

Robert Zhao Renhui: The Lines We Draw

Opening: 15 January 2020, 6pm – 8pm

Duration: 15 January – 15 April 2020

Singapore, July 2019 – ShanghART Singapore is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Robert Zhao Renhui, *The Lines We Draw*. Bringing together recent new work spanning photography, video and installation, this exhibition explores migration and extinction in the natural world. Drawing from narratives from China, Taiwan and Singapore, Zhao's work spotlights situations of ecological interest: from the migrations of godwits and great knots over the skies of the Yalu River estuary to the eradication measures against invasive spotted tree frogs in Taipei.

The exhibition is split into three parts. The first part is titled *Disturbances*, comprising images and objects that explore various taxonomies humankind has imposed on nature, such as native and invasive, noxious and useful. The work includes images of the spotted tree frog, an invasive species in Taipei crowding out the native white-lipped frog. These were created when Zhao joined a group of volunteers in Taipei who meet regularly on "Remove Every Frog" night hunts to capture invasive spotted tree frogs.

The second section, *The Lines We Draw*, is a series of large-scale lightboxes depicting bird migration in Yalu River. Located between China and North Korea, the Yalu river serves as a border; a politically charged space both on and above ground. For the migratory godwits and great knots, the river carries another meaning; it is a checkpoint in their annual journey that spans across the globe from Alaska to New Zealand. During migration season in 2019, Zhao and a local researcher visited the mouth of the Yalu River to document the phenomenon.

The last section of the exhibition is titled *A Monument to Thresholds* and explores extinctions and conservation efforts to prevent them. Gathering objects and narratives from different parts of the world, this section attests to the ambiguities of ecological conservation, and the extreme measures preventing species wipeout.

Zhao is particularly interested in threshold states, as both migration and extinction involve the crossing of boundaries. Exploring the spaces between invasives and natives, foreign and local, life and death, his works embrace a multitudinal perspective on the world. Although his images are drawn from specific locales, they are not constrained by their geographies. They remain mysterious, inviting contemplation without closing off interpretative possibilities, allowing for a position that is perpetually changing and unfolding.

In humankind's pursuit for objectivity and order, whether within the field of science or politics, they have drawn lines across landscapes, communities, and disciplines. Zhao's practice scrutinises the scientific method by infusing it with the aesthetic sensitivity and poetics of his images. In light of the ongoing Anthropocene extinction, the beauty in Zhao's works is fraught with tension and complexities; beneath the familiarity of animals and cabinets of curiosities lies the negotiation between humankind's understandings of existence and the latter's perpetual changeability. Zhao problematises the safety of anthropocentric knowledge through representations of the other; reflecting on the lines and logics demonstrated by beings other than ourselves.

About Artist

Singaporean visual artist Robert Zhao Renhui (b. 1983) works chiefly with photography but often adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, presenting images together with documents and objects in the form of textual and media analysis, video and photography projects. His artistic practice investigates man's relationship with nature, utilizing convincing narratives to invoke doubts in its audience towards the concept of truth and its portrayal. His works has been exhibited globally, having held solo exhibitions in Singapore, China, Japan, Australia, and Italy, as well as participating in various biennales and photo festivals.

Recent exhibitions include *Singapore Biennale: Every Step in the Right Direction*, Gillman Barracks, Singapore (2019), *The Lines We Draw*, Yalu River Art Museum, Dandong, China (2019), *Effect*, Orange County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA (2019); *Observe, Experiment, Archive*, Sunderland Museum and Winter Garden, London, U.K (2019); *The Institute of Critical Zoologists Final Report of the Christmas Island Expert Working Group*, NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore (2018); *The 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT9)*, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Australia (2018); *Hugo Boss Asia Art 2017*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2017). Most recently, he is named as a finalist for the Benesse Prize 2019, and the Hugo Boss Asia Art Award 2017.

About ShanghART Gallery

ShanghART Gallery was established in Shanghai in 1996. It has since grown to become one of China's most influential art institutions and a vital player in the development of contemporary art in China, representing over 60 pioneering and emerging artists, including DING Yi, LI Shan, Arin RUNGJANG, Melati SURYODARMO, Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, XU ZHEN®, YANG Fudong, ZENG Fanzhi, and ZHAO Renhui Robert.

In 2012, ShanghART Gallery established its first overseas gallery in Singapore, located in contemporary arts cluster Gillman Barracks.

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GILLMAN BARRACKS