

As a Mayfly

April Yuan and Netta Rabinovitch

Curators: Barak Rubin and Livia Tagliacozzo

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Ancient Chinese legends about poets of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) related to the beginning of the “three perfections” – when poets, calligraphers and painters combined their talent in order to produce collaborative artworks. During the Song Dynasty (960-1279) visual arts boomed, and with the royal’s endorsement, a class of scholar-artists emerged. Thus in traditional China scholars were accomplished in the “three perfections,” which harmonized with each other: calligraphic brushstrokes were integrated into paintings, paintings were considered “silent poetry,” and poems “painting with sound.”

The exhibition “As a Mayfly” brings together traditional Chinese art forms and contemporary issues. Each work unites calligraphy, poetry and drawing, yet these forms of art are reinterpreted via global lens. The Chinese calligraphy is produced using ink and brushstrokes on silk paper and then scanned onto a digital platform. Traditional painting, accompanied by traditional poetry, has been substituted by digital drawing, and is accompanied by symbols of man-made natural disasters. The “three perfections” as conveyed by Yuan and Rabinovitch thus become a means to raise awareness about the devastation of nature caused by human action on a transnational level: oil spills in the ocean, animal extinction, deforestation and plastic pollution are visual warnings of ongoing threats to our environment.

“As a Mayfly” presents three large scale works by Israeli artist Netta Rabinovitch, alongside April Yuan’s calligraphic reproduction of traditional Chinese poetry. They propose an alternative path, bridging between a local tradition and a global phenomena, highlighting the void between the poetics of nature and contemporary trends of global warming, pollution and climate change. This call for attention and the emphasis on communication between man and nature helps promote an aesthetic awareness of nature. Considering the way the poems are related and responding to the images and calligraphy, a wider discussion emerges, engaging with environmental disasters and the way art forms are related to pressing contemporary issues. The

poems serve as foils to the visual scenes of harrowing threats, and remind the spectator of the possibility of a balanced existence between humanity and nature. Thus for example, a decomposing plastic bag is presented alongside the ancient fairytale of Jingwei Tian Hai. This is the story of the daughter of an emperor, who drowned in the ocean and came back to life as a bird, and who spent her time moving branches and rocks from a hill to the sea— as if to make the ocean disappear. While this story relates to the concept of perseverance as well as the interrelatedness between man and nature, it is here placed next to a decaying plastic bag. This combination dismantles the narrative, leaving one to reflect on the plastic which is being thrown into the sea.

Two enlarged depictions of the red seal carvings produced by Yuan serve to authenticate the combined work of Chinese and Israeli arts and the balance between humanity and nature. The two images represent duality, the seal carving combines Chinese and Hebrew characters and is half outside craving (raised) and half inside craving (sunken), a reference to the way that complementary forces can be interrelated, as the concept of yin and yang. The second red seal stands for the word “mayfly” in Chinese, taken from an ancient article: “I (human being) am like a mayfly in the universe; And a drop of the ocean.”

April Yuan: born in Xi’an, and currently residing in Tel Aviv. She is a calligraphy artist and teacher. Yuan is a graduate of Shandong University MA graduate in Religious Studies and student at Tel Aviv University’s Archeology Department. Her work has been exhibited in Shandong and Shaanxi.

Netta Rabinovitch: active artist born in Petah Tikva and based in Jaffa. She is a graduate of the Department of Visual Communication at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and currently works as an illustrator. Her work has been showcased in Israel, Taiwan and New York.

1. April Yuan, Half, mixed media, 2019,
53x70cm
Calligraphy Translation: Human and
Nature



2. April Yuan, Mayfly, mixed media, 2019,
53x70cm
Calligraphy Translation: Mayfly



3. April Yuan and Netta Rabinovitch,
Jingwei Tian Hai, mixed media, 2019,
135x108cm

Text Source: Shan Hai Jing, Jingwei
Tian Hai, author(s) unknown and
Jingwei

Tian Hai of Tang Dynasty by Han Yu.

Calligraphy Style: Chuan-shu (篆书)
and Xing- Kai(行楷)

Calligraphy Translation (Chuan-shu):
With small stones from the / mountain in
her mouth, a bird desired for / filling up
the sea with the stones.



Calligraphy Translation (Xing-Kai):
There's a mountain named Fajiu
Mountain, in which there's a huge
forest. Inside the forest living a bird,
which is similar to crow, with patterns
on the feathers, white mouth, red feet, it
sounds like calling the name of itself.
The name of this bird is Jingwei (精卫).
In the previous life of the bird, she was
the youngest daughter of Emperor Yan.

Once she went to the East Sea to play, drowned, and thus turned into a bird. As a result of her memory from the previous life, she often carries branches and rocks from the western hill to fill the East Sea. Maybe her dream is to make the huge ocean fade away.

又北二百里曰發鳩之山，其上多柘木，有鳥焉，其狀如鳥，文首，白喙，赤足，名曰精衛，其鳴自詠，是炎帝之少女，名曰女娃。女娃游於東海，溺而不返，故為精衛，常銜西山之石，以堙於東海。漳水出焉，東流注於河。

蘇軾詩集注卷之五 精衛填海

4. April Yuan and Netta Rabinovitch, **In a Nutshell, mixed media, 2019, 496x135cm**

Text Source: "Han Shi" by Han Hong
Calligraphy Style: Cao-shu/ Grass Script (草书)
Calligraphy Translation: All over the Capital catkins flew wantonly / A scene of the spring so significant: / On "Cold Food" the east wind willfully / Made the imperial willows slant. / Now as the dusk approached quietly / Within the Han palace candles glowed towards the five mansions of nobility / The silvery smoke of the tapers flowed.

車珠其粟小
飛花寒食東風御
柳斜日暖澤宮傳
燭燭煙燻散入五
侯家

蘇軾詩集注卷之五 寒食已亥集注

5. April Yuan and Netta Rabinovitch, **Arteries, mixed media, 2019, 200x135cm**

Text Source: "Dream Pool Essays" by Shen Kuo Meng Xi Bi Tan
Calligraphy Style: Xing-shu/ running hand (行书)
Calligraphy Translation: "There is a kind of oil in Fu State and Yan State. The so called "lipidic water of Gaonu town" refers to such a thing.

This kind of oil was produced beside water, flowing out slowly mixed with sands, stones and water. Local people tried to collect the oil with pheasant tail into terrines. This kind of oil is like pure paint and it could be burning up like flax stem. The thick smoke from its burning would turn things around into black."

廊延境內有石油，舊說高奴縣出脂水即此也。生於水際，沙石與泉水相雜，惘惘而出。土人以雉尾挹之，乃採入缶中，頗似淳漆，然之如麻，但煙甚濃，所沾帷幕皆黑。

沈括夢溪筆談