



PAN YULIANG: A JOURNEY TO SILENCE

From Saturday, May 20 to Saturday, June 24, 2017

Opening on Saturday, May 20, 3 pm to 4 pm (press) - 4 pm to 9 pm (general public)

Curator: Nikita Yingqian Cai



Mia Yu, *An Atlas of Archive*, 2017. Courtesy Mia Yu

Pan Yuliang: A Journey to Silence

With Hu Yun, Huang Jing Yuan, Pan Yuliang, Marc Vaux, Wang Zhibo, Mia Yu

"What is important in a work is what it does not say. This is not the same as the careless notation "what it refuses to say", although that would in itself be interesting; a method might be built on it, with the task of measuring the silences, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. But rather this, what the work cannot say is important, because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence."

Pierre Macherey quoted in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan Education: Basingstoke, 1988, pp. 271-313

The social network of **Pan Yuliang's** (1895-1977) early career as a modernist artist and an art educator in the period of the Republic of China resonated with larger social-political movements at that time: from the cultural construct of 'New Woman' and the New Culture Movement, to the revolution and reform launched by the Nationalist Party and early Communists and the rise of modern nationalism in China, and from the end of World War I to the Japanese Invasion in 1937. While many of her male peers and acquaintances with western educational background advocated their social, political, and cultural visions in public, and made their way into mainstream history, Pan Yuliang's own accounts related to major decisions on changes in her life and her artistic motivation are nowhere to be found. The silent journey continued beyond her return to Paris in 1937, and she left no written commentary regarding her concept for *Quatre artistes chinoises contemporaines*, which opened in 1977 in Musée Cernuschi in Paris. For this particular exhibition, Pan Yuliang extended the solo invitation to include three other woman artists, who worked in traditional art forms and were all part of the Chinese diaspora.

Inspired by Pan Yuliang and her decision to expand the exhibition of 1977 to others, **Hu Yun, Huang Jing Yuan, Wang Zhibo, and Mia Yu** are invited to form a research group functioning as a collective subjective agency. Departing from the idea of representing Pan Yuliang by claiming new territories of authority, various subjectivities are displaced in the constellation of Pan Yuliang's past life, and her incarnation in our time as well as in the room of Villa Vassillief. Defying the usual autonomous area of individual work and artist, all of the participants in the exhibition are hosts as well as guests of each other's contributions. The research and the exhibition form a polyphonic orchestra that not only echoes Pan Yuliang's unique trajectory between modern and traditional China, the national and the transcultural, but also situates her constructed biography and artistic achievement within contemporary motives, detours, and universe.

Nikita Yingqian Cai

ABOUT PAN YULIANG

Pan Yuliang was born on June 14, 1895 in Yangzhou, China. In 1903, after having lost her parents, she was taken into the care of her uncle who sold her as a maid in a brothel. This unclear period in Pan Yuliang's life has given rise to many interpretations that are more or less fictionalized. However what appears to be certain is that she met Pan Zanhua that will become her husband. In 1920, she started to study painting at the Shanghai Academy of Arts, she then successfully applied for a scholarship with the Institut Franco-Chinois de Lyon, becoming the first female artist to benefit from the program. In 1923, Yuliang moved to Paris where she studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, during her stay in Paris, she became friends with the local Chinese art community, including artists such as Xu Beihong, Zhang Daofan and Sanyu. She graduated from the Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1925 and received a prestigious scholarship to continue her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, Italy where she trained in sculpture. After over three years in Rome, Pan Yuliang returned to Shanghai, and like the generation of artists who studied abroad, she played an important role in the circulation of modern art in China. Yuliang was appointed Professor of Western Art at the Academy of Arts in Shanghai and then at the National University of Nanjing, and significantly contributed to the creation and existence of many artistic associations.

She exhibited her work on numerous occasions, yet despite her success, her work - which gives a predominant place to the female nude - and her past continued to cause many controversies and misunderstandings and she continued faced many difficulties in imposing herself into the still very conservative Chinese art milieu. In 1937 Pan Yuliang left China for Paris to participate in the International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life. She remained there until her death. She exhibited on a number of occasions, notably at the Salon d'Automne or Salon des Indépendants, but despite her apparent success, she struggled as a Chinese woman and more broadly as a woman in asserting herself as a qualified artist in the French capital, even through she has realized an œuvre of unprecedented syncretism, of so-called Western techniques - such as oil painting - in combination with Chinese techniques - like ink drawings - to create an intercontinental oeuvre that continues to challenge a simple classification today.

She died on July 22, 1977 in Paris at the age of 82.

VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Hu Yun, *'Untitled (I'm-French, - but...)*, 2017
Courtesy Hu Yun

Huang Jing Yuan, *Unkind Jade: Three Chinese Painters*, 2017
Still image from two-channel video installation
Courtesy Huang Jing Yuan



VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Wang Zhibo, *As a painter, color will always be a question*, 2017
Oil on canvas
Courtesy Wang Zhibo

Marc Vaux, Pan Yuliang and her sculptures at the Grand Palais in the 1950s.
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VILLA VASSILIEFF & BÉTONSALON - CENTER FOR ART AND RESEARCH

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research offers a space of collective reflection that combines both artistic and academic practices, and questions the production and dissemination of knowledge. We develop our activities in a process-based, collaborative, and discursive manner, following different time spans, in cooperation with various local, national, and international organizations. Exhibitions are enriched by different associated events (workshops, conferences, performances, round table discussions...). We organize seminars and workshops in collaboration with faculty members from the Paris Diderot University. We lead off-site research projects in partnership with other institutions, and offer residency programs for researchers, artists, and curators.

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research is a non-profit organization established in Paris in 2003. Since 2007, Bétonsalon has been located on the campus of the Paris Diderot University. In 2016, we launched the Académie Vivante (Living Academy) program, an experimental research laboratory within the Epigenetics and Cell Fate unit (CNRS / Université Paris Diderot) that invites artists in residency. This same year, we launched Villa Vassillieff, our second site of activities, in the former studio of artist Marie Vassilieff, located in the heart of the Montparnasse neighborhood. Until 2013, this location was the Museum of Montparnasse. Villa Vassilieff is a cultural establishment of the City of Paris.

Villa Vassilieff intends to reconnect with the history of its location by inviting artists and researchers to take a contemporary look at the heritage of Montparnasse. Our exhibitions and public programs focus on exploring lesser-known resources and aim at re-writing and diversifying historical art narratives. Among many grant and residency opportunities, we joined forces with our leading sponsor Pernod Ricard to create the Pernod



Ricard Fellowship, a residency program inviting four international artists, curators, or researchers every year in the Villa's studio. We collaborate closely with museums and curators to design tailor-made research projects and bring innovative perspectives, as illustrated by the ongoing Marc Vaux program jointly led by Villa Vassilieff and Centre Pompidou's Kandinsky Library.

ABOUT

Curator

Nikita Yingqian Cai, associate director and chief curator of Guangdong Times Museum

Exhibition Coordinators

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Li Luyao Iris, assistant curator of Guangdong Times Museum

Coordination Assistants

Constance Doreau Knindick, coordination assistant, Villa Vassilieff
Cai Qiaoling, intern of Guangdong Times Museum

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Métro 4, 6, 12, 13,
stop Montparnasse-Bienvenüe
(exit 2 - Place Bienvenüe)
Bus 58, 91, 92, 94, 95,
stop Gare Montparnasse
Bus 28, 82, 89, 92, 96,
stop Place du 18 juin 1940 - Rue de l'Arrivée
Bus 89, stop Maine-Vaugirard

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PARTNERS

May 20 - August 20, 2017

A parallel exhibition, *Histoires d'oeuvres : Pan Yuliang*, is held at **Musée Cernuschi in Paris**.

September 8 - November 5, 2017

After the presentation in Villa Vassilieff, the journey will unfold into its second stage scheduled to be opened in the **Guangdong Times Museum**, where more artists are invited to join the conversation, and develop new interrogations that arise from Pan Yuliang while responding to the current situation of woman and female artists in China.

The exhibition is part of the Centre Pompidou's 40th anniversary program.

Exhibition partners

Pan Yuliang: A Journey to Silence unfolds over two chapters at Villa Vassilieff, Paris and Guangdong Times Museum; the exhibition is coproduced by Guangdong Times Museum and Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research. The exhibition is part of the Centre Pompidou's 40th anniversary program. A parallel exhibition, *Histoires d'oeuvres : Pan Yuliang*, will be held at Cernuschi Museum from May 20 to August 20, 2017.

Nikita Yingqian Cai is hosted by the City of Paris in the framework of the residency program of the International Center of the Récollets.

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The Académie vivante is supported by the Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso.

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research is a member of Tram, réseau art contemporain Paris / Île-de-France and of d.c.a / association française de développement des centres d'art.

Villa Vassilieff receives support from public and private partners first and foremost from the City of Paris, the Île-de-France Region and Pernod Ricard, its lead sponsor. Villa Vassilieff also develops partnerships with the Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, the Société des Auteurs dans les Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, the Collège d'études mondiales of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme, and the Goethe Institut.

