

TRAVELLERS MIRROR CITIES > < SRELLEVART RORRIM SEITIC

**Curators:**

Miriam Sun and Giuliana Benassi

**Artists**(Listed alphabetically):

Fu Tong, Gabriele Silli, Guo Fei, H.H. Lim, Jin Wang, Josè Angelino, Matteo Nasini, Oliviero Rainaldi, Qiu Anxiong, Rà di Martino, Shi Chengdong, Yang Yongliang.

**Venue:**

VIU- Venice International University  
Isola di San Servolo, Venice, Italy

**Dates:**

April 17th to May 16th, 2024

**Time:**

10:00 AM to 8:00 PM

**Opening:**

April 19th, 6:00 PM



**Press Release:**

From April 17th to May 16th, MoCA Shanghai collaborates with Venice International University in Italy to present the exhibition "TRAVELLERS MIRROR CITIES" echoing the spirit of the 60th Venice Biennale's theme "Foreigners Everywhere". The exhibition is curated by Miriam Sun, Executive Director of MoCA Shanghai, and Giuliana Benassi, an Italian curator. The participating artists are among the new strengths doing contemporary art from China and Italy, including Fu Tong, Gabriele Silli, Guo Fei, H.H. Lim, Jin Wang, Josè Angelino, Matteo Nasini, Oliviero Rainaldi, Qiu Anxiong, Rà di Martino, Shi Chengdong, Yang Yongliang.(listed alphabetically).

Cities, as geographic, social, and cultural spaces, contain numerous layers of value that are not readily apparent. This exhibition, centered around the theme of "TRAVELLERS MIRROR CITIES", is set within the context of Venice International University, a space dedicated to international exchanges of knowledge. The exhibition aims to ingeniously construct a conceptual art route of "The Traveler's City – A Spiritual Mirror Image of One's Self and the Foreigner", weaving a dynamic narrative with two threads, one apparent and the other concealed. By employing the non-linear presentation of artworks by Chinese and Italian artists and in diverse artistic languages (i.e., the apparent thread), the exhibition intends to prompt travelers to keep raising questions to the city, awakening them at points of art and guiding them to seek the reflection of themselves in the mirror within the replies from the city (i.e., the concealed thread). Thus, the purpose of the exhibition is not only for travelers to find answers to the city's visual enigmas but also to outline their self-reflection and encourage their further contemplation on interpersonal relationships. As Calvino wrote in a dialogue between the Kublai Khan and Marco Polo in his novel, *Invisible Cities*, "As to the City of Utopia, even though we have not discovered it, we cannot abandon our efforts to seek for it."

A heavyweight art piece is unveiled for the first time in this exhibition. The monumental work, the "DNA" series, is directed by Miriam Sun, the executive director of MoCA Shanghai. The expert team is composed of Michael Levitt, winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and a team of Chinese scientists led by professors Luo Zhen and Yin Tengfei. Visual and auditory artists Guo Fei and composer Jin Wang participate in the artistic creation. The series aims to explore the aesthetics, thoughts, and logic of artificial intelligence (AI) as an independent entity, as well as the dialogue, intersection, conflict, and fusion between AI and human artists. The live performance blends Jin

Wang's improvisation on the organ/piano and Guo Fei's improvisation on hardware modular synthesizers, intertwining sounds of electronic music and various instruments to explore new possibilities within determinacy and indeterminacy, expressing reverence for the past and future. Simultaneously engaging in improvisational dialogue is the live A/V work "endlessREDDAL", based on the DNA double helix structure. This piece focuses on the phenotypic variations in the iris color of Chinese and Italian individuals influenced by specific 18 genes and 41 loci. By transcribing the four bases of human DNA (A/C/G/T) into sound frequencies and rhythm sequences, it showcases the sequence of phenotypic variations, combined with dynamic visual imagery, to explore the relationship between reality and illusion, existence and meaning. This endless loop of artistic experience presents a multidimensional, symbiotic, and mirrored relationship, prompting contemplation on the philosophical level of genetic evolution.

Another work embodying the notion of "symbiosis" is the large-scale piece of immersive installation art "Flowing Bodies", which integrates AI and projection technology. New media artist Fu Tong explores the contrast and coexistence between immutable physical forms and fluid consciousness, combining modern technology with primal artistic elements. The piece employs symbolic elements such as thorns, blood, and butterflies, as well as dynamic images created by AI, to succinctly and substantially portray the fluidity of life and consciousness. In another interactive installation of hers titled "When I Think of You", featuring seven 3D-printed tear installations magnified 100 times and wall-projected tears representing different phases of human life, the artist seeks to explore the potential for empathic connections between individuals through sensory experiences—foreigners are everywhere, but we share similarities and connections, undoubtedly.

The concepts of fluidity and empathy also emerge from Josè Angelino's light works. Made with argon gas and neon, they are sculptural glass environments that reproduce the physical and aesthetic dynamics of the aurora borealis. Through the use of electricity, the artist makes the invisible visible, "playing" with the properties of materials, often introducing interference. As if in a spell, his sculptures seem to have captured a moment of vitality of matter, the essence of a place. The same could be said about the artwork "Mosquitos": a series of glass beakers inside which magnets swirl like captured flies: they respond to the frequencies of the Schumann resonance, that is, a characteristic pulsation that the Earth possesses of 7.83 hertz. In this way, Angelino makes visible what, invisibly, unites all places on Earth.

This exhibition serves as a confluence of Chinese and international perspectives. Yang Yongliang, a Chinese multimedia artist, presents his "Landscape After the Old Master" which is a captivating series of paintings inspired by Chinese Song Dynasty landscape masters such as Guo Xi, Fan Kuan and Li Tang, reflecting the reverence for nature in East Asian art. Reinterpreted, the work transforms the urban landscape through the lens of documentary photography, offering a fascinating contrast between postmodern and artificial wonderland. This artistic fusion explores the relationship between traditional artistic heritage and the changing modern world.

"The Moonlight", bridging tradition and modernity by combining contemporary vocabulary with cutting-edge technology to recreate the aesthetic essence of Eastern tradition and literati sentiments. He unfolds a unique narrative approach, reshaping not only a city but also the ever-changing backgrounds of historical narratives, after absorbing historical events, fables, and societal cultural insights. Simultaneously, the latest animation piece "Tianzhi Xiuyue", by artist Qiu Anxiong pioneers in colored ink animation, setting a tone of blue-green landscapes and intertwining stories from the Tang Dynasty's note collection "Youyang Zazu". Combining Einstein's thought experiment of the "Twin Paradox" with ancient and modern encounters, it constructs a fantastical tale where astronauts traverse wormholes to encounter a white-robed figure from the moon in a Tang Dynasty mountain setting, juxtaposing supernatural myths with modern technological narratives, presenting an open perspective and offering another angle for understanding the world.

Artist Shi Chengdong's exhibition works are divided into two series: "Dialogue with Time" and "Summer Fireworks". In the "Dialogue with Time" series, the artist incorporates the spatial construction of Chinese gardens into his paintings, blending them with the passage of time in a leisurely manner and engaging in dialogue with it, attempting to find answers about time, the relationship between humans and nature, and the state in which time and space can achieve a tranquil flow and mutual harmony. The fountain serves as the inspiration for "Summer Fireworks," blossoming on the water's surface like fireworks, forming a mirror image with the serene world beneath the water. Water and fire, movement and stillness intertwine, forming an energy field composed of natural elements.

From another place of Eurasia, Italian sculptor Oliviero Rainaldi's work "Calma tu alma" creates an interrelated dialogue with the "DNA" series through changes in the viewer's perspective, provoking exploration of the concept of "foreigners" and profound reflections on identification. The relationship with the transcendent emerges in his work: the upward-pointing fingers continue to ask questions about the metaphor of the journey as existence.

In "Code" series, H. H. Lim, a conceptual artist, creates, through his playful manipulation of the ambiguous and discordant nature between imagery and language, an odyssey of the human brain. His installation comprises a group of sculptures that seem to have plunged into the exhibition space from a journey through time: they are ambiguous clusters, equipped with handles; suitcases from the past or the future; wrecks or futuristic devices. The use of engraved writing is typical of the artist's practice. In these sculptures, the contents are indecipherable codes and numbers that shroud in mystery and suspend the coordinates of the journey.

The exhibition thus unfolds through a multi-voice dialogue, returning often contrasting or, indeed, mirroring imagery. The artists themselves, Chinese and Italian, are in the mirror: each through their own imagery brings with them the result of crossing places and visions, spatial and temporal dimensions.

Where are we when we are thinking? This question seems to be answered by Matteo Nasini's work. The large tapestry "The Golden Age," created by the artist at the Cittadellarte Foundation using naturally dyed wools, immerses the spectator in an imaginative landscape, almost in one of those invisible cities described by Italo Calvino in his book of the same name. The title of the artwork recalls, with subtle irony, an expected golden age immersed in a fusion of colors: as in a collage of the world's places.

Originating from a dreamlike imagery and linked to the sea, Gabriele Silli's site-specific work recalls, through the use of organic and inorganic materials treated in an unorthodox manner, a glimpse of an abyssal landscape, a large pointed anchor evoking a narrative linked to the role of the sea in the voyage and its history. The work seems to derive from the page of a navigation logbook, a nocturnal vision of the route, not the destination. It also engages in a dialogue with Venice and the Island of San

Servolo, questioning the waters surrounding the lagoon, the waters in which the sky is mirrored, and thus also the travellers who change themselves in this fluidity.

These contemporary artworks, akin to a "symbiotic network", are "interwoven" into the existing architectural space, with a touch of intrusion yet without discordance. They express a transformation from alienation to integration, from the visible to the intangible, from the tangible to the transient, and vice versa. Art serves as a mirror, drawing its viewer into a journey within it, reflecting the city, encouraging introspection, understanding the "foreigner" , and simultaneously establishing a connection with the viewer's self.

The year 2024 holds special significance for China and Italy, marking the 700th anniversary of Marco Polo's passing. By means of the exhibition "TRAVELLERS MIRROR CITIES", MoCA Shanghai hopes not only to echo the spirit of the 60th Venice Biennale's theme "Foreigners Everywhere", but also to introduce a new perspective for deepening mutual understanding of art, culture, and aesthetics between the peoples of China and Italy, further promoting friendship and cognition between the two nations. The exhibition at Venice International University is the debut of the "TRAVELLERS MIRROR CITIES" touring exhibition project, which will move in the foreseeable future to its next destination in New York City, US.

**Curators Introduction:**

**Miriam Sun**



**Executive Director of MoCA Shanghai**  
**President of Arts Momentum**  
**Director of Global Private Museum Network (China)**

Since 2002, when she co-founded MoCA Shanghai with Mr. Samuel Kung, she has always spared no effort to promote Chinese contemporary art and culture to the world stage. She actively promotes the exchange of Eastern and Western aesthetics, expands the boundaries of contemporary art, and persistently supports the concept "People's Aesthetic", allowing art to enter people's lives.

In the past 18 years, she has created an international network for Shanghai contemporary art that connects the world. She has participated in parallel exhibitions at the Venice Biennale four times. 2010 World Expo Shanghai, CIMAM meeting was held in Shanghai, Miriam Sun was entrusted with the mission to make overall arrangements. She also participated in planning international exhibitions which created great opportunities for Shanghai to dialogue with the world, including: Cultural Year Exhibition of Sino-French, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland, Guggenheim's Art in America: Three Hundred Years of Innovation, Kusama Yayoi A Dream I Dreamed, etc.

Miriam Sun spares no effort to bring Chinese contemporary artists to the international stage, including the Venice Biennale, Rome, Getty Museum, Hammer Museum and so on. In 2019 and 2023, Miriam Sun was specially invited by the Department of Culture of Macao to be the curator and art director of the Art Macao, creating a new look for Macao's urban culture development, inviting Cai Guoqiang to premiere the "Sky Ladder" project in Macao.

**Giuliana Benassi**



**Italian Scholar  
Curator**

Giuliana is an independent curator and art historian based in Rome. She teaches at Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and at Istituto Pantheon of Milan and she is professor at IED (European Institute of Design), international Master in "Curatorial Practice" 2020-21. She is the Art Advisor of the American Academy in Rome. She is co-founder and director of the project "There Is No Place Like Home" which was awarded the Artribune Prize for Contemporary Art in 2017. She is curator of the art residency "Ritratto a mano". She is editor of the Italian art publications Rivista Segno and Exibart. She is also co-founder of ALT - The contemporary Art program of the national newspaper "Il Manifesto". Her curatorial focus is on exhibitions that feature site-specific works which reexamine unconventional spaces.

She has collaborated with different institutions and associations among which Museo Laboratorio della Mente, Swiss Institute in Rome, Post Ex, artQ13 Rome; Fondazione Lac o Le Mon Lecce; MAMbo Bologna; Follemente Festival Teramo; Italian Cultural Institute London, Tang Contemporary Art, Hong Kong-Bangkok. She has also edited with many national and international publishers such as Silvana Editoriale, NERO, Viaindustriae, Palombi, among others.



**Artists Introduction:**

**FU TONG**



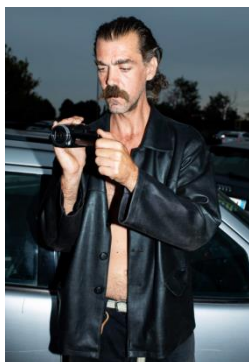
**New Media Artist**

Fu Tong is involved in the fields of new media art interactive installations, video art and conceptual art. She is the founder of the new media art groups "E3", "Nine Yuan Nine", "Tian Tuan". In 2023, she co-created with Tan Dun the new media and music Interactive exhibition "Female Script."

At the same time, she is also the founder and creative director of the new media creative group XFF. She has long been active in major music festivals, concerts, new media plays and press conferences as a stage director, stage designer, interactive installation creator, and live VJ.



**Gabriele Silli**



**Contemporary Artist**

**Actor**

He graduated in Philosophy at La Sapienza University in Rome in 2009. His artistic practice, always based on a philosophical framework, concerns matter and its possible transformations. Sculpture, video, performance and photography are all languages that he investigates through a process of assembling various elements. In 2004, he founded the collective Mastequoia. He is co-founder of Post Ex, Rome 2020.

In 2021 he was the protagonist in the film *Re Granchio* by A. Rigo de Righi and M. Zoppis and in 2022 in the film *Bassifondi* by Trash Secco.



## GUO FEI



**Electronic Musician**

**Sound Artist**

**Visual Artist**

Guo Fei's artistic practice spans different fields such as sound, experimental video, new media art, etc. OSCPLLEX is a personal music project whose work styles cover Dubtechno/Ambient/Minimal/Experimental Music/Field Recording, etc. He has released music works on well-known Dubtechno/Ambient labels in China/USA/Germany/Netherlands/France/Lithuania. Influenced by concepts such as minimalism/randomism, he experimentally uses multi-layered sound textures to create highly immersive Dub techno/ambient environment/experimental music.

## H.H. Lim



**Contemporary Artist**

Lim has practiced art in Rome since 1976 and has remained since, finding himself continuously inspired by the city's energy. A Neo-conceptual artist with a disposition for colossal works, Lim is known to incorporate elements of everyday life into his works, which at times are recycled, repackaged and framed, taking on a different meaning

and new life. In the past, Lim's conceptual works have consisted of paintings, installations, performance art as well as recorded video and sound.

Lim plays with the game-like ambiguity and non-accordance between images and languages to reveal the inevitable uncertainty and contradiction in the linguistic function of words and sentences vis-à-vis reality.



## JIN WANG



### Composer

Jin Wang's chamber music works have been performed many times at Shanghai Spring International Music Festival, Hong Kong Arts Festival and other concerts. Jin Wang has collaborated extensively with artists in various fields: he collaborated with artist Yang Fudong on many art films and multimedia video works such as "Strange Paradise", "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove", "Close to the Sea", "Broken Bridge without Snow", and "The Fifth Night", "The Foolish Old Man Moves Mountains". In 2010, he composed music for the famous Italian clothing brand PRADA's advertising art short film "First Spring" directed by Yang Fudong, which was broadcast on the official PRADA website.

## Josè Angelino



### Contemporary Artist

José Angelino's works are installations to be conceived as individual universes in their own right, systems or organisms functioning through a precise process triggered by the artist - such as the flow of gases, the vibrations of sound waves, the movement

created by a heat source, and so on - investigating the relationships it establishes with its surroundings and the inevitable interferences that are generated. He was awarded the Toti Scia Ioja Foundation Visual Arts Prize in 2013 and the "ArteFiera40" prize in Bologna in 2016.



### Matteo Nasini



#### Contemporary Artist

#### Composer

The research of Matteo Nasini starts from sound study, to take physical shapes deeply examining and observing the sound and plastic substance's surface. This leads to a practice that methodologically develops in sound installations, performances, sculptural and textile works.



### Oliviero Rainaldi



#### Contemporary Sculpture Artist

Oliviero Rainaldi, a famous Italian contemporary sculpture artist, was born in Caramanico Terme, Italy, in 1956. He currently works and lives in Rome and Monaco. Oliviero's sculptures often appear in major international public institutions and museums, such as the United Nations Building in Geneva, the Municipal Building in Stockholm, Villa Pisani in Venice, the Dubai International Financial Center, and the Frederic Meyer Gardens in Michigan, etc.



## QIU AN XIONG



### Contemporary Artist

Qiu Anxiong's works involve animation, installation, video, painting, and other cross-media forms. He is a representative artist of ink animation. His representative works include ink animations "New Classic of Mountains and Seas", "Landscapes of the Republic of China", "Dreams of Mountains and Rivers" and video installation "For Forgotten Memories". His trilogy of works, "New Classic of Mountains and Seas", depicts the technological wonders and existential crises of modern society from the perspective of ancients looking at today.

Thinking about the function of myth in the development process of civilization, the scenes and allusions of ancient myths are once again placed under the gaze of modern society obsessed with technology. Qiu Anxiong is an active force in the construction of contemporary art ecology in recent years.



## Rä di Martino



## Contemporary Artist

### Film-maker

She graduated in Chelsea College of Art and of the Slade School of Art of London. Her work has been shown in many institutions like Tate Modern, London; Moma-PS1, NY; Palazzo Grassi, Venice; MCA Chicago; Magasin, Grenoble; GAM and Fondazione Sandretto, Turin; PAC and HangarBicocca, Milan; MACRO and MAXXI, Rome; Museion, Bolzano.

She has participated to a large number of film festivals like Locarno Film Festival, VIPER Basel, Transmedia le.04, New York Underground Film Festival, Kasseler Dokfest, Torino Film Festival, and Venice Film Festival, where she won, in 2014, the SIAE Award and Gillo Pontecorvo Award, a special mention at Salina DocFest, and a Nastro d'argento for best doc-film 2015 with the medium length documentary The Show MAS Go On (2014). Her first feature film Controfigura (2017) was premiered at the latest Venice Film Festival.

In 2019 she has developed the project AFTERALL with the MIBAC Italian Council Award in collaboration with Fondazione Volume, Kunst museum St.Gallen and Mostyn Contemporary Art Gallery in Wales.



## YANG YONG LIANG



### Multimedia Artist

Since 2005, he has been engaged in the experimentation and creation of contemporary art, involving various media such as photography, painting, images and installations. Yang Yongliang's works connect tradition and the present, using contemporary vocabulary and cutting-edge technology to reproduce the traditional Oriental aesthetic methods and literati plot. He developed a unique narrative description method, and after accepting history, fables, allusions, and social and cultural inspiration, he reshaped a city and the ever-changing backgrounds in the long history.



## SHI CHENG DONG



### Contemporary Artist

Graduated from the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Shi is currently teaching in the Painting Department of the Shanghai Theatre Academy's Department of Stage Design. In 2017, he was awarded the Annual Art Discovery by the 11th Chinese Art Power List and the Best Popularity Award in the Wan Yingxiang – Youth Art Discovery. He not only inherits the tradition of academic painting but also presents a light, free, and colorful atmosphere, injecting a stronger personal style into the language of painting. His works exhibit a continuous refinement of detachment, becoming more relaxed and self-opening: the interplay of light and shadow forms a melody, where brilliance and darkness intersect and complement each other.



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