



Relic / 遺跡, 2018. Mixed media on canvas. 220 × 600 cm / 86 ⁵/₈ × 236 ¹/₄ in. Courtesy the Artist and Perrotin.

NI Youyu *So Near Yet So Far*

Opening Thursday May 24, 6 – 8 pm
May 24 – July 14, 2018

Perrotin is pleased to present “So Near Yet So Far”, the first solo exhibition of the Chinese artist NI Youyu in Hong Kong. Showcasing 12 pieces, the exhibition gives a comprehensive view of the artist's diverse creations.

Ni Youyu's practice does not apply demarcation to antiquity and modernity, nor does it concern itself with the task of reinventing paradigms – so the artist says. This principle is grounded in Ni's studies at the Fine Arts College of Shanghai University, where he specialized in Chinese paintings. Whilst the genre emphasizes engagement with – or even resuscitation of – antiquity, Ni's works are pivoted on the ways we can access the space between all temporalities and material objects as a repository of universal cognizance.

Regardless of questions about the relations assumed between Ni's *Dust* series and the cosmology of Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty (907 – 1127) landscape paintings, an awareness of life is evident in his work populated with astronomical tropes. Cosmology, after all, comes down to temporality in the sense that it is at once a temporal dimension – lodged in ephemerality – and a spatial concept. Through the almost scientific technique of grid division, which might be redolent of Renaissance Scandinavian landscape paintings, Ni maps out the various intersections between Chinese and Western cosmologies. A case in point is his “Waterfall & Rockfall” (2016) wherein he deconstructs the paragon of Chinese landscape by superimposing paradoxes, conflicts and resonance onto one another. From repetitive, experimental gestures thus emerge a highly idiosyncratic expression: using the water-wash technique, Ni applies

倪有魚 *咫尺千里*

開幕酒會：5月24日（週四）晚上6時至8時
2018年5月24日至7月14日

貝浩登很榮幸為中國當代藝術家倪有魚舉辦首次香港個展《咫尺千里》。該展覽共計12件作品，是對其多元創作的綜合展現。

倪有魚曾多次提及，在他這裏，從來就沒有古今之分，亦沒有創新一說。這一觀念或體認自然有賴於其學習中國畫的經歷——他求學上海大學美術學院時的專業即是中國畫，而中國古代繪畫並非一味趨新，相反，崇古、尚古乃至「復古」恰恰是其重要的方法和邏輯。不過，倪有魚的實踐所依循的不是「復古」，也不是所謂的「化古為今」或「化今為古」，而是如何重新探觸縱貫古今或一切既有物之間可能存在的普遍認知。

且不論五代北宋山水畫背後的天象學和宇宙觀是否是倪有魚「塵埃」系列的古典源頭，但我們依然可以清晰洞察隱伏在其作品中的天文色彩與生命意識。所謂宇宙觀，說到底即是一種時空觀，因此它不僅體現在無時不在變化之中的時間維度，同時，它也是一個空間的概念。藝術家通過畫格子這一理性的分割方式——文藝復興時期歐洲北部的畫家就曾通過這樣的方式描繪窗外的風景，試圖找到中西宇宙觀的交匯處。就像他曾經以相似的方式分疏、解析古代山水畫一樣，如《瀑布與瀑布》（2016），也可以說，他是在同一張畫面上，附著或疊加了兩個或多個不同的觀看視角，它們之間既有矛盾、衝突，也不乏契合之處。與之相應，在反復的實驗中，他還逐漸發展出一套完全屬於個人的表達方式——「水沖」繪畫。顏料經由不同的水壓沖洗，反復多次後在畫布上所留下的彷彿「屋漏痕」一樣的划痕和肌理，遠處看像山水畫的圖式與皴法，近觀則是表現主義的語言和結構，對此，我們同樣可以視為兩種不同繪畫方式和視覺機制的疊合。就像繪畫本身的「欺騙性」一樣，這裏，藝術家通過多個層次的嘗試（包括大量使用屬性是塑料的金色丙烯顏料），以強調其虛構的一面。



Dust (Fog II) / 塵埃 (霧之二), 2017. Mixed media. Painting : 121 × 160 × 7 cm / 47 ^{5/8} × 63 × 2 ^{3/4} in. Drawing with frame : 31 × 41 cm / 12 ^{3/16} × 16 ^{1/8} in. Courtesy the Artist and Perrotin.

pressurized water to wash away layers of paint, and repeats the process until the painterly trace and texture appear as *wulouhen*, a type of Chinese calligraphic stroke that likens the trailing of ink to rainwater trickling through the crevices of dilapidated walls. From afar, the work contains the pattern and wrinkled texture of landscape paintings; upon closer examination, then, the work is in fact a tactile manifestation of the Expressionist discursive structure, indicating a superimposition of two different drawing methods and their visualities. Seen thus, Ni's various experiments (largely with the golden acrylic – a plastic medium beneath its metallic reflet) are punctuated by painting's intrinsic deceptiveness as fiction.

At the heart of Ni's creative process is a displacement of social modalities such as identity, nationality, race, and class. The subjects in his work, be they constellations or dust, collectively embody life (and death) within the universe. Essentially, Ni is interested in tracing the fundamental cognizance that conditions and makes accessible the interplay between antiquity and modernity, between the Chinese and the West – embodied by dust. In Ni's previous works, such cognizance takes on the form of transparent cubicles as an allusion to the modern way of looking at things, conditioned by logic and reason, whilst the bonsai contained within the tanks hints at a miniature universe in its own right. Lacing through other scenic depictions across drawers, alcoves and coins is precisely this double perspective, enriched by golden paint common in both antique and contemporary art. Following from this discursive structure, Ni's new canvas work "Relic" (2017) replaces the three-dimensional cubicles with a transparent perspective. One notices the familiar texture – eroded, water-washed. At once literal and figurative, transparency as such points towards the influence of formal analysis and iconology on our understanding of traditional Chinese landscape paintings. As such, Ni questions the kind of "image inertia" and art historical self-consciousness we take for granted, and visualizes them as specimens of historical remnants. Occasionally, Ni would embellish the margins of the canvas with a hand-drawn frame,

在這個過程中，藝術家抽離了身份、國籍、種族、階級等所有可辨識和不可辯識的社會屬性，叢星也好，塵埃也罷，它們所指的既是宇宙萬物，也是芸芸眾生。毋寧說，倪有魚真正關注的是如何從古今中西相關的資源中尋得一個普遍的認知視角和路徑，而塵埃本身，在藝術家看來即是東西方哲學共享的一種宇宙觀。他曾將傳統山水或其一角置於一個透明的透視立方體中，如果說透明的立方體暗示的是一種現代理性的觀看或測度方式的話，那麼裏面的山水與其說是盆景，不如說是一個微觀的宇宙。同樣的邏輯，他還曾將古代山水、園林、名勝或微觀的宇宙描繪或部署在展櫃、抽屜、「壁龕」，或一枚硬幣上。如上所言，也可以說這是兩種不同世界觀的疊加。新作《遺跡》（2017）延續了這一話語結構，不同在於，此處它用透視空間取代了透明立方體，空間內依然是「水沖」形成的看似傳統山水畫的景緻。看似依然是一種「生硬」的嫁接，但它所喻示的則是當下我們最普遍的觀看和認知方式，就像「形式分析」和「圖像學」一度影響甚至支配著我們對於古代中國山水畫的理解一樣。而在藝術家看來，他所質疑的正是我們習以為常的圖像慣性和藝術史自覺，從而將其引至視覺或觀看的維度，畫面中的那些「殘山剩水」又彷彿是某歷史遺跡或廢墟的片段。有時，他還在畫面四周描上「畫框」，通過畫中畫的結構，以凸顯這一目光的自指性。

普遍性常常體現為一條線或某一抽象的圖形。在「漫長的一瞬間」系列中，圖片與盆景二者所「共享」的異形的虛白處即是這一普遍的圖形。而在「逍遙遊」系列中，藝術家將收集自世界各地由無名攝影師拍攝幾乎相同素材的舊照片，利用刻刀呈現一種反photoshop式的拼貼，在此，連接同一素材圖像的即是湖面的水平線或是山脈的邊緣線。裝置作品「浮屠」系列中，大大小小數十個蓮座則由一條中軸線串聯成一座塔，這裏的線或圖形即是一種普遍性，或者說是一個最大公約數。而測度本身也一直是倪有魚實踐的主題之一。

尺子是倪有魚常用的素材或現成品，曾多次出現在他的作品中，不過最典型的可能還是「寸光陰」系列。他根據常見的標準尺子，手工製作了一套尺子，儘管他力圖確保精確的刻度，但因為身體的主觀性介入，實際並不精確。這一行為既是一種時間的測度，同時

whence a metacognitive moment emerges to indicate the duality of the work as a painting-within-a-painting.

Often, the notion of universality is manifest in Ni's work as a single line or an abstract shape, such as the void shared between image and bonsai in *The Endless Second* series. In another instance, *Freewheeling Trip* combines images sourced from multiple obscure photographers on almost the same subject, resulting in a collage contra the kitsch perfection of Photoshop: the margins, indicative of manipulation, are retained as points of contact between clusters of subjects. In the installation series *Pagoda*, lotus seats of varying sizes are combined through an axis into a single composition. Here, lines and shapes figure as universality, or rather, a unit of measurement reflective of Ni's aesthetics.

Such interest in geometry also extends to Ni's frequent use of rulers à la readymade. The handmade rulers in the *Inches of Time* series, for instance, crudely exemplify the futility of subjective intervention more than any practical purposes. Nonetheless, they stand in as a unit of measuring time, or our experience of time in terms of introspection, emotions, and space. Exposing norms, perception and cognizance as constructed, *Inches of Time* questions their susceptibility to human sensibility whilst also highlighting the latter's semantic grey areas for our attention. Thus, what is being problematized in Ni's practice is not the order of things per se but the principles and abstract reasoning that enable such an order. After all, their universality is the place of origin whence power and violence emanate. One observes the same will to power and potency embedded in the act of "washing away" – brought to the fore as the true nature of aesthetics' seeming abstinence.

Lu Mingjun

[More information about the artist >>>](#)



Orchestra / 樂團, 2017. Acrylic on canvas.
120 x 120 cm / 47^{1/4} x 47^{1/4} in. Courtesy the Artist and Perrotin.

也可視為對於自我身體、情緒以及環境或空間的一種丈量。它不僅懷疑理性秩序，對於身體的感官機制也同樣保持著警惕。更重要在於，它提示我們，一切既有的標準乃至觀看和認知秩序都是被建構的。可見，倪有魚真正質疑的與其說是既有的標準和秩序，不如說是支撐標準和秩序的普遍原則和抽象邏輯，說到底，一切權力和暴力的源頭正是這些邏輯、原則及其普遍性。就像「水沖」本身潛在的行動性及其暴力感，大多時候，恰恰被包裹在節制、內斂的美學內部。

魯明軍

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Pagoda No. 8 / 浮屠之八, 2017. Wood, steel.
207 x 63 x 63 cm / 81^{1/2} x 24^{13/16} x 24^{13/16} in. Courtesy the Artist and Perrotin.

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