The Image of Memory: Leiko Ikemura and Shen Yuan

Time: 10/11/23 - 24/12/23

Venue: Being Art Museum

From November 10, 2023, to December 24, 2023, Shanghai Being Art Museum presents the dialogue exhibition “The Image of Memory: Leiko Ikemura and Shen Yuan”.

The exhibition presents significant artworks from two women artists — Leiko Ikemura and Shen Yuan. The exhibition attempts to open a dialogue across cultural and geographical boundaries through their art works, raising questions around memory, immigration, and female identity. The exhibition is curated by Guo Xiaohui.

Both of them are non-western artists living in the West. Leiko Ikemura left Japan at the age of 21 to study in Spain, she then lived and worked in Switzerland, and settled in Germany in 1986. Shen Yuan left China in 1990 and moved to Paris, where she joined her husband, the artist Huang Yong Ping. This cross-cultural background has provided them with a unique perspective and has also profoundly influenced their art practice.

Leiko Ikemura's work spans the genres of drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and poetry. At the center of her work is an exploration of nature, femininity and the cyclical rhythm of life and death. Many of her works feature elements of a mythological narratives, involving the creation of magical universes blending elements of animals, human figures, and plants.

Shen Yuan expresses her feelings about immigration, language, and the relationship between the body and politics. After moving to Paris, her immigrant status led her to explore the feeling about identity and language and became an important part of her work. Her works create places for poetical encounters between cultures. The artist invites the public to reflect without imposing value judgements.

About the Artists

Shen Yuan

Shen Yuan (沈远) was born in Xianyou (China) and lives and works in Paris, France. After graduating from the Fine Arts Academy of Zhejiang in China, Shen Yuan participated in the Chinese “avant-garde” movement. Shortly after participating in Beijing’s historical exhibition, she left China and moved to Paris.
Her work has been shown in numerous solo shows, both in France and abroad at the Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China (2018), kamel mennour, Paris, France (2015), Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China (2015), UCCA-Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2009), the Centre A, Vancouver (2007), Chisenhale Gallery, London (2001), French Institute, London, UK(2001) and Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland (2000).


Shen Yuan’s works are in the collections of: Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum, Mingsheng Museum, Power Station of Art, Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration and M+.

Leiko Ikemura

Leiko Ikemura (イケムラレイコ) was born in Japan and is now based in Berlin and Cologne, Germany. She has had a highly acclaimed career, spanning over four decades. Ikemura left Japan in 1972 and studied art in Seville, Spain, before moving to Switzerland in 1979, and then settling in Germany in the 1980ies. The influence of the different cultures she has lived in is apparent in her attitude both to her work and to the world.

Leiko Ikemura’s works have been presented in solo and group exhibitions internationally since the early 1980s. In 2023 solo exhibitions were presented at Museum de Fundatie, NL, Museo de Arte Zapopan, Guadalajara, Mexico and Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, Germany. Further solo exhibitions were presented at (selection): Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (2022); CAC La Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències Valencia, Spain (2022); Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, UK (2021); Centro de Arte Caja Burgos, Spain (2021); Kunsthalle Rostock, Germany (2020); St. Matthäuskirche, Berlin (2020); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2019); Nordiska Akvarellmuseet, Skärhamn, Sweden (2019); The National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan (2019); Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, USA (2016); Museum of East Asian Art, Cologne (2015); The Vangi Sculpture Garden Museum, Mishima, Japan (2014); Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Germany (2013); Asian Art Museum, Berlin (2012) and The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan (2011).

Most recently, Leiko Ikemura has been included in group exhibitions at (selection): Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, Germany (2023); The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; (2022-23); in 2022 : 9th Beijing Biennale at National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China; The National Art Center, Tokyo; Museum for East Asian Art, Cologne; AMMA Foundation, Mexico City; The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Shandong Art
Museum, Jinan, China; Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland; in 2021 : The Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi; Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany, among others.

Her work is included in the collections of renowned institutions such as the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, Liechtenstein; Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, UK; MOMAT-The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan.

About the Curator

Guo Xiaohui

Guo Xiaohui is a curator and researcher based in Beijing and London. In 2014, she gained two MAs from Goldsmiths College, University of London, majoring in Art & Politics and Cultural Studies. Over the past ten years she has worked extensively in the arts, gaining invaluable knowledge and curatorial experience in museums, galleries, art publishing and educational institutions. Xiaohui’s primary focus is to produce innovative and meaningful exhibitions bringing together art from China & the West. She has successfully curated numbers of exhibitions in China and the west.

Her recently exhibitions and projects include:

Painting Xinjiang: Xinjiang-focused Art Since the 20th Century, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing(2023); One Section of The 3rd China Xinjiang International Art Biennale , Xinjiang Art Museum, Urumqi (2023); Walking Between Worlds: Liu Shangying ,TAG Art Museum, Qindao (2023); Constellation: Youth Project Invitation Exhibition , Being Art Museum,

Shanghai, Yuan Art Museum, Chongqing (2023); The Art of Life—Contemporary Art by International Female Artists, National Art Museum of China, Shangdong Art Museum (2022); The Logic of Painting (2021), Shijiazhuang Art Museum and Xinjiang Art Museum, China; Beyond Boundaries :An Interaction Between the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, Somerset House, London, UK(2019); Cheng Ran solo show, CCA, Tel Aviv, Israel (2018).

About the Museum

Being Art Museum (BAM) is the first public art museum set up by the People's Government of Pudong New Area that integrates multiple functions such as housing a collection, research and exhibitions, aesthetic education, cultural exchange, and public services. In 2022, BAM was honored as a director unit of the Shanghai Art Museum Association. Located in Jinqiao
Biyun International Community, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, BAM covers a total floor area of 5,100 m² approximately, which includes an exhibition area of about 1,900 m². The museum is based in China but reaching an international audience. It aims to be a new platform for international art and culture exchange.

Leiko’s work:

Leiko Ikemura, Flower, Black and White Photograph on Baryta Paper, 2009/23, 100x66 cm, Courtesy of Leiko Ikemura.
Leiko Ikemura, Genesis, Tempera and oil on jute, 190x290cm, 2016, Courtesy of Leiko Ikemura
Leiko Ikemura, Hare Column, Sculpture, 182x17x17cm, 1992/2018, Courtesy of Leiko Ikemura
Leiko Ikemura, Tempest, Tempera and oil on Nettle, 90x90cm, 2022, Courtesy of Leiko Ikemura
Shen Yuan’s work:

Shen Yuan, Fishing the air of Paris, Wood, iron, copper, 146 x 98 x 55 cm (all items included), 2020, Courtesy of Shen Yuan
Shen Yuan, Hat shadow, Multiple materials, Dimensions Variable, 2015, Courtesy of Shen Yuan

Shen Yuan, Immortal Wandering, Ceramic, video, 500 × 200 × 60 cm, 2008, Courtesy of Shen Yuan
Shen Yuan, Mateo and me, Drawing photograph, iron cage, carpet, basin, rag, video. Iron cage 240 x 175 x 120cm, 2019-2021, Courtesy of Shen Yuan