

Interview with  
Pocono Zhao Yu

趙玉專訪



## About the Artist

### 關於藝術家

Pocono Zhao Yu (b. 1990, Shanxi, China) explores the ideas of mobility, identity, and cultural hybridity in her intermedia art practice encompassing image-making, videography, writing, and installation. Interweaving studio research with personal experiences, she fabricates narratives that reflect on the collective history of civilizations, reconstructing scenes recalled from her memories using elements borrowed from semiotics, literature, and sociology. In her works, Zhao adopts a decentralized perspective in examining our cultural history and relics, focusing on issues of territorial anxiety arising from globalization.

Zhao obtained her *diplôme national d'arts plastiques (DNAP)* and *diplôme national supérieur d'arts plastiques (DNSAP)* from *École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, respectively in 2017 and 2019. She is a contributor to various publications and media platforms, including *Art World*, Centre for Experimental Film (CEF), Jiazazhi, and Pulsasir. In 2018, Zhao was a guest editor for the special Long Reading project titled "Lions of the Scottish Highlands" for *Art World*; in 2019, she published her short story *La station de Métro Belleville*.

The artist currently lives and works between Shanghai, China, and Paris, France.

趙玉（生於1990年，中國山西）在她集圖像、影像、寫作及裝置於一體的跨媒介藝術創作中探索有關流動性、身份認同以及文化雜糅的議題。她將工作室研究與個人經歷交織在一起，創作了反映集體性文明歷史的敘事，並利用符號學、文學和社會學的元素重建了她記憶中的場景。在她的作品中，她採用了一種去中心化的視角來審視我們的文化歷史與遺跡，關注全球化帶來的領土焦慮問題。

趙玉分別於2017年與2019年在法國巴黎國立高等美術學院獲得國家造型藝術文憑以及國家高等造型藝術文憑。她寫作可見於《藝術世界》、CEF實驗影像中心、假雜誌、潑先生等媒體及刊物。她在2018年聯合策劃編輯《藝術世界》11月刊長讀項目「蘇格蘭高原的獅子」，並在2019年出版短篇小說《美麗城地鐵站》。

藝術家目前生活和工作於中國上海及法國巴黎兩地。



Artist Portrait

藝術家肖像



"Pomegranate" installation view

「石榴」現場圖

On the occasion of Pocono Zhao Yu's solo exhibition "Pomegranate," the gallery team had an in-depth discussion with the artist, highlighting the thoughts and concepts behind her creative practice. The exhibition opened at MOU PROJECTS in Hong Kong on August 5, 2023. Drawing inspiration from her childhood memories, textual research, and fictional narratives, the works featured in the exhibition revolve around the history of the pomegranate, the Age of Discovery, as well as the intertextuality of cultural motifs throughout human discoveries. Presenting Zhao's most recent installations, sculptures, and paintings, the story in "Pomegranate" unfolds through three interrelated chapters—"Voyage," "Retrospect," and "Childhood"—to chart the artist's own reflections on mobility, nostalgia, and personal history.

值趙玉個展「石榴」之際，畫廊團隊與藝術家進行了一次深入的探討，談及了藝術家的創作理念以及創作過程中的所見所想。展覽於2023年8月5日在MOU PROJECTS香港空間開幕。展覽從藝術家的童年記憶、文本研究和敘事寫作中汲取靈感，圍繞石榴的歷史、航海時代以及貫穿人類文明的文化互文性展開。聚焦趙玉最新創作的裝置、雕塑和繪畫作品，「石榴」透過三個相互關聯的章節——「遠航」、「追溯」和「童年」——層層遞進地展開一系列繪聲繪色的故事，提煉出藝術家自己對流動性、懷舊和個人歷史的思考。

## MOU PROJECTS (MP):

The exhibition title, "Pomegranate," seems to be inspired by your contemplation over the origin, cultural symbolism, as well as your childhood memories of the pomegranate tree. Can you share with us the stories behind?

Pocono Zhao Yu (Zhao):

When I was five or six years old, my grandparents had pomegranate trees planted in their backyard. My impression of that backyard all relates to summertime when it was filled with green trees and the chirping of cicadas. As a child, the yard for me was like a botanical garden. My great-grandmother would often give me the sweetest, most delicious pomegranates, storing them in her red, wooden dowry box, where she kept all her treasures. Each time she opened the box, she would pass me the pomegranate with the sweetest smile on her face. I remember that the pomegranate was plump and beautiful, with grains akin to crystal agate seeds. This moment always comes to my mind, making me feel warm and happy.

When I was 15 years old, I learned that pomegranates are regarded as the "fruit of heaven" in Islamic culture, and when I went to France to study in my 20s, I learned that pomegranate has special cultural meanings in many European countries. For example, the pomegranate is called "lotus fruit" in ancient Greek mythology, symbolizing rebirth and representing the prosperity of life, and in Spain, the pomegranate flower was once the national flower. Of course, in Chinese folklore, pomegranate also has the auspicious meaning of reproduction and happiness. Therefore, I began to conduct research on the origin and migration of the pomegranate as well as its cultural significance. Based on this, I studied textual materials and researched images till I came up with the idea "Pomegranate." From childhood memories to the common destiny of mankind, the exhibition reflects the relationship between humanity and nature, as well as the human's desire to conquer nature and our inevitable submission to nature.

## MOU PROJECTS (MP):

這次展覽名為「石榴」，當中的靈感似乎來源於你對這個植物遷徙歷史的思索、石榴自身的文化象徵含義，以及你童年時記對於石榴樹的記憶。可以淺談一下這當中的故事嗎？

趙玉 (趙):

在我五、六歲的時候，姥姥爺家院子的中庭裏種植着石榴樹，它們都開得很旺盛。不知道為什麼，我對於那裏的記憶，全都停留在盛夏，伴隨着知了蟲鳴和綠樹成蔭。院子對於小小的我而言，則是像植物園一般存在。我的太姥姥經常會把長得最好的石榴悄悄留給我，把它們放在一個紅色的木箱中，那是她的嫁妝箱，那裏有她所有的寶物。每一次她都興奮地打開箱子，笑咪咪地伸手把石榴遞給我，又大又漂亮的石榴，紅紅粉粉，熟透的石榴炸開了皮，一粒粒似水晶瑪瑙的石榴籽呼之欲出！這個瞬間總是浮現在我腦海中，讓我感到異常的溫暖與幸福。

在我十五歲的時候，我瞭解到石榴在伊斯蘭文化中被稱作「天堂聖果」。當我二十多歲去法國留學後，得知石榴在歐洲的許多國家都有着特別的文化含義：石榴在古希臘神話中被稱作「忘憂果」，象徵重生、代表生命的繁榮，甚至，西班牙的國花就是石榴花；當然，在中國，石榴在民間還有「多子多福」的吉祥含義。於是，我開始對石榴的遷徙及其背後的文化流變進行了一些研究，在此基礎上，虛構文本、尋找圖像，直到構思出這次展覽「石榴」。從小我出發到人類的共同命運，這其中體現着人類與自然的緊密關係，以及人類妄圖征服自然的本性和其必然臣服於自然的結果。

MP:

在你的展覽中，有許多關於航海的敘事，請問於你而言，航海與石榴有着怎樣的關聯呢？

趙:

在中國這樣一個以農耕文化為本的國家，游牧文



Explosive Juice of Reef 01, 2023  
Foaming agent, metal spray paint, natural stone powder, PVC resin, iron nails  
Approx. 20 × 20 × 20 cm

《爆汁的礁石 01》· 2023  
發泡劑、金屬噴漆、天然石粉、PVC 樹脂、鐵釘  
約 20 × 20 × 20 cm



Atlas of the Helios: Great Nautical Age, 2023  
Wallpaper, printed text, mixed media, pomegranate  
Dimensions variable

《太陽神圖集：大航海》· 2023  
牆紙、印製文本、綜合材料、石榴  
尺寸可變

MP:

In your exhibition, there are many nautical motifs and narratives related to expeditions. What is the correlation between the voyage and the pomegranate?

Zhao:

In China, agriculture has always been an important part of life throughout history, whereas nomadic culture and maritime culture are rarely talked about but are an important part of Chinese culture as well. Pomegranate is a fruit widely distributed in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. In my works, it signifies and carries the meaning of migration and cross-cultural experience and becomes a symbol of nomadic culture. Meanwhile, the idea of a voyage often involves crossing territories or borders, so it is also related to crossing cultures. In melding the two ideas together, I try to highlight the complexity of human migration and cultural transmission, creating an atmosphere of mystery that invites the viewer to reflect on the themes of journey, migration, culture, and memory.

MP:

Many of the works in the exhibition make use of appropriating existing images. For example, *Helios, Las Meninas* features Velasquez's famous painting *Las Meninas*; *Atlas of the Helios: Great Nautical Age* includes the 16th-century engraving *Americae Retectio* (Discovery of America). What is the significance of ready-made images for your work? How do you select them?

Zhao:

My art practice can be regarded as a kind of "photomontage." In my artistic process, I start by collecting, sorting, and examining images. Both *Helios, Las Meninas* and *Atlas of the Helios: Great Nautical Age* are related to my study of the images of Helios. The former is inward-looking, alluding to the idea of family, while the latter is outward-looking, referring

化和海洋文化被鮮少談及，但它們卻是中華文明的重要組成部分。石榴是一種廣泛分布於中東和地中海地區的水果，在我的作品中，它富有遷徙和跨文化的屬性，也化身為游牧文化的象徵。而航海往往涉及跨越地域或穿越邊界，這也是一種跨文化的體驗。通過石榴與航海的嫁接，我試圖表達人類遷徙和文化傳遞的複雜性。航海與石榴在我的作品中相互交織，營造出一種神秘的氛圍，引發觀眾對於旅程、遷徙、文化和記憶等主題的思考。

MP:

在展覽中，許多作品都有關對現成圖像的挪用。例如《太陽神·宮娥》系列上印有委拉斯開茲的名作《宮娥》，而《太陽神圖集：大航海》中則包含着《Americae Retectio》（發現美洲）這幅十六世紀的版畫。想問一下現成圖像為你的作品帶來了什麼別樣的意義？你又是如何選擇它們的呢？

趙:

我的這種工作方法可以被看作是一種「圖像蒙太奇」，在每一個創作階段中，我最先開展的就是對圖像的考古、蒐集以及整理。《宮娥》與《Americae Retectio》（發現美洲）兩者都是圍繞着「太陽神」的研究選取的，前者從外向內，指向「家庭」，後者從內向外，指向「探索」。我持續這種「文化考古」的方法，以東西方文化流變作為主要議題進行研究創作，圍繞「太陽神」的脈絡，注入我們所面臨的「數字幽靈」的概念，同時探討在文化流變中的異化。《太陽神·宮娥》系列與《太陽神圖集：大航海》都以類似書籍的形式呈現，於我而言，《太陽神·宮娥》系列是一本人本穿越古今的書籍，內含一封封穿越古今的書信，而《太陽神圖集：大航海》則以一種場域特定（site-specific）的方式呈現出一部巨大的書籍。我既探尋「書籍」中的奧秘，也試圖發現它們之間的差異。我之所以運用這種「圖像蒙太奇」的手法，正是為了闡釋、嫁接如今錯綜複雜的文化現狀。

to exploration. For me, this resembles the process of "cultural archaeology"—focusing on the cultural evolution of the East and the West, studying the concept of "digital ghost" in the context of the "Sun God," and exploring the alienation in the cultural history. Both *Helios*, *Las Meninas* and *Atlas of the Helios: Great Nautical Age* are presented in the form of open books. For me, *Helios*, *Las Meninas* is a series of books comprising letters that travel through time, while *Atlas of the Helios: Great Nautical Age* presents itself as a gigantic book in a site-specific manner. I explore the mysteries of "books" and try to discover the differences between them. The reason why I prefer the method of "photomontage" is so I can better tease out the complex cultural phenomena of the present time.

MP:

In the sculptural series *Ocean Robe*, soft fabrics are processed repeatedly and eventually hardened to a sculptural form. Can you tell us a bit more about the production process behind this work?

Zhao:

For this series, I consciously interweave various methods—such as superimposition, grinding, and grafting—in producing the works, which include both traditional techniques and new technologies. The pattern I printed on the cloth was generated by AI. After transferring the image onto the material, I shaped the sculpture into a form akin to a battle robe from the ancient Roman or Greek period, in order to highlight its sense of history and the vicissitude of time. During the production process, I repeatedly hardened the surface of the cloth with resin until the entire sculpture gradually solidified. Afterward, I polished the surface and adjusted the details, coloring the sculpture with pomegranate powder, metal powder, dried plant powder, food coloring powder, gold leaf, and propylene. Through the polishing process, *Ocean Robe* gradually revealed part of the fabric pattern and the word *shijie* (world) printed on the cloth. Finally, I installed handmade

MP:

在《海洋戰袍》系列中，你將布料反復處理，最終形成了一種硬化的雕塑形態。可以分享一下這件作品背後的製作過程嗎？

趙：

在今天，錯綜複雜的文化大熔爐中，我有意識地在《海洋戰袍》這系列作品中運用疊加、打磨、嫁接等處理方法，既包含了傳統的雕塑工藝，又有新科技帶來的新技術手段。在 AI 圖像生成後，我運用布面印制的工藝將圖像轉印於一種具有彈性且輕盈透光的布面材質之上。接着我將其塑造為古羅馬、古希臘時期的戰袍形態，為了突出它的歷史感與滄桑感。在製作過程中，我將用樹脂處理布料表面，經過數十次的硬化工藝後，雕塑整體逐漸固化。隨後我對其表面進行反復打磨處理以及細節調整，將石榴粉末、金屬粉末、植物乾粉、食用色素粉末、金箔與丙烯進行調制、着色，呈現出灰色基調的「戰袍」。經過打磨工序，《海洋戰袍》也逐漸露出一部分的圖像及「世界」字樣的文字。最終，我將製作好的手工石榴花安裝在「戰袍」之上，使其達到穿越古今的視覺效果。這是一種經過無數次反復打磨調整的工藝，也是一種從古至今、時間倒轉的經歷。

MP:

展覽的敘事中，你的外公其實是一個很重要的人物，在《軟情境》中，他化身男主角，展開了一場有關渴望的追逐。對你來說，外公這個人物怎樣影響了你的創作呢？

趙：

這件影像作品包括兩層結構：第一層是我對外公的追憶，以及與他的隔空對話；第二層是我意外發現了外公留存的筆記，他撰寫了一個關於男主追逐太陽出生地的故事，男女主因此分離而進行隔空對話的愛情。事實上，這也是一個戲中戲。

之所以我會選擇外公作為這件作品的原型，是因



*Ocean Robe 02*, 2023  
Printed cloth, mixed media, pomegranate powder, metal powder, dry plant powder, food coloring powder, propylene, gold foil  
Approx. 200 × 95 × 25 cm

《海洋戰袍 02》· 2023  
印製布面、綜合材料、石榴粉末、金屬粉末、植物乾粉、食用色素粉末、丙烯、金箔  
約 200 × 95 × 25 cm









Great Nautical Age of Dafen Village, year unknown  
Ready-made oil painting, wood frame  
15.7 × 17 cm

《大芬村的大航海》· 年份不詳  
現成品油畫、木框  
15.7 × 17 cm

pomegranate blossoms on the sculptures, so that it achieves a visual effect that brings the viewers into the past. For me, the laborious process of production hints at a reversible time through history.

MP:

In the exhibition, your grandfather is actually a very important figure. In *Soft Situationism*, he is incarnated as the protagonist and involved in a romantic story about pursuit and desire. How did your grandfather influence you in terms of your creative practice?

Zhao:

This video work consists of two layers: the first layer is my memory of my grandfather and my dialogue with him; the second layer is that I accidentally found the notes left by my grandfather, who wrote a story about the man chasing the birthplace of the Sun and left his lover so they had a dialogue of love. In fact, it's also a play within a play.

The reason why I chose my grandfather as the prototype for the protagonist of this work is that I think he is very humorous and has a melancholic, poet-like character. He is very romantic—fluent in Arabic, familiar with Islamic culture, serving as the director of the Taiwan office, and spearheading the establishment of the community library. My grandfather was addicted to writing and published many articles on cross-cultural exchange. His exploration and thirst for knowledge deeply influenced me subtly. In *Soft Situationism*, I weave together my grandfather's notes, writings, and stories my family once told me to fabricate a surreal narrative.

MP:

Can you share the story behind *Great Nautical Age of Dafen Village*? How did you find this item? What do you think of Dafen Village and its history?

為我覺得他非常幽默，同時帶有一些詩人的憂鬱氣質。他是一個十分具有浪漫主義情懷的人——精通阿拉伯語，深耕伊斯蘭文化，擔任對台辦主任，還帶頭組建社區的圖書館……外公沉迷寫作，發表了很多關於中外文化的文章，他對知識的探索與渴求也潛移默化地影響了我。在《軟情境》中，我結合了外公的筆記、文章，以及家人曾講給我的故事，將外公的這種開拓精神進行了超現實的表述。

MP:

可以分享一下《大芬村的大航海》這件作品背後的故事嗎？你是怎樣淘到這個物件的呢？你對大芬村及其歷史有什麼看法？

趙:

《大芬村的大航海》這件作品是我賦予它的名稱，至於這件現成品的年份與作者我都不知曉。大芬村的歷史可以追溯到上世紀九十年代初，當時大量的香港畫商帶着歐美的訂單湧入深圳來雇傭便宜的畫工，大芬村也逐漸成為批量生產油畫的集散地。大芬村的畫工們基於來自歐洲的風景畫，想象着遠方的場景，進行臨摹繪制。這些訂單的產物最終被發往歐洲，它們完成了從歐洲到大芬村，再從大芬村回到歐洲的航程。而它們的出生地是歐洲還是大芬村呢？這種貿易往來是勞動力和資本的交換，他們以藝術為媒，回到了一種最原始的交易狀態，而這些繪畫的遠行，就像大航海時代的產物一般。

MP:

你在藝術創作之餘，也經常進行文學寫作，想問對你而言，寫作和藝術創作之間的聯繫是什麼？

趙:

從現當代藝術史中，無論是達達主義、激浪派還是頗具實驗性的黑山學院，藝術創作與寫作之間的聯繫都非常緊密，文字也是成為藝術家態度表達的手段。於我而言，寫作是一種更加大眾化的

Zhao:

*Great Nautical Age of Dafen Village* is the title I gave to this found object, as I don't know the exact year and the artist of this ready-made painting. The history of Dafen Village can be traced back to the early 1990s, when a large number of Hong Kong dealers flooded into Shenzhen with orders from Europe and the United States to hire cheap painters. In this context, Dafen Village gradually became a mass-production factory of oil paintings. Painters in Dafen Village mainly paint based on landscape paintings from Europe, copying the original work while imagining the landscape depicted in the works. The products of these orders were eventually sent to Europe, where they completed the voyage from Europe to Dafen and from Dafen back to Europe. Then, there arises the question of whether they originated in Europe or in Dafen. This trade was the exchange of labor and capital, and they used art as a medium to return to a primitive state of exchange. These paintings traveled far, like the product of the Great Age of Navigation.

MP:

You also write a lot in addition to your art practice. What is the connection between writing and art for you?

Zhao:

In the history of modern and contemporary art—whether it is Dada, Fluxus, or experimental art in Black Mountain College—the connection between art and writing has always been close because it was a means for the artists to express their ideas. For me, writing is a way to disseminate information. The commonality between writing and art is that they are both a kind of expression, the output of thought, as well as the record and witness of history. Before the exhibition, I found a published article written by my grandfather more than 30 years ago, which gave me a wonderful energy transcending history and space. I incorporated his writing into the exhibition, where the power of literature is transformed into the power of art.

In addition to writing about daily encounters, I also attempt to write semi-fiction. Writing

信息傳播途徑。寫作與藝術之間的共性是一種內心的表達，是思想的輸出端，也是歷史的記錄與見證。在這次展覽「石榴」之前，我找到了外公三十多年前發表的文章，它給我帶來了一種跨越歷史與時空的奇妙能量。我在展覽中，將他的文章融入其中，文學的力量在此轉化為藝術的力量。

除了日常的記錄外，我經常嘗試半虛構式的寫作，對現實而言，文字總是可以創造更多的可能性。比如，我於2018年底完成的短篇小說《美麗城地鐵站》，就是以一種半虛構式的寫作完成的，它打破了一種寫作中更純粹的敘事方式與文本結構。

2018年，我起草了「寫作的平行展覽」這一方案，併入圍了OCAT研究中心策展方案展。在此契機下，我開始嘗試將文本作為展覽的劇本而進行寫作，這種嘗試也和翻譯與改編有着密切的關聯。所以在我的創作中，經常會感受到文本性的存在，我會將故事改編為影像，或者將其作為展覽的劇本呈現，這都是在創作中我很享受的部分。

MP:

可以推薦一本最近看過的小說嗎？

趙:

奧爾罕·帕慕克 (Orhan Pamuk) 的《瘟疫之夜》( *Veba Geceleri* )。

MP:

關於你近期的計劃和藝術創作，有什麼可以跟我們分享的嗎？

趙:

近期來看，我都會持續圍繞着「太陽神」展開研究。「太陽神」的形象及其精神在世界各地文化中的彌散，如幽靈一般溶解在圖像、文字和日常勞作中。人類同太陽神的關係總處在從「仰望」到「征服」直至「共存」的多元錯綜關係，以此



*Soft Situationism*, 2022/23  
Double-channel video (color, sound)  
12 min 33 sec  
Edition of 3 + 1 AP

《軟情境》· 2022/23  
雙頻道錄像 (彩色、有聲)  
12分33秒  
共3版及1版藝術家試版



*Newcomer, Messenger 01, 2023*  
UV print on Italian yellow marble, cement, metal plate, acrylic, resin  
Dimensions variable

《新來者·信使》系列·2023  
義大利黃洞石 UV 印刷、水泥、金屬板、丙烯酸、樹脂  
尺寸可變

can always create possibilities that are not available in reality. For example, the short story *La station de Métro Belleville*, which I completed at the end of 2018, was written in a semi-fictional manner that breaks the boundaries of narration and the textual structure of writing.

In 2018, I initiated the curatorial project "Parallel Exhibition of Writing" and was shortlisted for the program Research-based Curatorial Project at OCAT Institute. From there on, I began to write text as a script for exhibitions, which is also closely related to translation and adaptation. Therefore, in my practice, I often include textual materials in my works. I adapt the text to video or present it as a script for exhibitions, which is a part of art practice that I really enjoy.

MP:

Can you recommend a novel you've read recently?

Zhao:

*Veba Geceleri* by Orhan Pamuk.

MP:

What can you share with us about your upcoming projects and practice?

Zhao:

In the near future, I will continue to research about Helios. The image of Helios and its spirit are dispersed in cultures around the world, dissolving like a specter in images, text, and daily activities. The relationship between humanities and Helios has always been complicated—from "yearning" to "conquest" to "coexistence"—which extends to the research and of the Eastern and Western cultural changes. The exhibition "Pomegranate" serves as the beginning of my research on the Grand Voyage, and I will continue my research in this direction this year. I recently participated in the artist residency program of the Jimei Arles International Photo Festival in the Kulangsu

延伸至對東西方文化流變作為主要議題的研究創作。這次展覽「石榴」可以作為我對大航海研究的開端。今年我會持續這個方向的研究。最近在廈門鼓浪嶼參與集美·阿爾勒國際攝影季的藝術家駐地項目中，我發現東南沿海地區的海洋文明非常有趣，在接下來的展覽中應該會圍繞這個方向展開，包括 UCCA X 新天地的「燃冉」計劃，也會在 11 月進行展覽，我會進行推進之前的駐地主題《海上的就是世界的》。

Art Park in Xiamen, where I was deeply intrigued by the marine civilization in the southeast coastal areas in China. For the upcoming exhibitions, I will focus on this direction, including UCCA x Xintiandi's "RANRAN" project, which will also open in November. I will continue to explore the previous residency project "The World on the Move, All Rivers Run into Sea."





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