

# Summary of proposal

This expedition originally proposed through a personal invitation by curator and researcher Zairong Xiang was aimed as an introductory visit and research trip to the contemporary Chinese cultural scene during Shanghai's 2025 art week. This entailed visiting multiple cultural institutions, particularly the 15th Shanghai Biennale: Does the Flower Hear the Bee? which highly resonates with my artistic practice and research interests.

The grant not only facilitated travel between the Netherlands and China but also enabled mobility within Shanghai, allowing me to navigate the city's diverse cultural geographies. This was essential in understanding the spatial and infrastructural conditions of artistic production in Shanghai, deepening my understanding of how context shapes practice.

## Professional Development

Supported by the Gerbrandy Cultuurfonds, my research trip to Shanghai marked an important stage in situating my artistic practice within an international context. By expanding my discourse, knowledge and network, this research trip gave me the opportunity to reflect upon and expand my own creative and professional frameworks.

My trip centred on the 15th Shanghai Biennale, Does the Flower Hear the Bee?, as well as visits to a wide range of institutions, independent spaces, and both contemporary as much as historic cultural sites. These encounters offered a broad and nuanced understanding of Shanghai's artistic ecology and economy, spanning major institutions, project spaces, community-driven initiatives, and experimental platforms.

Being hosted and guided by Zairong Xiang allowed us to strengthen our professional exchange and significantly shaped the way I was able to enter and experience the city. His curatorial background (including Documenta, HKW, and the 14th Shanghai Biennale) provided a rare opportunity to encounter the city's contemporary art landscape from an informed and deeply embedded perspective. His local knowledge, introductions, and conversations granted me access to a diverse network in Shanghai that would not have been reachable to the same extent otherwise. These exchanges set the first steps toward potential long-term collaborations and helped me understand how my practice might evolve in dialogue with Chinese and broader Asian contemporary art discourses.

Experiencing this range of environments allowed me to situate myself and introduce my artistic practice within a new cultural and aesthetic context. I gained valuable insight, as well as an enormous amount of inspiration, by observing how artists and curators in Shanghai address questions of ecology, technology, cosmology, and world-making; all of which are topics central to my own research.

Professionally, this trip has laid important groundwork for future artistic development: enabling me to identify relevant collaborators, organisations, and thematic synergies. By immersing myself in Shanghai's cultural and social environment, I am now better equipped to envision how future research and production can unfold through partnerships formed during this visit. It has established the seed for meaningful exchanges between my practice in the Netherlands and the cultural communities of Shanghai.

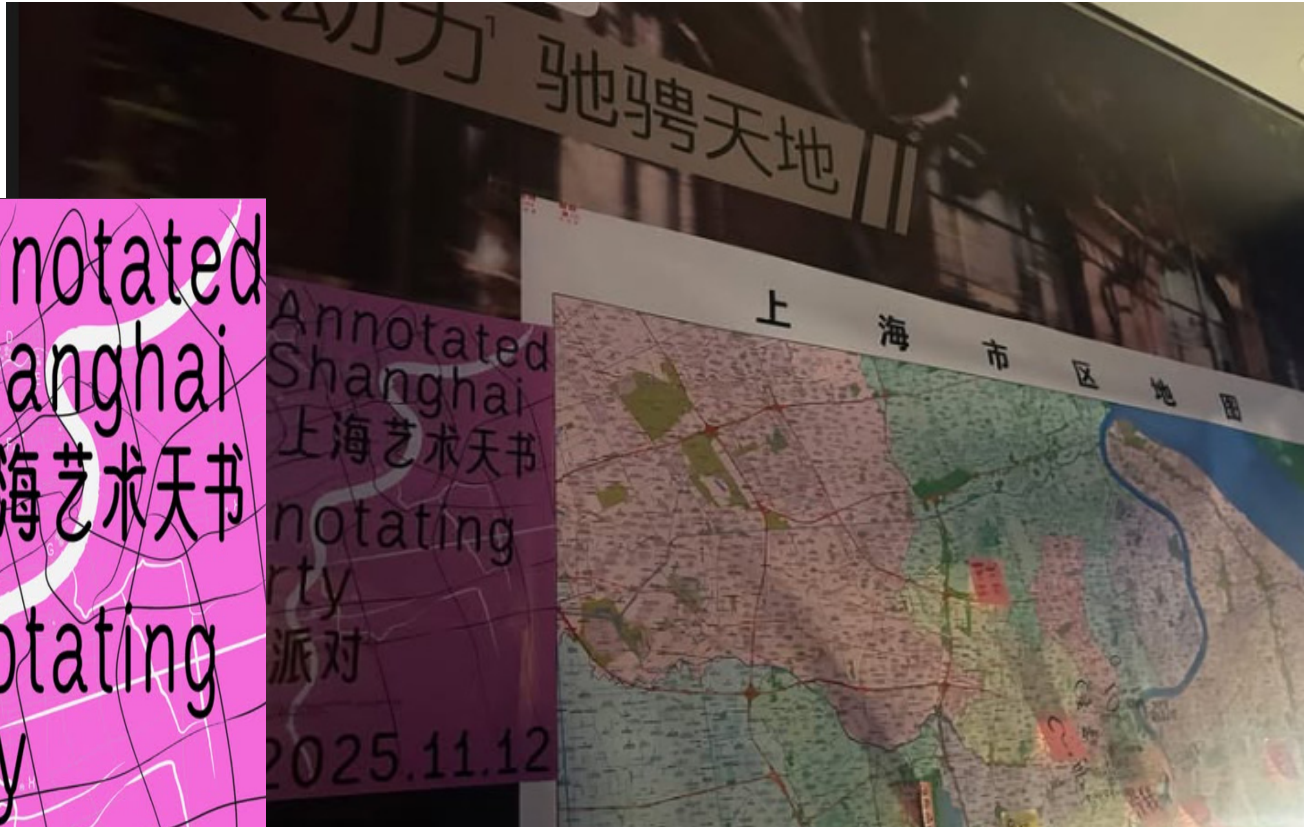
On a more personal note, this trip has deeply influenced and motivated me to pursue new artistic formats and ideas which resonate the idiosyncrasies of this vibrant cultural exchange. Overall, it has already begun to shape the themes and methodologies I am moving forward with.

In the following pages I will highlight a selection of the wonderful spaces and experiences that marked this exchange.

## Cultural Spaces Visited:

- The Rockbund Art Museum
- Power Station of Art
- 15th Shanghai Biennale "Does the flower hear the bee?"
- Cedar Kitchen
- Square Nature at Pond Society
- Tongues of Flare at Pond Society
- West Bund Museum
- Cheruby
- Shiro Takatani/Dumb Type "Tangent" at Theatre Young
- Yu Garden
- Wigwam
- FruityShop
- Heim
- Jing'an Temple
- NYU Facilities
- Shanghai: River Biographies – Huangpu River at West Bund Museum
- M50 Creative Space - Gallery complex
- Antenna Space
- Annotated Shanghai

- Annotated Shanghai
- Cedar Kitchen



Annotated Shanghai, a bilingual map/guide describing the city's art spaces and their quirks proved to be the best navigation tool for exploring the city's many compelling alternative spaces, especially for a visitor like me.

With this pink map in hand, the launch party of this guide proved to be a great introduction event to meet other artists that were in town exhibiting work, participating in events or much like myself, getting to know Shanghai through the cultural scene of art week with all the diverse programs, fairs, galleries and the biennale.

A great beginning of my journey in Shanghai was to join the launch of **Annotated Shanghai** which was hosted at the lively multidisciplinary cultural spot **Cedar Kitchen**. **Cedar Kitchen**, located on Julu Road in Shanghai, is an increasingly important venue for independent culture in the city. During the day it is a Lebanese bistro and project space that hosts events in the form of workshops and performances.

For example, Cedar provides space for people to share files via hard disks, open jam sessions, readings, and improvised PPT-sharing evenings. At night, Cedar Kitchen expands beyond its cramped café-kiosk into the adjoining business: a car garage. What makes Cedar unique is its openness and seamless fusion of global culture. It is less business-driven than other Shanghai venues, allowing the space to draw people into its community by encouraging playful, conscious engagement with the world.



A primary focus of my visit to Shanghai was the 15th Shanghai Biennale: “Does the flower hear the Bee?”

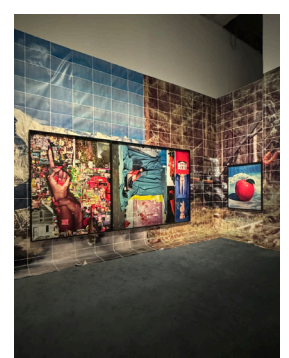
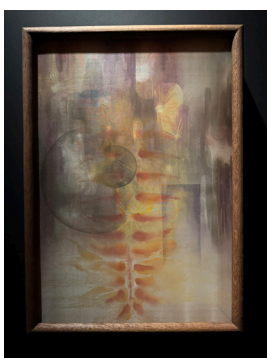
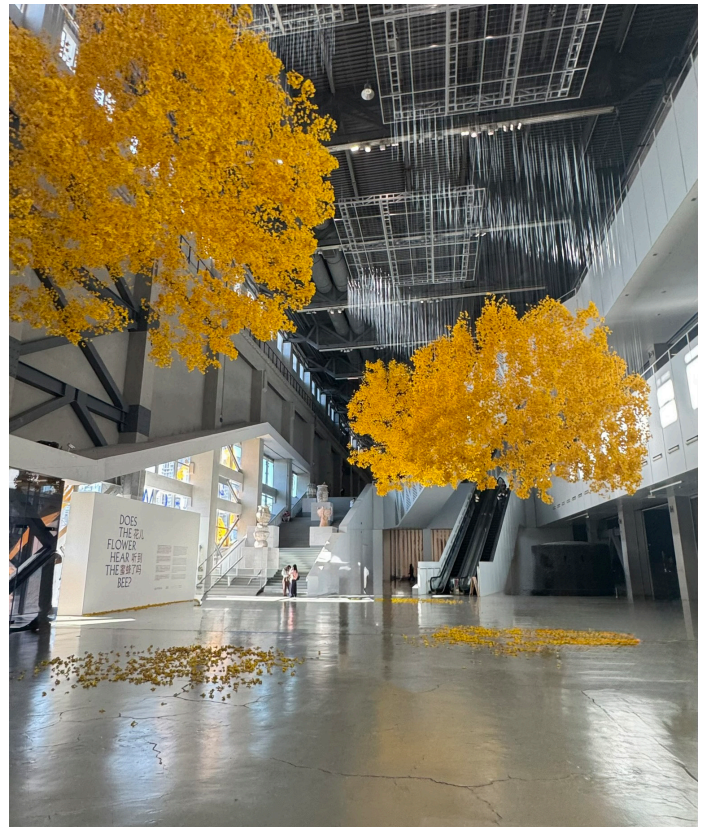
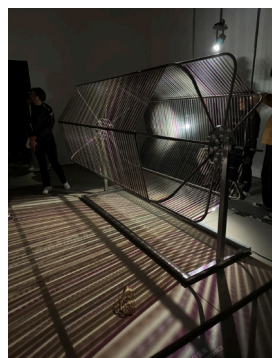
This edition of the Biennale featured over 250 works by 67 individual artists and collectives from around the world, including 16 from China.

Echoing Chinese architectural traditions, the exhibition design was created to be experienced like walking through a garden-like landscape. The Biennale centers on interactions between different life forms and unfolds as an open terrain: a space to wander through where artworks, architecture, and visitors co-exist in shifting relations.

The Power station of Art were both the Biennale and Lin Tianmiao's solo exhibition were being presented was an impressive 4 story building. The opportunity to visit these incredible institutions and witness the current cultural discourse of a variety of international artists through the framework of such a large event such as the Biennale felt like a very important experience in the growth of my own practice. This experience has shaped how I position myself within the international field of art, in both form and concept, particularly due to the theme of this year's biennale which echoes deeply with my own research.

On the fourth and final floor of the power station, I was able to see the solo exhibition by one of the most important contemporary Chinese artists. This was Lin Tianmiao's largest research-based retrospective to date, organized around a series of keywords relating to the body and everyday objects.

- 15th Shanghai Biennale “Does the flower hear the bee?”
- Power Station of Art : Lin Tianmiao: There's No Fun in It!

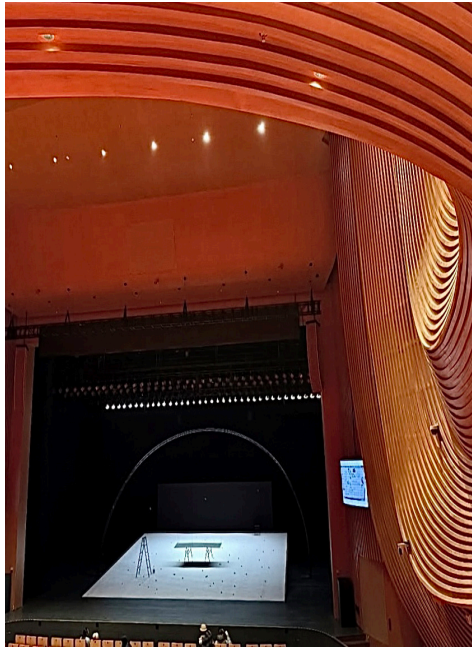






## • Shiro Takatani/Dumb Type “Tangent”

at Theatre Young



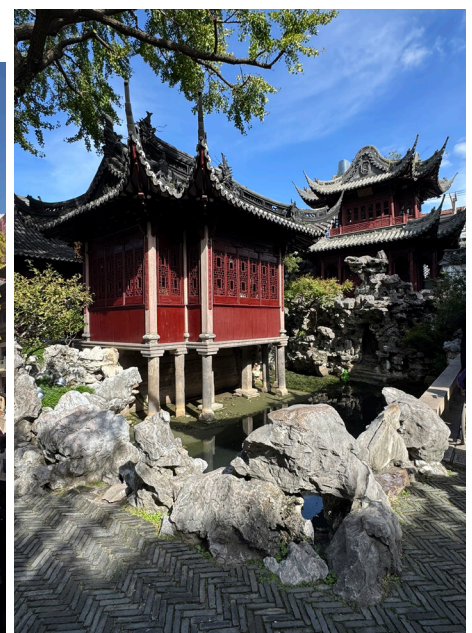
During my stay I tried to experience a range of activities that would encompass different areas of the vibrant cultural scene of the city of Shanghai, both traditional Chinese culture as much as contemporary and Pan-Asian perspectives. Having this wide range of perspectives allowed me to understand the different themes that were being showcased and the genealogies of tastes, stories, mythologies and imaginaries that grow from these historical seeds.

I approached theatre, performance and traditional temples as a way to enter diverse visual and theoretical narratives. For example, I was recommended to see a sonic performative piece at Theatre Young - an architecturally beautiful theatre- hosting an impressive stage work **Tangent** led by Japanese media artist Shiro Takatani and his avant-garde collective Dumb Type. This performance marked Takatani's Shanghai debut and brought together his three decades of cross-disciplinary work spanning installation art, theater, and modern dance. Takatani transformed the theater into a transitional perceptual space. Light and sound interact with the performers in real time, creating a rhythm that blurs boundaries and reshapes how audiences experience time and presence. The soundtrack is drawn from 12, the last album by the late Ryuichi Sakamoto. His music, with its profound emotional depth, resonates deeply with the visuals. The interplay of live sound feedback, projected light, and Sakamoto's haunting compositions builds a sensory landscape that is as intimate as it is monumental.

Another impressive experience that drew light on the fine balance between history and modernity in the city was visiting **Jing'an Temple** and **Yu Garden**, both situated in the heart of Shanghai. Jing'an is an ancient Buddhist temple, recognized as a national heritage site since 1983, stands in striking contrast to the surrounding modern skyscrapers. These traditional architectural features, combined with the temple's modern urban setting, create a unique blend of historical spirituality and contemporary Shanghai. Seeing Yu Garden was inspirational, due to both its architecture and conceptual approach as each subgarden represents a unique subtopic and corresponding storylines, which indicates the designer's deep feeling and personal stories through the arrangement of different elements inside.



## • Jing'an Temple



## • Yu Garden





• **CHERUBY** is brand new space in Shanghai's cultural scene. It nurtures the city's vibrant cultural ecosystem through community cultivation and supports cultural production with a multidisciplinary exhibition space that plans on hosting the programming of boundary-pushing activations, discursive events, and residencies.

Zairong and I received a private tour and introduction to CHERUBY'S first exhibition - inaugurating both their space and the culmination of their first two moth residency period. We were hosted by CHERUBY'S director Joni Zhu and had the opportunity to meet and discuss with their first resident: Mexican artist Barbara Sanchez-Kane. Amongst many

topics I was able to speak to them about their experience and their production trajectory in Shanghai. This meeting was extremely important for my network; allowing me to directly become familiar with specific individuals and the possibilities of diverse exchange programs and project spaces within the city.

• **Pond Society** in Shanghai, founded by Mr. Xue Bing, stands out as a non-profit art institution fostering multicultural perspectives in contemporary Chinese society. The gallery's commitment to international exchange is evident through its diverse artist roster and collaborations.

Featured:

'Square Nature', a solo exhibition by Azuma Makoto.

This exhibition hosted in one of the two buildings that comprise Pond Society, featured work by Japanese botanical artist Azuma Makoto. The installations were incredibly fascinating and was one of the most powerful exhibitions that I experienced during my trip.

The exhibition explores the relationship between nature and technology, featuring installations like living greenhouses, frozen flowers in ice, and sealed eco-systems. The works are presented within an artificial, "square" environment, showcasing how nature can thrive and be preserved in a modern, technological world.

The hybridity between artificial and natural, as much as the precise use of both technological structures and natural constructions that require much patience and precision were beautifully articulated in the works.

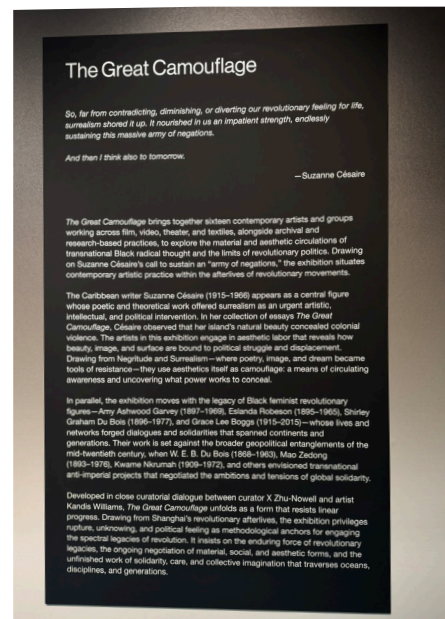
These topics resonate deeply with my interests and provoked me to reflect on the different visual languages capable of translating ecological, technological and historical traditions. The ancient art of bonsai trees or flower arrangements 'hua dao' are not only used as references to the economy of botany or the artificiality of ecology but it is also a clear gesture to reference a cultural and philosophical lineage. Not grown for the production of food or medicine, this Pan-Asian ancient practice of cultivating miniature trees was primarily conceived for contemplation, patience and ingenuity.





Unfortunately in both the exhibition *The Great Camouflage* and during the performance *Shanghai: River Biographies* I was not allowed to take pictures, nonetheless both were beautiful experiences that I would like to draw attention to in this report.

These two images of the exhibition *The Great Camouflage* were the first and only ones I managed to take before being told it was not allowed. **The Rockbund Museum** is known to be a critical art platform inviting an international and socio-political discourse within its exhibitions. ***The Great Camouflage*** was a powerful exploration of material and aesthetic circulations of transnational Black radical thought and the limits of revolutionary politics. The exhibition situates contemporary artistic practice within the afterlives of revolutionary movements. Focusing on video, textile, and theatrical languages, the exhibition presents Black feminist revolutionary figures whose lives intersected across decades, creating networks of dialogue, solidarity, and artistic-political experimentation that spanned continents and generations. It was both moving and impactful to witness how the collection of artists extend these inquiries into political and aesthetic worlds tracing global Black and Asian radical imaginaries, diasporic movements of labor, memory, and solidarity. The urgency and contemporary reflection brought by this exhibition was unique amongst the other exhibits I had the opportunity to see in Shanghai, and therefore resonated deeply with my artistic interests focusing on narratives that may be difficult but necessary to make public. As the title suggests, the exhibition prompts reflection on the material conditions of racialized life and the transmission of insurgent knowledge across generations.



• **The Great Camouflage**

**The Rockbund Art Museum**



• **Shanghai: River Biographies – Huangpu River**

**West Bund Museum**

In my mission to experience Shanghai's current cultural landscape in all its multiplicity, I made sure to visit the multi-sensory, immersive art exhibition by Swedish artist duo Lundahl & Seidl in the **West Bund Museum's** cultural research wing. ***Shanghai: River Biographies*** uses the Huangpu River as its central theme to explore environmental grief, memory, and human connection.

This collective immersive performance featured somatic and sonic elements that would guide us (the audience) through a philosophical and metaphorical becoming of the river across geological time.

This exhibition through its experimental format and use of different media, added another important layer to the array of different perspectives approaching themes of ecology, knowledge and human/non-human interrelations which pervaded the agenda for this years Shanghai art week.