

AOLUGUYA
敖鲁古雅

YU BOGONG
于伯公

20.09 - 27.10
2013

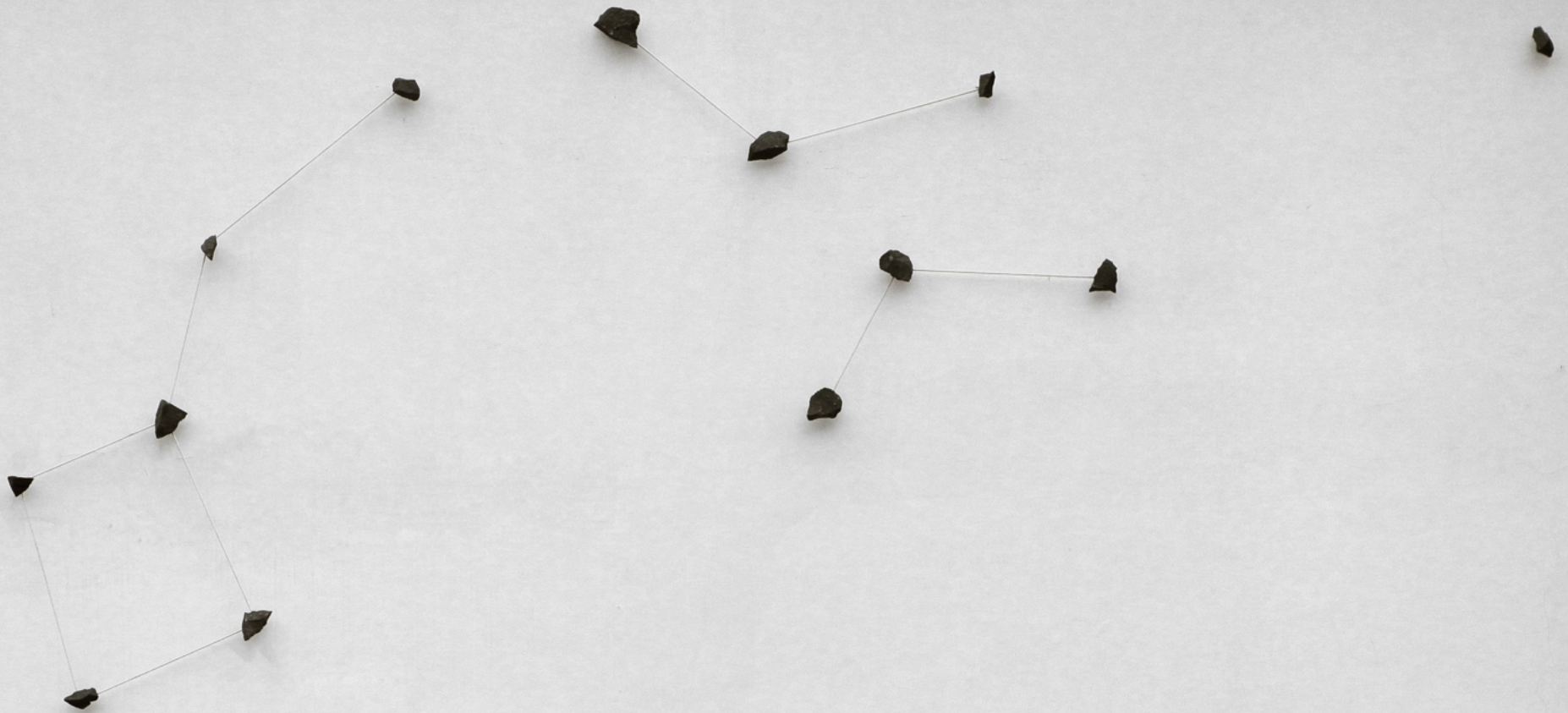
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Art Works



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Boundless Stars

2013

Black Granite, String

Dimensions Variable

Pick Up Your Weapons

2013

Hand-carved White Marble (260 pieces)







The Long Expedition

2012

Hand-Carved Pagoda Wood, Stone

213x35x38cm



Measure of the World

2013

Sand, Clay Sculptures (500 pieces) , Lacquered MDF, Sand Table

60x80x90cm×4



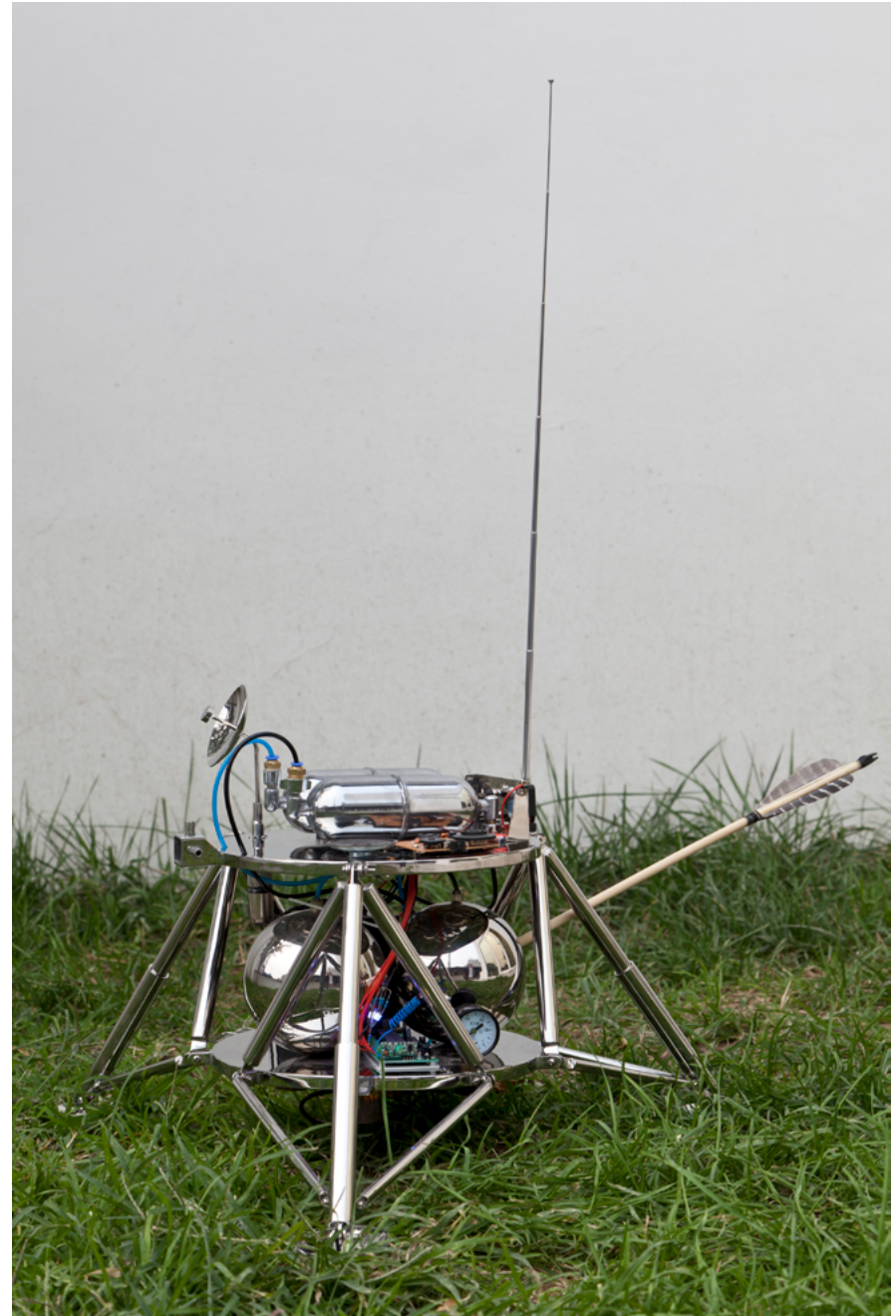


Landing Machine

2013

Stainless steel, PVC tube, Radio, Fan, Motor, Battery, Wooden arrow

62x45x90cm



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Aoluguya

2010

Black and White C-Print

84x110cm

Interview With Yu Bogong July 2013 at Artist's Studio in Heiqiao

Billy Tang: Rather than viewing each work as separate entities, with the 'Mandala Plan' you envisage them as components that build together a multi-dimensional Mandala. The word 'plan' in the title is very interesting because there an assumption that you have very concrete objectives that you would like to fulfill. Can you talk about your motives for this ambitious project that will span ten years from 2005 to 2010?

Yu Bogong: The 2005 - 2015 Mandala Plan encapsulates an attempt to create multi-dimensionality. The work produced from 1995, the moment I just arrived in Beijing, to the time before this plan together clarify a path, which has merged together into this vision. The works before were perhaps created in a situation detached from its setting or you could say that sometimes the heart of the matter was absent. The works were informed by ideas of placement, casting aside, and a suspended form of passivity. After a few years trying to clear up these issues, I found that these problems were symptomatic of a passive acceptance – a situation caused by a lack of clarity. In terms of the image, it is similar to a cell nurturing the production of a new world and illuminating its desires. Other intrinsic factors determining the plan are clarity, rhythm, and patterns. It is just like the growth of a plant that germinates into a flower, it is part of a cyclical process of rebirth. The initial idea for the Mandala Plan was to try out and freely experiment in different directions, which could be channeled through

a holistic structure. Spanning ten years, it currently composes of five parts and each part will unfold progressively in different periods of time. Movement and action drive the unfolding of the plan - it is an open-ended expanded form. What happens will be a gradual overflow of meaning.

BT: The plan you describe seems extremely mutable. In various traditions, the Mandala takes the form of a diagram drawing or pattern used as a spiritual tool to notate metaphysical concepts to create a meditative space. You mentioned at this stage there are five different parts of your Mandala?

YBG: The Mandala Plan is made up of several overlapping components: part (1) is a mental integration of image, time and space; part (2) focuses on the experience of sound. It encapsulates both visual and auditory experiences to explore and expand the path between outside and interior worlds. Diagrams and models are familiar forms to people – so with my previous work 'Talk to Yourself' and 'Measuring the World', they intentionally make use of structures in the external world that can be orientated through our internal world; part (3) is a part defined by the concept of returning to the body of origin; part (4) 'Critical Point' was an attempt in an exhibition to create a critical point in the show where our material capacity within a space could be converted into mental potential. In the space, the shell of a Cicada was transformed into a meditative object that emitted vapor inside the gallery; an electricity generator was converted into a halo of light that illuminated Mandala symbols; and a theatrical curtain and a rock piece created dramatic connections that evoked the imagination confronting notions of good and evil; part (5) was a work called 'Emancipate Consciousness'. Consciousness is the most effective means of emancipation and is an installation consisting of a barricade constructed by our 'beliefs'. These five parts will unfold during different moments and will gradually deepen as the duration

goes on. From the tangible to the intangible, from matter to energy, from the spiritual to a step-by-step way forward towards a freedom from constraints - what happens finally is a culmination of a multi-dimensional entity – it is similar to a life system of a new world that then flourishes.

BT: The body of work you have created in the last few years reveal an idiosyncratic symbolic language. They combine elements of Taoism with the Tibetan concept of Mandala. Like Chinese philosophy, religions often institute a school of belief and a code for living life, but your practice seems deliberately more hybrid.

YBG: In the last few years, I have been deliberately contrasting the humanity of the past I found in the Neolithic Stone Age era with the dominant value system of the outside world we presently face. On another hand they work with the present moment by reconstructing and reflecting mental perceptions of a person's interior world and on a metaphysical level – this question implies a return to history.

BT: Value systems are intimately related to how cultures form together. The current dominant system of values in our world seem to be deliberately stretched in your work as you choose a period of time that is furthest away from the world today. Can you discuss this further in relation to your work?

YBG: Today's world is slowly and progressively becoming more integrated with the economy. It is a world controlled by a few huge economic bodies like the European Union, the Sino-US Economic Agreement, and the joint Sino-Russian Economic and Regional Co-operation. We are advancing towards a world whose core is entirely economic – behind political conflicts there is the economy that leverages it. It is a question and predicament we have to face in our modern civilization. Our pursuit to maximize profit has caused

a crisis in our reality: for example the relationship between humans and nature, the relationship to the climate and industry, or our habitat and our capacity to mentally adapt. In our march forward, there are some things that we have lost on the way. Culture can repair the psychological vacuum that permeates a humanity saturated by excessive demands – in the past, the balance of our relationship with nature ensured that these two sides were equally maintained. The recent works like 'Pick Up Your Weapons', 'The Long Expedition', and 'Arrow of Consciousness' all in their different ways respond to the plight of today's world and look at things that in the past we once took more notice to acknowledge.

BT: With your work using Sand Therapy, the work is an exercise of forming 'worlds'. A person can use this exercise to rationalize the differences between internal desires and the outside world. You have been developing this idea for some time now.

YBG: From the perspective of what is 'interior' and what is 'external', we can then understand the efforts and ideas I am attempting with the Sand Therapy work. With the production process of the prop-like sculptures, the clay is an enigmatic object like sand – it is also a fundamental element you can use to mold interior and exterior worlds. Clay mixed with water becomes a pulp form you can mold with your hands and afterwards it goes through a baptism of fire to turn solid into pottery. The process itself is a form of exploration directed from the inside to interact with certain kinds of intuition, temperatures, and energies as the hand interacts with the mud. With each installation, they possess open possibilities when placed together with other objects to establish a scenario – a space produced by intent. This kind of outward projection is channeled through the producer as he or she installs an object through placement, setting things aside - and as they encounter

resistant forces and forms of suspension - bringing together the dual role of the internal and the external so that a channel of communication and construction naturally develop.

BT: Sand Therapy was a technique developed by a Jungian therapist in Zurich during the 60s. It is a very cathartic exercise where inviting participants to play rather than coercing mental patients with prescribed forms of 'treatment'. What is also particularly fascinating is that Tibetan Buddhism also influenced its founder – so it is something of a functional hybrid existing in the West. How did you first come to encounter this very particular phenomenon?

YBG: I initially encountered this concept through research for two previous works of mine 'My Island' and 'the Man Dulatu Community'. I started to read the biography of Carl Jung called 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections'. Through collaborating with the famous German Sinologist Richard Wilhelm, this opened up a gate of entering Chinese culture for Jung, and he was profoundly influence by Taoism. The book outlines the idea of cultivating a form of alchemy using both the inner self and outer self. The original inventor of the Sand Therapy Dora Kalff expanded on Carl Jung's theories of psychoanalysis in an attempt to bridge the differences between the East and the West. The tradition of this game of psychoanalysis actually has a long history in the East and it eventually developed again in the West.

BT: Horoscopes have a particularly important status in China as they help people understand their character. Also in ancient cultures, the symbolic meaning of stars and a way of 'reading' these stars has another use as they help people find their place under the sky in order to navigate. Ideas of notation, reading, and creating symbolic frameworks to produce meaning in our world seems to be a pertinent motif that connects more

broadly to your art practice.

YBG: In some of my work, I have used string and rock to form star constellations to connect together how we reference, symbolize, and form associations with the past, the present, and future. The stars above the sky continues to rise and fall with a star that still resides within ourselves – it's a ray of light that continues to go on. These concentric movements form an orbit around a centre that is itself a composite of alternate overflowing dimensions. The work is a psychological totem of our inner state – it is precisely like a full Mandala cycle.

BT: The star constellation pieces also connect with another previous work of yours, where in a black and white photograph you assembled structures on the floor. The picture I am referring to is a site-specific work you made in a seemingly secluded area in the wilderness.

YBG: The black and white photograph forms a part of my 'Facing Nature' project, which was an in-depth study of the Ewenki people who inhabit areas deep in the grassland and forest hinterland. The Ewenki live near the Artic Circle – they follow the track of reindeer and migrate all year round in the wilderness. Their spiritual fate rests with these reindeer and so their belief and value system revolve around the preservation of nature – it's a kind of respect and co-existence together. This situation causes them to view all living things as far as the eye can see as a constant abstract concept. There is a profound form of consciousness that resides internally within these people and through the passage of time they develop a strong belief in the forms around them. The materials and shapes I have selected to use for the work 'Boundless Stars' have a simplicity to them that is very natural. They are patterns that have been a constant to our imagination within our outside world - they are like co-ordinates or a lit candle flame. The point of their trajectory is focused outwards, all around, or can

also be directed inwards.

BT: In another interview you briefly discuss the role of individuality. I get the sense that individuality for you is a notion that remains unresolvable as it is intimately bounded to knowledge and experience. In your Mandala, it seems to be a preposition that you are continually seeking out?

YBG: There are similar issues to the journey and nomadic situation of 'On the Road' with my project 'Facing Nature'. This particular project required the need for exploration, observation, verification and discovery. The culture and forms of these tribes are fading away and face a situation where they are becoming forgotten. It is a situation that involves issues of political awareness, transformation of economies, cultural assimilation, and different aspects related to psychological forms of crisis. The tribe has an aspiration to return to their original tribe in Europe, but constrained through ideological forms of pressure they have not been able to fulfill this desire. Much of the nomadic way of life has been transformed into tourism or other businesses and the survival of these cultural forms has been destabilized. The question is whether the survival of these nomadic structural forms of life can withstand the prominent issues of politics, the economy, and culture. A state of individual consciousness is like the route of a nomadic journey, the journey and nomadism has defined moments of our evolution and our liberation of the self. For me this kind of struggle through a form of self-exile is necessary in order to develop a consciousness in order to arrive at a new world.

BT: My last question is about communication. You have previously given lessons as art work, some works have taken the form of didactic blackboards, and in other moments you use humor. You have mentioned before the need to create a personal language to communicate

directly your own thoughts. I wanted to ask your views regarding the void you perceive we have in our current forms of communication. Are you trying to transcend verbal language – there are many techniques in your works where reality and the imaginary merge. Is the issue of communication related to this?

YBG: The ineffectiveness of communication does not necessarily imply that this has been instigated because of communication itself. It is decided by how sensitive the object of communication is to the content of what is communicated. For the artist, communication of language is completed through means of the work that is present – that is also where the charm of art lays. Each individual creative language that is established helps to ensure that art continues to meet its needs - reality and the imagination mutually transform one another. The imagination doesn't simply come out from thin air, but rather reality is used as a frame of reference and this is also the context for communication. The imagination transcends reality and it is the fundamental requirement for the evolution of people. If there is no imagination, people can no longer regard themselves as people any more.

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