

Nominated by Gwen Lee

Yang Yong Liang Wintery Forest in the Night

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As the year 2014 has come to a close, it is perhaps time to pause a while to contemplate life and the world in which we live.

Witnessing traditions, livelihoods and old architecture bulldozed into ruins by China's relentless drive towards modernization, Yang Yongliang sees a similar fate awaiting Chinese landscape ink painting, or Shan Shui, a traditional art form he holds dear. The young artist's creative insight was to adapt the art form to changing times by retaining the inner essence of the Shan Shui, but evolving its subject matter and media. His fusion of the old and the new resulted in exquisite, multi-layered photo-video "paintings" of a hybridized boomtown Shanghai. Mountains are interspersed with skyscrapers and cranes; streams are interwoven with busy highways: the organic versus the mechanical, tradition versus modernity. The dialectical relationships point to the challenges and contradictions in China's frenzied landscape of change.

Gwen Lee, Singapore, is Co-Founder and Director of the Singapore International Photography Festival.

I use images of architecture as brushstrokes; heavy mountain rocks with enriched details draw a faithful reference to Song Dynasty landscape painting. Urban development makes life in the city flourish, but it also imprisons these lives; centuries-old cultural tradition in China is profound, but it has also remained stagnant. Ancient Chinese people painted landscapes to praise the greatness of nature; my works, on the other hand, lead towards a critical re-thinking of contemporary reality. In the *Artificial Wonderland II* series from 2014, there are digital replicas of two Song Dynasty master paintings, namely "Travelers Among Mountains and Steams" (Fan Kuan) and "Wintery Forest in the Snow" (anonymous). Whereas ancient landscapes are often seen as being without time, my interpretation of the latter work is a nocturnal image, titled *Wintery Forest in the Night*.

Yang Yongliang

Wintery Forest in the Night. From *Artificial Wonderland II*, 2014

What inspires you?

I believe inspiration bursts at the moment when persistent thinking reaches an eventual outcome. Inspiration does not come from heaven. It marks a qualitative change lead by quantitative change.

What is the goal or intention of your work?

It is a way of expression. I am not the most sociable person in daily life; I am not good at talking with people that I am not familiar with. But I do think a lot. Through my works, I wish to express the thoughts that I have in mind.

Are you a more perceptual or a more conceptual type?

My work is a complex mixture of sense and reason. Its core value has a very perceptual side, while its formation is blended with strict order. Especially in most of my previous works, they seem to present strong concepts. In the upcoming ones, I strive to dig further into the perceptual.

Which city do you like the most?

I would like to say Rome, but I recently realized that my favorite city only exists in my mind, not in the real world.

Are you a more introverted or extroverted person?

I should be a more introverted person.

Which camera did you use for this project?

I used a Canon 5D Mark III.

Which part of the photographic process is the most challenging for you?

The most challenging part is to determine the concept, a theme. I test a few samples to estimate visual effects until they become satisfying, then I accomplish the work step by step. The rest just costs a large amount of time.

How do you finance your photographic projects?

Living off art was difficult at the very beginning. Now, I depend on gallery sales of my works for future projects.





Wintery Forest in the Night (Detail)
From *Artificial Wonderland II*, 2014