

深度时间的 飞去来器 The Boomerang of Deep Time

从汪建伟个展“行于泥浆”和
迈克尔·王个展“太湖”谈起

On Wang Jianwei's exhibition
“Treading in Sludge” and
Michael Wang's “Lake Tai”

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迈克尔·王个展“太湖”展览现场，
Prada 荣宅，上海，2022 年
图片致谢艺术家及 Prada 荣宅

Michael Wang's solo exhibition
“Lake Tai”, installation view,
Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Prada Rong Zhai

2022 年最常被提到的一个说法可能就是全球化的终结。三年疫情防控带来中国与世界的割裂，右派政治势力在西方崛起，以维护本国经济利益为由出台的政策，控制人口流动的自由，缩减为达到碳中和目标，淘汰化石燃料，以及遏制地球升温种种控制措施的投资。就连一向走在环保治国前沿的瑞典，新任政府上台后也屈就于议会中占多数席位的极右派，将推行绿色环保策略的环境部降为能源部隶属的部门，收紧政府在对抗气候变化方面的预算。刚刚落幕的 COP27 全球气候峰会没有对控制地球升温达成实质性方案，第三世界国家要求发达国家为他们超标的碳排放量赔偿的诉求没有得到回响，整个大会的信息在国内社交媒体几乎没引发任何话题。

问题是，这个地球自身的命运能够受控于国家制度和财政预算，在能源、生态和气候危机之外独善其身吗？答案显然是不可能的。生态批评家厄休拉·海斯（Ursula Heise）在讨论环境问题的全球化时，提出“生态世界主义”的新概念，环境作为议题，不仅关注你我居住地的“地方意识”（sense of place），而涉及关乎整个地球命运的“星球意识”（sense of planet）。用探险、开发、战争、奴役、殖民、掠夺书写的人类历史，归根结底也是一部获取地球能源的开发历史，从宇宙的深层时间发射的光子仍然无时无刻地影响我们今天的生活和未来的走向。然而，如何展示这种力量？如何让人认识到地球自身的历史与今天人类的日常和未来的关联？如何从生态和自然的变迁认识一片水域与当代人的地理、社会乃至血缘的联系？近期在上海开幕的两个艺术展览：上海没顶画廊举办的艺术家汪建伟个展“行于泥浆”和Prada荣宅呈现的艺术家迈克尔·王的展览“太湖”，都将关注点聚焦在地球的历史。两位艺术家通过各自的知识储备和工作方法，将他们的哲学思考和科学研究以绘画、雕塑和装置等不同媒介的艺术作品展出，邀请观众参与他们对人世纪中地球命运的忧虑，以及面对濒临种种危机的地球生态，艺术能否发挥功用的思考。

走进没顶画廊位于苏州河畔下沉广场的空间，剥落墙皮的水泥墙面，裸露的通风管道，迎接观众的是各种不同材质合成并置，形态和颜色难以定义的雕塑作品和墙上挂着的近乎逼真，正缓步走来的非洲象的画作，欢迎来到汪建伟的“寒武纪公园”，或者用艺术家惯用的工作方法命名，“寒武纪的排练场”。用科学和哲学的隐喻综合跨学科知识，是汪建伟为当代艺术赋能的工具和方法论，其核心是艺术家对时间的多重性作出的哲学思考的艺术表达。继2015年，汪建伟在纽约古根海姆美术馆以“时间寺”命名的个展后，这一次，他将时间指向由此向下5.3亿年前的地球的寒武纪，进入被称作地球生命的“深度时间”。塑造“深度时间”概念的美国作家约翰·麦克菲（John McPhee）在记录他在美国犹他州的峡谷中穿越远古地形之旅的著作《盆地与山脉》（Basin and Range, 1981）中，感叹“在深度时间里数字似乎失去了功能，几千年，五万年，五千万年……全都一样令人敬畏。”¹人类如何以一生常常不足百年的生命历程，去理解地球46亿年的演化呢？

¹ Alden, Andrew. "What is Deep Time?" ThoughtCo, Jul. 30, 2021, thoughtco.com/what-is-deep-time-1440836.



汪建伟个展“行于泥浆”展览现场，没顶画廊，上海，2022年
图片致谢艺术家及没顶画廊

Wang Jianwei's solo exhibition "Treading in Sludge", installation view, Madeln Gallery, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Madeln Gallery



汪建伟个展“行于泥浆”展览现场，没顶画廊，上海，2022年
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在汪建伟探伸到寒武纪地质时间的研究型创作中，敬畏无疑是一个贯穿他的哲学和艺术思考的线索。在2018年展览“寒武纪”的前言开篇，他就指出：“一个沉睡的地质时间仍可能具有我们当下无法穷尽的知识。这不仅仅是对于地质长时间的敬畏，而是对于人生命的短时间无法理解之事的惶恐，地质时间超越了“我们”对于世界惯有的量度，或者说不再以人的目光去衡量万物。”²在没顶画廊展厅内，一对仿佛展开的不锈钢翅膀下累积的一叠打磨上色的木块（《行于泥浆 No.3》2022），一只钢铁部件上伏卧着一个木雕，外形让人想到侏罗纪恐龙。（《行于泥浆 No.6》，2022）近观这些形状古怪的造型，木材拼接处细密的纹路露出丝滑的光泽，不锈钢的部件打磨得熠熠生辉。汪建伟的雕塑以物体的“合金”方式存在于被哈曼（Graham Harman）用艺术物件（Arty Object）扩宽的雕塑领域，它们难以名状的外形在哈曼的艺术品的“怪异”（weirdness）美学看来，“（怪异）有一种精确的技术意义：一种物体以其自身的特性而非可还原的方式紧张地存在的情况。”³

² 汪建伟“寒武纪”展览前言，
<http://wangjianweistudio.com>

³ <https://tzvetnik.online/article/graham-harman-as-for-how-the-object-resists-being-exhausted-i-don-t-think-it-needs-to-resist>

哈曼所言的紧张关系，在汪建伟一贯倡导的剧场性实验中被激活：摆放在地上低矮台座上的雕塑，与挂在墙上描绘史前地貌的绘画构成舞台上的点位，画面中明显的数码像素笔痕露出使用智能手机的现代人的惯性，寒武纪行星爆炸的残体落入地层，构成矿产资源的地球往事。在这里，跨国矿业公司在全球各地追逐的镍矿，才是这场以地球为舞台的“历程剧”的主角，从没顶画廊的下沉广场垂直下落到寒武纪生命大爆发的泥浆，和由此出发的生物演化，从细胞到文明，人类祖先的认知革命到超人类主义的科技奇点，压缩成艺术家汪建伟的创世记。这些在时间中不断生长的技术之物（汪建伟语），一张拖进当代艺术的行动者的网络（策展人陆兴华语），在我看来，是汪建伟对地球历史在“深度时间”的泥浆中生命出走的视觉隐喻。

若干个地球的深度时间过去后，在距今大约5千万年的地质时代，一颗巨大的陨石撞击今天的亚洲大陆，留下上千公里宽的陨石坑，形成日后的太湖。太湖是中国第三大的淡水湖，担负着周边2千万居民的日常饮用水，农业灌溉和连通无锡到上海的水路。作为中国经济发展的龙头地带，长三角地区密布的工厂也在夜以继日地向太湖排放废水。20世纪90年代起，太湖湖水的人为富营养化引发蓝藻大规模爆发，最严重时曾造成无锡市全民停水数日。太湖已经成为一种淡水生态系统退化的全球标志，从欧洲航天局拍摄的航空图片可以看到被绿色水华覆盖的湖面，亮丽的颜色几乎让人难以相信这些看上去很美的微生物竟有如此巨大的杀伤力。

“一个沉睡的地质时间仍可能具有我们当下无法穷尽的知识。这不仅仅是对于地质长时间的敬畏，而是对于人生命的短时间无法理解之事的惶恐，地质时间超越了“我们”对于世界惯有的量度，或者说不再以人的目光去衡量万物。”

Perhaps one of the most frequently discussed notions of 2022 will be the “end” of globalization. Three years into the pandemic, we have witnessed events ranging from China’s large-scale lockdowns and border closures, to the rise of far-right parties in Europe, policies defending domestic economic interests, restrictions on social mobility, and scaled-back investment in order to meet carbon neutrality targets (including fossil fuel phaseout and other measures to curb global warming). Sweden, assumedly in the vanguard of environmental governance, has elected a far-right government that’s decided to scrap the Ministry for the Environment as a standalone department responsible for environmental policies, placing it under the Ministry for Energy and making huge cuts in green funding for climate strategies. The COP27 global climate summit concluded without offering substantive proposals for controlling global warming. Demands by the developing world that the wealthiest countries pay for their excessive carbon emissions also went unheeded. Unsurprisingly the summit was overlooked by social media and the public in China.

Are we really placing the fate of the Earth on nation-states’ political policies and financial budget monitoring, and imagining these actions vanquishing the energy, environment and climate crisis? Any answer will be controversial. In discussing the globalization of environmental issues, the ecocritic Ursula Heise has coined the notion of eco-cosmopolitanism and suggested an inclusive and mutually constitutive relationship between a “sense of place” and a “sense of planet”; the environment as an issue is not a patchwork of distinct local issues in fragmented localities, but a total fact calling for global awareness. The history of mankind, written in terms of exploration, exploitation, war, slavery, colonization, and plunder, is ultimately a history of preying on Earth’s resources. The photons emitted from the deepest time in the cosmos continue to influence our current lives and our future, but how is such power manifested? Are we aware of the deep imprint of Earth’s history upon our humanity now and then? How can we perceive a waterscape that contains networks of contemporary geographical and social constructs (including kinship) through an understanding of ecological changes? Recent art exhibitions in Shanghai—Wang Jianwei’s solo “Treading in Sludge” at MadeIn Gallery and Michael Wang’s “Lake Tai” at Prada Rong Zhai—both consider humanity’s bond with the Earth. The artists’ senses of place and planet are not mere chance encounters; although they differ in research methodologies and their rationales are manifested in different artistic practices and media, they both invite the audience to contemplate the ecological issues conveyed by these paintings, sculptures, and site-specific installations, and to destabilize the anthropocentric obsession with determining Earth’s fate.

Here is MadeIn Gallery’s space, located in a sunken plaza along the Suzhou River. Viewers are met by a visual composite of huge abstract sculptures and relatively more realistic paintings of animals, complemented by raw concrete walls and exposed ventilation ducts. The African elephant in Wang Jianwei’s installation sends greetings. Perhaps, methodology-wise, the more precise name for this work should be Cambrian Rehearsal Grounds, as Wang is most familiar with interdisciplinary knowledge alloyed with scientific and philosophical metaphors that turn his rationale into tools for empowering contemporary art, at the heart of which is the artistic expression of his philosophical reflections on the multiplicity of time. Following Wang’s solo exhibition “Time Temple”, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2015, he now points back in time to the 530-million-years-ago Cambrian period of Earth, into what is known as “deep time”. American writer John McPhee applied the concept of deep time, in his book *Basin and Range* (1981), to a documentation of his journey through ancient terrain in the canyons of Utah, USA. He writes, “Numbers do not seem to work well with regard to deep time. Any number above a couple of thousand years—fifty thousand, fifty million—will with nearly equal effect awe the imagination.¹ So, how can humans, with a lifespan that seldom exceeds a century, possibly gauge Earth’s 4.6-billion-year evolution?”

¹ Alden, Andrew. “What is Deep Time?” ThoughtCo, Jul. 30, 2021, [thoughtco.com/what-is-deep-time-1440836](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-deep-time-1440836).

Awe is certainly a thread that connects Wang Jianwei’s philosophical and artistic thinking with the installations on display here that speculate about the Cambrian period. He has stated in materials for a 2018 exhibition that displayed works from the Cambrian installation series in Shanghai that “a dormant geological time may still have knowledge that we cannot possibly fathom at the moment. It is not just our wonder of geological longevity,



汪建伟,《行于泥浆 No.13》, 2021年, 布面油画, 113 × 163 厘米
图片致谢艺术家

Wang Jianwei,
Treading in Sludge No.13, 2021,
oil on canvas, 113 × 163 cm
Courtesy the artist

“A dormant geological time may still have knowledge that we cannot possibly fathom at the moment. It is not just our wonder of geological longevity, but instead a fear at everything incomprehensible due to humans’ inability to share the same longevity and continuity. Geological time transcends humans’ predominant gauge of the world. Or, in other words, it never expects us to measure everything through the eyes of men.”



汪建伟个展“行于泥浆”展览现场，没顶画廊，上海，2022年
图片致谢艺术家及没顶画廊

Wang Jianwei's solo exhibition "Treading in Sludge", installation view, MadelIn Gallery, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy the artist and MadelIn Gallery

but instead a fear at everything incomprehensible due to humans’ inability to share the same longevity and continuity. Geological time transcends humans’ predominant gauge of the world. Or, in other words, it never expects us to measure everything through the eyes of men.”² At MadelIn, these oddly shaped installations—for example, a stack of polished and painted wooden blocks around a pair of steel wings (*Treading in Sludge No.3*, 2022) and a well-structured steel plinth underneath a wooden dinosaurlike sculpture (*Treading in Sludge No.6*, 2022)—reveal a silky sheen on top of the finely assembled wood slices and stainless steel skeletons. These alloyed objects remind us of neo-materialist theories and the extended concepts for sculpture contained therein, especially “the weird” of Graham Harman’s *Art and Objects* (2019), “which has a precise technical sense: a situation in which objects exist in tension with their own qualities rather than being reducible to them.”³

Harman’s tension is also articulated in Wang’s theatrical experiments. Sculptures are placed on lower plinths, and across them paintings depicting prehistoric landscapes form different points of view on a stage. The pixelated details seem to echo a contemporary scene of humans’ craving

² Wang Jianwei, foreword to the exhibition “Cambrian”, <http://wangjianweistudio.com>

³ <https://tzvetnik.online/article/graham-harman-as-for-how-the-object-resists-being-exhausted-i-don-t-think-it-needs-to-resist>

for the digital such as smartphones. While the remnants of the Cambrian explosion—the bio-mineralised organisms that are now fossils—were once the witness of single-celled organisms’ hunger for nickel (lack of nickel was one of the causes of the Great Oxidation Event and the Cambrian explosion), we humans are now watching another round of nickel chasing involving multinational mining companies. A retelling of the story of the sludge (a metaphor for anaerobe as the shelter for organisms to block oxygen invasion) has its genesis in MadelIn at the sunken plaza. Looking back on the tool-beings (a phrase used by Harman and emphasized by Wang Jianwei) of evolutions, civilizations, cognitive revolutions and posthuman object-oriented technologizations, as well as the actor-network (coined by Latour and suggested by Lu Xinghua, curator of the exhibition) that fits in contemporary art, I cannot help but again dwell on the various versions of a nonhuman Exodus hidden behind the sludge that entails a visual and metaphoric reincarnation of a specific deep time.

In a geological era some 50 million years ago, a meteorite struck the present-day Asian continent, leaving a crater thousands of kilometres wide and forming what is now called the Lake Tai. It is the third largest freshwater lake in China and is responsible for the daily drinking water for the 20 million local inhabitants, agricultural irrigation and the waterway linkage from Wuxi to Shanghai. However, the Yangtze River Delta, China’s leading economic region, is also home to a cluster of factories that discharge industrial wastewater into Lake Tai night and day. Since the 1990s, anthropogenic eutrophication of the lake has caused massive cyanobacteria blooms, the worst of which has caused water outages in Wuxi for days. The lake has then become a global symbol of degradation of freshwater ecosystems. According to an image taken by the European Space Agency, the lake is covered in an enchanting green that would almost distract us from the threatening nature of such microorganisms.



迈克尔·王，《玉轴1，玉环1，玉盘1（先期研究）》和《组件2（先期研究）》，“文物（玉）”系列，2022年

迈克尔·王个展“太湖”展览现场，Prada 荣宅，上海，2022年
图片致谢艺术家及 Prada 荣宅

Michael Wang, *Shaft 1, Ring 1, Disk 1 (preparatory study)*, and *Assembly 2 (preparatory study)*, from the series “Artifacts (Jade)”, 2022

Michael Wang's solo exhibition “Lake Tai”, installation view, Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Prada Rong Zhai

如果说汪建伟的“行走泥浆”是地质时间的向下挖掘，美国艺术家迈克尔·王在 Prada 荣宅的展览则是由下而上，从地质向社会、历史和个人身份的探寻。从太湖出发，迈克尔·王以一名科学家的工作方法，考察被蓝藻损害的生态环境和近年来太湖治理的成果，探本溯源太湖的技术治理产出的生物废弃物的去向，包括太湖传统物产的大闸蟹每年吃蟹季产生的成千上万吨蟹壳垃圾的再利用。通过与同济大学学生在实验室进行测试和实验，最终获取完成艺术作品的材料。从太湖经由无锡抵达上海荣宅的历程，也是资本主义经济在中国落地生根，民族资本家的发家历史。一个多世纪前，荣宅的主人从无锡到上海，白手起家创造了坐拥半个中国的资产，在曾经遍布上海水路种满芦苇的藻泽地上，建起荣家的豪华花园洋房。让这条溯源之路更为个人化的还有艺术家迈克尔·王的身份故事，他的祖先有一半来自江浙，父亲出生于上海，祖父和荣宅的主人一样来自无锡。在迈克尔·王的创作中，“太湖”以一种自然与社会，科学与文化的杂合体，承担起编织世界的主角。

Prada 荣宅二楼宴会大厅里，重工镶嵌的彩色玻璃天花板下陈设着一组形奇色艳的“太湖石”。走近看，嵌在太湖石斑驳的纹理中的却是水草、蓝藻、和用太湖的蟹壳垃圾回收再造的甲壳素。在艺术自身从无功能性到用人为和技术塑造的新崇高的嬗变中，本是遭受长期碳酸盐侵蚀的地质残缺造就的太湖石千窍百孔的漏与皱，却在中国文人雅士和造园家眼中，化成遐想和意趣的载体，以一种自然的拟像被收藏、把玩。中国传统文化对山水自然的精神性的想象矗立在被工业污染和人类活动改变了生态环境的太湖，在人类纪的风景线上无用之材与怪石美学的奇异组合，将太湖组装成为一个关联历史、文化、个人以及经济利益、生态平衡和远古微生物的赛博朋克。

当代艺术展览大都是临时性的，而艺术家在创作中又常常怀抱着作品永恒的野心，艺术作品的生命期与材料生产碳排放量的关系，也是迈克尔·王关注的问题。十年前他创作的作品“碳副本”，用纸质的缩小副本模拟一些著名当代艺术家的作品，在计算出原作制作材料的碳排放量后，迈克尔·王按照购买消除等量碳排的国际指标价格给他的“副本”定价。迈克尔·王虽然表明他无意用环保标准去道德绑架其他艺术家，但他自己确实做出了用环保技术和地球关爱创作艺术的选择。荣宅中一般的大闸蟹雕塑是由太湖的水藻制成，日光室中的“苏州河（桩）”是回收苏州河沿岸被拆建筑的混凝土。在哈曼主义万物皆平等的的认知下，迈克尔·王展示了处于一种杂合状态中的所有物，人或是非人都应该被给予同样关注的诉求。迈克尔·王以一位气候行动者的身份，对当代艺术广泛谈论的材料命题，给出了一个艺术品创作可持续性的选择。

迈克尔·王在“太湖”展览中追逐的蓝藻是地球最古老的生物之一，在 26 亿年前的地质时间里引发大氧气事件，带来地球生态的革命；它们出现在汪建伟展览中的行于泥浆的地球深度时间里，因为具有转化氧气的功能，为寒武纪生命大爆发提供了先决条件；生物组织从细胞到生物体，从生物体到社会，完成人类社会的创世纪。上世纪末，蓝藻在中国经济迅猛发展的长三角地区引发生态危机，自然以自身的力量向人类宣战。身处人世纪的我们，如何才能认识到气候变化、碳排放、再生资源等热点问题的紧迫性和重要性？艺术家和环保行动家埃利亚松（Olafur Eliasson）在面对人类对气候变化的巨大影响普遍的无动于衷态度，提出文化可以将知识变为行动的有效途径。“艺术关乎着个人经验与共同经验间的关系，将我们凝聚在一起，激励着我们在不放弃个人和情感经验的前提下，成为这个世界上积极和有志向的一份子。”⁴ 汪建伟和迈克尔·王的展览，如同投向地球时间的飞去来器，一个指向地球的深层历史，揭示行于泥浆的生命源泉和当代社会的技术本质；另一个，从远至近，在自然、历史与人类的交汇处用艺术和行动警示当下。

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Olafur Eliasson, “Ice, Art, and Being Human,” <https://olafureliasson.net>

“艺术关乎着个人经验与共同经验间的关系，将我们凝聚在一起，激励着我们在不放弃个人和情感经验的前提下，成为这个世界上积极和有志向的一份子。”



迈克尔·王，《桩（先期研究）》，“苏州河（桩）”系列，2022 年

迈克尔·王个展“太湖”展览现场，Prada 荣宅，上海，2022 年
图片致谢艺术家及 Prada 荣宅

Michael Wang, *Piles (preparatory study)*, from the series “Suzhou Creek (Piles)”, 2022
Courtesy the artist

Michael Wang's solo exhibition “Lake Tai”, installation view, Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Prada Rong Zhai

Wang Jianwei's “Treading in Sludge” is an unearthing of a specific Earth's time, whereas American artist Michael Wang's exhibition at Prada Rong Zhai is a bottom-up approach to explore the social, the historical, and the individual. Lake Tai as a point of departure provides Michael a context for his research in the lake's environment interrupted by algae blooms and the technological interventions that aims to restore the healthy waterbody. He engages with waste from the techno-ecological treatments and crab shells due to annual consumption of hairy crabs, collaborating with students from Tongji University to develop materials for artworks. The journey he takes from Lake Tai via Wuxi to Rong Zhai in Shanghai also echoes the former owner of Rong Zhai's sojourn more than a century ago, paving the way for Rong's empire that owns a tremendous amount of asset including this luxurious western-style garden villa in central Shanghai—a swampy city that was once home for reed marshes. Part of artist Michael Wang's identity connects with these locations as most of his father's lineage came from Jiangsu or Zhejiang province, while his grandfather was from Wuxi and his father was born in Shanghai. Lake Tai in Michael Wang's new works, becomes a hybrid body entailing natural, socio-cultural and technological narratives that confront specific localities and the wider world.

In the ballroom on the first floor, here stands a collection of unusual Taihu stones under the extraordinary skylight composed of panels of stained crystalline glass. Take a closer look at the stone's textured surface flecked with recycled waste materials such as invasive water plants, algae (cyanobacteria) and crab shells. You would wonder how the artist has transformed the valueless waste into a new technological sublime. The long-term erosion from carbonic acid rendered the irregular craggy surfaces and openings of admired by ancient Chinese literati and garden landscape architects who often considered the stones an embodiment of taste, an object of imagination and a miniature of nature. The spirit within traditional Chinese culture's imagery of landscape has never left Lake Tai, even though it has been defiled by industrial if not anthropogenic pollution. There, the useless waste materials are the cyborg bodies of oddly aesthetic stone grottos weathered by an anthropocentric assemblage of historical events, cultural symbols, personal and economic interests, ecological urgencies and ancient microbes.

The ephemerality of contemporary art exhibitions concerns artists that are often ambitious about creating works that would be more than ephemeral spectacles. Reflecting on the general question of a life span of artworks and the heated issue of carbon footprint, Michael Wang has been ecologically conscious of his materials. For his solo project *Carbon Copies* ten years ago, Wang selected artworks from a range of well-known contemporary artists and represented them in cube-shaped copies. These sculptures were priced at the amount required to offset carbon footprint for producing the original artworks. Wang makes it clear that he has no intention of gaslighting other artists' practice, but only insists on practicing relevant technologies to care for the planet. For the exhibition in Rong Zhai, Wang continued with such an awareness, utilizing algae from Lake Tai for the hairy crab sculptures in a boat and concrete from demolished buildings along the Suzhou River for *Suzhou Creek (piles)* (2022) in the sunroom. Towards a Harmanian object-oriented ontology that considers all objects existing on equal footing, Wang reveals his wish for a state of hybridity in which all things, whether humans or nonhumans, can be given equal and unbiased respect. At the forefront of climate change action, Wang offers an alternative to the widely discussed approaches for sustainable materials in contemporary art.

The cyanobacteria investigated by Michael Wang for the exhibition "Lake Tai" are among the oldest living organisms on Earth, which triggered the Great Oxygen Event 2.6 billion years ago and thence a planetary change. A geophysical evolution, as well as an ecological revolution occurred. The

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Olafur Eliasson, "Ice, Art, and Being Human," <https://olafureliasson.net>

blue algae also seemed to be resonating with Wang Jianwei's object, the Cambrian. As the microbes silently and steadily released oxygen, they provided the conditions for more living bodies, leading to an explosion of life in the relevant era. No one would have thought that the cyanobacteria, the harbingers of an evolution of such magnitude, are responsible for the transformation of microorganism into organism, the formation of a hospitable planet, and the creation of human society. At the end of 20th century, cyanobacteria triggered yet another ecological crisis in the Yangtze River Delta that includes some of the fastest-growing economies. It is the nature's declaration of war on mankind. Still, are we trapped in the iconography of anthropocene? How can we recognize the urgency and importance of the heated issues such as climate change, carbon emissions and renewable resources? The indifference towards climate change is common. Artist and environmental activist Olafur Eliasson responded to such attitude, suggesting that culture has the power to make sense of knowledge and prompt action, "[a]rt deals with the relationship between personal and shared experiences... A work of art can contribute to the creation of a sense of community or reciprocity, and it can motivate us to do something together, to become conscious and active members of a global we, without surrendering our personal, emotional experiences."⁴ Both Wang Jianwei and Michael Wang's exhibitions are boomerangs that fly to different Earth times. While the former points to the deep history of Earth, revealing a contemporary imagination of the source of life and its asylum—figuratively, the sludge—along with the technological nature of contemporary society, the latter returns to the present, suggesting the possibility of art and action for the sake of nature, history and humanity.

Translated by Harriet Min Zhang



迈克尔·王,《太湖大闸蟹(前期研究)》, 2022年

迈克尔·王个展“太湖”展览现场, Prada 荣宅, 上海, 2022年
图片致谢艺术家及 Prada 荣宅

Michael Wang, *Taihu Crab (preparatory study)*, 2022

Michael Wang's solo exhibition "Lake Tai", installation view, Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Prada Rong Zhai