Gallery film and contemporary Chinese art : on Yang Fudong's *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* and *Endless Peaks*

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GALLERY FILM AND CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART:
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AND *ENDLESS PEAKS*

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AND *ENDLESS PEAKS*

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Philosophy

Gallery films are cinematic installations assembled and displayed in an art gallery as a combined exhibition of moving images and contemporary art. As such, a gallery film signifies the evolution of film presentation from a black-box screen to a white-cube space, a characteristic of contemporary art. This research examines Yang Fudong's (b. 1971) two exhibitions *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (Suzhou Museum, September to December 2019) and *Endless Peaks* (ShanghART Gallery, November 2020 to January 2021) by employing theories from art history as well as film and media studies, including theories of Chinese landscape painting, discourses on the picturesque and spectatorship, and works by such thinkers as André Bazin and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Following Gene Youngblood's "expanded cinema," I argue that Yang has extended the boundaries of film viewing by integrating Chinese landscape ink painting and video art into his gallery films. Yang's creative strategy, specifically his use of multiple screens and classical Chinese landscape painting in creating a stylistic shift of cinematic viewing in the white cube setting, distinguishes him from other gallery film artists. This type of gallery film is characterized by ambiguity, an epistemological void that invites a hermeneutic interpretation. Gallery film is vital to the understanding and appreciation of Yang Fudong's works and my study seeks to fill in the gaps of prior studies which tend to focus on the exhibition's socio-political aspects and do not provide any in-depth analysis informed by concepts of gallery film and contemporary art.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNED

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(WANG Bingxi)

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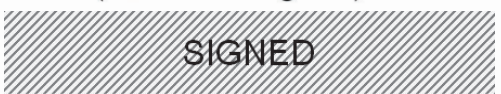
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I would like to conclude my two-year research journey with a famous Winston Churchill quote: "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Introduction

A young woman in an orange palace dress enters the camera from the left of the screen enclosed by a layer of red gauze-like wallpaper interlaced with white and blue flowers and birds of traditional Chinese patterns. She walks forward along a corridor where a man dressed in a Song Dynasty blue court uniform is standing close behind her. Her head rings are swaying as she moves. Their extravagant clothes complement the redness and the massive size of the corridor columns around them, showing unmistakably their distinguished status. An expert's eye will recognize that the setting is at the corner of a rooftop corridor in the stunning Song Dynasty palace. The picture becomes clearer as the woman walks into the foreground focus. Following the woman's footsteps, the camera pans from left to right. She halts at the back of a column, lowering her head, and glimpses back cautiously from time to time apparently waiting for the gentleman behind her. From her facial expressions, she seems to be shy or terrified of being noticed by others. She moves into the off-screen space on the top left area of the screen. She takes one more step forward as if the column can block her whole body. At this moment, the man joins the framed image from the left. He hugs the woman from behind, moving her head towards him. He attempts to kiss her on the lips, but she turns her face away. Her mouth is moving, and she speaks to the man, sending him into contemplation. He lowers his head towards her and mutters in her ear. They have a special dialogue, the subject of which is intended not to be overheard by the audience. Instead, the sounds heard are noises of men's deafening and audacious laughter from one more screen. The audience can hear subtle whispers but cannot hear the conversations between the man and woman clearly as if they are hiding somewhere. The feeling of peeping into their secrets is magnified by the gauze-like wallpaper that covers the screen at the screening. This composition makes the audience realize that obviously these two characters are probably having an affair, and quite possibly plotting something together. Through this "window paper" (*chuangzhi*)[1], one can only guess and wonder what they are really doing. What is their relationship? What are their secrets? Under the enigmatic ambience and with all sorts of questions, the audience begin their investigation and wandering of Chinese contemporary artist Yang Fudong's multi-screen film

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[1] In ancient China, paper was used to glue the windows. The term "window paper" here refers to the gauze that covers the screen as an analogy. The reason is that through the window paper, you can see the scene inside the room vaguely, just like you can see the screen through the gauze.

installation, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (*Shan'e de bi'an Diyizhang*, 2019) in Suzhou Museum. And in his most recent solo exhibition, *Endless Peaks* (*Wuxian de shanfeng,* 2020-2021) in ShanghART Gallery, Yang combines paintings with video art to create a kind of multi-media artwork.
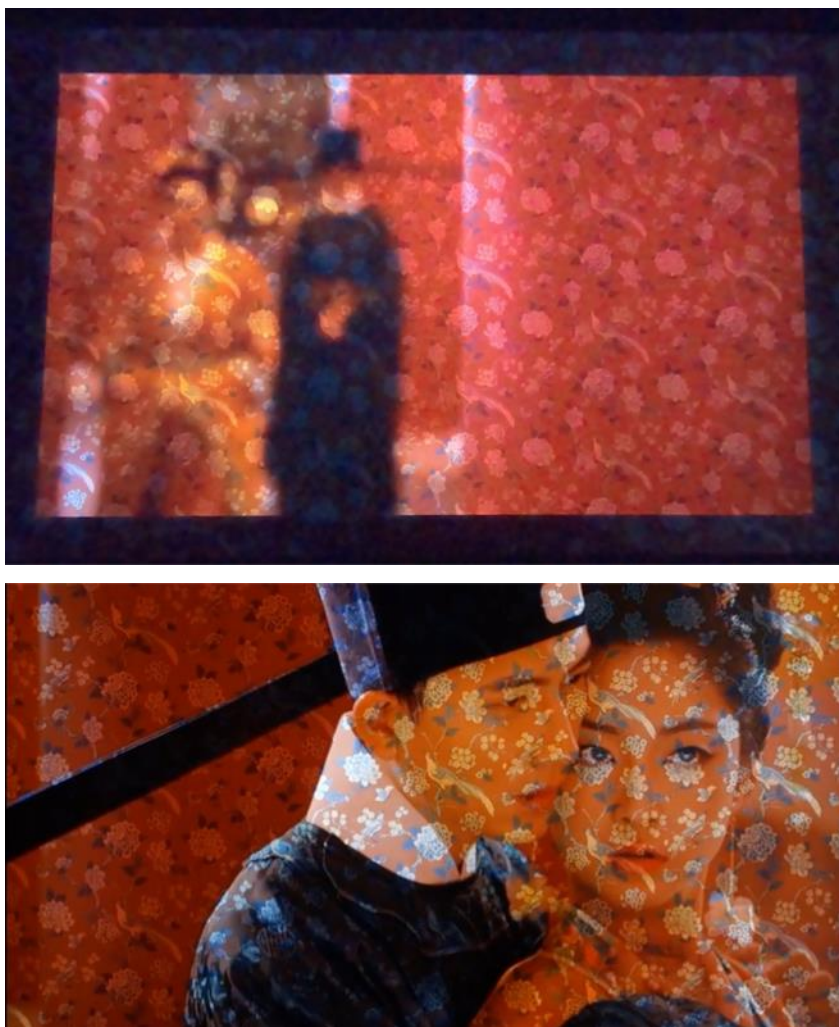
Fig. 0.1 Yang Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, stills of the channel 1.1, Suzhou Museum, Suzhou

Chinese film scholar and curator Dong Bingfeng (b. 1974) considers Yang Fudong's works to be "Cinema of Exhibition", namely a cinema in a gallery, which can refer to both the problem of exhibitions of moving images in museums and galleries as well as a type of moving image that is apart from the film industry.[2] Dong

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[2] Dong Bingfeng 董冰峰, *Zhanlan dianying: zhongguo dangdai yishu zhong de dianying* 展覽電影: 中國當代藝術中的電影 [Cinema of exhibition: Film in Contemporary Chinese Art] (Taipei: Aqiaoshe wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 2018), 8.

wants to use this idea to explore the aesthetic language, content, form, and expression of moving images as well as the way of knowledge generation about the functioning of the system and the curation of museums. This kind of approach is too broad for me and my study. In this study, I will continue to use the connotation of Dong's idea and adopts the concept of "gallery film" from film scholar Catherine Fowler to characterize Yang's works as it is more suitable for my exploration of his multi-media installation. As a space-time dynamic, complex, and diverse art form, gallery film represents the growth of film from a black box to a white cube since the expansion of cinema. From around the 1960s to the present, gallery film has continued to progress. Various contemporary artists and filmmakers have added to its development with various artistic practices. Although its history is still short, its content and forms' innovation, complexity, and diversity make it valuable to study. This study will examine the materiality, form, content, space, and spectatorship of Yang's two relatively recent works in order to determine how they exhibit a unique type of gallery film, which I will refer to as a landscape-scroll film installation (I will explain why I use this term in Chapter 1). I would like to concentrate on Yang Fudong's film installations in investigating his artistic efforts in the interplay between film and contemporary art, as well as to determine how he applies various aesthetics to his gallery films. In addition, I hope that my analysis of Yang Fudong's two works will highlight the artistic and aesthetic differences and similarities between his works and the average gallery film, thus providing readers with an understanding of gallery film as an art form.

Gallery Film and Multi-Screen

Before studying Yang Fudong and his artworks, it is necessary to understand what gallery film is and how it has developed. In a broad sense, gallery film denotes moving images displayed in white cubes such as museums and galleries, the creation of which began to bloom as expanded cinema arrived in the public sphere. Moving images encompass films, video art, new media art, and other projection methods. The term "moving image" is used here instead of "35mm film" or "video art" to emphasize that, and thanks to digital technology, the boundaries between them in terms of format, materials, and installation forms have long been blurred. In this regard, gallery film is inclusive and comprehensive. In my discussion of Yang Fudong, gallery film refers to formats such as films, digital video, etc. from the perspective of the medium. Also,

by "cinematic," I mean that the artist uses film languages and elements in their moving images, which is able to generate a cinematic effect, such as an immersive experience for the audience. As for "cinematic viewing", I mostly refer to the passive way that audiences sit in a cinema and watch a film that has been edited by the director. The audience do not have a lot of autonomy in this way of viewing when it compared to gallery film. Films began to transform from the black box to the white cube, signifying the ongoing incorporation of cinema into contemporary art practice and emerging as the foundation of contemporary art tradition throughout the 1990s.

Following Catherine Fowler's definition of gallery film as "a body of films made for the gallery space", the gallery film is less concerned with the social-political and institutional extensions of exhibition than the "Cinema of Exhibition".[3] Instead, it focuses on the fusion of cinematography and installation art, the materiality of this art form, and the new cinematic aesthetics it engenders. The term "film" is derived from what Gene Youngblood refers to as "Expanded Cinema", which emphasizes that this art form is not only concerned with temporality but is also immersive and interactive in relation to spatiality. This increases the visual possibilities of film in the white box space as well as the complexities of human consciousness and perception. I would like to point out that a gallery film should refer to films that are beyond the mainstream narrative film and produced specifically for the museum and/or gallery environments. This type of cinematic work should include the film elements, its language, and its mode of projection (e.g., various projection equipment, screens, etc.). However, it should also incorporate the "ecosystem" and mechanism created by the screen and the screen, the screen and the audience, the screen and the architecture, the projection venue and the environment, and the audience and the environment outside the screen. According to Noam M. Elcott, this is a type of "phantasmagoria," which originally meant "horror theater" and vanished in the 19th century, and whose "fundamental configurations cannot be sought in a single image, medium, technique, device, style, or psychological disorder."[4] Elcott considers the phantasmagoria to be a full collection of images and mechanisms made up of numerous components. The audience must be aware of the entire mechanism for the

[3] Catherine Fowler, "Into the Light: Re-Considering Off-Frame and Off-Screen Space in Gallery Films," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 6, no. 3 (2008): 253.

[4] Noam M. Elcott, "The Phantasmagoric *Dispositif*: An Assembly of Bodies and Images in Real Time and Space," *Grey Room* 62 (January 2016): 64.

illusion to be functional. This also highlights the importance of the participation of human consciousness in the presentation of the phantasmagoria. Elcott's explanation of the audience experience will serve as the theoretical basis for the discussion of spectatorship throughout the thesis.

The convergence of cinema and museums is not a phenomenon of the contemporary era, rather, cinema has a history of "installation" at its origin, and the collision between cinema and museums was developed at the early stage of modernity, which originated at the birth of the medium.[5] I agree with the saying that the form of post-cinematic art projection is a return and reconnection to the "exhibitionary fantasies" that emerged in the pre-cinema era.[6] This reveals the mechanical and technical nature of the film. For some scholars, for example, the intersection of the two must be traced back to sculpture film and Benjamin Buchloh's discussion of Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* (1968). This is an example of how people think about film and sculpture in ways that do not follow the medium specificity, but do emphasize the characteristics and aesthetics of the medium.[7] A similar example is Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), which projects a beam of light to create a sculptural quality. The emergence of sculptural cinema demonstrates that artists have begun to rethink what film is outside of its language, history, and medium specificity. On the contrary, it can be regarded as a kind of reflection and expansion of the sculpture medium. The film may have become more emphatic about the heightened sense of physical experience by presenting the conditions and characteristics of other media, such as sculpture in this period. The temporal differences in the development of film and art history as objects to each other, as well as the mechanical apparatus and artistic nature of film itself, reveal the film's tendency to merge with other art forms in its development and its historical inevitability to enter museums and galleries. In terms of the historical development of various types of gallery films, those created before and after the 1990s have

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[5] Giuliana Bruno, "Cinema, Museum, and the Art of Projection: Transient Visions in the Museum and in Art", in *Extended Temporalities*, ed. by Alessandro Bordina, Vincenzo Estremo, and Francesco Federici (Udine: Mimesis International, 2016), 27.

[6] Bruno, "Cinema, Museum, and the Art of Projection", 29.

[7] Ling-Ching Chiang 江淩青，"Cong diaosu dianying maixiang lunwen dianying: lun dongtai yingxiang yishu de xushi qingxiang" 從雕塑電影邁向論文電影：論動態影像藝術的敘事傾向 [The Shift from Sculptural Film to Essay Film: On the Narrative Tendency of Moving Image Art]. *Yishuxue yanjiu* 藝術學研究 [NCU Journal of Art Studies], no. 16 (June 2015): 181.

different characteristics. The gallery films before the 1990s were mainly the expanded cinema proposed by Gene Youngblood. This is not to say that the gallery films after the 1990s no longer have the characteristics of expanded cinema, but that some changes have occurred in the gallery film after the 1990s, which we will talk about later. According to Youngblood, the expanded cinema is not "a movie at all: like life it's a process of becoming, man's ongoing historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes".[8] They arose mainly due to the global expansion of the Internet and mobile wireless technology, and the growing strength of the film industry. As cinema continues to move towards a formulaic approach, its appeal to the audience has begun to decline. Against this backdrop, films are gradually moving away from the black box and seeking development in other arenas. Expanded cinema refers to cutting-edge cinematic works outside established genres and formulas, new attempts after the cinema have come out of the black box, and films of the future that are being developed but not yet formed[9]. It is an alternative practice parallel to the industrial mode of filmmaking. As one of the ways out of the black box (cinema or film theatre) and home (due to the invention of TV), some experimental images or avant-garde films entered the white cube during this period. In other words, museum and gallery as an alternative screening institution and venue provide space and conditions for the survival of films as well as artists and filmmakers who try to innovate and experiment outside the industrial film system. In this stage, the gallery film form has shown its diversity. Audience can see reframed films that are made for the cinema in the gallery space, such as films of Chantal Akerman. Some of the more experimental challenges can also be seen, for examples, in Robert Whitman's *Shower* (1964), Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), and Michael Snow's *Two Sides to Every Story* (1976), etc. Elcott sees the "solid light" films of McCall as a prime example of the expansion of cinema into performance, sculpture, or installation art; meanwhile, Whitman's "Cinema Pieces" introduces film and video into sculpture and theater.[10] These are two different ways of entering phantasmagoric respectively.[11] In addition, the gallery films of this period are characterized by anti-narrative and anti-illusion due to the modernist exploration of

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[8] Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 41.
[9] Ling-Ching Chiang, "The Shift from Sculptural Film to Essay Film: On the Narrative Tendency of Moving Image Art,"*Journal of Art Studies* 16 (June 2015): 177-8.
[10] Elcott, "The Phantasmagoric *Dispositif*," 57.
[11] Elcott's proposed third way to enter phantasmagoric - video installation - will be discussed in a later article.

the specificity of the medium and in order to meet the expectations of museums and galleries for art exhibits. Jackie Hatfield's summary of this phenomenon is apt and prevailing:

> Not without ambiguities, expanded cinema as a term generally describes synaesthetic cinematic spectacle (spectacle meaning exhibition, rather than simply an issue of projection or scale), whereby the notions of conventional filmic language (for example dramaturgy, narrative, structure, technology) are either extended or interrogated outside the single-screen space.[12]

At this stage, gallery film emphasizes the entry of film as an object into the white cube of museum or gallery space, resulting in the deconstruction and destruction of the original film language and medium specificity. Gallery film is "centrifugal" that the space where the film is exhibited and screened will be more important than the film itself. The distancing process of the audience's attention from the images to the projection environment is illustrated in Andy Warhol's *Sleep* (1963), although it is not shown in a white cube. Because the film is devoid of sound, color, and narrative, the audience is unable to concentrate on the film for a long duration of more than five hours and gradually becomes aware of the projection environment. This also shows that the film achieves an anti-illusion effect through its anti-narrative contents. Furthermore, for this phase of the study, the focus has been on the differences in the viewing experience of the audience provided by the white cube and the black box as well as how the changes in the screening environment allow artists and filmmakers to change their original film production settings.

Changes Since the 1990s

However, since the 1990s, there has been a shift in gallery film. According to scholar Catherine Fowler, contemporary artist-filmmakers in the 1990s returned to the "frontal flat image", using some art historical conventions such as Renaissance perspective, painting frames, and narrative and denying the "multiple viewpoints and planes" mentioned by Chrissie Iles about moving image artists between 1964 and 1977.[13] This point does not support the differences between gallery film and other films in the black-box. The returns of narrative and pictorial framing that led our gaze

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[12] Jackie Hatfield, "Expanded Cinema – And Cinema of Attractions", *Art In-Sight*, 27.1 (2005): 5.

[13] Catherine Fowler, "Into the Light: Re-considering Off-frame and Off-screen Space in Gallery Films," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 6, no. 3 (December 2008): 253–4.

back to the center of the frame, in my opinion, did not deny the "multiple viewpoints". In other words, the denied "multiple viewpoints" are simply a type of cinematic identity expressed through sculptural models and terminological counterparts, limiting the materiality of the film medium. The use of multi-screen in gallery films, on the other hand, perpetuates the feature of multiple viewpoints. At the same time, the return of narrative in moving images and the use of multiple screens combine to create a sense of "centripetal" space in this stage of the gallery film. Fowler has categorized the "moving-image gallery work" produced after the 1990s, one of which is "an extension of expanded cinema's use of strategies such as repetition, and more than one screen, to challenge the dominance of the cause and effect, linear narrative paradigm".[14] Indeed, many artists gradually emerging since the 1990s have used multi-screens to return to the narrative paradigm. The multiple screen's viewing mode, and cinematic aesthetics demonstrate that gallery film has reached a new stage of development, which is a return to cinematography. Chrissie Iles has divided the motion picture since the 1960s into three periods and emphasized the attempt to return to the cinematic viewing experience in the white cube since the 1990s after the first two stages of critiquing the cinematic viewing experience and labelled this stage as the "cinematic".[15] Iles is not the only one who has noticed this historical change. Sarah Cooper also perceived a return to the cinematic experience of mental vision when she viewed video artist Douglas Gordon's installation *Phantom* (2011). She argues that even without the auditorium space of the cinema, the darkened room, the motion graphics on the screen and the moody music all suggest a black box rather than a white cube environment.[16] The off-screen installations - a black Steinway piano and another scorched fragment of a Steinway piano - give the audience a concrete sense of which is difficult to achieve through ghost-like illusions and phantasmagoria alone. Gordon's juxtaposition of moving image and installation connects the viewer's eye and mind while also linking the gallery-goers to the cinema spectators. This example illustrates the ongoing return to the black box in the white

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[14] Catherine Fowler, "Room for experiment: gallery films and vertical time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila", *Screen*, Volume 45, Issue 4, (Winter 2004): 326. The othter two kinds of moving-image gallery work are "structuralist/materialist films' foregrounding of the projector, camera, lens and film material" and "a 'primitive cinema' preoccupation with the difference between stillness and movement".

[15] The other two phases termed as "the phenomenological, performative phase" and "the sculptural phase". Chrissir Iles, "Film and Video Space," in Erika Suderburg, ed., *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minnesota: Minnesota UP, 2000), 252-62.

[16] Sarah Cooper, "Douglas Gordon and the Gallery of the Mind," in *Theorizing Film through Contemporary Art Expanding Cinema*, ed. Jill Murphy and Laura Rascaroli (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 144.

cube space and reveals an audience's trust in cinematic fantasy.[17] I think Yang Fudong's gallery film is to a certain extent in line with the trend of returning to the black box. However, in terms of form and content, they are distinct from Gordon's gallery film. In terms of form, for instance, Yang Fudong's gallery film employs multiple screens that complement the architectural structure of the exhibition space; in terms of content, Yang Fudong's work contains a narrative. I will range more widely across this phenomenon later in returning to Yang Fuodng's practices. His use of multiple screens in an installation sense helps gallery films, which are becoming a cinematic viewing experience, to maintain their artistic nature, identity, and form, and is an important factor in allowing artistic practice to attract spectators and critical attention.

Fig. 0.2 Douglas Gordon, *Phantom*, 2011, video installation with soundstage, screen, a black Steinway piano, a burned Steinway piano, and one monitor, Park & 75, New York

André Bazin predicted that total cinema would lead to the disappearance of the screen, but the status quo in contemporary art is the opposite: the importance of the materiality of the screen is constantly being emphasized. The frequent use of multiple screens in video artworks demonstrates the desire of artists to expand the cinematic experience by creating a new way of viewing the film that allows for a more diverse and immersive experience for the audience. Multi-screen artwork has been appearing since the early 20th century. Abel Gance's three-screen manifesto *Napoleon* (1927)

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[17] Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen* (Bristo: Intellect, 2009), 24.

attempted to revolutionize visual culture at a time when sound was entering the cinema. [18] Youngblood took this as a new, experimental audio-visual experience constructed by multiple screens "synesthetic cinema", a new revolution, which is "the only aesthetic language suited to the post-industrial, post-literate, man-made environment with its multi-dimensional simulsensory network of information sources."[19] As a result of the introduction of television, spectators were able to watch films at home; hence, the steep decline in cinema attendance was an unparalleled shock to the film industry. This has hindered the growth of multiple-screen cinema. Besides, because of the unique aesthetic language and characteristics of multiple-screen cinema, it developed in a different direction than commercial media. Therefore, its entry into the white cube seemed to be a natural consequence.

Three Types of Multi-screening

Many different moving image artists' multiple attempts to use multiple screens at Expo 67 can be seen as an important precursor to the diversity and interconnectedness of screens in the digital architecture of the 21st century. [20] Focusing on the 21st century, with the growing maturity of multi-screen films, we may be able to summarize some general principles of artists' use of multi-screen, and here I would like to make a simple classification of multi-screen films in gallery film. The first and most common type is the pure use of multiple screens. In this case, the emphasis is on a sense of image and amplification of the visual experience. British artist John Akomfrah, for example, likes to place multiple screens (usually three to six screens) side-by-side rather than staggered in a darkened exhibition environment. Although it uses three screens rather than one to project his gallery films, any one of them is made strictly in accordance with the 16:9 aspect ratio normally used in the film industry. This suggests that Akomfrah is one of the more traditional artists in the art of moving image and adheres to the standards of the film industry, which also illustrates that his multi-screen images may be more accessible to audiences because they are closer to films in cinema. The use of multiple screens here seems to become a simultaneous storyboard. His shots are usually very subtle and colorful, thus giving the audience a strong visual impact on the enlarged and increased screens. At the

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[18] Cf. Nelly Kaplan, Napoleon (London: BFI Publishing, 1994).

[19] Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, 77.

[20] Janine Marchessault, "Multi-Screens and Future Cinema: The Labyrinth Project at Expo 67," *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, ed. Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 29-51.

same time, he pays attention to the use of sound and its coordination with the visual images, which also illustrates the artist's desire to amplify the sensory experience.

The audience can see his multi-screen video installation in a static way, where they can stand or sit at one point and view all the screens. This is a typical example of using the Renaissance perspective to appreciate the "frontal flat image". For example, when watching his three channel video installations, *The Unfinished Conversation* (2012), *Vertigo Sea* (2015) and *Precarity* (2017), the experience is similar to watching modern triptych.

Fig. 0.3 John Akomfrah, *Vertigo Sea*, 2015, 48-minute immersive three-channel video installation

The second type of multi-screening is inherently variable in that the screens are not simply juxtaposed, but rather scattered throughout the exhibition space [21]. Typically, in this form of multi-screen film installation, the screens are relatively independent of each other. Each screen has its own separate sound channel. The viewer can no longer see all the screens from a fixed viewpoint but needs to move around the exhibition space to see all the screens. Compared to the first use of multiple screens, this type increases the interactivity of the screens, the exhibition space, and the audience. For example, Isaac Julien's *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010),

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[21] This type of artwork does not become a solo exhibition for the artist probably because the number of exhibits or screens is not sufficient for a solo exhibition. This type of artwork can be adjusted according to the location of the exhibition, the size of the space it occupies, etc. to match the other exhibits.

which is composed of nine double-sided projection screens, each has a part of 9.2 surround sound system accompaniment, and seven of them form a panoramic floating enclosure, while the remaining two are suspended in the air, sloping inwards and folded over each other.[22] The audience can view this work from different directions and floor heights. The 13 screens in Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto* (2015) are scattered throughout the exhibition space, some on the walls and some in the middle of the gallery that divides the space. Although the multiple screens do not surround by shape as they do in *Ten Thousand Waves*, the viewer needs to roam through the divided space to see all the screens, thus taking a more active role. In both cases, the screens themselves appear separate and fragmented, yet interconnected in content, and the way in which they are dispersed makes the multi-screen format unique in itself (I will explore in more detail later about this point).

Fig. 0.4 Julian Rosefeldt, *Manifesto: Art x Agency*, 2019-2020, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.

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[22] Joseph Livesey, "Wave after Wave after Wave," *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2014): 26.

Fig. 0.5 Isaac Julien, *Ten Thousand Waves*, 2010, nine double-sided screens, 55-minute moving image installation, MoMA, New York

The third type is to use multiple screens as an important component of the entire artwork to construct a Gesamtkunstwerk, which can be translated as a "total work of art" to describes an artwork that combined different art forms into one single cohesive whole. This model adds some other art forms to the second use of multiple screens, such as painting, performance, sculpture, architecture, installation, etc. The different art forms work together to form a complete and total work of art. William Kentridge has many works of art that have achieved Gesamtkunstwerk. For example, he used 5-channel video installation, some steel megaphones, and a breathing machine to create *The Refusal of Time* (2012) for the thirteenth Documenta Kassel (2012), which is a metaphor of the developments of science and industry and focuses on time as a form of political and social control. The steel megaphones and the breathing machine are surrounded by multiple screens, creating a separate space within the exhibition space, into which the viewer feels surrounded by images. The immersive experience of being completely surrounded by the wall of images is akin to viewing a panoramic painting, while the repetition of monotonous patterns and lines on the screens removes the perception of time, forcing one to reflect on modern industry and the concept of time. The multi-screen is here for the audience to create "entirely new architecture for sensory immersion that would expand the experience of film".[23]

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[23] Janine Marchessault, "1. Multi-Screens and Future Cinema: The Labyrinth Project at Expo 67," *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, 2007, 30.

Fig. 0.6 William Kentridge, *The Refusal of Time*, 2012, five-channel digital video installation, black-and-white and color, sound, 30 minuets; steel megaphones, and a breathing machine ("elephant")

Yang Fudong

The development of gallery film and the use of multiple screens in video art in mainland China is relatively backward but is progressing rapidly. As the father of video art in China, Zhang Peili's (b. 1957) *30x30* (1988) is considered to be one of the earliest video art works in China. This single-screen work exhibits the anti-narrative and anti-illusion characteristics of early video art. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, we could find that gallery film had returned to "frontal flat image" showing a return to the mode of cinematic viewing, which had been re-embraced in some video artworks of Chinese video artists who came later than Zhang Peili, such as Yang Fudong. Yang Fudong may be a typical example of an early Chinese video artist whose artistic style was close to the formal and stylistic transformation of video art at this historical juncture and who thus had the opportunity to enter the international art scene.

As one of China's most prominent contemporary video artists, Yang Fudong has garnered significant attention from the international art community. During his college years at the China Academy of Art, he studied oil painting, but after graduating he turned to image creation. Since the 1990s, he has attempted to incorporate 35mm film into his imaginative image and video works. Subsequently, he began to produce large-scale video installations for museum and gallery

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exhibitions. *An Estranged Paradise* (*Mosheng Tiantang*, 2002), an early video work by Yang Fudong, was exhibited at the eleventh Documenta Kassel in 2002, earning him international recognition and esteem. Yang Fudong was nominated for the Guggenheim-administered Hugo Boss Prize for Contemporary Art in 2004 and ultimately became the third Chinese artist to win the award, following Cai Guo-Qiang and Huang Yong Ping. Later, in 2007, Yang's five-part, multi-channel video installation *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest* (2007) was exhibited at the Venice Biennale, contributing to his breakthrough on the international art scene.

Yang Fudong's transition from oil painting to video production began during his college years. In 1993, his third year at the China Academy of Art, Yang Fudong attempted to remain silent for three months and only communicated with others through writing. *Otherwhere: Not Speaking for Three Months* was the title of the performance artwork, which was documented by photographs and videos. This was a pivotal moment in his artistic development. "Yang's departure from oil painting was inspired by wide reading (including translations such as Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*), looking at films (such as videos of performances by Joseph Beuys) and the example of artist-teachers and mentors including Qiu Zhijie (b. 1969) and Zhang Peili who had abandoned practice in conventional fine arts (in Qiu's case printmaking) to experiment with video, photography and multi-media arts."[24]

An Estranged Paradise (1997-2002) is Yang Fudong's first film, which tells a story of a young male intellectual and several women he met in Suzhou and Hangzhou. The film depicts the mental state of young people. They must adapt to life but cannot allow life to adapt to them; therefore, the film's male protagonist has always felt ill but has never been able to identify a disease, which is a state of compromise with reality. Although this art film was shot in 1997, for financial reasons, it was not completed until 2002 when Yang Fudong was invited and funded by the eleventh Documenta Kassel and participated in the exhibition. According to Ute Meta Bauer, one of the artistic directors of the eleventh Documenta Kassel, Yang Fudong was selected for the Documenta because the artistic directors' group saw a modern city in *An Estranged Paradise* which they interpreted as a change within China, but they

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[24] Claire Roberts, "Tolerance: The World of Yang Fudong", *Humanities Research XIX*, no. 2 (2013): 143.

also saw in the film that the male protagonist was disoriented. So, they were curious about what China was like at the time.[25] The character's disorientation, sadness, and uncertainty in the film became an important personal and artistic trait in his future works. Perhaps the exhibition and projection of Yang Fudong's first work in a museum setting at the eleventh Documenta Kassel set the tone for his later works, which were also exhibited in museums and galleries. Regarding projection formats, this is an essential element in the outward expansion of cinema. The introduction of film into museums and art galleries represents the spread of film beyond the black box and the outward exploration of the white cube. In the white cube environment, the film not only discovers a new area for the survival and development of avant-garde films, art films, experimental films, and other visuals, but also creates a new cinematic style. In the contemporary context, these are the forms of film and art collaboration.

Yang Fudong frequently produces both single-screen and multiple-screen gallery films. His artistic trajectory reveals a gradual transition from single screen to multi-screen practices. In order to clarify the reasons and significance behind Yang's use of multiple screens in his artistic practice, the following is a summary and classification of his artistic trajectory based on empirical research and qualitative analysis.[26] Before 2005, Yang Fudong's works primarily consisted of single-channel video/film, but after 2005, multi-channel moving images became his primary form of artistic expression. In fact, Yang began utilizing multiple screens to create artwork as early as 1999. *I Love My Motherland* is likely his first multi-screen video work.[27] At this early stage, he was already creating complex moving images on five screens when he began using video instead of painting as his primary artistic medium.

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[25] Yang Fudong, "Live Virtual Event", interviewed by Ute Meta Bauer, Zena Zezza, April 09, 2022, audio, 01:22:00.

[26] Because Yang Fudong's artworks are complicated and numerous and works with the same content have been exhibited in different places around the world that may have different versions. Therefore, this classification may not be complete and comprehensive.

[27] A black and white, sound, 5-channel video installation in1999.

Fig. 0.7 Yang Fudong, *New Women*, 2013, multi-channel video, 35mm B&W film transferred to HD, 8-11 minutes, exhibited in ShanghART Gallery, 2014

Prior to 2002, Yang Fudong's artworks tended to be experimental films or video art, most of which lacked storytelling. In his later artwork, *Tonight Moon* (2000), Yang Fudong has embedded many small monitors into a large screen displaying a garden, each with a scene of men swimming fully naked.[28] The artist seems to be experimenting with the medium of video art, as seen by his use of experimental techniques such as short cuts, numerous exposures, and out-of-focus images. In 2002, Yang Fudong also created multi-channel works such as *Flutter, Flutter…Jasmine, Jasmine*, and it was in this year that he was invited to participate in the eleventh Documenta Kassel. Possibly because he witnessed the success of *An Estranged Paradise* (1997-2002) at Documenta and discovered that a film could be projected in a white cube as a method of projection and exhibition, he continued with this approach and produced a number of single-channel films and videos, such as *Liu Lan* (2003), *The Half Hitching Post* (2005), etc. and projected them in white cube space. The single-channel films and videos from 2002 to 2005 show a certain return of storytelling, i.e., a clearer and more complete narrative logic can be seen again in the single-screen and multi-screen films after 2002. After 2005, almost all of Yang Fudong's video works are multi-channel video installations, and his poetic, picturesque and ambiguous personal artistic style and characteristics are becoming

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[28] A color, sound, multi-channel video installation.

more and more distinct and consistent. From Yang Fudong's multi-channel video installations after 2010, we can see some changes in the way he uses multi-screen. Firstly, his multi-channel videos before 2010 were mostly juxtaposed and projected on the same plane, such as *Tonight Moon* (2000) and *No Snow on the Broken Bridge* (2006). This is the traditional way to exhibit multi-channel video works in a white cube space, like John Akomfrah's gallery film that I mentioned in the introduction. Except for the difference in the number of screens, there is no significant difference between this way of projection and the way of projecting single-screen images. Perhaps Yang Fudong also realizes that this form of projection does not fully exploit the potential of multi-screen and the possibilities for creating meaningful images. Therefore, after 2010, Yang Fudong's multi-channel video works were not placed on the same plane and began to be integrated with exhibition space and architecture. For example, in the version of *One Half of August* (2011) exhibited at the Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, Yang Fudong projected the video onto different objects and architectural structures, such as doors, cabinets, walls of different shapes and materials, and the turning corner and concave sides of walls. This multi-channel video installation emphasizes the subtle facial expression and simple actions of the characters. Employing multi-screens in the artwork expands the audience's vision and perception besides challenging the materiality of film. The screens in *New Women* (2013) are placed in different positions in the exhibition hall, and at different heights and angles. Some are hung in the corners of the walls; some are leaning against the pillars. These screens, placed at different angles in different parts of the room, required the audience to walk through the exhibition hall containing columns with Chinese floral patterns that depict young women walking elegantly naked between Roman columns or interacting with Chinese or Western furniture and objects. Thus, in this way, the viewer's body physically achieves the same state as the bodies of the characters in the images. Therefore, through these examples, we can see the presence of multiple screens in Yang Fudong's work, the variations in their usage, and the meaning they create for different exhibitions.

In fact, before Yang Fudong, many artists had already created many artworks and exhibitions using multi-screens. Among them, British artist and filmmaker Isaac Julien (b. 1960) is one of the most famous and whose artworks are most similar to Yang Fudong's works. One of his multi-channel film installations, *Ten Thousand*

Waves[29], was exhibited in New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 2010.[30] As an artist who has long been concerned with themes of politics, race, and immigration, in this film installation Isaac Julien focuses on twenty-three cockle pickers who died when they were smuggled into northwest England from Fujian Province, China (Morecambe Bay tragedy).[31] For critics such as Joseph Livesey, multi-channel installation is the core of this artwork as it questions "the boundaries between center and periphery, and producer and spectator, as well as the customary stability of these relationships".[32] The use of multiple screens helped and enhanced his ability to create a "nonlinear, fragmented use of multiple narratives" to show the changing and fluctuating bodies and identities of the migrants.[33] Therefore, through the multi-screen installation, the audience can perceive the floating of immigrants' bodies through their own body movements while watching the exhibition, and then associate with the changes of identity in history and society as well as in different cultural contexts.

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[29] *Ten Thousand Waves* consists of nine double-sided projection screens, each of which is equipped with a part of the 9.2 surround sound system accompaniment and suspended in the Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium of MoMA.

[30] Yang Fudong makes a cameo appearance in the reenactment scenes of a Chinese film, *The Goddess* (1934) in *Ten Thousand Waves*.

[31] The tragedy occurred in February 2004 when more than 30 illegal Chinese (mainly from Fujian) cockle pickers were stranded on the beach by a sudden high tide while picking clams in Morecambe Bay; 23 of them were killed and 15 were rescued. The tragedy has created a significant degree of outrage in the United Kingdom, and the issues of the survival rights of the Chinese in the United Kingdom, illegal workers, and workplace laws have garnered considerable attention.

[32] Joseph Livesey, "Wave After Wave After Wave: The Multi-Channel Immersion of Isaac Julien's Ten Thousand Waves," *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2014): 30.

[33] Ibid.

In the same year 2010, Yang created *The Fifth Night*. He placed multiple screens side by side like a handscroll to create a special visual effect. From Yang Fudong's many different multi-screen artworks, it is not difficult to see that his reasons for using multiple screens and the effects he hopes to achieve are constantly changing depending on the work. Hence, there may be a difference between Yang and many other artists who also use multiple screens as their main method of creation. This also implies the importance of analyzing his work on a case-by-case basis, as well as the versatility of his work.

Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter (2019) is a fresh attempt by Yang Fudong to utilize many screens, following his previous attempts in *One Half of August* (2011) and *New Women* (2013). On the basis of Yang's use of multi-screens in *Endless Peaks* (2020-2021), his exhibition immediately following *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019), it is probable that this experimentation will be an important direction for Yang to explore and use multi-screens in the future to create artworks and exhibitions. At this stage of development, Yang Fudong's usage of numerous screens is an imitation of ancient Chinese landscape painting. This is not the first time Yang Fudong has incorporated elements of traditional Chinese painting into his moving-image work. Whether he was a student at the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts in his early years or later working on his own films, he has always studied and admired ancient Chinese paintings which are a source of inspiration for him. Traditional Chinese landscape paintings emphasize cavalier perspective in terms of form, and Yang Fudong physically achieves "cavalier perspective" by dividing a scene exhibited on a single plane into multiple pieces for the audience to view. Because the multi-screen installation itself requires the viewers' bodies to enter the artwork and allows them to move freely in and out of the exhibition hall, the viewers' bodies move through these multiple screens just as they do in a landscape. However, the landscape scenes depicted by the painters are not a mere imitation of the natural world, as ancient Chinese landscape painting emphasizes "meaning beyond the object". When viewers appreciate a Chinese landscape painting, they are not only enjoying the scenery with their eyes, but their bodies are taking a virtual journey through it. And

through the visual illusion, people are actually thinking about their own subjects. *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019) is a multi-screen film installation space constructed by Yang Fudong, whose use of multi-screen is different from other artists as the multi-screen are designed according to the construction features of classical Chinese garden. Thus, the utilization of multiple screens in the work and the construction of Suzhou gardens work together to create a gallery film with site-specificity.

Past Research on Yang Fudong

The following section will investigate past research from two perspectives: on the one hand, the extent to which research is aware of the phenomenon of gallery film in China, and on the other hand, the extent to which aspects of Yang Fudong's artistic practices have been researched, and to what extent Yang Fudong's research has achieved.

From previous studies, there is a great lack of attention and research on the phenomenon of gallery film in China, and there is limited international research specifically on this phenomenon. Although part of the reason for the lack of attention to the study of gallery film in China may be that Chinese moving image artists are lagging in their artistic practice compared to other countries, the trend of combining film and contemporary art and using museums or galleries as new spaces for creation and exhibition has been around for a long time. The only authoritative and cutting-edge work on Chinese gallery film is Dong Bingfeng's book, *Cinema of Exhibition: Film in Contemporary Chinese Art* published in 2018. Dong Bingfeng's contribution lies in his consideration of the phenomenon of gallery film taking root in China, as film comes out of the black box and enters the white box, in the context of contemporary art development in China. In his view, gallery film is a new category of art, which he calls "cinema of exhibition" or "exhibiting films in the museum/gallery". But his vagueness about this concept can be seen from his choice of terminology. In the book, he sorts out the development of moving images in China, which involves numerous art movements, exhibitions, directors, artists, and art practices from a socio-historical perspective, and sets out the research context for subsequent researchers. However, his recognition and analysis of this phenomenon does not go far enough — it only remains at the level of describing and sorting out

the historical facts — both in terms of its emergence and development in the world and in China. In his book, Dong Bingfeng analyzes two of Yang Fudong's internationally acclaimed works, *An Estranged Paradise* (2002) and *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest* (2007) and compiles some of Yang's artistic styles and characteristics, with a particular focus on non-linear narratives. He does not analyze the aesthetics of this new form of film apart from providing some factual information.

It should not be a surprise that as a leading light of Chinese moving images art, especially when we are noticing the phenomenon of gallery film in China, Yang Fudong is worthy of study because of the representativeness of his artworks in this worldwide wave. Yet, it is surprising that there is not much relevant research on Yang Fudong compared to other internationally acclaimed video artists, such as Isaac Julien, and in those past studies on him, two major flaws can be summarized. Firstly, the existing studies are mainly limited to the analysis of the film texts of Yang Fudong's artworks. In other words, many scholars merely treat Yang Fudong's works as "films", and the narrative, plot, framing, and characters in the films are the focus of their attention. So, some interpretations of the characters in Yang Fudong's works (the image of Chinese intellectuals, the state, and the transformation of their image under certain circumstances) are commonly seen in the studies on him. Secondly, most of the existing studies are limited to Yang Fudong's Chinese-ness. For example, there are also interpretations that link Yang Fudong to the characteristics of Chinese society and the context of the times. Admittedly, as a Chinese artist who is based in Shanghai and whose artworks are suffused with Chinese elements, there are certain restrictions if our awareness of his art and style is based just on his Chinese-ness.

Although some scholars have realized that a detailed and precise definition of Yang's artwork is necessary in order to examine his artwork, this is not easy to achieve: most of Yang Fudong's works are related to film, video, and installation simultaneously, and are therefore often considered "difficult to define". As a result, some scholars have chosen to talk about Yang Fudong's single- or multi-screen moving image works in isolation, bypassing concepts such as installation art, contemporary art, and new media, or simply do not discuss the issue of the combination of film and contemporary art. For example, Jing He avoids a discussion

of the form and nature of Yang Fudong's artistic practice, focusing instead on the symbolism, imagery, and appropriation of history from the perspective of cultural studies in his single-channal gallery film, *Moving Mountain* (2016) and interprets it as a kind of "film of imagery". Jing He argues that although Yang does not directly present a single story or myth from Chinese history in his work, he is still constructing a narrative about ancient Chinese history.[34] Due to Yang's appropriation of ancient Chinese historical contexts, viewers are able to find many Chinese elements in his artworks, which reflects the symbolism and realism in Yang's art practice. They also express an artist's concern for history and a sense of nationalism. However, if we only analyze the content, symbols, and creative context of Yang Fudong's moving images, it seems a bit too simplistic and crude. At the same time, the difficulty of defining his work will be solved only when one realizes the importance of the diversity of art forms in Yang Fudong's moving images. His works should not be considered simply as films projected in the black box, especially when they are viewed with a kind of expectation and standard of looking at commercial films. One should better realize that on top of using film as the main format for his creation, Yang Fudong has also expanded it to incorporate painting, sculpture, architecture, installation art, and other art forms as a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk.

In terms of socio-politics, Claire Roberts explores the history of Yang Fudong's video art and discusses the relationship between Yang Fudong's films and the shifting Chinese context at various periods. She points out that Yang Fudong's creation has undergone two important shifts: his influence from some artists who started making video art in the 1980s, such as Zhang Peili, and his shift to a "straighter documentary-like style" after completing the *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest* (2007). At the same time, Roberts emphasizes that Yang Fudong's artworks are not confined to a single historical moment, which in part reflects the uncertainty and cultural fluidity of Chinese society.[35] Chris Berry argues that opacity is a strategy that Yang adopts in his artistic production from the perspective of political economy. Considering that opacity is one of the main characteristics of the films exhibited in the gallery, taking this strategy helps Yang to successfully enter the contemporary art market and attract

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[34] Jing He, "Mythology, The Feminine, and Sense Film: The Flashback that Begins with 'Moving Mountains'", *LEAP* 43 (March 2017): 71-81.
[35] Claire Roberts, "Tolerance: The World of Yang Fudong", 135-53.

more buyers and investors, especially in the early stages of his creation, which largely demonstrates the dangers and fragility of the market economy.[36]

Additionally, from the perspective of post-socialism, experimental visuals from 1995 to 2005 are examined to construct a critical post-socialist urban landscape.[37] In an article by Zhen Zhang, some of Yang Fudong's artworks are discussed as some of the more important examples, such as the gallery films of the *Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest* (2003-2007) and the photographic works of *The First Intellectual* (2000). Compared to other analyses of Yang's work, Zhen Zhang's breakthrough is to note and acknowledge the unconventional narrative properties of Yang's gallery films, and to mention Yang's interest in traditional Chinese portraiture and landscape scrolls.

Furthermore, in the context of post-socialism, Jenny Lin focuses on the 2000 Shanghai Biennale in mainland China. In much the same vein as Zhen Zhang, Lin analyzes Yang Fudong's artworks, *Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest* (2003-2007) and *The First Intellectual* (2000) that has been removed from the *Fuck Off* exhibition by Chinses Cultural Inspection Bureau. In Lin's view, events such as the Shanghai Biennale are a myth of Shanghai's urbanization and globalization, created to promote the city's positive image at national and international scales. However, the artworks of Yang Fudong (and other artists such as Zhou Tiehai and Ai Weiwei) offer resistance to the idealized projection of a multifaceted city image and question the globalization of contemporary art in Shanghai.[38] Unlike Zhang, Lin analyzes Yang's work from an art historical perspective, and she does not notice features such as Yang Fudong's narrative approach but does provide a detailed analysis in iconography and an interpretation of the video images and character movements.

Nevertheless, I think the analyses from studies by Zhang and Lin are probably flawed. Both still limit themselves to the textual analysis of Yang Fudong's gallery film but do not analyze the form of Yang Fudong's artworks. In other words, they

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[36] Chris Berry, "The New Gestural Cinema," *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2014): 17-29.

[37] Zhen Zhang. "Transfiguring the Postsocialist City: Experimental Image-Making in Contemporary China." In Cinema at the City's Edge: *Film and Urban Networks in East Asia*, edited by Yomi Braester and James Tweedie (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 95–118.

[38] Jenny Lin, "Biennialization-as-Banalization, Promotion, and Resistance." In *Above Sea: Contemporary Art, Urban Culture, and the Fashioning of Global Shanghai*, 1st ed., (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 96–116.

have confined their research methods to a relatively traditional and homogeneous mode approach to film studies or art history. Their analyses of the characters shown in the film is still limited to the identity of Chinese intellectuals and the "literati" model. Zhang believes that the characters show purposelessness as well as the situation of hypochondria. The problem with a monolithic study of the film text is that it focuses significantly on on-screen content, while ignoring the increasingly diverse, complex, and varied forms of Yang Fudong's gallery films. The multi-screen, multimedia, and different art forms used in Yang Fudong's artworks, as well as the relationship between them and the impact they have had, all these have been overlooked. For example, Yang's use of traditional Chinese painting in his film installation can continue to be investigated. At the same time, the interpretive approach that corresponds to the development of Chinese society and the transformation of characters and scenes in Yang Fudong's works also does not break away from the insistence on his Chinese-ness. Convincingly, Yang Fudong's gallery film is a product of the development of contemporary art. As a contemporary artwork, it should not only be appreciated and interpreted from the perspective of Chinese characteristics, but should also be examined and esteemed in a global context, even though the audience can easily find Chinese elements in Yang's works, such as Chinese costumes, mythology, historical legends, and so on. In essence, Yang Fudong, as an artist who grew up after the Cultural Revolution, has been nurtured by multiple cultures and his artworks contain many non-Chinese elements. Moreover, the era of the division between the East and the West (or "eastern" and "western") is way past.[39] Certainly, Yang Fudong's works have a strong Chinese flavor, but we must look beyond his Chinese characteristics and elements to appreciate the global nature of his works.

To conclude, in addition to the two main limitations mentioned above, the following problems exist in the current research on Yang Fudong's artworks. Firstly, current research on his artistic practice is limited to his earlier works, and pays little attention to his recent works. Secondly, no one has combined art history and cinema studies to examine the globally and contemporarily significant artistic phenomenon of gallery film through Yang Fudong's artistic practice. Thirdly, in the field of

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[39] John Clark, "Conclusion." In *Eye of the Beholder: Reception, Audience, and Practice of Modern Asian Art*, (Sydney: Wild Peony, 2006), 295–317.

contemporary art, the significance and aesthetic development of Yang Fudong's gallery film in China has not been sufficiently comprehended. On this basis, the impact of the phenomenon of gallery film on the development of Chinese cinema and contemporary art has not been touched upon.

Focus on Yang's Two Recent Works

In order to address the issues in the current research on Yang Fudong's artworks mentioned in the previous section, this study will combine research methods from art history, film, and media studies to analyze two selected recent artworks by Yang, namely *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (Shan'e de bi'an Diyizhan*g*, 2019) that exhibited in Suzhou Museum, and *Endless Peaks* (Wuxian de Shanfeng, 2020-2021), a solo exhibition of Yang in ShangART Gallery, Shanghai. Because these two works are two of Yang Fudong's more recent works, no academic research has yet been published on them. At the same time, I believe that these two works not only contain Yang Fudong's usual poetic artistic style but also embody his long-standing artistic philosophy and may indicate a transformation in his creation and are therefore of great research value. This research is also based on interviews, field studies, and stylistic analysis of the two gallery films. Through this research, I hope to understand how Yang Fudong uses various aesthetics to support his gallery films, the shift in the use of multiple screens in his aesthetic ambition beyond cinema and how he created a new cinematic aesthetic through the creation of his gallery films. Meanwhile, some other questions, such as whether we can consider his creative strategy as a distinctive feature of contemporary art, whether Yang Fudong's expression is unique or a characteristic of Chinese contemporary gallery films, etc., will also be discussed.

In the first chapter, I examine how Yang Fudong first sought to make a site-specific gallery film by combining the composition of multi-screen film installation with classical Chinese gardens in *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*. This chapter explains how Yang Fudong applies his multi-screen moving image works to interact with the garden space, such as borrowed scenes (*jiejing* 借景) and hidden scenes (*cangjing* 藏景). It also analyzes his usage of gauze-like wallpaper and sound design to establish a paradoxical experience of film viewing in the garden by depicting a romantic and yearning atmosphere.

In the second chapter, I investigate how *Endless Peaks*, a solo exhibition by Yang Fudong, builds a dialogue across numerous mediums and art forms (film, video art, photography, and Chinese landscape handscrolls). This is his first attempt to create an object-based gallery film. As an exhibition that includes multi-media and various art form, I suppose Yang Fudong concentrates here on the relationship between film and painting. He predominantly employs handscroll, film roll, multi-screen, and installation to create a new gallery film and viewing mode that may be categorized as both film and painting. I believe that the perspective in Chinese painting explains why Yang Fudong utilized multiple screens in this event. Furthermore, the various instances of montage in handscroll demonstrate the complementary relationship between Yang Fudong's painting and film.

In the third chapter, I use the picturesque theory, which originated in Europe in the 18th century, to analyze the relationship between landscape, landscape painting, and Yang Fudong's gallery film. Landscape has played a significant role in the first two chapters and has been a central element of Yang Fudong's artworks. I examine how Yang Fudong's landscapes and gallery films complement one another primarily in terms of movement and frame. It is significant to gain a deeper understanding of Yang Fudong and his artistic methodology through this study, but more importantly, it is through this study that one can understand the nature and characteristics of gallery film in providing a rational experience of film watching.

<center>**Chapter One**</center>

<center>**Yang Fudong's *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019)**</center>

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the complexities of how the exhibition space for Yang Fudong's artworks is created. What are the special features of his use of multiple screens? Hitherto, discussions of Yang Fudong's art have paid little attention to his use of exhibition space but have mainly focused on the "internal" analysis of film text of Yang Fudong's style and images, or the "external" analysis of his artworks in relation to social and political contexts. Both approaches reduce Yang Fudong's artworks to pictorial reproductions, and academic analysis is limited to the use of a single research method (film studies or art history) to discuss the paintings or images iteratively. The focus of this chapter is on the construction of Yang Fudong's installations and exhibition environments. Yang Fudong's artworks are not only considered as images but also as carriers of images. This is to say that Yang Fudong not only captures the part of the film that the actors act out in front of the camera (which is usually the only part of the film that is shown), but he also presents the content behind the camera, that is, how the film is shot. It is the fusion and tension of these two aspects that make an artifact an artwork, and it is the innovation of Yang Fudong in combining the two that makes his artwork a new and worthy object of study. This chapter will analyze Yang Fudong's gallery film, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019) in the context of theories of Chinese landscape painting and garden design, which can highlight the "*shen* 神" ("Shen, the 'spiritual' refers to a state of human perfection derived from humane potentialities, and its achievement is aided by chi [qi] 氣, 'vital spirit,' a floodlike physical force generated by moral self-cultivation."[40]) and "*yi* 意" (the hidden meanings of intentions that words can never fully explain) of his gallery film.[41] Also, I think the work brings an aesthetic enigma to the audience, and I refer to Merleau-Ponty's concept and interpret it. I will discuss this point in more detail in the following section.

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[40] Susan Bush and Christian F. Murck, *Theories of the Arts in China* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), xviii.
[41] Bush and Murck, *Theories of the Arts in China*, 64.

<center>28</center>
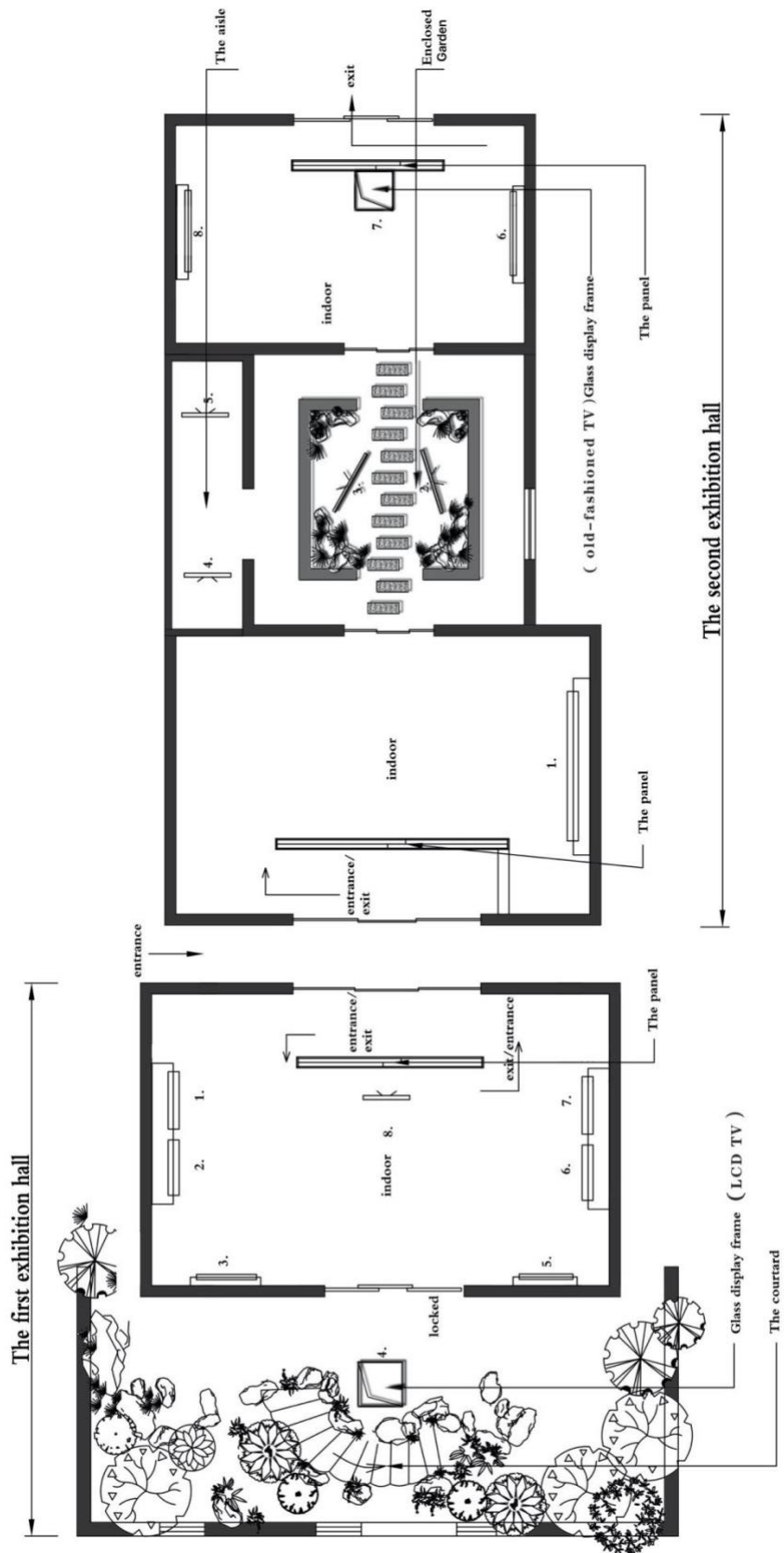
Fig. 1.1 The map of the exhibition of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, Suzhou

Museum

Yang Fudong's multi-screen evolved with his exhibition context: Garden appeared in *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019)

Yang Fudong's 16-channel film installation, an immersive gallery film *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* 善惡的彼岸 was exhibited in the Nanmu Hall courtyard as a part of the contemporary art section during the exhibition called *The Painted Screen Past and Future* curated by Wu Hung in Suzhou Museum (6 September 2019 to 6 December 2019). In fact, *Beyond GOD and Evil*, also known as *Dawn Breaking* 明日早朝, is the output of Yang Fudong's "30-days New Gallery Film" project in the West Bund of Shanghai Long Museum.[42] The whole film, exhibition and performance lasted for 30 days and was open to the public. The background of the moving images is set in the royal court of the Northern Song Dynasty. But the version exhibited in Suzhou Museum is a site-specific gallery film, which means that it is created in response to the environment and architecture of the Suzhou–Museum. So, many of the works responded to the context of the classical gardens of Suzhou.

After making three turns and passing two doors upon entering the Suzhou Museum, visitors will see a zone with a particular architectural style designed by Ieoh Ming Pei. In fact, it is the Nanmu Hall courtyard in the Zhong Wangfu Palace that was King Zhongwang's residence during the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (1851–1864). I.M. Pei created the Suzhou Museum on the partial site of the former Zhong Wangfu Palace and conserved a substantial portion of the layout, structure, and characteristics of Suzhou's classical gardens, including verandas, water pavilions, rockeries, etc.[43] Even the flowers and trees put there are highly lovely, much like the garden's greenery. Although the Suzhou Museum and the Zhong Wangfu Palace appear to have different architectural styles, they both preserve the architectural style and aesthetic qualities of Suzhou's classical gardens. Audiences walk into a Chinese garden when they enter the Suzhou Museum and the Zhong Wangfu Palace.

In the past, Chinese literati believed that the ideal way of life was to live among

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[42] *Dawn Breaking* is an opening chapter of Yang Fudong of his Gallery Film/Museum Film Project, shooting in Shanghai Long Museum in 2018 and opening for public. *Beyond GOD and Evil* is a film that was shot and edited after *Dawn Breaking*. *Beyond GOD and Evil-Preface* was exhibited in Marian Goodman Gallery, London from 30 May to 26 July 2019. The work exhibited in Suzhou Museum is *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*.
[43] A part of the old Zhong Wangfu Palace was built as the present Suzhou Museum, but at the same time a part of the Zhong Wangfu Palace as seen in Suzhou was preserved, and the two are interconnected.

natural landscapes because one could find complete freedom in the natural landscapes. Due to the situation that most of the literati needed and wished to have an official career, true seclusion in mountains was not easily achievable, and a compromise was to occasionally retreat to a small world that symbolized nature, namely the private garden. The garden is a part of the landscape, or rather, the garden is a scale replica of the landscape, reflecting the yearning of literati who appreciate and enjoy living in the landscape. At the same time, it also embodies a balanced life of literati between social ministry and spiritual pursuit. Therefore, after the Song Dynasty, private gardens were increasingly added to the residences of literati and scholars, while in paintings, scholars were often depicted in gardens or natural scenery (usually in magnified garden scenes).[44] *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* is a gallery film about human desires such as power, fame, fortune, love, and sex embodied through an existential play set in the Northern Song Dynasty, an era when the literati thrived. It is situated in a Chinese garden symbolizing natural landscape, indifference to fame and fortune, and the pursuit of freedom, which precisely embodies the living conditions and pursuits of the literati class in ancient China.

Due to the strict rule of the feudal autocracy, the royal court and imperial palace are the places where human desire and struggle can best be expressed. Besides, the actor's lines are adapted from Friedrich Nietzsche's three-hundred quotations and the film title also originates from Nietzsche's book *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* which Yang adopts as the title of his installation. The quotations from Nietzsche are all about human desires, such as the desire for power and love. During the shooting, Yang Fudong set up 36 screens full of Nietzsche's sayings that were juxtaposed with the content of 36 days of the morning court of the Northern Song Dynasty. Although the exhibition held in Suzhou Museum only shows the first chapter of the gallery film, more than 300 texts and more than 100 video frames are running a loop playback across 16 screens. In the gallery film, Nietzsche's quotations will become the actors' lines and will also appear directly on the screen. Usually, one channel can show one or two scenes. There are many actors and actresses in the gallery film. Though the film does not give a very clear account of their specific identities, we can, according to the costumes and character relationships, roughly deduce that they can be divided

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[44] Hung Wu, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 129-130.

into the following categories: the harem concubines (three women dressed in different costumes in a various scene and appeared in screens), an old emperor and a eunuch who always follows him, a group of ministers (all men in red court dress), a dwarf emperor and his ministers (played by a group of dwarf actors), a group of guards and assassins. The identity of the two young men is the most difficult to confirm. They are dressed in blue and green court costumes and appear on multiple screens and are also related to many other characters, so it is clear that they both have special identities. They may represent a royal prince and a minister.

Since the courtyard comprises three distinct historical constructions, Yang's artworks are divided into two halves to accommodate the spatial arrangement. The moving visuals exhibited in each location resonate with the traditional Chinese patterns on the specifically made gauze used as the projection screen. Shanghai-based sound artist Wang Wenwei collaborates with Yang on the exhibition's sound installations. With the carefully designed sound installation placed in the courtyard, visitors' sensory experience might be enhanced in a multidimensional, immersive manner. The following part will provide a virtual tour of Yang Fudong's visual garden.

The exhibition board at the entrance becomes a screen wall 照壁 for visitors to enter the garden.[45] The South Hall of Nanmu Hall is a rectangular room with two screens of different sizes on each side of the wall. The eyes of the audience are immediately drawn to the eight screens that surround the room with colorful and continuous moving images. Each screening is about 5-6 minutes. Strangely, a Chinese architectural door blocks the audience from entering an outdoor garden. This is a special design in a classical Chinese garden, called the garden within garden 園中園. Through the gap on the door with carvings, which the audience can see the lush plants outside with an LCD placed in a glass case in the outdoor garden. The door forms a frame for the outdoor view. This is related to the architectural device of *jiejing* (借景, can be translated as borrowed scenery or view borrowing, which is a framing

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[45] Also called "spirit wall" or "screen wall", 影壁 *yingbi* in Chinese. It used to shield the entrance gate and blocking people's views in traditional Chinese architectures, such as gardens. Visitors usually have to walk around the spirit screen from the left or right to enter the garden. Here, Yang Fudong used an exhibition board as the garden's spirit screen in both south and north Nanmu Hall.

device in classical Chinese garden)[46]. I will analyze this framing device applied to the outdoor garden in Chapter 3.

Fig. 1.2 Yang Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the channel 1.4, one example of garden within garden 園中園 in the exhibition, Suzhou Museum

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[46] This is a common architectural technique used in Chinese gardens. Because the environment in the garden is limited, the depth and breadth of the garden can be expanded by borrowing scenery. Many of the scenes that cannot be contained in the garden are accommodated and become special scenery. Landscapes, plants and animals, people, astronomical meteorology, etc. all can be borrowed in the gardens.

Fig. 1.3 Yang Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the South Hall of Nanmu Hall (the first exhibition hall), Channel 1.1-1.3, Suzhou Museum

Fig. 1.4 Yang Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the South Hall of Nanmu Hall (the first exhibition hall), Channel 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, Suzhou Museum

Fig. 1.5 Yang Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the South Hall of Nanmu Hall (first exhibition hall), Suzhou Museum

In contrast to the South Hall, the North Hall is a labyrinth that must be explored. *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* is not displayed as a single interior location. South Hall and North Hall are two courtyards located in a corner of the Zhong Wangfu Palace, divided by an outside tunnel. Therefore, the audience must exit the South Hall, return to the outdoor route where they first enter, and then enter the North Hall by a different chamber entrance. This exemplifies the combination of Yang Fudong's gallery cinema and traditional Chinese architecture and heightens the audience's experience of wandering physically through a Chinese garden. In contrast to the previous eight screens-situated on each wall of the room, the audience can only view one giant screen covered by gauze-like wallpaper that occupies nearly the whole wall and is the largest projection in the entire show. As the audience watch this film, a faint red glow emanates from the next room as if to entice them. Undoubtedly, entering the next crimson room filled with danger and mystery will be an adventure for many guests. Another garden within a garden is depicted here. I refer to it as an enclosed garden, but it was originally a Chinese courtyard with a patio. For pedestrians to access the next room, there are two cloisters on each side. The courtyard has a window on the right wall and a door on the left (although it is not easy to find). In the center of the cloister, directly below the patio, is a flower garden.

With a crimson, clear plastic plate, Yang Fudong covers the patio and window. As a result, when natural light from the outside enters the courtyard through the plastic panels, the entire courtyard is bathed in dull red light, allowing spectators to see a wooden plank-paved path in the center of the flower bed. Through the boardwalk, guests can cross the flower bed directly to the next room. One screen is put on each side of the boardwalk in the flower beds. From the entrance of the boardwalk, the audience can see an old television flashing in the center of the adjacent dark room. This atmosphere produces a great deal of dread among the exhibition's audience, similar to how a flickering old television in a dimly lit room may occur in horror films. I shall return to discuss the red enclosed garden later in this chapter. Following this crimson room, the audience reach the third and final room in the north hall, which is also the conclusion of the show. This room includes a screen on each wall and an analog TV monitor in the middle. Except for the two screens in this area, all the screens on the walls of the exhibition are covered in gauze-like wallpaper with traditional Chinese floral motifs. Behind the old television are exit doors leading to Zhong Wangfu Palace's other courtyards. Both the panoramic design in the South Hall and the labyrinth of screens in the North Hall compel the audience to investigate independently, and immerse them in the gallery film as they meander through the Chinese gardens.

The use of multi-screens/multi-channels creates the conditions for Yang Fudong to make an immersive viewing experience for the audience. The multi-screen in the South Hall of the exhibition is a panoramic immersive viewing experience, while the North Hall is a labyrinthine immersive experience. The multiple screens are like multiple windows showing different views, allowing the audience to rotate around the South Hall to view the many sceneries in the garden. The North Hall is more about the coordination between the screens and the architectural structures, requiring the audience to explore the garden on their own to find different scenery, which is closer to a real garden tour experience. In the following section, we will focus on some of the special designs of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, and learn more about the structure of Chinese gardens, the audience's experience, and the aesthetic ideas expressed through them.

Gauze-like Wallpaper

In the design of classical Chinese gardens, in addition to the role of doors and

windows in the passage and light transmission, many special and sophisticated designs increase the visual pleasures enjoyed by visitors of the gardens. For example, in the classic garden in Suzhou, it is important that the views from different doors, windows, and angles should be different. In the garden that Yang Fudong has designed for the museum's visitors, each screen projected on the walls becomes a window to the outside world. Traditional Chinese windows are decorated with carvings, and oil paper or gauze is used to paste and cover the windows. This corresponds to Yang Fudong's use of gauze-like wallpaper to cover the screen. The identities of museumgoers and spectators of the film thus become visitors to the garden.

In the indoor area, a total of nine screens are projected on walls at different sites, and seven of them are covered by colorful wallpapers featuring different traditional Chinese ornaments (Channel 1.1-1.7 and 2.1). According to Yang Fudong, his subtle application of wallpapers is inspired by the ancient Chinese shrouds excavated from the tomb.[47] For example, through careful observation and comparison, we can find that the biggest screen in the exhibition, Channel 2.1 is covered by a dark wallpaper applying the lotus tangled pattern with twigs and red-crowned crane 仙鶴纏枝蓮花紋. Similar patterns have been found in textiles excavated from the tomb of the Wangluo family during the Ming Dynasty in Changzhou 常州明代王洛家族墓.[48] This is showing that such pattern was used by the noble gentry in ancient China. Also, we can indeed find some possible ornaments on Chinese palace garments or imperial-court decorative paintings 院體畫 in Song Dynasty. For example, the Channels 1.1 and 1.2 are on the same wall and covered by the same wallpaper with peonies, golden pheasant, and butterflies. These patterns are derived from the picture of the *Peony and Golden Pheasant* 牡丹錦雞圖 which is a typical imperial-court decorative painting.[49] The ornate patterns on the wallpaper perfectly complement the content of the court of the Northern Song dynasty on the screen. Because these patterns had positive connotations of riches and fortune, they were frequently chosen by the imperial family in Chinese history, and they complemented the substance of the

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[47] According to my interview with Yang Fudong at the Suzhou Museum during his exhibition in September 2019.
[48] For more details in *Tian Sun Loom - A Study of Textiles Excavated from Wangluo's Family Graveyard of the Ming Dynasty in Changzhou* 天孫機杼——常州明代王洛家族墓出土紡織品研究.
[49] This painting originates from Lu Ji 呂紀 (14439-1505), a Ming Dynasty court painter of flowers and birds. Later, similar illustrations are widely used in painting, embroidery, etc.

Northern Song period.

Fig. 1.6 Yand Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, still of channel 2.1, Suzhou
Museum

Fig. 1.7 Yand Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, gauze-like wallpaper on
Channel 2.1

Fig. 1.9 Yand Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, still of the channel 1.1, Suzhou Museum

Fig. 1.10 Yand Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, gauze-like wallpaper on Channel 1.1 and 1.2

In addition to depictions of apparel and paintings, the patterns on these wallpapers also include references to architecture. Consequently, these wallpapers were also a form of ornamentation for the garden's design, bringing it closer to the Northern Song Dynasty shown in the film. These wallpapers function as tracery windows that embellish and frame the landscape, i.e. the moving image, behind them.

The landscape artist approached garden design similarly to how he would create a landscape painting, being inspired by nature's beauty, and affected by situational sentimentality. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, the connection between the two was already established. Ji Cheng (1582-1642) 計成 wrote in *Yuanye* (園冶 *The Craft of Gardens*), "Treat the whitewashed wall as if it were paper, and the rocks as painting upon it."[50] Thus, Chinese landscape painting has also been referred to as "the mother of garden art" to stress the fact that practically all ancient Chinese gardens were designed exclusively by painters. The process of discovering a kind of "unintentional painting" in the garden by the late Ming and early Qing Dynasty artist Li Liweng (1611-1680) 李笠翁 proves that he saw the garden as a three-dimensional painting.[51] The tracery window is a typical example of the composition in painting used in gardens. Usually, the tracery window consists of a range of geometric patterns and is adorned with diverse carvings and designs. Through the spaces in these designs, visitors may see the scene beyond the window. Although the screens are all rectangular in shape, their sizes vary and they are covered in wallpaper with varied patterns, forming tracery windows. In Yang Fudong's gallery film, the tracery windows have two main functions.

Firstly, this visual blocking and blurring created by tracery windows create a mysterious atmosphere that attracts the audience to explore more about the film, which is the embodiment of the gardening technique of *Yinjing* (引景 means attracting scenery) in the classical gardens of Suzhou. In the garden design, the architects often use windows and doors to attract the audience as the visitors can see part of the view behind the wall, but not all of it through the window. As visitors pass by more tracery windows and want to know more about the landscape inside the walls, they keep getting to know the garden better. Here, Yang Fudong uses the screen and wallpaper as a tracery window to attract the audience to go deeper into this garden to learn more about the gallery film. Although the audience could not see the scene behind the wallpaper very clearly, they are enticed to watch the film more attentively and carefully.

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[50] Cheng Ji, *The Craft of Gardens*, trans. Alison Hardie (New Haven: Yale University Press), 109.
[51] Joseph Cho Wang, *The Chinese Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30.
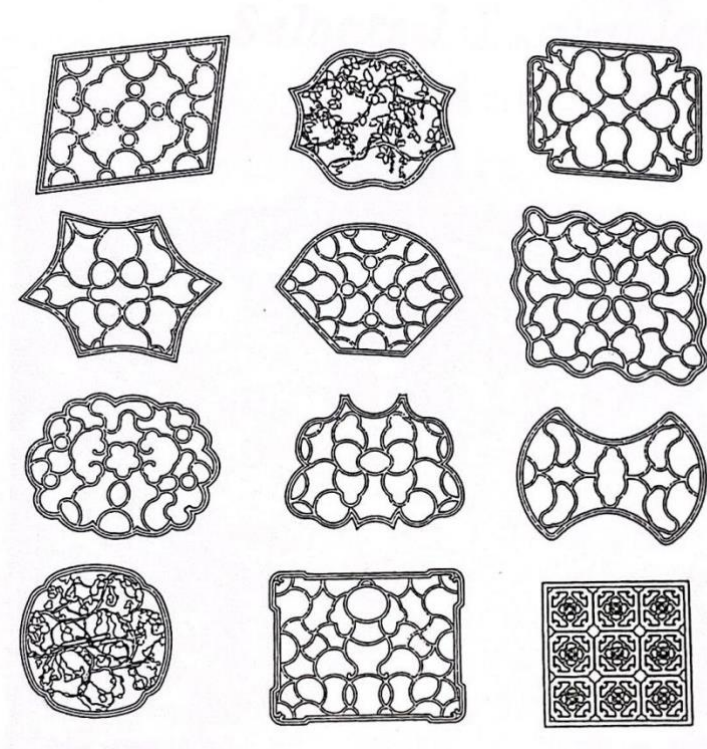
Fig. 1.11 Some examples of tracery windows in ancient Chinese gardens. (Adapted from Liu Xujie, *Classical Gardens of Suzhou*)

At the same time, the scenery is changing along with the moving step (*Yibuyijing* 移步異景, so-called *Yinludejing* 因路得景), as one of the features of Chinese gardens is also revealed by Yang Fudong's use of multiple screens. Because each screen presents a different scene and characters, each tracery window in the garden shows a different landscape. The viewers can see the changing scenery as they stroll through the garden, enhancing the pleasure of the tour. Yang has created a multi-layered visual experience in which the audience seem to roam into different spaces of the garden through the scenery shown on different screens (or tracery windows), thus realizing the expansion of the garden space in time. The film installation and the landscape architecture work together to form a three-dimensional painting. Because of this ingenious design, we can see that Yang Fudong does not simply and arbitrarily place his multi-screen film installation into a white cube space. Instead, the *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* exhibited in the Suzhou Museum is a gallery film designed and produced by Yang Fudong specifically for the exhibition environment of the Suzhou Museum.

As a result, a garden can be perceived as a three-dimensional painting in which

images are framed by various devices, such as windows and openings in the garden walls. Scenes will unfold in space and time as the visitor walks along a garden path, much like viewing an unrolled handscroll.[52] In this gallery film, the screens are more integrated with the garden architecture through the wallpaper, creating a multi-layered visual representation and integrating the film into the architecture, making the image a three-dimensional handscroll.

Sound, Tactility, and Desire

The sound installation of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* is specially designed by Shanghai sound artist to create a multi-dimensional immersive experience of traveling in gardens for audiences. The combination of sound and film structure the exhibition space into a chaos, yet harmonious and orderly world.

Yang Fudong and the sound designer establish unique sound channels for each screen in order to create an immersive and authentic experience of traversing the garden. This design differs from the previously described video artists who utilize several screens to make exhibition films, such as *Ten Thousand Waves* by Isaac Julien and the majority of John Akomfrah's three-screen gallery films. Although these are not single screen works, their many displays utilize a single channel of sound, allowing them to be dispersed but unified under the same sound narrative. Yet, the dispersed screens and audio channels in Yang Fudong's exhibition film form a complete and united garden or habitat. The 16 screens with independent sound channels are dispersed throughout the architecture to demonstrate the independence of each screen, and Yang Fudong employs sound to accentuate the characteristic of "the changing scenery along with the moving step." As visitors travel through the garden, they can hear a range of noises, and Yang employs a number of screens and installations to demonstrate the variety of scenarios that individuals can encounter.

The two most common circumstances are those in which sound is audible and those in which it is not. The first scenario is one in which guests can see and hear plainly through the windows. In this exhibition film, Yang Fudong has made the majority of the screens audible, and some of them are especially loud. For instance,

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listeners can plainly hear lines on channels 1.7 and 1.5. In Channel 1.3, the voice of an old man shouting while playing a Fangtian Ji 方天戟 (a Song-era spear with two crescent-shaped blades) is so loud that it can be heard clearly from every corner of the exhibition room. In the south show room, the audience can hear the sound from channels which they are not viewing. Most of the time, viewers can hear the sound of characters' lines through other channels that include a clear sound device, combining the audiences' aural and visual senses. The conversations the audience hear appear to be blended with the visuals they see, giving the images a new meaning (even if the noises and images do not originate from the same channel). This provides the audience with an immersive and realistic experience as they tour the garden. Due to the enormous number of museum visitors, when a person enters an exhibition hall, the noises of the surroundings — the sound of several screens and the sounds of other museum visitors — all emanate toward that individual. This is comparable to what occurs in nature. When a person enters the terrain, he or she will hear the noises of everything around him or her. Yang Fudong combines the sounds of the audience in the exhibition hall with the sounds from the various displays to imitate and reproduce the sounds of nature, thereby incorporating the screens and the audience into his artworks.

Another situation is that visitors can see the scenery through the windows but cannot hear the sound. One typical example of this condition is the Channel 1.4. This area will be referred to later as the outdoor garden, as it is the only outdoor environment where screens have been placed. The Channel 1.4, as an LCD TV, is placed in a glass display case and set in the middle of a small garden outside the south room of Nanmu Hall. A locked door blocks the audience's path, so the audience can only watch the screen through the Chinese ancient architecture door. As the audience cannot hear any sound of this screen, and Yang Fudong and the sound designer do not provide any sound installation of that channel in the indoor exhibition space, so we can say that the Channel 1.4 is a deliberate silence channel. The audience can see inside or outside through the windows or doors, but they may not hear the voices of the characters in the film speaking because they are not present or because they are too far away. The screen in this outdoor garden is no longer a symbol of the window, but a subject that the viewer sees through the window. It seems to be a person standing in the middle of the garden, surrounded by trees and rockeries. Visitors can only see

him from afar through the gap in the openwork of the carved Chinese door. Visitors are eager to know what it shows, but they cannot see the screen or hear the sound. The installation of the outdoor garden will be analyzed in more detail later, but here we just show how Yang Fudong reproduces a possible situation in the garden in terms of sound setting.

The design of Chinese gardens emphasizes "hidden scenery" 隱景 and does not allow visitors to stand at one point and see the scenery in the garden at a glance. Therefore, the garden is deep and winding, with many lush trees, high mountains-like rockeries, corridors, and other designs to enrich the content and increase the visual depth of the garden. Many hidden spaces or visual blind spots have been formed in the Chinese garden. Classical Chinese novels, operas, and paintings often use the garden as a place to develop male and female love stories, because the garden has both hidden and public places. For example, *Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓夢 by Cao Xueqin (?1715-1763), *The Golden Lotus* 金瓶梅 by Lan Ling Xiao Xiao Sheng (1530 -1600) in Ming dynasty, and *The Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭 by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616) have many erotic events that take place in gardens. The famous Ming Dynasty painter Qiu Ying (?1494-1552) also painted many garden-themed paintings with erotic implications. For example, a young woman may meet her lovers in the garden at night, and people's dreams of romance may also happen in gardens. At the same time, social and class distinctions often become blurred in the gardens, and men and women in the gardens may have the illusion of freedom from the shackles of religion. The traditional Chinese garden presents a "special" state, which is a hiding place for the self, a place where desire resides; it is another world and a space of divine wandering.

This particular situation is also reflected in Yang Fudong's work. The scene described at the beginning of the introduction (the Channel 1.1) is a demonstration of this situation. I will make a brief review here: it involves a man and a woman with different social identities having an affair. (Because, according to our previous speculation, the woman who can appear in the court of the Northern Song Dynasty in a fancy orange dress is, to a large extent, a consort of the harem. The man in the blue court dress is probably a royal son or a minister. In either case, their affair was not

allowed by social etiquette at that time.) They cross the cloister separately and hide behind a pillar for a rendezvous. The man holds the woman and tries to kiss her on the lips, but the woman avoids him several times. The woman does not break away from the man's embrace, and this avoidance looks more like a tease to the man. The man keeps whispering to the woman. They finally kiss each other. Their facial expressions and behaviors look like they are avoiding other people's eyes, but they move from the back to the foreground and stand in the middle of the screen, showing the audience this intimate moment. The audience can hear the sound of whisper between the two characters if they stand in front of the scenes of love affair in Channel 1.1, but they cannot hear what they are saying clearly. It must be noted that such a sound device greatly reproduces the whispers in real life as when the audience stand in front of this screen, they can truly feel the feeling of others' whispering in their ears, which creates a immersive experience for the audience. There are seven channels in the south room of Nanmu Hall that create a chaotic and noisy environment, but slight whisper can be heard when they pass the channel, enhancing the sense of reality. The sound design also adds to the realistic experience of the audience as they tour around the garden. It is interesting to note that the audience do not know they are voyeurizing a lovers' rendezvous until they finish watching the scene. The gauze blocking the screen and the whispering sound design enhance the audience's sense of reality of the voyeurism, but at the same time, it also arouses their strong curiosity and makes them want to watch until the end.

The inclusion of erotic scenes in movies is a tradition that has been carried on since the early days of cinema and is also an expression of cinema of attraction that continues to this day. Therefore, a knowledgeable audience will no longer be surprised by such scenes on screen. However, it is undeniable that the act of watching is a kind of voyeuristic gaze on the world of the screen. The concept of voyeurism originates from psychoanalytic theory but is often used in film studies to describe the position and viewing style of the audience.[53] John Ellis in his *Visual Fictions* has the following saying:

Voyeurism implies the power of the spectator over what is seen. Not the power of

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[53] See, Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans.C. Brittonetal. (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982).

changing it, but the knowledge that the actions being undertaken are played out for the spectator. This is so too with cinema, where the cinema spectacle itself clearly has only one aim, that of performing itself for an audience……The characteristic voyeuristic attitude in cinema is that of wanting to see what happens, to see things unrolling.[54]

"Distance" is an intrinsic concept for both film viewers and voyeurs. One of the many changes that have taken place in the way audiences view films as they move from the black box into the white box is that the distance between the audience and the screen has been brought closer. Instead of sitting in the auditorium and passively receiving the film, the viewer can choose whether to watch, how long to watch, and how to watch gallery films, and gallery films are no longer meant to serve and please the audience. As a result, the status of the film and the audience have changed in many ways. At the same time, because the white box space is an open public space, the viewer's gaze on the film is no longer a voyeuristic gaze. The audience is able to choose how they view the moving images in the white box in a more autonomous manner, and thus the invisible fourth wall between the film screen and the audience is broken down. However, the scene of rendezvous in Channel 1.1, as described in the analysis above, fulfills a psychological state of voyeurism for the audience, and this psychological and emotional state seems to be no different from watching a scene of voyeurism in a movie theater. Because, firstly, the audience is at an impenetrable distance from the characters and the environment on the screen; secondly, the audience is hiding in an off-screen space, eager to see what will happen next. They are curious, and at the same time stimulated by the excitement and pleasure of the affair in the film. This makes them enter the screen emotionally and reach an emotional agreement (empathy) with the characters. This way of viewing seems to be a return to the cinematographic way of watching in the white cube space. It evokes a kind of empathy between the audience and the film.

However, it is through the special design of the materiality of the screen and the sound that separates the audience from the screen and does not allow them to see and hear what is happening in another space on the screen, making it impossible for the audience to achieve a kind of cinematic illusion, and unable to empathize. They can only return to rational thinking under the familiar scenes of the film and the

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[54] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions. rev. ed.* (London and New York, 1992), 45.

cinematographic way of watching. They realize that they are voyeurs and that they do not belong to the same space as the man and woman in the screen. Only through the audience's self-awareness and rational thinking can the audience enter the screen again, truly bringing down the fourth wall between the screen and the audience. This is a paradoxical way to achieve a Brechtian "alienation effect". This "alienation effect" is achieved by the joint action of the body and the perception, which is itself so "paradoxical" according to Merleau-Ponty.[55] According to him, the paradox of expression can be embraced, and profound new insight thereby realized.[56] In this work, Yang Fudong asks the audience to receive a paradoxical method for gaining new insights and understanding new information in the original work. By creating a "situation" of voyeurism, the audience becomes aware that they are peeping at someone else. By separating the audience from the screen space with a tangible, visible wallpaper, the audience is allowed to break the intangible, invisible fourth wall between them through autonomous reflection. The audience goes through the process of emotionally understanding the content of the screen - not understanding why they cannot see or hear the content (clearly) of the screen - reflecting on it rationally and finally understanding the gallery film. Through the "body-subject" perception and awareness, they become aware of their own consciousness and can bring such a spiritual awareness to the gallery film and other existences in the garden space.

Multi-screen sound and image seem to propose a new way of viewing *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, that is, to combine the information obtained by auditory and vision in different channels. However, this approach will encounter several problems. First, the sound of individual channels may not be compatible or even be in conflict with the actors's lines. Second, as the sound of other channels has its own source, some viewers may not be able to adapt to this way of film watching that combines different information from different channels. Third, for the entire exhibition, this method may not be clearly understood and fully appreciated.

Either of these problems shows that Yang Fudong is blurring and obscuring the

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[55] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*. Edited, with an Introduction, translated by James M. Edie, (Northwestern University Press, 1964), 16.
[56] Kym Maclaren, "Merleau-Ponty and the Paradoxes of Expression," Ryerson University, accessed December 20, 2022, https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/merleau-ponty-and-the-paradoxes-of-expression/.

intentions of his gallery film, and audience may find it difficult to understand his work. Undoubtedly Yang Fudong's installation films do challenge the usual viewing habits of most audiences. In fact, the above possible problems arise because we are used to the traditional and single way of film watching. When watching films in the traditional way, if the content of the film and the screening method differ from the general practice, the audience may possibly be confused. Yang Fudong intentionally tries to use different strategies of blurring his intentions of the film and tries to make his audience to accept new projection forms and film watching modes.

Not only the loud sound of some channels but also the silence is a component of a soundtrack. If we combine the silent or indistinct channels together with the loud and clear channels as a whole, we find that Yang Fudong is trying to challenge and break through the single way of film watching in a black box through the installation of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*. For example, in the south exhibition room of the Nanmu Hall, the eight channels contain two types of sound effects. When audiences watch the eight channels in a certain order, they may find the sound effects of the channels are as incoherent, discontinuous, intermittent, and irregular as the narrative of the film since a silent channel may follow a loud and clear channel, thus breaking the regular habits and way of film watching. On the other hand, the loud and tiny voice, clarity and blur, conflict and order, contrast, and harmony of the sound of the film constitute the effect and experience of Cubism from multiple perspectives. The combination of sounds and images achieves not only the deconstruction of sounds but also the deconstruction of the narrative and content of the film. Yang Fudong also uses these techniques and strategies to blur his intentions of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*.

Garden Within Garden

In the above two sections, we analyze the unique screen-gauze-like wallpaper used by Yang Fudong and the special design of sound that transforms the entire exhibition environment in a white cube into a Chinese garden. The audience's experience of visiting the museum is also expanded into an experience of visiting a Chinese garden by Yang Fudong's gallery film. Yang Fudong uses a paradoxical model to evoke the return of a cinematographic mode of viewing through a variety of media in the white cube space. His authorial intentions also become blurred in this

process. In the following section, we will focus on the combination of gallery film and exhibition architecture and continue to analyze how Yang Fudong has constructed a garden environment through an example of "garden within a garden" installations.

In our above analysis of the screen showing of the love affair scene, we briefly introduce one of the scenic techniques used in Chinese gardens, the "hidden scene". Although the screen does not directly reflect the technique of hidden scenery, it is related to the effect of the use of hidden scenery in the garden. The most prominent example of the "hidden landscape" technique is the "garden within a garden," in which ancient Chinese artisans would build several small independent gardens within a single large garden. These small gardens are scattered throughout the large garden, separated by walls and other architectures, each with its own characteristics, without interfering with each other, but forming a complete large garden. Visitors roaming the garden are often surprised by these "hidden" small gardens and feel that there is something else in this large garden. The most famous example is the Da Guan Yuan 大觀園 in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Although it is a complete garden, there are small gardens with purple bamboo as the main vegetation and small gardens that imitate the appearance of a farmhouse. In the *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, the Nanmu Hall of the Zhong Wangfu Palace is treated as a large garden, and there are two "gardens within gardens" that are "hidden" by Yang Fudong.

Example: Red Enclosed Garden: The Process of Expressing

The multi-screen images in the South Hall emphasize a sense of detached, calm observation and reflection. Typical of these are the screens of Channel 1.1 and the outdoor garden. In contrast, the images in the North Room are intended to engage the viewer's emotions, curiosity, and encourage them to explore the architectural environment on their own. Because of these two different ways of presentation, the process of visiting is different. Gauze-like wallpaper and the Chinese architectural door may require the audience to keep some distance to the screen and artwork, but the red enclosed garden in the North Hall invites the audience to have a proximity participation in the garden. Although the expressions and the audience's experience are different, one emphasizing rational thinking and the other mobilizing human emotions, they are not contradictory. What they embody is the process of expressing.

This is presented in detail in the red enclosed garden below.

The red enclosed garden was originally a Chinese architectural courtyard with a patio. There are two cloisters on either side for pedestrians to go to the next room. There is a window in the right wall and a door on the left of the courtyard (although it is not easy to find). In the middle of the cloister is a flower bed, directly below the patio. However, Yang Fudong covers the patio and the window with a red transparent plastic plate. As a result, when natural light from the outside reaches the courtyard through the plastic panels, the entire courtyard is enveloped in a dim red light. Through the dim red light, audience can see a path paved with wooden planks in the center of the flower bed. Audience can cross the flower bed through the boardwalk directly to the next room. The Channels 2.2 and 2.3 are placed in flower beds on both sides of the boardwalk. (Fig. 1.12) Standing at the boardwalk entrance, you can see an analog TV flickering in the middle of the next room, which adds to the atmosphere of terror. (Fig. 1.13)

Fig. 1.12 Yang Fudoong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the North Hall of the exhibition (the second exhibition hall), the enclosed garden, Suzhou Museum

Fig. 1.13 Yang Fudoong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the North Hall of the exhibition (the second exhibition hall), the channel 2.6-2.8, Suzhou Museum

In addition, there is another "hidden scenery" installation in this garden within a garden. Two screens, Channels 2.4 and 2.5, are hidden in the passage of the red enclosed garden in the North Hall, and so not all the visitors may find those two screens. The Channel 2.4 and 2.5 are hidden in the long and narrow aisle, away from the access door, to ensure that people outside the tunnel cannot see the lights of the channel. The corridor door is an archway, unlike the south gallery door, which is not decorated and cannot be opened and closed. The light in the enclosed garden is not bright enough for visitors to notice a door on the left wall. Therefore, not all visitors to the exhibition can find and watch these two channels. (In fact, most of the audiences do not watch them.) Yang Fudong seems to hide the two channels intentionally as he could originally put them in some other place that is more obvious for the audiences to find them, or he can give some hints and clues to guide visitors to view them as he does not want anyone who visits the exhibition to miss these two channels. Yet his choice of staging his exhibition suggests that he is deliberately vague about his intentions.

The dangerous, spooky, and tense atmosphere is a game that the artist plays on the audiences' psychology by using the red enclosed garden, and the two hidden screens are like the bonus of this game, and only the daring warriors who explore the game space will be rewarded with special prizes. This is actually very similar to the

experience of touring the real garden, because there are also some spectacles in the garden that people need to explore enjoy the pleasure of visiting a garden.

Fig. 1.14 Yang Fudong, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, 2019, the North Hall of the exhibition (the second exhibition hall), the enclosed garden, and the aisle, Suzhou Museum

What is described above is what happens when the viewer's body enters the red enclosed garden. According to Merleau-Ponty, "Art is not imitation, nor is it something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is a process of expressing."[57] An aesthetic expression only unfolds when the audience's body enters the red enclosed garden as they explore the garden environment. Because the extent and length of exploration differs from person to person (and because each person's "Vorsicht" is different), they end up with different experiences, aesthetic expressions, and aesthetic values.[58]

We can perhaps rely on George Santayana's view of "expression" to help us to have a better understanding of Merleau-Ponty's "process of expressing." According to Santayana, expression is a quality that one acquires indirectly through the

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[57] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hubert L. Dreyfus, and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, IL: Northwertern University Press, 1964), 17.
[58] "Vorsicht" is a concept mentioned by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*, which means "foresight" and may be related to people's knowledge, experience, etc. When a person wants to understand an object in the world, he has to make a "first cut" based on a predetermined position or point of view, which is the "foresight".

association of an object, such as an abstract concept or memories.[59] Expression does not, by itself, evoke beauty if it is merely as an idea or a meaning; it needs an object that gives it a sensual representation.[60] Thus, the aesthetic value may have two sources. Firstly, in the process of perceiving the object itself, called sensuous and formal beauty, and secondly, in the value obtained from the formation of other ideas, called beauty of expression.[61]

I think that in Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics, the representational object and the represented object are mutually present and represented, and this is also highlighted in Yang Fudong's gallery film. This meaning can be divided into two levels: the first level is for the artist, the artist is expressed by the work of art, and therefore the work of art expresses the artist's represented object. The second level is for the viewer, who, by complementing the artwork (more in terms of content, as will be explained later), is also represented by the artwork. This is because the audience will incorporate their own interpretations into the artwork. So, in fact, through the artwork, the artist and the audience are talking to each other. A greater degree of freedom for equal communication between the artist and the audience is provided by gallery film. In Yang Fudong's gallery film, taking the red enclosed garden as an example, Yang Fudong's self-expression is presented by the external garden, which is already a process of expression with aesthetic value. When the audience enters the red enclosed garden, their abstract selves are revealed through the materiality of the work, and in the process of complementing the artwork (its content), an interpretation of the work and the self is presented. This is a whole process of artistic expression, an expansion of the artist, the artwork, and the viewer. The gallery film thinks of itself in the audience, and the audiences are its consciousness. Thus, an aesthetic enigma emerges here - the visible gallery film becomes invisible, and the invisible human mentality and consciousness emerge.

Conclusion: Site-specificity

Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter is a site-specific gallery film, some of whose meaning and form are acquired from Suzhou, its specific exhibition place,

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[59] George Santayana, William G. Holzberger, and Arthur C. Danto, *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outlines of Æsthetic Theory* (Cambridge, MA. etc.: MIT Press, 1988), 48.
[60] Santayana, Holzberger, and Danto, *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outlines of Æsthetic Theory*, 50.
[61] Ibid., 59.

making it as a unique work with contemporary artistic characteristics.

Site-specificity does not imply that work exists in a place, nor does it mean that the work itself is a place. To be precise, it means that the appearance and significance of the work depend largely on the space where it is located, and the realization of the work depends on the configuration of the installation. *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* is located in a space that was previously a Chinese garden. Therefore, its exhibition is closely connected with the garden's structure and characteristics. At the same time, the multi-screen film installation has converted the entire architectural context into a new piece of art. Video and architecture generate a stunning symbiotic effect. The entire exhibition environment transforms into a gallery film, and the gallery film transforms into an unfolding three-dimensional Chinese garden; the two are inextricably linked. The identity of the audience is also given multiple meanings: they are museum-goers, film-goers, and garden-goers. In ancient Chinese painting theory, it is believed that when the viewers appreciate a landscape painting, their spirit will follow the characters in the painting as they wander through the landscape. Yang Fudong's landscapes and gardens not only allow the audience's mentality to roam in the film and the garden, but also physically allow their bodies to step into the landscape. The audience's access and understanding of the gallery film, both intellectually and emotionally, helped them achieve a kind of "telepathy". According to Merleau-Ponty, "This visibility of my body (for me— but also universal and, eminently, for the other) is what is responsible for what is called telepathy."[62] Thus, *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* is a mental visualization of Yang Fudong's aesthetics and ideas, and the audience's experience of roaming through this garden-like gallery film will eventually make their mentality perceptible.

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[62] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Claude Lefort, and Alphonso Lingis, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 245.

Chapter Two

Yang Fudong's *Endless Peaks* (2020-2021)[63]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed a type of gallery film introduced by Yang Fudong in *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, his first gallery film with site-specificity. The focus of this chapter, *Endless Peaks* which is composed of painting, photography, and moving image, is Yang's first attempt at installation with object-based work. In this chapter, we will focus on: How do different mediums and objects constitute a coordinate gallery film? How does his approach elucidate the evolution of media?

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[63] Please refer to the Appendix for pictures of the exhibition.

Endless Peaks - Rely Upon
(1)

Entrance

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai IX
(2)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai III
(1)

Endless Peaks-Formless Hermits I-IV
(6)

Endless Peaks - It's the Wind II
(3)

Endless Peaks - It's the Wind III
(3)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai I
(1)

Endless Peaks-Propitious Clouds
(1)

Endless Peaks I
(15)

Endless Peaks II
(17)

Stairs

Go up to the second floor

Endless Peaks - It's the Wind I
(1)

The First Floor

Fig. 2.1 The first-floor map of the exhibition of *Endless Peaks*, 2020-2021, ShanghART Gallery

The labels on the floor plan read:

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai II
(1)

Endless Peaks-Fragrant Mountains
(1)

Endless Peaks - the Apiary
(1)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai VI
(2)

Endless Peaks III
(14 - channel video installation on photography collage)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai VII
(3)

Endless Peaks - the Waterfall
(1)

Stairs

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai X
(2)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai IV
(2)

Endless Peaks - the Edge of the Village
(1)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai V
(2)

Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai VIII
(2)

The Second Floor

Fig. 2.2 The second-floor map of the exhibition of *Endless Peaks*, 2020-2021, ShanghART Gallery

The title of the exhibition, "*Endless Peaks*" describes the appearance of continuous mountain ranges in an endless sea of clouds when looking into the far distance from the top of a mountain. Developing from this concept, the artist draws figures and stories from traditional paintings in different dynasties as the source of his works.[64] Yang Fudong's solo exhibition *Endless Peaks* (2020-2021) features paintings, photographs, and multi-channel video installations. It is primarily divided into four sections, *Endless Peaks I*, *II*, *III*, and other paintings and photographs. All of the photographs and videos in the exhibition are taken by Yang Fudong at Guoqing Temple 國清寺 in Tiantai Mountain 天台山, China, and all of the "monks" in the

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[64] "Endless Peaks," ShanghART Gallery, accessed 9 September 9, 2022, https://www.shanghartgallery.com/galleryarchive/exhibition.htm?exbId=14172.

photographs and videos are played by Yang Fudong's friends. The exhibition also features works by Yang Fudong, such as 1-6 *Endless Peaks-Formless Hermits I-VI* (2020) and *Endless Peaks- Propitious Clouds* (2020). However, the primary paintings in the exhibition are appropriations of two ancient Chinese painters. The first is a painter from the late Song and early Yuan dynasties named Yan Hui 顏輝. Another painter is called Shitao 石濤 (ca. 1642-1707) from the early Qing Dynasty. The original paintings by Yan Hui and Shitao are both called *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats* 十六羅漢圖. Both Shitao's and Yan Hui's original paintings of *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats* were intended to represent the theme of "Sixteen Arhats" and were both painted in the form of hand scrolls. The difference lies in the fact that Shi Tao used a line drawing technique, while Yan Hui used his usual ink and wash brush. Yang's series of paintings, *Endless Peaks- It's the Wind I*, part of *II* and *III* (2020) are inspired by their works.
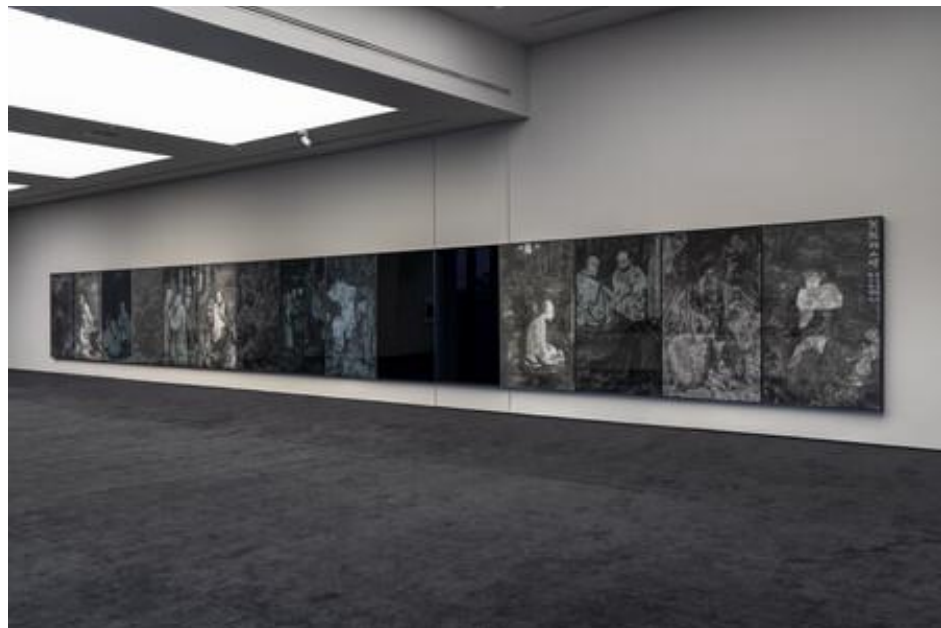
Fig. 2.3 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, photography, coated mirror glasses mounted on aluminum, stainless steel black frame

Fig. 2.4 Yan Hui, *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats* 十六羅漢圖, 1362
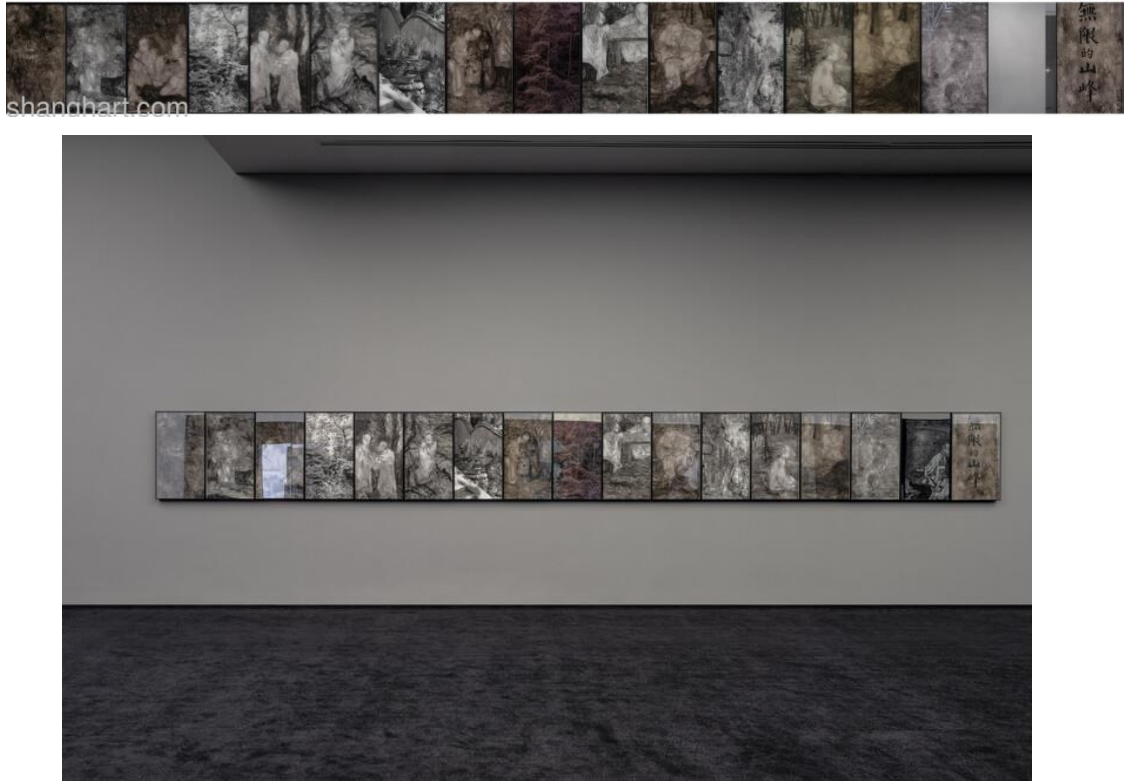
Fig. 2.5 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, photography, coated mirror glasses mounted on aluminum, stainless steel black frame

The Painting of Sixteen Arhats. The *Endless Peaks I* and *Endless Peaks II* are the copied artworks from Yan Hui's *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats*. They are both acrylic on canvas, photography, and coated mirror glasses mounted on aluminum, stainless steel black frame. Yang does not paint a handscroll like the original one but dissects the painting into various parts. Both *Endless Peaks I* and *Endless Peaks II* are copies of *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats*, but Yang adds different photographs onto the two paintings. There is even a door in *Endless Peaks I* which can let the audience go upstairs. Displayed on the second floor of the gallery, *Endless Peaks III* is a 14 multi-channel video installation which has 14 screens projected on a photography collage. The photography collage is produced as a Chinese handscroll which is a black and white collage printed with white acrylic on it.

When the audience enter Yang Fudong's solo exhibition environment *Endless Peaks* in the ShanghART Gallery, they will enter a vast gray space. The floor is covered with a dark gray carpet, the walls of the white cube are painted gray, and the exhibition space is lit from above by white lights. The large, rectangular, gray room on the first floor is adorned with five works of art. There are in total 11 pieces of artworks including paintings and photography on the first floor. Typically, we begin with a large photograph (*Endless Peaks-Rely Upon*, 2020) to the right of the entrance. *Endless Peaks I* and *Endless Peaks II* are the biggest artworks on the first floor. On each of the four walls of the auxiliary room are several paintings and photographs. At the first floor's main exhibition space. There is a door disguised as a painting in *Endless Peaks I*. In this door, there is an artificial pine tree which is also part of its successful disguise. Entering the door, the audience can reach the exhibition space on the second floor by ascending a carpeted staircase leading straight up from this entrance. Unlike the first floor, the second floor is a dark space. The work *Endless Peaks III* is displayed in a long glass case in the center of the room, and the room's walls are lined with groups of photographs of various sizes. These works are illuminated from above and below by small spotlights so the audience can view their contents.

Fig. 2.6 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III*, 2020, Photography collage, acrylic, 14-channel video installation, glass and metal cabinet, adjustable spotlight

Viewing Perspectives

The key to grasping the curatorial work of Yang Fudong in *Endless Peaks* appears to be the application of scattered vanishing-points perspective, known as multiple vanishing-point perspective, is a particular type of scattered perspective technique found primarily in Chinese landscape art since the 4th century. In essence, the point of observation of a landscape scene painted by a painter in a landscape painting is not fixed in one location, nor is it limited by a defined field of view; rather, the point of observation is determined by the necessity to move the foothold for observation, with the landscape/ subject matter being observed from different footholds. Consequently, a mountain painting may depict a scene observed from multiple viewpoints. Using this technique, Chinese artists become versatile in content selection, sequencing, layout, and composition, depending on their impressions and feelings regarding the task at hand.[65] Through the relationship between scattered vanishing-points perspective and curation, I hope to demonstrate how Yang Fudong combines a variety of artworks, including painting, photography, and film, into his solo exhibition *Endless Peaks*, hence making it like a Chinese landscape painting. Simultaneously, the multi-screen becomes compatible with the scattered vanishing-point perspective, a powerful principle applied in Chinese painting, to form a unique object-based gallery film.

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[65] Wang, *The Chinese Garden*, 41.

The works in *Endless Peaks* are based on the composition layout in theories of landscape painting. According to *Shanshui Jieyao* 山水節要 by Jing Hao 荆浩 (ca. 850-911), "there must be a 'host' and 'guest' in mountains, to and for in water, tortuousness in hills, up and down in a mountain range."[66] The host mountain usually means the highest or largest mountain in a group of mountains. When it comes to a landscape painting, it refers to the mountain that occupies a prominent position in the layout of the painting. Wang Wei 王維 (692-761) wrote about the host and guest mountains in his *Shanshui Jue* 山水訣 that "the host mountain is the most appropriate towering, the guest mountain must be running towards."[67] There are three main works in *Endless Peaks*, namely *Endless Peaks I*, *Endless Peaks II*, and *Endless Peaks III*. As these three works are the biggest works in the exhibition with installations in them, they are similar to the host mountains in a landscape painting while some of the other paintings and photographs are similar to the guest mountains. At the same time, the host mountains occupy the most central position of the exhibition. For example, *Endless Peaks III* occupies the center of the room on the second floor of the exhibition while the other works only surround it. Yang Fudong decides on the location of the host mountains and then fills in the guest mountains and other works.[68] This curatorial approach allows us to grasp the context and method of viewing the exhibition. As introduced above, the photographs and films in the exhibition are chiefly shots of Tiantai Mountain and Mountain Xiang. Therefore, we can also say that the whole exhibition is arranged in a scattered vanishing-point perspective to show the audience different aspects of Tiantai Mountain and Mountain Xiang. As for Yang Fudong, the specific way of arrangement is based on the composition theory of landscape painting.

In addition to the significance of landscape painting theory as a reference to the overall curation, its use in a single work merits consideration. In *Endless Peaks I* and *Endless Peaks II*, for instance, Yang Fudong divides a handscroll into multiple sections, each of which becomes a separate painting or photograph (its operation will

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[66] Wang, *The Chinese Garden*, 41. *Shanshui Jieyao* also known as *An Outline of Landscape Painting*.

[67] *Shanshui Jue* also known as *The Secret Formula of Landscape Painting*.

[68] According to my interview with the ShanghART Gallery staff in May 2022, although they have their own curatorial department and Shi Yong 施勇 (b.1963) is responsible for most of the exhibition curating, Yang Fudong usually curates his own exhibitions.

be described in detail later). Each individual component is covered by a piece of colored glass. For example, the glass of the ninth photograph in *Endless Peaks II*, which depicts a forest, is red. Yang Fudong has curated the exhibition with reference to Chinese landscape painting theories from a macro perspective, but from a micro perspective, he is still using landscape painting theories to compose a picture. So, we can conclude that he intends to construct the entire exhibition as a three-dimensional Chinese landscape painting. After this conclusion, we can further study the role of scattered vanishing-point perspective in the exhibition.

The scattered vanishing-point perspective is used to construct different segments of the exhibition, which can be considered a 3-dimensional scroll as a whole. Through scattered vanishing-points perspective, Yang Fudong depicts the condition of a location from various angles and times. For example, there is a series of photography works (*Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai I* to *X*, 2020), all of which show different views of Tiantai Mountain. This collection of works is dispersed across two floors. As a result, when the audience peruses the exhibition, they will encounter various views of Tiantai Mountain from various locations. In this way, Yang Fudong has transformed the painting technique of vanishing-points perspective from a flat surface to a dispersion in real space, giving the exhibition's audience a genuine sense of landscape travel. If we think of the entire exhibition as a single 3-dimensional landscape handscroll, we enter the white cube space as if we are climbing a continuous mountain peak. Here, a closed loop is formed: exhibition - landscape handscroll painting - natural scenery. The audience enters an art exhibition in a white cube, but simultaneously they enter a scroll painting depicting a landscape, and through this scroll painting they are able to eventually enter the natural surroundings. The Chinese landscape painting becomes an intermediary between the viewer and nature.

In addition, in conjunction with the architecture and handscrolls, Yang Fudong creates a dialogue between Chinese landscape painting and multi-screen film. The physicalization of the vanishing-points perspective also explains why Yang Fudong employs multiple screens in this exhibition from a cinematic standpoint. It is comparable to the multiple screens in *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, which I have described in the previous chapter, in that they exist independently but are

interconnected so that all the screens form a single cinematic work. In *Endless Peaks*, however, Yang Fudong attempts to incorporate more media into his artistic creations. These paintings and photographs can also be considered channels or screens because Yang Fudong incorporates film elements into painting and photography. (The argument for this point will become clearer in the upcoming sections, so for now, we will only discuss the connection between multiple screens and the multiple vanishing-point perspective.) The multiple screens in this exhibition actually serve to physically divert the viewer's attention. Through the various landscapes displayed on the various screens, the audience are given the impression of being inside a Chinese landscape scroll painting.

Moreover, multiple vanishing-point perspective and multiple screens complement each other. In recent years, Yang Fudong has always produced multi-screen gallery films, but the principles and functions of his multi-screen use vary from one work to another. In *Endless Peaks*, his use of multiple screens is based on the theory of Chinese landscape painting and the principle of multiple vanishing-point perspective. He treats the painting, photography, and projections of film as scattered screens in order to construct a three-dimensional panorama of the landscape scroll. We can realize that it is his different use of multiple screens that makes his films to be gallery films. Only in a white cube environment can there be enough space for the artist to use and create multi-screens, which cannot be done in a black box setting. In other words, Yang Fudong's *Endless Peaks* is a gallery film made specifically for the white cube space, and because of the ingenious combination of multi-screen and multiple vanishing-point perspective, Yang's attempt may suggest a hypothesis: perhaps Chinese landscape paintings, gardens, and other artworks that rely on Chinese landscape painting theories are suited to be combined into multi-screen images and gallery films.

Enter the Painting and Phantasmagoria

There is a story called *Huabi* (畫壁 "painting the wall") in an ancient Chinese novel *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異). One day two young men came to an ancient temple and were received by an old monk. One man followed the old monk around the temple, while the other was attracted by the fairy on the wall of the temple and entered the world of the painting. When he came out of

the painting, the figures in the original painting on the wall changed slightly. When the two men wondered why the painting on the wall had changed, the old monk said that it was because their minds had changed.

The viewing of the exhibition, *Endless Peaks* as a three-dimensional landscape painting is the basic premise for the discussions of the *yi* 意 (intention) and *qing* 情 (feelings) of visitors of the exhibition. Only when the viewer's two sensibilities are unified with the characters in the painting does the viewer truly enter the world of painting. This section will serve as an extension to the three-dimensional painting mentioned above besides briefly discussing how Yang Fudong invites the audience into his painting world in *Endless Peaks*. This section will also serve as an introduction to my Chapter 3.

The situation described in the above story is very similar to what happens when the audience is confronted with Yang Fudong's work. The audience can walk directly into *Endless Peaks I* whose fifth frame is a door that leads the audience to the second floor of the exhibition. But its excellent camouflage—a pine tree is placed inside the door with dark glass behind it—makes this hidden space look like a painting in a long scroll, and not easily visible. If we take *Endless Peaks I* as a huge handscroll, then this magical frame is a "painting" inserted into the handscroll, and the audience can step through the door like walking into the painting. If we take *Endless Peaks I* as a film stock roll, then the audience walking into the door is like walking into one frame of the film stock roll. Whether the artwork is viewed as a painting or a film roll, the artist is undoubtedly trying to create a sense of "letting the viewer physically into one frame of the artwork." In fact, the audience should have the feeling of "being there" long before they physically walk into a frame of the artwork. As the size of this hand scroll/film stock is so large, the figures in the painting are almost life-size. So, when viewing this artwork, the audience will have the feeling of interacting with the characters in the painting compared to the non-people-sized artworks. Also, the special black glass covering the paintings and photographs has a good reflective function that can let the audience see the shadows themselves in the paintings or photographs. The darker the color of the glass, the clearer the reflection of the audience's shadows on it. Therefore, the audience feel like they are in the artwork before they actually step into it.

When the audience successfully climb to the top of the mountain and arrive at the second floor of the gallery, they will find the other handscroll in the exhibition cabinet, and the walls around it are full of photographic works. *Endless Peaks III* is a fourteen multi-channel video installation, which has 14 channels projected on a printed handscroll. The handscroll is a printed black and white photography collage with white hand-painted acrylic pigment covered on it. There are natural landscapes such as rolling hills, bamboo forests and rocks, man-made structures such as the temple buildings, incense burners and staircases, and people such as monks on this long scroll. The fourteen projections are projected on the long scroll in black and white as well as in color, mostly of natural landscapes, monks walking, farming, resting, etc. The interaction between moving images and static scrolls can make it difficult for the audience to distinguish between moving images and static collages. For instance, a branch in a collage will fit perfectly into a tree in a moving image, as if it has grown from the tree, or the eaves of a temple in a collage will fill the gap in the sky of a moving image. At the same time, the paintings on the long scrolls, especially the white paint overlay, may be perceived as a continuation of the moving image due to visual dislocation. In the first channel, for example, the waterfall is shown in the moving image, with the water flowing down from a height, and the white paint on the long scroll can be seen as a continuation of the water, which blurs the boundaries of the moving image. Besides, the photographs on the surrounding walls show views of the Tiantai Mountain and Guoqing Temple. Each of these photographs, of varying sizes and representing a location, appears to be a combination of different shots when they are viewed together.

The purpose of Chinese landscape painting is to invite the audience into the painting and, through the landscape shown in the painting, to attain the natural landscape imagery. In Chinese landscape paintings, for instance, there are typically figures walking along a mountain path, sitting in a boat, or standing in front of a pavilion; the presence of these small figures gives the entire painting a sense of vibrancy. As a representation of the viewer, such diminutive figures lead the viewer into the painting and into the natural landscape. The figures in the painting guide the viewers into the landscape, illustrating the artist's desire to incorporate the viewer's "*yi*" into his landscape paintings.

Geoffrey Batchen makes a good comment on this point of Gilpin: the artist or the viewer only acts as a channel between nature (God) and the image. From an epistemological point of view, the status of picturesque landscape and nature is equal to that of knowledge. In Foucault's words, they are seen as symbols "perfectly transparent to one another." [69] The combination of multiple vanishing-points perspective and architecture of the gallery provides a tactile sensation of being encompassed by the landscape as if the audience are literally strolling into the landscape painting. Their consciousness and "*yi*" may be better able to penetrate the landscape painting as a result of this more immersive experience.

In addition, this kind of *yi* and *qing* experience embodies to a certain extent the audience's rational thinking about the painting and the exhibition. It is because people must understand the meaning of painting itself before they can truly put their *yi* and *qing* into the landscape. The meanings of Chinese landscape painting, gardening and poetry are similar here, and they all contain a kind of Chinese intellectuals' expression of ideals. The *qing* [70] 情 (emotions captured while 'flowing' from literature or images) and the *jing* 景 (scenery forms 'projecting' from visual images) have been merged into a single entity.[71]

From the perspective of Chinese landscape painters, what they are seeking is also the unity of emotion and landscape, of mind and objects. They use this intuitive method to understand nature and to learn the brushwork of the ancients. (In this sense, the process that the painter and the viewer go through is very similar.) "When the subjective mind is impressed or stimulated by objective phenomena, natural feelings are aroused and natural and proper responses are expressed."[72] Jian Youwen 簡又文 (1896-1978) explained the so-called "impression and response" (*kanying* 看應) of Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428-1500) in this way. Painters, similar to poets, usually "express their intent through their paintings" (*yanzhi* 言志), This is expressed

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[69] Picturesque theory is a theory of landscape painting that emerged in Europe in the 18th century and was applied to both landscape design and photography. In Chapter 3, I will discuss this theory and Yang Fudong's gallery film in detail.

[70] *qing* 情 refers to emotions, sentiment or feeling.

[71] Chang Kang-I Sun, *Six Dynasties Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 46

[72] Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural", in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. William Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 73.

through *wuhua* 物化 (materialize) which is actually very close to the meaning of telepathy mentioned by Merleau-Ponty. This realm of *wuwoheyi* 物我合一 (combination of objects and subjects) illustrates that people and objects can sense each other in the process of aesthetic examination, and unknowingly transfer their emotions and will into the objects, so that there is me in the objects and there are things in me, gradually reaching a state of *wuwoliangwan* 物我兩忘 (to become unconscious of the boundary between oneself and the external world), and "one's intent and meaning" is also expressed through the objects (paintings).

Shi Tao and Yan Hui are the typical examples of an ancient *Taochan* (逃禪 "Zen escape"). *Taochan* refers to the practice of Buddhism as a way to escape from the secularity when ancient intellectuals did not want to serve a particular court. Although Yan Hui did not become a monk, his situation and choices were very similar to those of Shi Tao as they were both *yimin* (遺民 or "adherents of a former dynasty"). Thus, their artworks also feature numerous Buddhist and Taoist figures (Yan Hui in particular is best known for his paintings of Buddhist and Taoist figures with bizarre images). Their artworks also depict their "aspirations," i.e., their desire for seclusion from the outside world. By copying their paintings, Yang Fudong may try to express a new style of Zen escape admired by some contemporary intellectuals. In the chaotic Chinese society under the epidemic, expressing one's feelings through painting may be a new kind of Zen escape. Just as in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, the *yimin*, still loyal to the Ming dynasty utilized painting as "silent poetry" (*wusheng shi* 無聲詩) to protest and testify against an increasingly volatile and dangerous society.[73]

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[73] Wen C. Fong, *Images of the Mind: Selections from the Edward L. Elliott Family and John B. Elliott Collections of Chinese Calligraphy. Princeton* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 193.

Fig. 2.7 The exhibition poster of *Endless Peaks* (2020-2021)

Dialogue Between Handscroll and Film

"The film has already begun when you see the exhibition poster outside the ShanghART Gallery." This was stated by Yang Fudong during our interview in Shanghai.[74] In the history of art, a handscroll is an art form that is easily associated with the film. The scroll must be opened slowly in order to be viewed, and when it does so, paintings of landscapes or people slowly play out before the viewer's eyes, which is similar to the process of film screening. The narrative scroll is more similar to a film in form and content. So, people may have a perception of the Japanese narrative scroll as films. In *Endless Peaks*, Yang Fudong also wants to try to establish

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[74] According to my interview with Yang Fudong in Shanghai on 25 January 2021.

an intermedia communication between film and handscrolls.[75] This is due to the fact that a Chinese handscroll is viewed by placing the scroll on a table, with the viewer holding the unopened portion of the scroll in his left hand while pulling it out with his right hand and observing it as they roll. Therefore, viewers cannot see the entire handscroll at once. Due to this unique viewing method, handscrolls are frequently used to depict narratives or panoramic landscapes. In addition, a narrative painting scroll contains different spaces and times, so viewers may find the experience and appearance of viewing a handscroll similar to that of viewing a film. In this section, I will discuss in conjunction with the architecture and handscrolls, how Yang Fudong creates a dialogue between Chinese landscape painting and multi-screen film. As we view Yang Fudong's exhibition as a film, I consider Yang employing an invisible camera to supplement and expand Yan Hui's painting and his own artworks. When I mention a composition in a painting, it also means the composition that audience can see through a camera.

Inspired by the characteristic of Chinese handscrolls, Yang Fudong has included Chinese handscrolls as the primary work in the exhibition and has incorporated film language and elements throughout. The exhibition as a whole establishes a dialogue between various art forms, particularly between film and painting. *Endless Peak I*, the film's main feature, is an enlarged version of Yang Fudong's copy of Yan Hui's handscroll. Yang Fudong applies the film editing method to the creation of his multi-media handscrolls, *Endless Peaks I* and *II*. As Yang Fudong's approach to these two works is almost identical, I will take *Endless Peaks I* as an example here to analyze how he uses the editing in recreating a handscroll.

As I mention in the beginning of this chapter, the original handscroll is *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats* painted by Yan Hui. It depicts twenty-five characters, including not only sixteen arhats, but also commoners, such as mountain people and attendants, as well as animals, such as tigers, dragons, crane, etc., which embody the characteristics of "the integration of monks and laymen," i.e., abstaining from and engaging in worldly affairs, following the Sinicization of Buddhism. Yang Fudong

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[75] This idea should have been evident from his last exhibition. In the last exhibition, *The Painted Screen: Past and Future* (6 September 2019 to 6 December 2019, Suzhou Museum), Yang Fudong explained to me that the painted screen is the film screen of the ancient people. His *Endless Peaks I* can also be seen as screens hung on the wall. But here we do not take the screen as the main object of analysis.

replicated Yan Hui's *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats,* using acrylic paint and a series of glass and aluminum frames to separate various scenes in the original handscroll. Each frame can be seen as a separate image. Creatively, Yang Fudong not only divided *The Painting of Sixteen Arhats* into multiple parts, but he also added photographs of contemporary rocks and trees to the painting based on his copy of the original painting, thereby transforming *Endless Peaks I* into a multi-media work of art. According to the order from right to left when appreciating the handscroll, the second, sixth, ninth, and twelfth pieces (or frames) of *Endless Peaks I* are Yang Fudong's photographic works. Except for the second piece (or the second frame), which is about rocks and weeds, the other three pieces are all about forest trees. If looking at the painting carefully, we can see that Yang Fudong did not disrupt the sequence of characters and scenes in Yan Hui's original work. *Endless Peaks I* comprises fifteen frames that are hung side by side on the wall of ShangART Gallery, preserving the handscroll's original state. Therefore, we can boldly speculate that Yang Fudong's creative technique when creating *Endless Peaks I* is likely to be that he first divided Yan Hui's original painting into fifteen parts, then took what he wanted to keep and copy, and cut out what he did not want, and finally pieced together 15 parts to create a brand new work of art. In other words, the inserted photographs are not simply inserted into the original painting but are used to replace parts of the original painting. Some parts of the original painting have disappeared with the addition of photographs. Yang Fudong applied a montage technique to Chinese scroll painting as a result. The Chinese handscroll painting is edited to become a negative film.

This kind of cutting in painting is similar to editing in films where directors will clip together footage shots in different times and places. In fact, Yang Fudong's creative technique of dividing a complete handscroll into multiple parts and his display form of fifteen separated but connected frames both seem to deliberately imitate the texture of films. Both painting and photography works become two image works in this work, and each frame of painting or photography in *Endless Peaks I* becomes a "frame" on the film. The form of "cutting" a complete film roll and inserting a frame in the middle of another roll is very similar to the way of editing in the era of early cinema.

Yang Fudong breaks the space in the scrolls through montage, giving new possibilities to read the scrolls. As for the analysis of temporality, neither for the original paintings nor for Yang Fudong's works, there is no clear element that shows the change of time. The four landscape photographs can be seen as scene transitions or empty shots. In this way, each frame in the film is transformed by Yang Fudong into a painting and a photographic work, and they form a narrative in the film. According to Yang Fudong's usual narrative approach, he will only provide some events, but will let the audience become the "second director" and encourage them to form a new narrative in their own minds. In this way, Yang's editing becomes a kind of parallel editing or cross-cutting (depending on how the audience interprets the edited volume). In Yang Fudong's hands, Yan Hui's paintings become the film material, and after some editing, the audience is allowed to connect and imagine the finished plot. For examples, the fourth frame of the *Endless Peaks I* shows a young monk sitting on a cattail hassock in a bamboo forest with a crane in it. He looks solemn, appearing to be meditating or listening to someone's sermon, and his gaze is looking out of the frame, or looking off-screen. This is a typical artistic feature of Yang Fudong, with "glossy black-and-white cinematography, no dialogue, mood music, beautiful young people who appear lost, looks off-screen, and the promise of narrative coherence without delivery."[76] Although this is a painting and a piece of film, it is clear that Yang Fudong has incorporated his own personal style when he chooses to copy Yan Hui's painting. He gives the audience a certain degree of autonomy in the creation of the film, allowing them to complete the picture.

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[76] Chris Berry, "The New Gestural Cinema: Yang Fudong and the Gallery Film," *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2014): 17.

Fig. 2.8 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the fourth frame), 2020, ShanghART Gallery

In addition, in contrast to *Endless Peaks I* and *II*, Yang Fudong also shows the movement of the camera through his paintings. As mentioned previously, the two handscrolls are very similar in form and content, but not identical. The portion of the *Endless Peaks II* that Yang Fudong chose to copy moves slightly to the left or right compared to the portion depicted in *Endless Peaks I*, similar to the sensation that the camera pans slightly to the left or right. In the seventh frame of *Endless Peaks I*, for example, the audience can see an Arhat in a light dress sitting on a stool in a bamboo forest shaving his head with a razor, with an attendant in a dark dress standing behind him. The arhat's shaving behavior can be inferred from a round tray placed on his lap, which is used to catch his falling hair. In front of him is a table with what looks

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like a square tray on it. Most of the table in the painting has been cut, leaving only one corner, so that the audience can know that there is a table in front of the Arhat, and something is placed on it. But the "something" is a mystery to the audience. Such occurrences are common in the works of Yang Fudong. The "editing" between the seventh and eighth frame is special to the whole artwork. At times Yang Fudong collaged his landscape photographs and left out Yan Hui's painting. In the seventh and eighth frames, he did not insert anything, but cut out a part in the middle of the frame. The picture depicted in the seventh frame in *Endless Peaks II* is still the arhat who is shaving his hair. However, the pictorial space of its left is extended compared with the original Yan Hui painting, so that the audience can see a mirror on the table in front of the arhat. Although the audience cannot see the full picture of the mirror, but through the part that can be seen they can determine that it is a mirror. By comparison, in the case of *Endless Peaks I,* the audience need have to guess what is in front of this arhat. But the attendant behind the arhat can only reveal half of his face. This is a typical example of camera movement. Yang Fudong shows the movement of one camera through two paintings, or two screens. For the audience, if they want to know a complete event in *Endless Peaks I*, they can probably find the answer in *Endless Peaks II* behind them.

Fig. 2.10 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the fourth frame), 2020, ShanghART Gallery

At the same time, the difference in size between these two works seems to symbolize the development of film in the history of cinema. "Compared with *Endless Peaks I*, it (*Endless Peaks II*) was about 60% smaller in size and its frame proportions changed from 8:5 to 9:5, which were longer and narrower."[77] This seems to be a hint that Yang Fudong is bringing the Chinese handrolls similar to the film, as the change in size and frame proportions of these two handrolls seems to symbolize the change from 35mm to 16mm. In the around 1890s, W. K. L. Dickson cut film of Eastman Kodak into strips of approximately 35mm and connected them end to end, drilling four holes on each side of each frame to allow the gears to drag the film across the Kinetograph camera and Kinetograph viewing box. From then on, 35mm film became the standard for early cinematography.[78] The 16mm film was introduced to the market by Eastman Kodak in 1923 when it was used by film enthusiasts to shoot

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[77] Btr, *Yang Fudong Endless Peaks*, ed. ShanghART Gallery (Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2021), 40.
[78] Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell, and Jeff Smith, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2022), 25.

home entertainment films. The difference in size between the two artworks indicates that Yang Fudong is transitioning from painting to film. The arrangement of the exhibition hall shows that Yang Fudong's actions suggest the development and evolution of film throughout the history of cinema. These are strong examples of his ability to bridge several artistic mediums.

In addition to montage and camera movement, another element that builds a dialogue between handscroll and film is sound. *Endless Peaks III* on the second floor of the exhibition hall is a multi-screen film installation with fourteen projections on a long black and white printed scroll. It mainly shows the natural scenery of Tiantai Mountain, as well as some images of monks living, walking, and farming. The details of this work will be analyzed in the next chapter, but here we will only focus on the sound of the multi-screen film installation. Unlike *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, where each screen has its own soundtrack, this is a silent multi-screen film installation. By making the sound of the film disappear, it is probably the most direct way to bring the film similar to the painting. At the same time, the audience must enjoy the film as if it were a handscroll spread out on a table when viewing the multi-screen. All this shows that Yang Fudong can create an attempt to enjoy motion pictures in the same way as viewing paintings. When the audience is appreciating the painting on the first floor, they need to understand and be able to look at the scroll painting in the same way as watching a movie in order to understand Yang Fudong's intention of incorporating film elements into his painting. While in the dimly lit room on the second floor, they have to watch a film installation in the way as viewing a handscroll. This leads to a reflection on the relationship between film and painting.

Looking back at the genealogy of experimental film, it can be traced back to the European and American historical avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1930s.[79] One of its key features is that the artists emphasized the close integration of the idea and method of the materiality of the image, and its proponents invariably saw film as the indispensable material basis of the medium. Jonathan Wally has described structural cinema as representing the specificity and cinematography of the film as a pure medium, as opposed to paracinema, which embodies the idea of conceptual and

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[79] Gabrielle Jennings ed., *Abstract Video: The Moving Image in Contemporary Art* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 10.

fleeting cinema through immaterial forms (such as light and time). [80] However, Youngblood's concept of "extended cinema" emphasizes that the future of cinema and video will not be limited by film, but will depend on digital and technological development.

When we look at Yang Fudong's gallery film, we know he is trying to break the boundary between the different materiality of film and painting, seemingly breaking the "medium specificity", but his action proves the difference between them. It seems that he is deliberately using painting to imitate the texture of film, while using digital representation for motion pictures. This embodies a "post-medium condition" that combines heterogeneity and hybridity. It not only has the meaning of expanded cinema, but also shows the characteristics of experimental cinema.

Conclusion

Yang Fudong combines the artistic world in his paintings with the real world to create an alienation effect in the exhibition. The paintings and photographs in both *Endless Peaks I* and *Endless Peaks II* represent the unreal world, and it is only at the moment when the audience face the mirror that they see the real world. A more direct reason for this is that many things in the paintings do not appear in the real world, such as dragons, arhat riding on a tiger, etc., so it is reasonable to assume that the handscroll represents the unreal world. However, when the audiences face the mirror, they can clearly see themselves and the scene they are in — the art gallery — which is a way for the artist to bring the audience back to reality from the fantasy world. When the audience meet themselves face to face in the mirror, the sense of astonishment probably interrupts their illusion of being immersed in a narrative world. This jarring interruption of the audience and the narrative makes it difficult for them to engage in the narrative of the handscroll or the film. This is Bertolt Brecht's alienation. Yang Fudong is activating the audience by drawing them out of narrative, thus forcing them to view the artworks and exhibition with self-consciousness.

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[80] Johnathan Walley, "The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film," *October*, Vol. 103 (Winter, 2003): 17, 28. And Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 233.

Hollywood films often require the audience to emotionally resonate with the characters, for example, the audience may be moved to tears by a film sequence or be frightened along with the actors in the film, thus allowing the audience to understand the motivation of the characters by achieving emotional resonance. However, Brecht wanted his audience to remain "distant" or "detached" from the characters and the action, and in this way to become observers who would not participate or sympathize emotionally or empathize through psychological identification with the characters. Instead, he wanted the audience to intellectually understand the characters' dilemmas and their misbehavior exposed in the plot. By emotionally distancing themselves from the characters and actions on stage, the audience would achieve such an intellectual level of understanding (or intellectual empathy). In theory, while emotionally distancing themselves from the actions and characters, they would be intellectually empowered to analyze them. In Yang Fudong's artworks and exhibitions, one can constantly find him creating a kind of alienation that is anti-narrative and counter-resonance. For example, in the exhibition, *Endless Peaks*, he interrupts the viewer's immersion in the narrative of the handscroll through some device like a hidden door and a mirror. When the viewer suddenly sees himself/herself in the mirror, the narrative built up in the painting is interrupted by a sense of dismay, and the viewer is taken out of the narrative. Meanwhile, in the case of the hidden door, the process of climbing up to the second floor after walking through the hidden door is an abstraction of the narrative for both *Endless Peaks I* and the works on the second floor of gallery. This is because there are no other artworks in the process of climbing the stairs, and what the viewers experience is just a normal and pure stair climbing process, which neither creates a narrative connection with *Endless Peaks I* on the first floor, nor a narrative connection with the photography or moving images on the second floor. The audience may even be attracted by the fake pine trees in the hidden door, or by the scenery outside the window to make some other associations and imagination. Thus, these process and installations break the illusion created by the narrative of Yang Fudong's artwork, and the viewers are even completely removed from the exhibition environment in museum and gallery as a result. However, this emotional distance aids the audience's intellectual engagement with the artwork. Rather than becoming engrossed in the narrative of the images, the viewers would be able to consider the artist's motivations for creating all of these installations and his intention to imitate ancient Chinese

paintings. "Since Chinese painters produced neither scientific theories of vision nor the modern Western 'desperate revolt against illusion,' Chinese paintings remained 'images of the mind'."[81] Yang Fudong uses painting and installation to break the illusion created by the film. This embodies an interpretation of the film and Chinese handscrolls, and demonstrates the complementary relationship between the two media.[82] Because the mediums of painting and film have their individual strengths and weaknesses, Yang Fudong highlights the qualities of the two mediums by imitating and complementing each other.

By analyzing Yang Fudong's solo exhibition *Endless Peaks*, this chapter introduces a new form of gallery film. In this exhibition, Yang Fudong utilizes a variety of media and art forms to create an object-based gallery film. The final presentation of the entire exhibition is largely a multilayered work comprising multiple media and intermediaries. This type of work may not be a "film work" in the conventional sense, but it can be considered a gallery film, not only because it possesses the characteristics of art and film, but also because it provides the audience with a rational experience through the use of multiple media and multi-layered presentation, which is a cinematic aesthetic characteristic of gallery film. The scattered perspective and multiple screens produce a landscape painting style that is dispersed throughout the architecture.

In addition, this object-based gallery film interprets a stylistic and unique cinematic aesthetic and introduces a new way of viewing, allowing the viewer to view the entire work or exhibition from a different angle. This is because Yang Fudong has created a three-dimensional landscape handscroll film installation. In Yang Fudong's *Endless Peaks*, for example, the entire exhibition can be viewed as a painting, particularly from the perspective of Chinese landscape handscrolls.

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[81] Wen C. Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 11.

[82] Scroll painting, originally a long-established art form, is often used by contemporary Chinese artists. Contemporary artworks using scroll painting as a form include Qiu Anxiong's 邱黯雄 (b.1972) *New Classic of Mountains and Seas I* (2006), Sun Xun's 孫遜 (b. 1980) *Brave New World* (2014), *Mythological Time* (2016), Xu Bing's 徐冰 (b.1955) *The Character of Characters* (2012), and so on. A large number of contemporary Chinese artists have borrowed the scroll form to create artworks that illustrate the contemporary relevance of scroll painting, and through these artists' works, the introduction of the scroll form is imbued with a strong Chinese-ness. Xu Bing shows the history of the evolution of Chinese characters in relation to the formation of the universality of the Chinese character. However, in Yang Fudong's gallery film, his use of the scroll painting form is more a manifestation of a metaphorical concept and thought and highlights the formal similarity between the handscroll and the film.

Additionally, the audience can view the entire exhibition as a film. This seems to be one of the ways Yang Fudong expects the audience to view his works, or he expects the audience to discover that painting can also be viewed in the form of a film. Viewing Yang Fudong's exhibition from various vantage points elicits a variety of associations and interpretations, which reflect the exhibition's multifaceted nature. This is a feat that few other types of gallery films can accomplish. *Endless Peaks* is therefore a pioneering and representative gallery film.

Moreover, a complementary relationship is formed through the interaction of various medium. Yang Fudong chooses to create his works through painting because painting can freeze a moment in time and transform a film into an object. So, Yang Fudong uses a great deal of painting to express film roll in his exhibition. At the same time, film roll can be freely edited by the director without the constraints of time and space, which is difficult to achieve with painting. This explains why many of Yang Fudong's works employ montage and why he treats handscroll like film roll. The uniqueness of Yang Fudong's gallery film is a result of the complementary nature of the two media.

Chapter Three

Picturesque

Introduction: Picturesque and Yang Fudong

In the last two chapters, I argued that both of Yang Fudong's gallery films are related to landscape paintings and Chinese gardens. I should like now to explore further relations that may have held between gardens, films and paintings in Yang's gallery films. Yang Fudong has had a specific interest in Chinese landscape painting since the very beginning of his career as an artist-filmmaker of gallery film. The audience can identify the natural landscape in Yang's works from the subject matter to the visual images.

In terms of landscape in the sense of scenery, the concept of it often appears frequently as an important element in Yang Fudong's gallery film creations. For example, the ambiguous atmosphere in *An Estrange Paradise* (1997-2002) is shaped not only by the ambiguous romance between the man and woman in the story, but also by the poetic meaning of the city, fields, and West Lake of Hangzhou. In *The Seven Intellectuals in the Bamboo Forest* (2002-2007), the characters switch between scenes in the mountains, the farms, the coast, and the modern city, making the landscape play an important role in different historical periods and stages of the work, full of symbolic meaning. In terms of painting meaning, ancient Chinese landscape painting has always been the ground for Yang Fudong to draw nutrients from in his artistic practice.

In his subsequent gallery films, the composition and ambient of Chinese landscape painting are applied to his works. For example, *Liu Lan* (2003) tells the story of a young man in a suit from the city and a fisherman's daughter who fishes on a boat for a living. There are frequent scenes of the fisherman's daughter slowly drifting on the calm water with the fishing boat surrounded by mist and some reeds in the foreground, which is like a Ma-Xia school of the Song Dynasty. The love story in *Liu Lan* takes place on a fishing boat, with the river and the fog as the background. This scene also implies the uncertainty of the future of love between a modern man

in a suit and tie and a daughter of a fisherman.

Also, he applies the landscapes as some important social metaphors or imageries. For example, in *Moving Mountains* (2016), whether for the family living in the mountain or the intellectuals who go into the mountain, the "mountain" they are in is undoubtedly a metaphor for social responsibility, and they all eventually take up the social responsibility of "moving the mountain."[83] The natural landscape took place exactly during the period when Chinese society moved from a socialist economy to a new liberal one. In the film, the mountains, which represent nature and the countryside, and the urbanized landscape are positioned opposite one another and there is a scene in which the mountains are encircled by the city. Only the elderly, women (mothers), and young children remain in the mountains, but not the most productive young men. This reveals the changes in economic, social, and spatial structures as a result of the constant economic progress and urbanization. Yang Fudong uses the imagery of the mountain to express the anxiety of personal consciousness and identity at a time of social transformation of urbanization. Regarding *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019), a traditional Chinese garden serves as a social arena that carries power, status, wealth, knowledge, desire and other elements that reflects the social reality. In *Endless Peaks* (2020-2021), Yang Fudong uses painting, photography, and video art to depict the mountains and the forests as well as the temples and the monks in them, which symbolizes the natural and harmonious state of intellectuals living in the reality.

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[83] "Moving Mountains" is a Chinese Warring States period myth and narrative from a book called *Liezi-Tang Wen* 列子-湯問. The story describes the family of a foolish old man who is fearless in the face of adversity, excavates mountains, and ultimately convinces the God Emperor to remove the mountains for his family. This fable explores the distinction between stupidity and wisdom. The people of that era considered the old man a fool. From a different perspective, though, the old man who overcomes obstacles possesses great wisdom. See Lieh-tzǔ and Angus C. Graham, *The Book of Lieh-tzǔ: A Classic of the Tao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 92-117.

Fig. 3.1 Yang Fudong, *Moving Mountains*, 2016, still from single channel film installation

His earliest and most direct use of ancient Chinese painting can be traced back to his first feature-length film, *An Estranged Paradise*. At the beginning of the film, there is a sequence about painting Chinese landscapes: a Chinese painter is shown painting a landscape painting, and the camera captures the painter's constantly moving hand while a voice-over introduces the theory of landscape painting as follows: "Landscape painting is a way for man to represent nature. For a natural landscape to communicate with human thoughts, the best way is perhaps through the language used by landscape painters…"[84]

This voice-over reflects Yang Fudong's understanding of landscape painting. The landscape painter, after experiencing the natural scenery, incorporates his own understanding into it and paints the painting. This is just like the painting theory in Shitao's *Hua-Yu Lu* 畫語錄 (also known as *The Book of Paintings*). Shitao presented a theory of *yihua* 一畫, which literally means a single stroke, and Zhou Rushi translates it as "the primordial line". Shitao thinks that "The primordial line is the basis of all things and the root of a myriad phenomena…Now painting springs from man's mind [*xin*, 心]…If a painter knows how to fall in and use this primordial line in a concrete though small way…people will know how his paintings are done,

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[84] From an alternative translation, see Lin Ye, "The Best Painter Has No Rules: An Insight Into The Visual Koan", in *Endless Peaks*, ed. ShanghART Gallery (Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2021), 10.

and no painting will go against the dictates of his mind [or heart]."[85] The single stroke reflects the action and mentality of a painter as well as representation of nature. He believes that the essence of painting lies in a single stroke. A single stroke in a painting can express all things in the world, because according to the Buddhist and Taoist viewpoints, "one" completes the shift from nothing to everything: nothing exists before "one", but after "one", the design is completed.[86] Shitao emphasizes that painting should follow the artist's mind through the theory of one stroke, which highlights the important role of mentality in Chinese painting. In his book, Shitao has repeatedly emphasized the importance of following one's own mind, as for example, "Painting responds to ink, ink responds to brush, brush responds to my wrist, my wrist responds to my mind."[87] All of these illustrate the relationship between landscape painting and the human mind: the mind is the origin of painting. The painter incorporates his own thoughts, emotions, will, and aspirations into the landscape (as mentioned in the previous chapter), and also requires the viewer to experience the same emotions and aspirations in the painting in order to understand the painter's intention and state of mind at the time of painting.

The School of the Mind (*Xinxue* 心學) developed by Chinese thinkers in the Northern Song period influenced the way people viewed landscapes. Shitao's theory of *yihua* and Yang Fudong's description of landscape painting in his film are evidence of this influence. In the School of the Mind, "the highest reality is *li* [理] (metaphysical principles that underlie the physical universe), objective principles and the subjective mind are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive. While in theory principles constitute a world of their own, in reality they can be found only within concrete objects, and then apprehended only through the mind of the experiencing self."[88] Most of the Chinese literati landscape paintings were influenced by neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, which encouraged people to unite *li* and mind through observation and intuitive realization.

Chinese philosophy, particularly the ideas of the Song and Ming philosophies and

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[85] From an alternative translation, see Zhou Rushi, "In Quest of the Primordial Line: The Genesis and Content of Tao-chi's 'Hua-yu lu'" (Ph.D diss., Princeton University, 1969), 108, 109-17.
[86] Wen C. Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 204.
[87] From an alternative translation, see Zhou, "In Quest of the Primordial Line", 28.
[88] Wen C. Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 142.

Mencius, made its way to Europe and had a significant impact on the European Enlightenment.[89] If European Romanticism and the Enlightenment were themselves inspired by Chinese culture, it is logical to infer that Chinese ideas have infiltrated literary and visual discourses developed in Europe since the Enlightenment. Then we may be able to identify a correlation between Chinese landscape painting and the visual ideas that were emerging in Europe at the time. The theory of picturesque is one of a number of theories that are related to teleology.

William Gilpin (1724-1804), one of the most faithful and influential advocates of the theory of picturesque, defined picturesque as "expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture" in 1768.[90] In the words of another person around the same time as Gilpin, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), the landscape painting made "an impression on the imagination and the feeling" and could "produce a pleasing effect upon the mind."[91] It is apparent that picturesque highlights the significance of the landscape to the human imagination. Those who find the natural world picturesque should imbue the landscape with their feelings, comparable to the mentality of Chinese literati painters who created landscape paintings.

The term picturesque was used to describe a variety of landscapes, including, gardens, natural scenes, landscape paintings and photographs. "The picturesque, Europe's primary theorization of landscape during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, provided its adherents with a widely recognized set of conventions and aesthetic standards by which to make and judge landscape images."[92] This theory not only influenced many European landscapes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but also the aesthetic interest of the painters and photographers of that era. This aesthetic theory influences people to push natural landscapes and gardens to conform to the compositional conventions of paintings. The commercially successful landed gentry in England, for instance, engaged in

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[89] Many Chinese and French studies of Neo-Confucianism and European societies have mentioned this idea. See Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之, *Zhongguo zhexue dui ouzhou de yingxing* 中國哲學對歐洲的影響 [*The Impact of Chinese Philosophy on Europe*] (Shanghai People's Press, 2006). and Quesnay François, *China, a Model for Europe*, trans. Lewis Adams Maverick (San Antonio, TX: Anderson, 1946).

[90] Luke Herrmann, *British Landscape Painting of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press,1976), 112.

[91] Ibid., 112.

[92] Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 69.

active farming in order to transform their gardens into landscape views that would make nature appear more like a painting. In addition, the audience is drawn to identify or observe the picturesque natural scenes. For instance, wealthy Englishmen would travel to the European continent in search of natural landscapes that resembled paintings, and painters would use tools such as the camera obscura, Claude glass, and camera lucida to capture the reflected nature on paper for all time.

After the development of the camera, painters converted the landscape into photographs. In fact, most of proto-photographers are painters.[93] Hence, picturesque theories must be considered in the context of film or intermedia, as they are expanding in tandem with technology. In other words, the picturesque must be comprehended within the context of the evolution of visual art mediums. (But we should consider the landscape as medium and intermediality at the same time.) How to extend the picturesque as the natural landscape to something that is land space is the important question here. Yang Fudong has, in my opinion, pushed this topic to its utmost through the usage of gallery film, and so I will employ theories of picturesque to analyze Yang Fudong's gallery film.

At the same time, the landscape may be framed, as demonstrated by the commodification of landscape painting, which is related to the rise of the landlord or middle-upper class.[94] This may suggest that when landscape first started as a kind of commerce, it was tailed by the middle class of society. The target audience for Yang Fudong's gallery film are urban consumers. Although not every consumer who comes to see his gallery films in museums or galleries will purchase his works, these urban consumers (probably the majority of whom are middle class according to the location of his exhibitions) come to purchase an experience, a landscape they cannot see on a daily basis, a landscape that must be created through art and technology.

Movement

Picturesque is related to time and space because it depends on the viewer's gaze and is therefore associated with movement. This movement is manifested in the painting in two ways. First, although the content of the painting is static, the viewer's

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[93] Ibid., 69-70.
[94] Ibid., 71-3.

imagination may perceive the space represented by the painting to be in motion. Second, in the physical space, the paintings occupy a fixed and static position, whereas the viewers are in motion and view these immobile paintings with a moving gaze. Also applicable to film is the interpretation of the concept of movement. The minor distinction is that the film itself is animated. Consequently, the initial unidirectional movement becomes a two-way movement. As we move through the architecture, both our bodies and our vision move, and the architecture's scenery changes as we move. This experience appears to be comparable to a cinematic one.

According to European aesthetic theories of the picturesque, picturesque architecture has a sense of movement. Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), for example, developed the concept of architectural movement in his analysis of Baroque architecture, which is inextricably linked to the concept of picturesque. The concept of movement, according to Heinrich Wölfflin, is not caused by an object but rather by the viewer's perception of that object.[95] Therefore, one does not necessarily need physical movement to achieve this spiritual perception. The viewer's body does not necessarily need to move in the actual space in order for visual movement to produce mental perception. This is comparable to the argument made by Uvedale Price (1747-1829), a picturesque theorist, that eye movement is a copy of the contour of an object.[96] This explains why natural landscape and garden design can become like paintings. This is due to the fact that when people appreciate a painting, they keep their bodies stationary and use visual movement to view the surface of a painting. This sensation is similarly comparable to watching a film in a black box. The architectural design of the artwork is inextricably tied to the principle that the eyes may reach where the body cannot. The frame creates distance and transforms the garden's landscape into a painting.

Movement is a mental perceptual force that is not equivalent to physical movement in real space. This viewpoint is comparable to a Buddhist koan from *The Alter-Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*:

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[95] See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance Und Barock: Eine Untersuchung Über Wesen Und Entstehung Des Barockstils in Italien* [*Renaissance and Baroque: An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of the Baroque Style in Italy*] (München: T. Ackermann, 1888). Heinrich Wölfflin, *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*, trans. Michael Selzer (Colorado Springs: KeepAhead Books, 2017).
[96] Steven Jacobs, "Screening Landscapes: Film between the Picturesque and the Painterly," Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, *Film and Media Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2021): 4-5.

Outside of the temple, I saw two monks disputing on the theme of "the Wind or the Banner?" One of them maintained that it was due to the motion of the wind that caused the banner to flap; while the other asserted that it was due to the motion of the banner itself. Thus the disputation was carried on interminably. Whence I ventured to say, "It is neither due to the motion of the wind, nor to the motion of the banner, but simply to the motions of your own Mind."[97]

This sutra shows a kind of mental movement to us. There is a connection between this mental perception and the external world. Or rather, it is because we have mental movement that we perceive the external world. This could be explained through the viewpoint of Chen Xianzhang in the School of the Mind that "he insisted on the union of the subjective and the objective through self-acquired knowledge: through quiet meditation, he believed, the mind becomes one with the universe".[98]

Mental perception is also considered a perceivable motion, thus a mental motion. Mental motion is even prior to physical motion. Movement can be understood in three ways: the first one is physical movement in real space, which is typically the movement of the audience's body in the exhibition. The second type is visual movement, which refers to the movement of the viewer's gaze within a restricted field of view without physical motion. A person seated in a helicopter, for instance, can see a mountain range in the distance, but his or her body does not physically move to that location. The third type of movement is mental movement, which refers to the viewer's imagination. For instance, the viewer's imagination moving through the painting space or their own movement within the painting. Each of the three movements is centered on the audience's gaze. In this section, we will discuss the relationship between landscape, architecture, film, and handscroll with the audience's gaze as a prerequisite and central element.

Let's first examine how these various movements are incorporated into Yang Fudong's gallery film. As the film moves from a black box to a white cube, the audience's gaze and movement are also different. With the white cube, the audience has the ability to have physical movement, which was unavailable in the black box. According to the preceding analysis, it is apparent that for gallery films, the physical

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[97] Daniel J. Scharpenburg, *The Alter-Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (CreateSpace Independent Pub, 2015), 24.
[98] Wen C. Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 143.

movement appears to be the driving force and crucial to altering the film's aesthetics. What changes are brought about by the audience's body being moved? First, this increases the extension of visual movement. Second, some other subsequent perceptions, such as hearing, may change the mental movement of the audience. Third, the frame shifts as the art forms diversify (Yang Fudong includes intermedia and different art forms in *Endless Peaks*, which creates various frames in the exhibition), and the distance established by the frame shifts as the viewer's body moves.

Regarding visual movement, the audience's eyes are restricted to the screen's surface in the black box. They can surely pay attention to anything in the black box space, but it is typically unrelated to the film's plot. In that dark environment, the audience tends to focus their full attention on the huge screen rather than the environment beyond it. This is because according to our established and singular way of film watching, we are "supposing that the artist has something (not necessarily a "message" or even a defined world-view) that he wishes to communicate, he/she will always seek ways to establish points, to guide perceptions, to determine judgments."[99] As the space outside the screen is not the part of the work created by the artist, the audience must focus solely on the surface of the screen to avoid missing the artist's therefore intended message.

In the white cube, however, the audience may concentrate on more objects rather than only focusing on the screen itself. Artists can merge numerous media and art forms into a single gallery film, for instance, because of the advantages of the white cube environment. The white cube's environment can integrate with the screen to create new meanings and messages that cannot be communicated just through the screen. This is what the gallery film should do, and what distinguishes it from other exhibits in the white cube, such as paintings and sculptures.

Moreover, the audience enjoys a higher sense of autonomy than they would in a black box. "There is a sense in which every spectator is always free: nothing prevents him/her from getting up and leaving the theater, the individual intelligence can say "No" to any effect, any strategy, any moment. Yet most films are not made for the

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[99] Robin Wood, "Narrative Pleasure: Two Films of Jacques Rivette," *Film Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1981): 6.

free choices of the individual intelligence."[100] Compared to the black box space, the audience as the individual intelligence has more freedom and may pick what to view, how long to concentrate on something, etc. in a white cube environment. Film's form and aesthetics have changed as a result of changes in its venues, and as audiences have more body movement and visual movement while watching the gallery film, they also welcome more diversified aesthetic interests and interpretive authorities.

For Yang Fudong's gallery film, their eyes can move across many screens and focus on the exhibition's installations and architecture, which is also typical of multiple-screen gallery films. In the case of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* and *Endless Peaks*, however, Yang Fudong's innovation is the employment of classical Chinese garden techniques such as borrowed scenery to make the visual movement more expansive, extensive, and informative. Even if the audience observes elements that do not belong on the film screen or not even in the exhibition space, they can nevertheless relate to the gallery film, getting a unique picturesque experience through movement and framing and a completely different viewing experience from that gained in the black box.

The theory of picturesque played a crucial role in the evolution of European garden design from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and Chinese landscape painting has its own unique tradition and discourses that resonate with picturesque. Numerous Chinese landscape paintings depicted garden scenes at first. Some paintings depicted the walls and pavilions of the gardens, while many others omitted the walls but depicted the interior landscape directly. This is comparable to the original meaning of picturesque. In addition, architects followed the rules of construction when constructing Chinese gardens so that they would be aesthetically pleasing. The degree to which a garden's landscape resembles a painting is an important criterion for determining its aesthetic value. Therefore, gardening techniques such as "borrowed scenery", "opposite scenery", "hidden scenery", "framed scenery", "the scenery is changing along with the moving step", and so on connect the landscape to motion.[101] Garden artisans encourage visitors to discover

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[100] Ibid., 6.
[101] These are the Chinese Gardening techniques that means 借景, 對景, 藏景, 框景, 移步異景/因路得景 in Chinese.

various picturesque vistas as they tour around the garden. This not only ties together other gardening techniques, but also suggests a picturesque aesthetic that emphasizes movement. Moreover, it demonstrates that landscape architecture implies a perceptible spatially continuous movement. By examining classical Chinese gardens through the lens of contemporary architectural theory, visitors and viewers gain an evolving spatial experience. The viewer sees various picturesque landscapes from various perspectives, scenes, and times. In picturesque theory, space is an object that can be captured in motion.

In Chinese landscape painting, mental movement is a distinctive sort of movement. Influenced by neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, painters placed greater emphasis on expressing their personal feelings and aspirations through calligraphy and painting. This mental activity is an experience of personal feelings and goals that can be brought to life in a piece of art, as opposed to simply envisioning the plot of a film. Yang Fudong's two gallery films blend the composition, techniques, and theories of Chinese landscape painting, allowing the audience to feel a mental movement while seeing his gallery films. This further illustrates the unstable character of picturesque. This is due to the fact that when the audience lacks sufficient understanding and familiarity with Chinese art philosophy, the production of such a mental movement is constrained. Richard Payne Knight (1750-1834) is one of the key developers of the picturesque theory, and he believes that "This very relation to painting, expressed in the word picturesque, is that which affords the whole pleasure derived from association; which can, therefore, only be felt by persons, who have conversant ideas to associate; that is, by persons in a certain degree conversant with that art." [102] Therefore, if viewers unfamiliar with Chinese landscape painting theories come to see Yang Fudong's gallery films, especially *Endless Peaks*, it will be difficult for them to have a pleasant feeling from memory and association. This is also a limitation on Yang Fudong's gallery film.

Moreover, this instability in the idea of picturesque suggests the participation of mental processes and the significance of their role in the picturesque effect. Both the Enlightenment and Romanticism highlighted the importance of the human

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[102] Richard Payne Knight, *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), as quoted in Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 198-9.

intellect, inner feeling, and mind as a component of the self. Accordingly, mental movements also played a significant part in the formation of picturesque theories throughout that historical period. According to Knight above, picturesque is a system associated with human understanding, association, and memory. Gilpin also believes that in a picturesque aesthetic, the eye is governed by the imagination. "The learned eye, versed equally in nature, and art, easily compares the picture with it's [sic] archetype: and when it finds the characteristic touches of nature, the imagination immediately takes fire; and glows with a thousand beautiful ideas, suggested only on the canvas."[103] Picturesque, as a sublime and delightful effect on the mind, is based on the viewer's perception. In other words, the artist or spectator is no longer a transparent channel between nature and picture (as stated in the preceding article), but rather becomes the subject of cognition. The sense of picturesque implies self-awareness, and nature as the subject serves as the cue that triggers this association; nonetheless, it is the human subject's thinking that produces the picturesque effect. Therefore, mental movement plays a vital role in picturesque aesthetics.

The picturesque is already integrated into Sergei Eisenstein's montage effect. According to Sergei M. Eisenstein (1898-1948), the moving gaze of the film is established or presented in architecture, an art that suggests the real movement of the viewer in space as opposed to a virtual movement.[104] Eisenstein encourages his readers to view Auguste Choisy (1841-1909)'s paintings and analysis of the Acropolis, through the lens of a filmmaker and considers them a storyboard version of the Acropolis.[105] Even after calculating the ideal duration of each image of the architectural complex, he discovered a "montage effect" in Choisy's perspective drawings and discovered that the "camera length" could be determined by the speed of the viewers' movements in relation to the rhythm of the structures themselves and the distance between them. He notes that the viewer's changing angle of view can form two lines of a spatial eye: the first is cinematic, in which the viewer sees the image along an imaginary line formed by a series of objects; and the second is spatial. The second path is architectural and requires the viewer to "move between a series of

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[103] Gilpin, as quoted in Wendelin A. Guentner, "British Aesthetic Discourse, 1780-1830: The Sketch, the *Non Finito*, and the Imagination," *Art Journal* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 44. See Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, 76.

[104] Sergei M. Eisenstein, Yve-Alain Bois, and Michael Glenny, "Montage and Architecture," *Assemblage*, no. 10 (1989): 110-31.

[105] See Auguste Choisy, *Histoire De L'architecture* [*A History of Architecture*] (Genève etc.: Slatkine, 1983).

meticulously arranged phenomena."[106] He regarded the Acropolis as "the ideal example of one of the earliest films."[107] Choisy's use of the term "picturesque" in his own essay suggests that he deliberately applies the picturesque aesthetic theory to urban planning, as opposed to viewing picturesque as a mere accident. Eisenstein's work demonstrates that picturesque is a form of cinematography.

The Chinese garden is designed and planned with a picturesque aesthetic in mind, and it also creates a cinematic aesthetic by presenting the audience with a series of carefully planned sequences. The Chinese phrase "The landscape is like a painting" (*fengjing ruhua* 風景如畫) is used to describe a beautiful natural scenery, although it is rarely used in the opposite sense: "the painting is like (natural) scenery" (*huaru fengjing* 畫如風景).[108] This phrase demonstrates the use of picturesque aesthetics in Chinese landscape painting and garden design. Literati have discovered that landscapes can be framed to look like paintings. This discovery is also utilized in Chinese garden design. At the same time, the existence of mental movements in Chinese landscape painting and gardens has already been demonstrated in the previous section and chapters. These are indications of the similarity with the evolution of the picturesque theory in Europe.

In addition, it should be noted that the garden's frame creates distance and transforms the landscape into a painting. This holds true for both European and Chinese garden designs. The viewer is accustomed to standing in front of a frame in order to appreciate the scene within the frame, i.e., the process of appreciating paintings, which have a separate world from the real world. The frame separates the viewer from the contents of the painting. The viewer's body is immobile outside the frame, and a visual movement is employed to view the image's surface. This distinction between visual motion and physical stillness is fundamental to the picturesque theory. This picturesque garden layout adheres to the maxim "where the eye can see, the body cannot go."

This is exemplified by the borrowed landscape in Chinese gardens. The scenery

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[106] Eisenstein, Bois, and Glenny, "Montage and Architecture," 116.
[107] Ibid., 117.
[108] Wang, *The Chinese Garden*, 17-8.

may be borrowed from outside the garden that the audience is physically unable to access the location, but can be viewed from the location where the audience stands. Through the hidden doors and glass along the staircase in Yang Fudong's *Endless Peaks I,* for instance, viewers can see distant buildings and trees, but they cannot access them. They "reach" those views through a visual movement. The window frames transform these landscapes into paintings. Numerous Chinese landscape paintings of gardens, particularly handscrolls, are capable of highlighting the variety of picturesque views in a garden. In that they depict a continuous view of architectural space, they resemble the series of perspective paintings by Choisy.

The unrestricted movement of the audience in the physical space produces the effect of multiple movements and multiple narratives. The results of these effects will vary depending on the viewer's perspective, their movements within the exhibition space, and the circumstances. However, they are all ultimately embodied in the spiritual movement. Through these visible and perceptible film installations, garden environments, and handscrolls, the ultimate goal of gallery film is therefore to reach the spirit and consciousness that are invisible. It is an immersive viewing experience that engages all the senses of the audience, making it simpler to mobilize their emotions and thoughts for active participation and interaction. This is also a characteristic shared by all gallery films and film installations.

In Yang Fudong's gallery film, the means and outcomes of the audience's spiritual and mental movement differ from those in the black box. In terms of outcome, cinema emphasizes emotional empathy, whereas museums and galleries emphasize rational reflection. This does not mean it is impossible to empathize with the film in a white cube, but this empathy may be more akin to the "telepathy" of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) that was achieved through the Chinese landscape than a narrative. In the previous chapters, it was explained that the meaning of this concept is similar to empathy. The German aesthete Robert Vischer (1847-1933) wrote it as "Einfühlung", which was later translated as "empathy" by the American psychologist Edward B. Titchener (1867-1927).[109] Yang Fudong employs a paradoxical method to obtain the audience's spiritual and mental participation by

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[109] Zheng Jinchuan 鄭金川, *Meiluo Pangdi de meixue* 梅洛龐蒂的美學 [*The Aesthetic of Merleau-Ponty*] (Taibei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., 1993), 71.

using the narrative as means in his gallery film. Due to the audience's past habit and expectation of film viewing mode, having a specific narrative in a gallery film makes it easier for them to enter and accept the film. The narrative of Yang's gallery films is a means to welcome and inspire the spectator to enter the film, which is certainly not the film's purpose, but it is a vital component of the film. When the narrative acts as the film's primer rather than its aim, the audience is compelled or inspired to begin contemplating and seeking their destination within the film. This is what makes Yang's gallery films so impressive in highlighting the paradox and making full use of them to achieve their captivating performance. Yang Fudong enabled the restoration of a black box viewing mode in a white cube space, which combines museum/gallery viewing with cinematic viewing in his gallery film.

To accomplish the aforementioned goals, the film must live in a white cube space, not a black box space. In other words, gallery film must be exhibited in a museum or gallery venue to achieve a rational viewing experience. It is essential to note, however, that not every film that enters a white cube can create these results. The film must also have a high level of compatibility with the architectural space, or even a site-specificity that can transform the entire exhibition area into a film space. Consequently, gallery film is a type of film created exclusively for museums and galleries. The mix of the Chinese garden, handscroll, Chinese landscape painting, and multi-screen has been combined by Yang Fudong to create a unique form of gallery film. But in addition to this structure presented by Yang Fudong, other forms are possible, and this does not imply that all of Yang Fudong's film installations or video installations are gallery films.

Frame

After discussing movement in picturesque, architecture, and film, we return to the concept of picturesque to examine another premise that makes it possible. Landscapes are framed to resemble paintings, so the frame is essential for the picturesque adjective. In *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; On Sketching Landscape* (1794), Gilpin urges the audience "to frame views, to graduate perspectives from foreground to background, and most importantly, to ensure the variety of painted, drawn, or engraved texture, which minimized similar

qualities in the natural world."[110]

The concept of Frame is present in both paintings and films, but their respective frames are distinct. According to André Bazin (1918-1958), the fixed frame of a painting encloses a completely free world, which draws the viewer's attention in a centripetal manner to the static image and composition. In contrast, the frame of a film camera is mobile, allowing a centrifugal space to extend from the frame to the smallest and most remote corners of daily life.[111] There are numerous instances of frames in Chinese gardens. The views through doors and windows, for instance, are framed by "doors and windows" to make them appear as paintings. In gardens, these doors and windows are also known as " garden portals" and " openwork windows".[112] This means that the prototypical door resembles a hole through which the landscape can be viewed; the window is not completely covered, and the landscape can be viewed through the window's openings.

Framing a garden is a method for achieving aesthetic appeal. This process is accomplished by framing the landscape. There is also a systematic process of aesthetic appeal in Yang Fudong's gallery films, which is divided into multiple levels and achieved through frames. At the most fundamental level, it is necessary to frame certain objects with objective frames (painting frames, camera frames, screen frames, garden door frames, window frames, etc.) to make them appear as if they are in a picture. Bazin identifies the distinction between film and painting as the difference between the camera frame and painting frame.[113] However, the frames of the screen and painting are both fixed in the exhibition space, so they are physically similar and both serve as a type of fixed image display. Therefore, these two frames may serve as a channel for observing the relationship between film and painting in Yang Fudong's exhibition film. Although it is doubtful whether Bazin's thesis is valid for all kinds of paintings or films since there are different types of painting compositions

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[110] John Dixon Hunt, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Garden and the Picturesque in England 1710-1750," in *The History of Garden Design: The Western Tradition from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, ed. Monique Mosser and George Teyssot (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 236.

[111] André Bazin, "Peinture et cinéma [Painting and Cinema]," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? [What is the Cinema?]*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975), 187-92.

[112] Means *Dongmen* (洞門) and *Louchuang* (漏窗)

[113] Steven Jacobs, "Screening Landscapes: Film between the Picturesque and the Painterly," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2021): 9. Also see André Bazin, "Peinture et cinéma [Painting and Cinema]," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? [What is the Cinema?]*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975), 187-92.

since modernism, Yang Fudong's gallery film is in line with Bazin's thesis as the frames of painting and film are interconvertible in *Endless Peaks*.

Yang Fudong transforms the film into a painting. This necessitates converting the centrifugal space of the film into the centripetal space of the premodern painting. (Note that Bazin is referring to the camera frame and not the screen frame.) In fact, Chinese scroll painting does not create a centripetal space; rather, it creates a centrifugal space, similar to a film. Perhaps that is why it was relatively easy for Yang Fudong to establish a connection between film and painting using the Chinese scroll form. In addition, in *Endless Peaks I* and *Endless Peaks II*, Yang Fudong divides the Chinese scroll painting into multiple sections, adds a frame to each section, and inserts landscape photographs at various locations, creating the appearance of a film roll for the entire scroll painting. The centripetal space of the scroll painting is transformed in this manner. Instead of perceiving a scroll painting as a single, continuous image, the viewer can perceive it as a collection of works painted or photographed at various times and locations. This is similar to how the director can edit the film to suit the needs of the plot. Yang Fudong creates a screen frame that depicts a single event in a single location by filming a single fixed scene. Typically, such scenes are portrayed in long takes in his gallery films. The camera is merely a collection of varying perspectives within the same scene, which may be a representation of the "dispersed perspective" in Chinese landscape painting. As a result, Yang Fudong presents a scene that is mostly fixed through the screen's frame, or more accurately, the time and space of the camera's display are fixed through the screen's frame. This screen frame is centrifugally drawing the audience's attention, and it is more analogous to the space of a painting where a fixed frame encloses a free universe. The screen's frame resembles a painting's frame.

In addition, by altering the frame in two significant ways, Yang Fudong imbues both the screen frame and the painting frame with installation-like qualities. First, the painting frames are significantly larger than the subject. Thus, the frames of the film are also enlarged. The image also depicts a comparable-sized individual. With the glass's reflection, viewers can see their own shadows on it. This creates the illusion that the viewer is present in the painting and can communicate with the characters on an equal footing. This creates a synaesthetic experience (which may require

explanation using the example of the giant screen in the expanded cinema). Second, he converts a painting frame into an installation by altering its function. In *Endless Peaks*, he transforms a painting's frame into a channel, allowing viewers to physically enter the artwork. This can also be viewed as an introduction to the concept of Chinese gardens from a different angle, because the entrance to some passages is typically concealed by disguising it as a painting, analogous to a portal or entrance in a Chinese garden. The portal and window are essential for concealing scenes and luring viewers into the garden. The two approaches of Yang Fudong are the process of conforming paintings and films to the aesthetic appeal of installation.

The preceding describes how Yang Fudong imitates a painting in the film and how the two relate to the installation and the physical space. Additionally, Yang Fudong can blur the border between the frame of the film and the frame of the painting in other ways, allowing the two to blend together. Yang, for instance, projects moving images onto a printed collage to create the installation *Endless Peaks III*. Continuation of the white color breaking through the frame on the moving image creates the illusion that the painting has become a film and the film has become a painting. This overlap visually resembles the gauze-like wallpaper in *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*, as it obstructs the view and blurs the film. However, the roles of the two are distinct. The wallpaper serves to distinguish the on-screen space from the real space (although the two are inherently distinct, the audience frequently forgets this during the viewing process), and it creates a linear blur to remind the audience of this distinction. In *Endless Peaks III*, however, this blending of painting and film creates a new visual effect and experience.

Initially, the change of camera in the motion picture results in a change of scene. In the transformation of these natural scenes, the ink-printed painting, the white acrylic paint, and the painting from the film intertwine and overlap, creating a visual effect with multiple layers. The audience will have increasing difficulty distinguishing between the painting and the film. In this process, the entire film's composition is continuously changing (the foreground, middle ground, and background of the picture are changing). In a channel of the film, for instance, the four monks are in the left foreground, the shorter mountain behind them is in the background, and the taller mountain in the distance is in the distance. Due to this

image, however, the position of the projection coincides with that of a mountain peak in the printed painting. Additionally, there are tree branches in front of this peak. In one channel of the film installation that features a printed painting, the branches extending down from above become the foreground, the four monks and the mountain behind them become the middle ground, and the tallest mountain filling the void left by the lower mountain becomes the background. In this manner, the painting and the film are combined to create a new, multilayered image. In other instances, the moving images depict waterfalls and streams that overlap the white acrylic paint. The acrylic paint also continues to extend downward in the painting, creating the illusion that the painting extends beyond the boundaries of the film. It appears as though the waterfall in the film is flowing towards the white acrylics. (Fig. 3.5) The acrylic paints also appear to be incorporated into the film. Thus, the distinction between painting and film is blurred. It is challenging for the audience to distinguish between a painting and a moving image. More often than not, the final visual effect is the new image they create when combined. The distinction between painting and video then becomes less significant.

Simultaneously, the picture is constantly undergoing the process of "reframing" in Yang Fudong's *Endless Peaks III* (2020). In numerous Chinese character scrolls, the landscapes serve as frames. Some frames in *Endless Peaks III* already contain a landscape-based frame, but due to the position of the projection and the video, they are reframed by the landscape in the painting. In a projection, the left side of the painting may be used to reframe the first shot, and the right side of the painting may be used to reframe the next shot, which could be seen as a kind of fade out in film editing. It is possible that when the image changes, the frame itself will also change. Yang plays with the framing in the film and painting to form a dialogue and intermedial effect between the kind of landscape in painting and the kind of picturesque in film.

In conclusion, the movements in picturesque allude specifically to the physical and mental movement of the viewer, which Yang Fudong did not include in his film of literati landscape or single channel film. In the past, the audience lacked physical movement and could only sit quietly in a white box space to watch a single channel film. But now Yang Fudong's gallery film has become a dynamic physical space with

multiple layers.

Fig. 3.2 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III* (detail), 2020, still from 14-channel video installation

Fig. 3.3 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III* (detail), 2020, still from 14-channel video installation

Fig. 3.4 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III* (detail), 2020, acrylic on photo collage

Conclusion

This study focuses on two gallery films of Yang Fudong, namely *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* (2019) and *Endless Peaks* (2020-2021), with the following questions: the complexities of how the exhibition space for Yang Fudong's gallery films is created, what are the special features of his use of multiple screens, and what kind of cinematic aesthetics does his gallery film bring to us? By "cinematic," I mean that the artist uses film languages and elements in their moving images, such as editing, narration, and mise-en-scène, and is able to generate a cinematic effect, such as an immersive experience for the audience. I argue that Yang Fudong's gallery film is combined with two concerns: the exhibition environment (which was emphasized before the 1990s) and the cinematic nature of the film and its aesthetic viewing (which was emphasized after the 1990s). Yang's gallery film can address this "stylistic" shift before and after 1990s, as he has articulated the interaction between the two through strategies such as multi-screens, site-specific installations, hybrid media, a combination of immersive or cinematic viewing and the museum's "rational experience," etc. By integrating these elements in his gallery film, Yang has extended the way of film viewing and creating a stylistic shift of cinematic viewing in the white cube environment, distinguishes him from other gallery film artists, such as John Akomfrah, Isaac Julien, Julian Rosefeldt, and William Kentridge.

Despite the fact that the moving image art in mainland China did not begin until the 1980s, it expanded swiftly in just a few decades. Yang Fudong was one of the most prominent artists to experiment with moving image art as a form of artistic expression in the 1990s. As stated at the outset of this study, the 1990s witnessed a moment of transition for art house cinema. Before the 1990s, gallery film emphasized the exhibition environment more than the cinematic nature of film, but after the 1990s, gallery film shifted its attention back to the film itself. This is one of the most intuitive aspects of that transformation. The gallery film by Yang stresses the combination of the two. Yang's exhibition *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter* in Suzhou is an example. As a highly site-specific gallery film, Yang mixes a multi-screen film installation with Chinese garden design as an exhibiting environment. Using gauze-like wallpaper, sound, and other components in conjunction with landscape design approaches, Yang incorporates the entire exhibition's space into the gallery film.

Endless Peaks, another gallery film by Yang, emphasizes the integration of multiple media and art forms, and is an intermedia object-based gallery film. This intermedia form is reminiscent of medium specificity. According to Rosalind Krauss, this means that the modernist concept of medium specificity has been met with the post-medium condition of video art as difference and mixture.[114] Yang Fudong's gallery film responds to the post-medium condition in another unique way. In contrast to "sculpture film," which uses light as a material form, Yang Fudong uses painting to replicate the film form to highlight the complementary relationship between the two media, thereby emphasizing their distinction.

Focusing on the characteristics of Yang Fudong's different works, I emphasize that the ultimate goal of the gallery film is to reach the invisible mentality and consciousness through these visible and perceptible film installations, garden environments, and handscroll installations. Whether through paradox, alienation, or mental movement, Yang intends to activate and provoke rational thinking in the audience while they watch his gallery film.

In Yang Fudong's gallery film, the combination of multiple screens and Chinese landscape scrolls unifies the viewer's body, vision, and *yi* 意 (mental). In creating a three-dimensional landscape film installation, Yang's use of numerous screens physically disperse the landscape throughout the exhibition space, which is consistent with the multiple vanishing-point perspectives of Chinese landscape art. We may conclude that, in the context of contemporary art, Chinese landscape painting is ideal for multi-screen presentation because of its own characteristics, such as multiple vanishing-point perspectives. Additionally, through picturesque theory, Yang has established a multilayered kind of gallery film that stresses the viewer's physical and mental movement, something not found in his earlier works. This unique art form also explains why works by Yang Fudong are restricted to museums and galleries. In other words, only the white cube space can accommodate his works' diverse

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[114] Rosalind E. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 31-2. Also see Song-Yong Sing, 孫松榮, "Taiwan luxiang yishu de dianyingxing: lun Yuan Guangming yu Wang Junjie Zuopin zi baling niandai qijin de sange chuangzuo shiqi ji zhuanbian" 臺灣錄影藝術的電影性: 論袁廣鳴與王俊傑作品自八〇年代迄今的三個創作時期及轉變 [The 'Cinematic' of the Taiwanese Video Art: On the Three Periods and the Transformations of the Works of Yuan Goang-Ming and Wang Jun-Jieh from the 1980s to the Present]. *Yishuxue yanjiu* 藝術學研究 [Journal of Art Studies], no. 25 (2019): 193.

expressions. This also demonstrates that the gallery film is designed expressly for the white cube environment.

In conclusion, this study fills a gap in the study of gallery film and Yang Fudong's works. Yang's multi-screen gallery films create cinematic aesthetics and a cinematic viewing experience, providing valuable models for gallery films. There are still many different forms of gallery film that deserve to be studied as well as to be refined as a unique film genre and related theory based on the integration of film and contemporary art.

Lunch with Yang Fudong in Shanghai (January 2021)[115]

Regarding the themes and content of *Endless Peaks*:

Yang: Actually, *Endless Peaks* is an "invisible film." Did you notice the exhibition poster up in front of the ShanghART Gallery? When you view this poster, the film has already begun. Or it has the atmosphere and texture of a film, which can stimulate the imagination but never occurs.

This solo exhibition draws inspiration from the works of Yuan Dynasty artist Yan Hui and Qing Dynasty artist Shi Tao. For example, in *Endless Peaks*, I adapt and reshape Yan Hui's paintings by selecting ten distinct images, like a split screen, and organically combining them with the present landscape photography, glass decorated with various textures, and the actual exhibition space to create a complex and nuanced, three-dimensional image narrative.

Wang: I read about your "New Film Project for Museums" and "Library Film Project". I know that the exhibition we met last time in Suzhou (*Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter*) is one of the films of your project. Is this exhibition (*Endless Peaks*) part of your project? Why is this work about Buddhism?

Yang: I'm not sure if I should put it in the Library Film Project, as one of the "pictorial films".

The title of the exhibition, which has a religious theme and depicts the daily lives of monks, features arhats; yet is there a spiritual life beyond the prosaic material? It concerns faith, daily existence, and the passage of time. These are truly connected to the overall sentiment of the Library Film Project (including the Museum Film), as one of its primary concerns is whether or not individuals have a spiritual existence. During interviews with several publications, I was asked if I was a monk.

Wang: Do you write the script in advance when you shoot?

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[115] This is only an excerpt from a conversation during our lunch time.

Yang: All the images of monks in this photoshoot or film are actually played by artists, friends of photographers, or friends of friends, because they are art-related themselves and will better grasp what the artists wish to convey, and I will feel as though we have lived the monk's existence together. A brief interval during which reality and dream are linked.

I believe the sensation of being on the ground is necessary, that is, the ability to improvise several adjustments on the spot based on the real scenario and the actual state, because improvisation and the scene are essential to the creative process.

Regarding the employment of various artistic mediums in *Endless Peaks*:
Wang: Why do you incorporate multi-media into this exhibition? Or, what is the relationship between film, painting, and photography in your opinion? Is there a new development and change in their relationship in the context of modern art?

Yang: In ancient Chinese traditional paintings, such as long scrolls, the images of landscapes or people are revealed slowly to the viewer's eyes, as if a film were being shown.

I have stated previously that pictures are films. A picture is a highly condensed film, or a film with only one frame, which leaves a great deal of room for the imagination.

By reconstituting these paintings, photography, moving images, space construction, etc., an unorthodox narrative expression is produced. The so-called "pictorial film" is a technique I would like to experiment with, as it is closer to *yihui film* 意會電影.

In this exhibition, I will not pursue the so-called proportional relationship, just as the title of this exhibition, "Infinite Mountains," suggests that these mountains may be rolling and spreading in an infinite sea of clouds; or in the mountains, it is not

necessary to emphasize which mountain is the tallest and most dangerous. The spectator is not the same; his experience and passage through the location will be distinct, as will his emotions. Perhaps you are in such a state because you do not know the mountain's genuine form.

I think in a sense, "Infinite Mountains" should be more than a simple relationship between painting and photography.

As I mentioned previously, it may be a type of pictorial film with quotation marks or a film that is closer to the imagination. This type of imaginative creation is merely an additional attempt to create a possibility through the use of diverse media such as painting, photography, glass, etc. It is a new sort of creative practice for me, and this form of narrative expression provides me with a unique experience - a cinematic interaction between inner reflection and audience perception.

There are many young artists who create in forms related to technology and use many new creative media, but those are not the creative forms of our generation.

Wang: Will you transform your art creation in the future?
Yang: Don't you think it is already transforming?

Fig. 1 Photo with Yang Fudong at Suzhou Museum in December 2019 during his exhibition of *Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chatper*

Appendix II

Fig. 1 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Rely Upon*, 2020, photography, image size 145*217cm
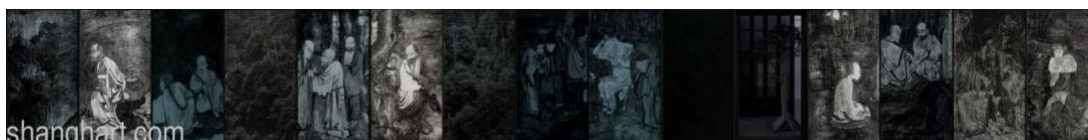

Fig. 2 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I,* 2020, acrylic on canvas, photography, coated mirror glasses mounted on aluminium, stainless steel black frame 221.5(H)*2052*7.5cm | image size 218.8*133.7cm (x 15 pieces)

Fig. 3 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the first frame), 2020

Fig. 4 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the second frame), 2020

Fig. 5 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the third frame), 2020

Fig. 6 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the fourth frame), 2020

Fig. 7 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the fifth frame), 2020

Fig. 8 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the sixth frame), 2020

Fig. 9 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the seventh frame), 2020

Fig. 10 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the eighth frame), 2020

Fig. 11 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the ninth frame), 2020

Fig. 12 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the tenth frame), 2020

Fig. 13 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the eleventh frame), 2020

Fig. 14 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the twelfth frame), 2020

Fig. 15 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the thirteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 16 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the fourteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 17 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks I* (the fifteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 18 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - It's the Wind I*, 2020, acrylic on canvas
190(H)*320.5cm

Fig. 19 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, photography, coated mirror
glasses mounted on aluminium, stainless steel black frame
91.3(H)*872.1*6cm | image size 89.4*49.3cm (x 17 pieces)

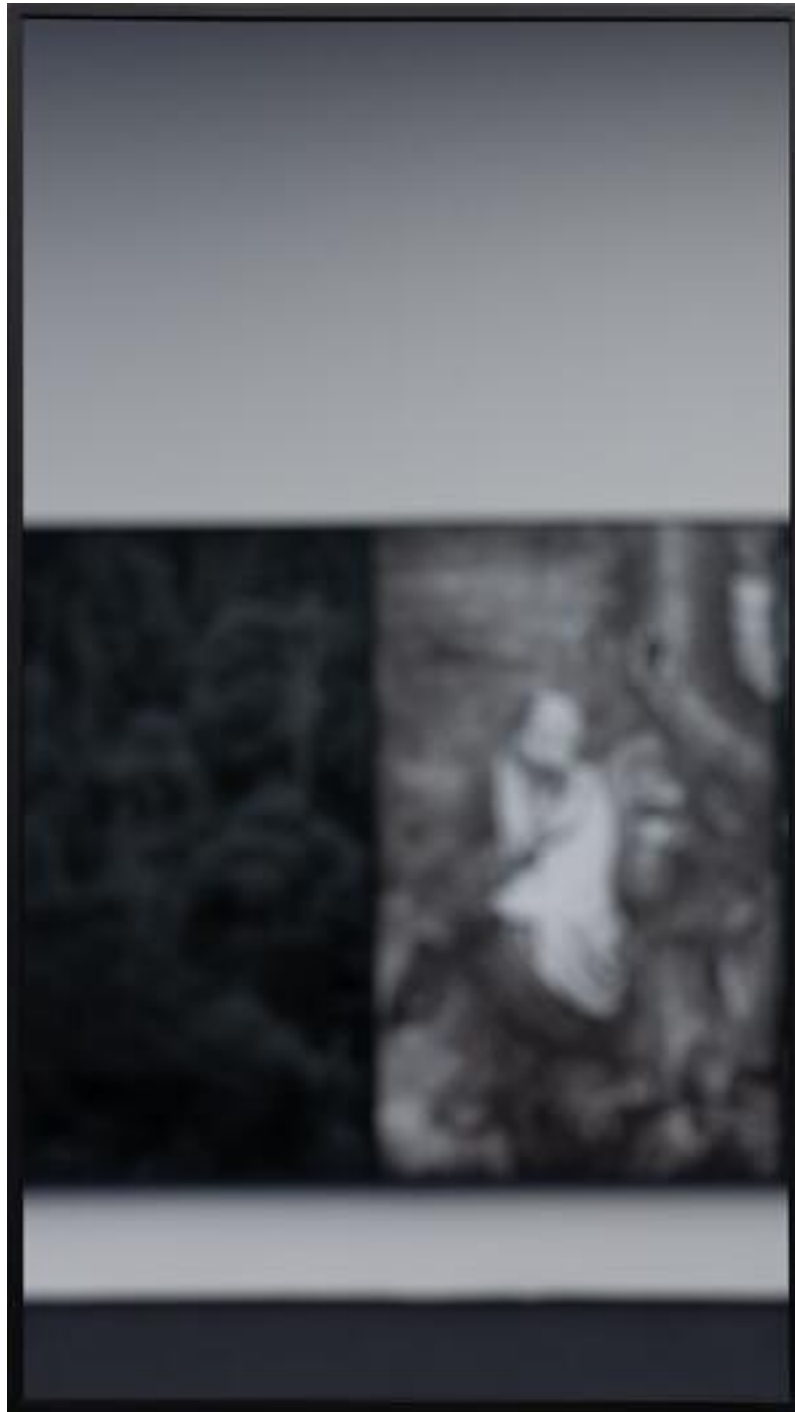**Fig. 20** Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the first frame), 2020

Fig. 21 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the second frame), 2020

Fig. 22 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the third frame), 2020

Fig. 23 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the fourth frame), 2020

Fig. 24 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the fifth frame), 2020

Fig. 25 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the sixth frame), 2020

Fig. 26 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the seventh frame), 2020

Fig. 27 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the eighth frame), 2020
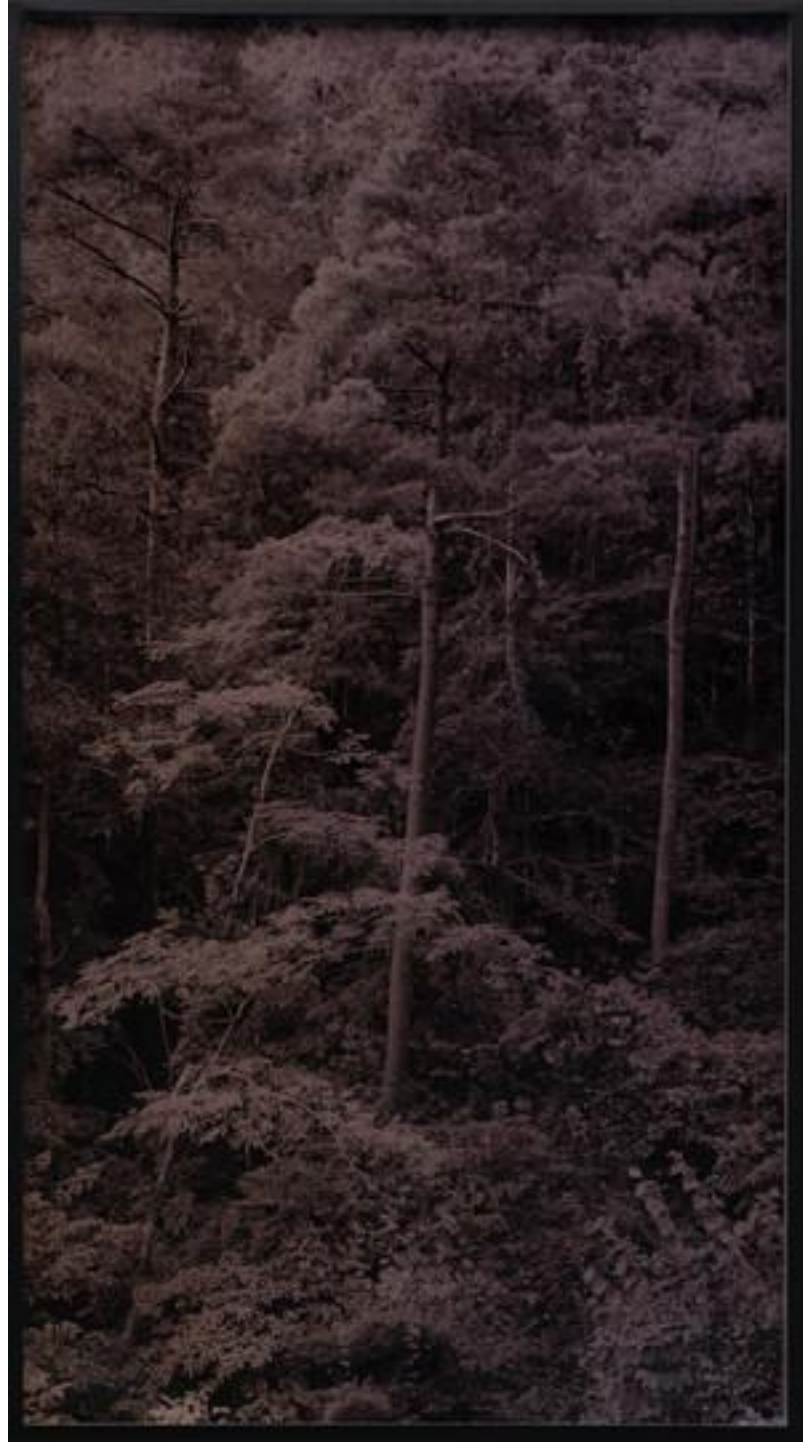
Fig. 28 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the ninth frame), 2020

Fig. 29 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the tenth frame), 2020

Fig. 30 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the eleventh frame), 2020

Fig. 31 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the twelfth frame), 2020

Fig. 32 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the thirteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 33 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the fourteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 34 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the fifteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 35 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the sixteenth frame), 2020

Fig. 36 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks II* (the seventeenth frame), 2020

Fig. 37 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Formless Hermits I*, 2020, mineral pigments and acrylic
on wood panel

49(H)*39*8cm | unframed size 30*18cm

Fig. 38 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Formless Hermits II*, 2020, mineral pigments and acrylic
on wood panel
49(H)*39*8cm | unframed size 30*18cm

Fig. 39 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Formless Hermits III*, 2020, mineral pigments and

acrylic on wood panel

49(H)*39*8cm | unframed size 30*18cm

Fig. 40 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Formless Hermits IV*, 2020, mineral pigments and
acrylic on wood panel

49(H)*39*8cm | unframed size 30*18cm

Fig. 41 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Formless Hermits V*, 2020, mineral pigments and acrylic

on wood panel

49(H)*39*8cm | unframed size 30*18cm

Fig. 42 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Formless Hermits VI*, 2020, mineral pigments and

acrylic on wood panel

49(H)*39*8cm | unframed size 30*18cm

Fig. 43 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - It's the Wind II*, 2020, wooden board, drawing, acrylic, photography

75.5(H)*47*8cm | image size 30*18cm (x 3 pieces)

Fig. 44 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - It's the Wind III*, 2020, wooden board, drawing, acrylic, photography

75.5(H)*47*8cm | image size 30*18cm (x 3 pieces)

Fig. 45 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Propitious Clouds*, 2020, oil on canvas
63(H)*51*8cm | unframed size 35*24cm

Fig. 46 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III*, 2020, photography collage, acrylic, 14-channel video
installation in glass and metal cabinet, adjustable spotlight
installation 175(H)*1200*120cm | long scroll 110*1170cm

Fig. 47 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III* (detail), 2020, acrylic on photo collage (on paper)

Fig. 48 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III* (detail), 2020, still from 14-channel film installation

Fig. 49 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks III* (detail), 2020, still from 14-channel film installation

Fig. 50 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - Fragrant Mountains*, 2020, photography,
image size 120*180cm

Fig. 51 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-the Edge of the Village*, 2020, photography,
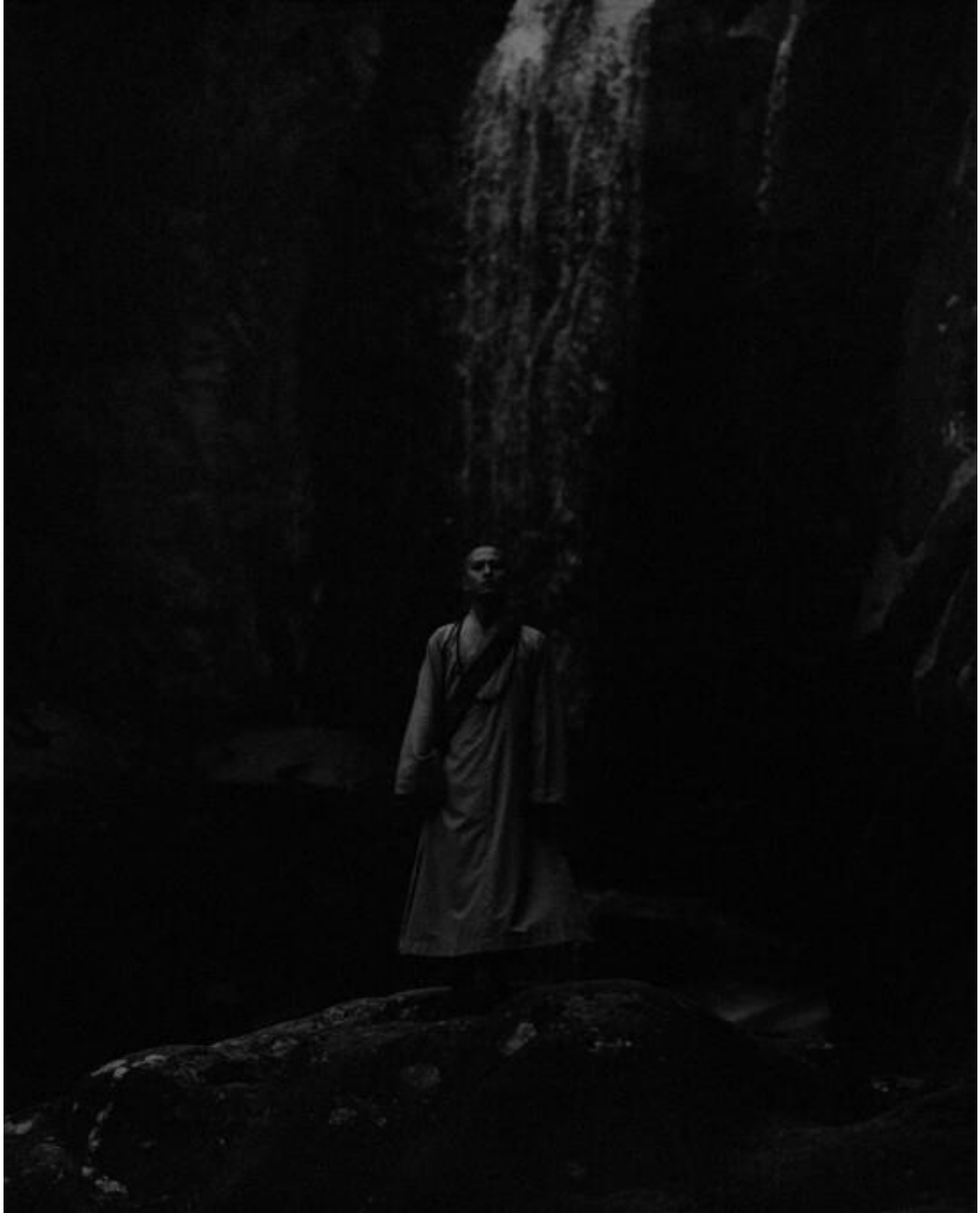image size 145*181cm

Fig. 52 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - the Waterfall*, 2020, photography,
image size 181*145cm

Fig. 53 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks - the Apiary*, 2020, photography,
image size 145*181cm

Fig. 54 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-In Front of Guanyin Temple*, 2020, photography, image size 120*180cm

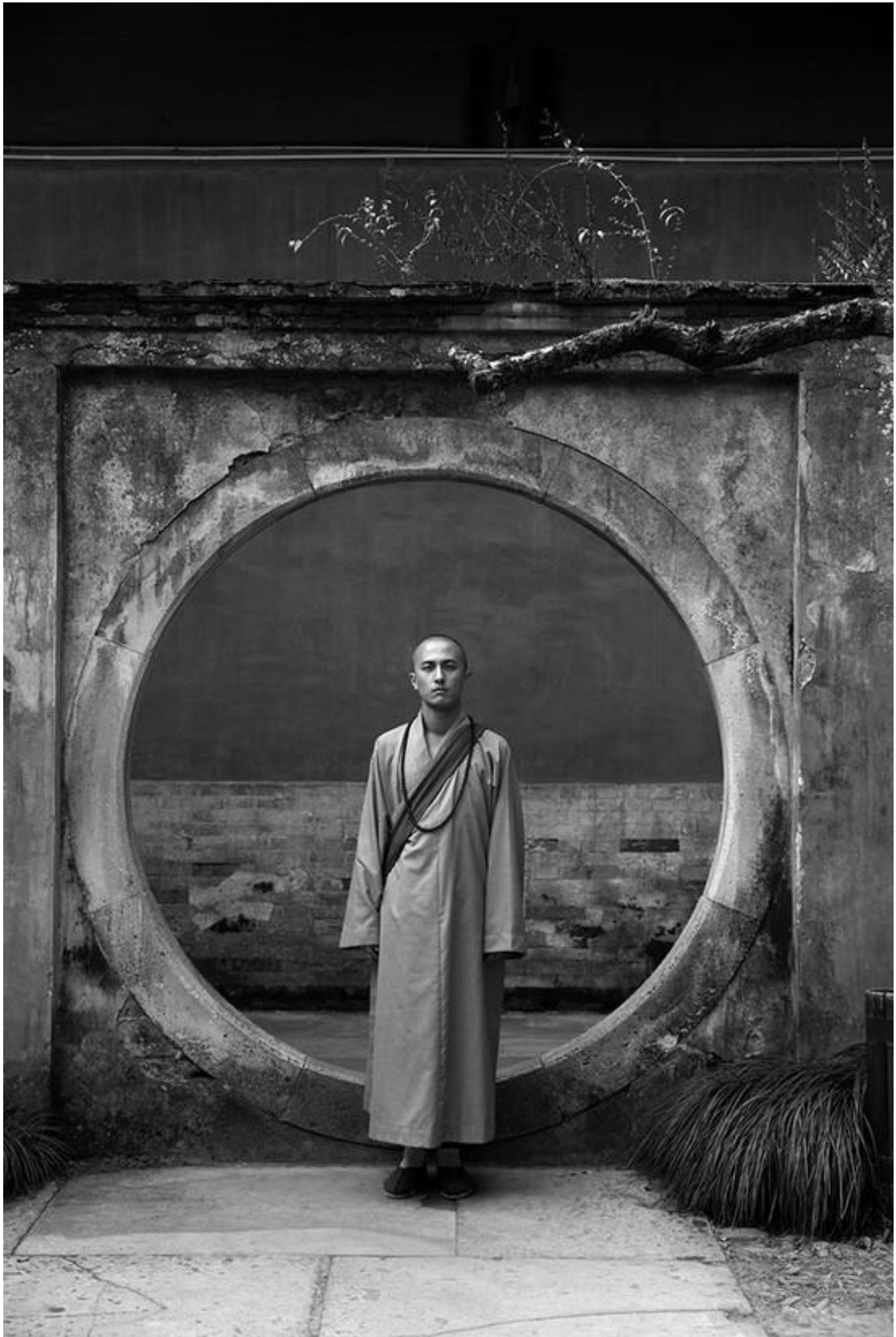**Fig. 55** Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai I*, 2020, photography, image size 70*105cm

Fig. 56 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai II*, 2020, photography,
image size 65*43.3cm

Fig. 57 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai III*, 2020, photography,

image size 26.67*40cm

Fig. 58 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai IV*, 2020, photography,

image size 26.67*40cm (x 2 pieces)

Fig. 59 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai V*, 2020, photography,
image size (left) 26.67*40cm | image size (Right) 40*26.67cm

Fig. 60 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai VI*, 2020, photography,
image size 26.67*40cm

Fig. 61 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai VII*, 2020,
photography, image size 26.67*40cm (x 3 pieces)

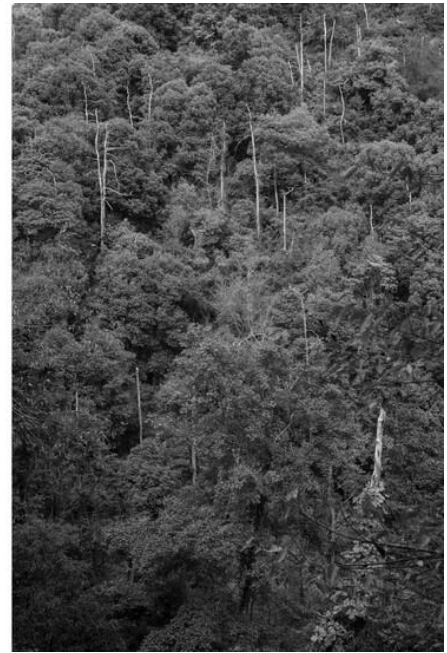**Fig. 62** Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai VIII*, 2020,
photography, image size 26.67*40cm (x 2 pieces)

Fig. 63 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai IX*, 2020,
photography, image size 26.67*40cm (x 2 pieces)

Fig. 64 Yang Fudong, *Endless Peaks-Beyond Tiantai X*, 2020,

photography, image size (left) 26.67*40cm |

image size (right) 40*26.67cm

<p style="text-align:center">Filmography/Videography</p>

By Yang Fudong

An Estranged Paradise. 76 minutes, Mandarin with English subtitles, Digital, 2002

Beyond GOD and Evil-First Chapter. 16-channel color video, immersive spatial installation, 2019

Endless Peaks III. photography collage, acrylic, 14-channel video installation, glass and metal cabinet, adjustable spotlight, 2020

First Spring. 9 minutes, single channel 35mm black-and-white film transferred to DVD, 2010

Flutter, Flutter... Jasmine, Jasmine. 18 minutes, 3-channel video installation, 2002

I love my motherland. 12 minutes, 5-channel black-and-white video installation, 1999

Liu Lan. 14 minutes, single channel 35mm black-and-white film transferred to DVD, 2003

Moving Mountains. 46 minutes, single-channel black-and-white film, 2016

New Women. 8-11 minutes, multi-channel video installation, 35mm black-and-white film transferred to HD, 2013

No Snow on the Broken Bridge. 11 minutes, 8-channel video installation, 35mm black-and-white film transferred to DVD, 2006

One Half of August. 15 minutes, 8-channel black-and-white video installation, 2011

Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest. 5 parts, 35mm black-and-white film transferred to DVD, 2007

The Fifth Night. 7-channel 35mm black-and-white film transferred to HD, 2010

The Nightman Cometh. 19 minutes, single channel 35mm black-and-white film transferred to HD, 2010

Tonight Moon. 5 minutes 34 seconds, multi-channel video installation (1 overhead projector, 24 small black and white TV sets, 6 big TV sets), 2000

By other artists/directors

30x30. Peili Zhang, single-channel video, 32 minutes 9 seconds, 1988

Line Describing a Cone. Anthony McCall, 30 minutes, 16 mm film, 1973, collected by Tate

Manifesto. Julian Rosefeldt, 130 minutes (exhibition), 90 minutes (feature), 13-channel video installation, 2015

Napoleon. Abel Gance, 330 minutes (and various other lengths), three-screen silent film, French, 1927

Phantom. Douglas Gordon, video installation with soundstage, screen, a black Steinway piano, a burned Steinway piano, and one monitor, 2011

Precarity. John Akomfrah, 46 minutes 3 seconds, three-channel HD color video installation, 7.1 sound, 2017

Shower. Robert Whitman, 16mm film loop, color, silent, 1964

Sleep. Andy Warhol, 321 minutes, silent avant-garde film, United States, 1964

Ten Thousand Waves. Isaac Julien, 55 minutes, nine double-sided screens moving image installation, 2010

The Refusal of Time. William Kentridge, five-channel digital video installation, black-and-white and color, sound, 30 min.; steel megaphones, and a breathing machine ("elephant"), 2012

The Unfinished Conversation. John Akomfrah (2012), 45 minutes, 3-channel video installation, 2012, collected by Tate

Two Sides to Every Story. Michael Snow, 11 minutes, 16 mm color film loop, two projectors, switching device, and aluminum screen, 1976

Vertigo Sea. John Akomfrah, 48 minutes, three-channel video installation, 2015

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