

杨泳梁 YANG YONGLIANG

[b.1980 Chinese]

水图 Views of Water 2018

A series of 6 digital videos

[Reference: *Twelve Views of Water* by Ma Yuan / 马远水图]

Views of Water takes its historic starting point from works by Song Dynasty painter Ma Yuan (c1160-1225). Ma's studies of water, which are undated but likely to be made in the late 12th or early 13th century, concentrated on the qualities and properties of water in motion. The collection of these water studies held in Beijing's Palace Museum number twelve in total; delicate ink and wash paintings on silk, mounted together on a handscroll.

Each work in Yang's contemporary rendition carefully recreates key aspects of these historic images in digital video, translating static bodies of water back into an active, animated state. The composition of each work connects closely to Ma's paintings, with features such as rolling fog, rocky outcrops and rippling waves speaking directly to the history of landscape painting in China. A 21st century perspective offers an alternative reading of *Views of Water*, however. At this time, perhaps more so than any other, water is becoming an issue of global concern both in terms of water security and sea level rise. Yang's subtly manipulated waterscapes are imbued with a feeling of disquiet or unrest, remaining at a distance from reality. It is this atmosphere that creates an intersection within the works: a crossroads between the artist's connection to history and his position within the contemporary moment.

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夜游记 Journey to the Dark 2017

3-channel 4K video

A dark, mountainous landscape glows with the artificial light of a vast city, stretching out into the distance. The luminous ground is mirrored by the night sky, so crystal clear that the structures of nebulas can be observed amongst the thousands of distant stars. This gives the scene an otherworldly quality, as if this place is somewhere that has no atmosphere to filter out the dimmer celestial light.

The movements of this metropolis are in continuous flow, as vehicles pulse up arterial freeways, cranes slowly rotate their loads around on the skyline and ships make their way up a waterway lined with skyscrapers whose lights periodically wink on and off. Across three channels of digital video, the city is viewed as a panorama; a limitless urban sprawl.

Closer inspection reveals that the city does not only cover the landscape, but is in fact the landscape itself. In *Journey to the Dark* Yang has constructed the mountains out of industrial and architectural imagery, harvested from a library of digital images that the artist has compiled over previous years. Buildings are densely layered to create mountains and cliffs, power pylons and cranes clustered like trees along their ridges. This is Yang's alternate-reality Shanghai, a place that contains many familiar landmarks, but has mutated to become something other; an alien ecosystem unto itself.

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人造仙境 I - No.1

Artificial Wonderland I - No.1 2010

Giclee Print

This photographic composition is part of Yang Yongliang's *Artificial Wonderland* series, which began in 2010. The series reflects Yang's background in traditional Chinese ink drawing, and the influence of shan-shui, the traditional landscape art of China. At the same time, his use of digital technologies and industrialised imagery also connects to the artist's experiences of living in a rapidly developing city environment that is constantly renegotiating its relationship to the past. *Artificial Wonderland 1 - No. 1* is a monumental landscape; a panoramic view recreated out of urban detritus. Delicate and beautiful in composition and tone, yet dystopian in vision, it is a work that reflects the relentless march of progress that has become synonymous with modern China.

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人造仙境II - 溪山行旅图

Artificial Wonderland II - Travellers among Mountains and Streams 2014

Giclee Print

In *Artificial Wonderland II - Travellers among Mountains and Streams* Yang looks to a famous work by Song Dynasty painter Fan Kuan, who was active between the 10th and early 11th centuries. Fan's original ink painting on a silk scroll depicts two miniscule travellers accompanying a mule train, crossing a stream before a towering mountain. The effect is to diminish the figures within the sublime scene, highlighting the psychological force of the immense environment they travel through. In Yang's version of the work, the train of mules has been replaced by one of vehicles – trucks haul trailers carrying fuel tanks and shipping containers. In the background a soaring mountain rises, bristling with forests of pylons and cranes. What initially appeared as a faithful reproduction of the ancient original becomes a lament for unchecked urban development.