



Pavilion of the People's Republic of China at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

China Pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition, titled “Meta-Scape”, is hosted by is organised by Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China and presented by China Arts and Entertainment Group Ltd. The project for China Pavilion, curated by Zhang Zikang, director of the Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, with Sun Dongdong as assistant curator, elects the works from four artists —Liu Jiayu, Wang Yuyang, Xu Lei and the art collective AT art group (a joint project between the CAFA Institute of Sci-Tech Arts and Tsinghua Laboratory of Brain and Intelligence). The exhibition will be open to the public from April 23 to November 27, 2022. The Pre-opening will take place on April 20, 21 and 22.

The theme of China Pavilion “Meta-Scape”

“Scape” is an evolving term in the discourse system of traditional Chinese culture, extending from the meanings of frontier and border to the spiritual realm that can be touched by human spiritual perception as well as various terminologies. Besides, the image of “Scape” also appeared in Chinese modernization process. In the early 1990s, when "virtual reality technology" was spread as an emerging technology in China, the famous scientist Qian Xuesen keenly discovered that it contained the combination of human and machine and spiritual intention, which could be connected to the interpretation of "realm" in traditional Chinese culture. For this reason, he translated "virtual reality" into "spiritual scape", and understood the "virtuality" from this context in a unique Chinese style.

Zhang Zikang, curator of the China Pavilion, stated "Meta-Scape" as the exhibition theme of the China Pavilion at this Venice Art Biennale, is inspired by the "Scape" in the traditional Chinese literary represented by "poetry". From the contemporary perspective of media theory, "Meta-Scape" has connected an ecological or system image presented by "Scape" to the current human context of "human-technology-nature" and has responded to the exhibition theme of “The Milk of Dreams” that represents “Anthropocene” and “De-humanization” as well as the thoughts, concepts and actions of “A Free World Full of Possibilities” not only in the long history of the evolution of Chinese civilization, but also from the inner experience of Chinese modernization.

As the exhibition theme of the China Pavilion at this Venice Art Biennale, based on the human context of “human-technology-nature”, Meta-Scape aims at representing the “Structure of Understanding” created by the Chinese nation in the process of understanding and transforming the world and exploring the civilization landmark set by mankind for the coexistence of the future world by taking the “Scape” in traditional Chinese culture as a principle concept,

holding the attitude of transcending time indicated by “Meta”, basing on Chinese experiences in pursuing modernization, regarding the practices in new media art as medium and applying emotions and scenes, virtual and real, heart and objects through the aesthetic method of “scape creation” and symbolic images of plants, rocks, etc.

According to Sun Dongdong, assistant curator of the China Pavilion, “Meta-Scape” is divided into two areas: garden and exhibition hall. Wang Yuyang's sculptures “Snowman” (2021) is displayed in the garden area. The exhibition hall area displays the group project “Jungle”(2021) by the CAFA Institute of Sci-Tech Arts and the Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, Tsinghua University, "Xinghui" by Xu Lei (2021), “Stay in absolute void; remain silent within” by Liu Jiayu (2021) and “Wang Yuyang#: Quarterly” by Wang Yuyang (2021). The works of the three artists and a group project together construct the spatial narrative of “Meta-Scape”.

Meta-Scape, as the theme of the exhibition, it creates and presents a symbiotic cosmic consciousness. The starting point is completely different from the popular concept of "metaverse". The purpose of “Scape Creation” is not to establish new divisions, on the contrary, its purpose is to transcend the boundaries of reality, to re-establish a universal way of looking at oneself, hereby exploring the possibility of constructing a common future for mankind.

Profile of curator

Zhang Zikang:

Zhang Zikang is the director of CAFA Art Museum, and a professor and doctoral supervisor of Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA). He is also the editor-in-chief of Art Museum magazine, vice-president of CAFA Institute of Sci-Tech Arts, director of China Artists Association, deputy director of the Experimental Art Committee of the Chinese Artists Association, and deputy director of the Art Museum Committee of Chinese Museums Association. He has been in charge of the planning, editing and publishing of more than 1,000 volumes of various literary and art books, and won national book awards in China for many times. He also has curated numerous large-scale art exhibitions with great influence both in China and abroad, such as “Marc Chagall: Color and Magic”, the first Marc Chagall’s solo exhibition in China; “Leandro Erlich: The Confines of the Great Void”; “Anish Kapoor”; “Xu Beihong: Living Art Forever”; “Beyond”, the opening exhibition of TAG Art Museum, etc.

Sun DongDong:

Sun DongDong is a curator, critic and writer of contemporary art, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Huayu Youth Award. He is dedicated to the critical writing and exhibition planning of Chinese contemporary art, focusing on the "post-Olympic era" of Chinese contemporary art, new media art, and the construction of Chinese contemporary art systems.

Profile of artists

Liu Jiayu:

Known for her immersive and evocative media installations, Jiayu Liu is a media artist based in London and Beijing. She holds an MA from the Royal College of Art.

Jiayu's work often recreates and augments the natural world and focuses on relationships between humans, nature, and the lived environment, exploring human behavior and response. Using live and static streams of data and digital technologies, her installations enable new communication nodes with audiences. The audience's behavioral response and emotional resonance are aroused through spatial collage and displacement, making her creation repeatedly "re-created" by audiences.

Her work has been featured on ITN N2K, WIRED, Inhabitat, Thecreatorsproject, VICE, Design Boom, Fubiz, Tatler, and more. She has been shortlisted for the Aesthetica art prize, Lumen digital art prize. She has exhibited internationally in the museums and galleries, including the V&A in London, K11 Art Space in Hong Kong, He Xiangning Museum, and Guan Shanyue Museum in Shenzhen, CAFA Museum, Times Museum, Today Art Museum and Riverside Museum in Beijing, Power Long Museum and OCAT in Shanghai, London Design Festival, Kinetica Art Fair London, London Fashion Week, Watermans Art Centre London, Chengdu Biennial and Guangzhou Triennial. She was made in a list 2020 Forbes China 30 under 30 and 2020 Robb Report China Young artist of the year.

She has collaborated with many brands (Audemars Piguet, Burberry, Lancome, Acqua Di Parma, Mo&co, OPPO, Lexus, Marie Claire) and some art commission projects for public spaces, such as Hanzhong road station and Glowworm garden in Ruihong World in Shanghai, Iceland in Sanya.

Wang Yuyang:

Wang Yuyang born in 1979, Harbin studied at the China Central Academy of Drama and the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He has taught at the School of Experiment Art at the Central Academy of Fine Arts since 2008 and lives and works in Beijing. WANG Yuyang creates works using emergent media but does not deliberately emphasize the novelty of technology. He is more interested in the artistry brought about by "outdated" technology, "destructive" aesthetics and material waste. His work has employed all possible media. He often uses humour, fiction and spectacles to explore and reflect upon the relationship between the human body, experience and cognition. At the same time he also investigates the relationship between artificial reality, media technology and historical perception.

Heterogeneously profuse and cognitively amorphous, WANG Yuyang's work eschews the familiar stock of artistic tools, eliciting questions about authorship foreign to the human subject, creativity in favor of another order of ingenuity, and conceptual heresies that collapse the conventions of criticism. His mode of conception and production may be characterized as a form of non-standard art, akin to François Laruelle's radical estrangement from philosophical traditions in the name of non-philosophy.

Xu Lei:

Xu Lei, born in Jiangsu province in 1963, is currently working at the Chinese National Academy of Arts. He was admitted to Nanjing Art Institute in 1980, where he majored in traditional Chinese painting. After graduation, he participated in the 85th Art New Wave Movement and participated in the Chinese Modern Art Exhibition. Since then, his main direction is to transform traditional paintings with modern concepts, so that traditional aesthetics can be regenerated in new images, forming styles and making influences. At the same time, he also uses installation, video as his creative medium to extend his painting concept, advocating the transformation of traditional Chinese cultural "principles" into contemporary visual cognition, and building a connection with the future based on the knowledge lineage of art history.

Xu Lei has held solo exhibitions at the National Museum of China, Suzhou Museum, Beijing Today Art Museum, Beijing Nanchizi Art Museum, Marlborough Gallery (New York/Madrid), as well as galleries in San Francisco, London, and Hong Kong. He has also participated in important exhibitions such as the Guggenheim Museum's "5000 Years Exhibition of Chinese Civilization and Art" and "China Pavilion at the 12th Venice Architecture Biennale". Besides, his works are collected by the Palace Museum, Shanghai Art Museum, Jiangsu Provincial Art Museum, Suzhou Museum, Hong Kong M+ Art Museum and other institutions.

The AT group:

The AT group was born out of a collaborative research process between the Institute of Technology and Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Brain and Intelligence Laboratory of Tsinghua University, and its members are committed to exploring and practicing new paths and possibilities for the intersection of art and technology in today's multidisciplinary and multi-disciplinary era, promoting innovation in art development while providing new imaginations and practices for technology. AT is also an acronym for Art and Technology.

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The group will continue to include new members from different fields of interest, depending on the direction of the research and the nature of the project.

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