for that year, “*Humanistic Nature and Society (Shan-Shui)-An Insight into the Future*” stands in as the latest attempt to envision and explore a future imbued with the traditional *Shan-Shui* spirit. The project has gained support from China National Arts Fund in 2015, Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation in 2015, and Propaganda Cultural Development Fund of Pudong New Area in 2015, and was awarded by the Ministry of Culture as an Outstanding Exhibition in China in 2015. The show began its China Tour in March 2016 at the Chongqing Art Museum. It then moved to the Xi'an Museum of Contemporary Art with its third stop being the Shanghai Himalayas Museum starting from September 28. Beijing will be the next and final destination for the exhibition.

The newly added section, “*Humanistic Nature and Society - A People's Biography*” focuses on the

contemporary practice of *Shan-Shui*. Inviting artists who have brought arts to the villages, the exhibition presents the current practice and role of contemporary art in revitalizing villages.

*Plan of Xu Village* by Qu Yan presents, from different perspectives, the artist's practice at Xu Village during the past 10 years. He says, "*Plan of Xu Village* is not merely a recording and summary of a village art event...the purpose is to understand the impact of social transformation on Chinese villages, and the solution to dealing with it." The theory and practice of "Art to Promote Revival and Renovation of Villages" he proposed talks about the active and complex interactions between art and local government, rooted village officers and villagers.

Xu Village can be categorized as kind of rural construction from the outside to the village itself. Comparatively, Shijiezi Village exhibits an artistic transformation plan initiated by the villagers. The village is located in northwest of China, at 34'54 degrees north latitude and 105'40 east longitude. It is 5 kilometers north from Qin'an county of Tianshui city, south east of Gansu province. This village on the arid area at Liang Mao Ravines of Loess Plateau comprising no more than 13 households has been turned into an art museum. **Jin Le**, an artist born at Shijiezi Village, was elected as Head of the village in 2008. He made great efforts to transform the village into an art museum. Every year, he invites artists from China and abroad as well as theatre performers to attend the art activities in the village. Villagers and artists work together on the basis of the local characters. He said: "**Art makes a better village.**"

Qu Yan and Jin Le introduced art into the village from a macro perspective, while Wang Lin, Chen Qiji and Gao Lei created workshops to encourage students to collect old family photos and tell family stories, from their own memories as a form of teaching and interaction. Li Yifan's *Village Archive* is an image collection against a diversified society, recording large amounts of video of a western village in China. His work tries to present the universality of western Chinese village societies through the objective recording of his video samples. Zhang Xiaotao's *Puzzled Fog* is a myth miracle that utilizes cartoons to tell the story of animals establishing a ten mile long steel city along a river of pastoral sights. War, fear of death and struggle are well presented. The work aims to reflect the futile efforts, ignorance, conceit and absurdity of human beings in the pursuit of material goals through the allegory of an animal drama. Yang Qian's series *Walking In Shan-Shui* records his daily walking routes using the now popular software to measure "*Shan-Shui*" by foot. Zou Cao's work leverages modern technology to interact with the audience, as reflected in *Travelling in Heart*, *See the Light for Thinking*, and *Neither Have Nor None*, which expand the concept of "nothingness" in traditional Chinese philosophy to the broader field of contemporary art. Bing Yi, Lan Zhenghui, Qin Feng, and Zhang Mingming salute to the "*Shan-Shui*" landscape society with their ink paintings, which echo the classic *Shan-shui* works of Chinese masters Xie Shichen, Zhang Daqian, He Haixia, Feng Zikai and Gu Yuan. The world famous musician Tan Dun uses sound to express feelings of "*Shan-Shui*", classic and modern.

An additional architecture section will be presented at the exhibition of "A People's Biography": "Reconstructing Utopia". Curated by Ye Cheng, this section invites young architects in China and abroad to think about utopia cities and future buildings.

“*Shan-Shui* society” is a topic that the Shanghai Himalayas Museum has been consistently working on during the past few years. From *Let's Talk about the Environment in the Language of Art* in 2012, the presentation of *Shan-Shui* architecture in the inaugural exhibition “Insightful Charisma” at the museum’s new main space in 2013, to *Oh, My Homeland!* at the Marrakech Biennale and *Lofty Mountains and Dancing Water: A Probe into the City for Tomorrow - Exhibition of Chinese Shan-Shui City* at China Cultural Center in Berlin in 2014, the museum has made great efforts to bring into life the essence of *Shan-Shui* spirit in a contemporary context.

## **Humanistic Nature and Society (*Shan-Shui*,山水) - An Insight into the Future** **Humanistic Nature and Society - A People's Biography**

Shanghai Himalayas Museum

Duration: September 29-October 4, 2016 (Closed on Mondays)

Venue: Shanghai Himalayas Museum (3F-4F, No.869, Yinghua Road, Pudong New District, Shanghai)

Founder: Dai Zhikang

Curator: Wong Shun-kit

## **Humanistic Nature and Society (*Shan-Shui*,山水) - An Insight into the Future**

Collateral Event of the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia

China Tour Exhibition | Shanghai

A Project Supported by China National Arts Fund

**4F, Shanghai Himalayas Museum**

Artists: ( alphabetical order)

Chen Bochong, Gao Shiqiang, He Haixia, Hu Xiangcheng, Lee Mealee ( Korea ) , Ma Yansong, Ni Weihua, Wang Nanming, Wang Jiuliang, Xie Shichen, Yangjiang Group ( Zheng Guogu, Chen Zaiyan, Sun Qinglin ) , Yang Yongliang, Yuan Shun

## **Humanistic Nature and Society - A People's Biography**

**3F, Shanghai Himalayas Museum**

Artists: ( alphabetical order)

Arata Isozaki, Bing yi, Bai Xueshi, Chen Qiji, Chen Linxiang, Feng Zikai, Fei Xinwo, Gao Lei, Gu Yuan, Guan Shanyue, Huang Binhong, Huang Junbi, Huang Chunyao, Huang Qiuyuan, Huang Shanshou, Huang Miaozi + Yu Feng, Jin Le, Jin Shengxi, Lou Shibai, Lan Zhenghui, Li Bo+ Zhang

Yong, Li Yifan, \*LLND( Laurent Lettree & Nathalie Delpesch Aka ), Luo Zhijian + Zhang Qingyi, Ni

Mogeng, Pan Xiaoling, Qian Songyan, Qin Feng, Qu Yan, Song Di, Tan Dun, Tao Yiqing, Tong Yankui, Wang Lin, Wang Wenji, Wang Suncang, Wu Yifeng, Xie Zhiliu, Xu Yan, Yuan Songnian, Yu Zicai, Yuan Jiang, Yang Qian, Zhou Huaimin, Zheng Mukang, Zhang Mingming, Zhang Xiaotong, Zou Cao, Zhang Jin, Zhang Daqian, Zhu Qizhan



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**Architecture Part : Reconstructing Utopia    Curator : Ye Cheng**

Chris Precht + Sun Dayong, Dai Pu, Feng Feifei, Gao Yuan, Guo Jinda, Han Mengyao + Jacopo Abbate + Martina Mitrovic, He Jianxiang+Jiang Ying, Joanne Chen, Just open Architecture, Li Danfeng+Zhou Jianjia, Mu Wei+ Alain Renk, Shuhei AOYAMA, Ruan Wentao+Liu Zhenyu, Shi Gang, Shi Yang, Wang Wei, Wang Zigeng, Ye Cheng, Ye Min + Blasco Grande Ivan, Zhang Jiyuan +Bu Xiaojun, Zhao Wei