

Portfolio of *Dino Zhang*

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An Image of the artist in 2019

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(The excerpt links are marked in red, their length is 12 minutes in total.)

(Please note this portfolio does not present artworks in a chronical order since the perception of linear time is denied.)

(In production)

Film

Single channel, Super 8mm film transferred to 4K video & 4K video, Stereo Sound, 40 minutes in Estimate

Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/1028043995/c63bd6d87a>

The Seventh Heaven



Film Still from "The Seventh Heaven", 2024

Project Statement:

The Seventh Heaven (2024–) is a feature film named after the building in Shanghai where Dino’s mother’s family lived during the Cultural Revolution. The film envisions the building as a maternal womb, a threshold obscuring life and death, where the memories of four generations converge and collide. By restaging historical events alongside documentary footage of his family, Dino interconnects the film with 1930s Shanghai leftist cinema, and imagines alternative strands of history that could have unfolded in different ways.

In mourning his grandmother's passing in early 2023, Dino seeks to evoke historical remnants that, though repressed, are still awaiting recovery. Through this film, he aims to uncover the echoes of past societal upheavals in his hometown of Shanghai, spanning its colonial, nationalist, and socialist periods, ultimately re-examining the meaning of modernity in that city.

Viewing *The Seventh Heaven* as a confluence where time collapses, Dino takes inspiration from Juan Rulfo’s novel *Pedro Paramo*, and weaves together stories from his family’s past: his mother’s recollections of childhood in the building after the Cultural Revolution ended; his grandfather’s memories of his first date with his grandmother during the Cultural Revolution, when her family’s home was confiscated twice; and his relatives’ accounts of his great-grandfather’s early life in the 1930s, when he joined the revolution and became an underground member of the Communist Party.

Film Stills from 'The Seventh Heaven', (2024 -)



The Seventh Heaven in 1930s, it used to be the highest in Shanghai



The seventh floor of the building, is now converted to a restaurant



The flat where Dino's grandmother stayed during her pregnancy



Dino's great-grandfather's flat, he used to live on the second floor



196 年 月 日 第 頁 共 頁

賈炳炎罪証

金戒指	貳拾玖只	✓人造喉嚨	壹塊	錫茶壺	壹只
金手鐲	捌根	✓卡其布	壹塊	銅杓	壹只
金手鐲	壹根	✓花人造布	壹塊	銅小碟子	五只
金木桌	貳只	✓桑什綢	壹塊	磁碗碗像	壹只
14K女手錶	壹只	✓條花被面	壹塊	磁獅子	壹只
銀元主	壹只	✓毛料	壹塊	磁花瓶	壹只
銀鎖連鏈索	壹付	✓真絲被面	壹尺	美鈔	貳佰元
銀行存單(張)	伍拾元	✓桑元料	壹塊	旧布	壹扎
建設公債	捌拾玖元	✓格子布	壹塊	旧画	壹扎
銀圓	玖佰玖拾捌元	✓條花被	壹塊	画鏡	五塊
銀幣	太共貳拾柒只	✓桑子被面	壹塊	木盤	四只
銀幣	又貳拾 貳只	✓香之紗	壹卷	磁碗盤碟	壹打箱
銅幣	壹色	✓紅布	貳塊		
美元小銀幣	太共陸只	✓台灣席	壹条		
銅調羹	拾玖只	✓綢被面	壹塊		
銀筷	四双	✓絨布被	貳塊		
銀項圈	壹根	✓絨毯	貳条		
銅小水壺	壹只	✓絨布	壹塊		
錫并	貳只	✓皮長袍子	壹件		
銅碟子	拾陸只	✓四旧綢料	貳件		
銅盆子	壹只	✓長絲被	壹双		
錫酒壺	貳只	✓領帶	貳根		
馬褲呢皮大衣	壹件	✓領帶	又壹根		
毛料	貳塊	✓手套	柒双		
毛絨料	壹塊	✓西服上袄	叁件		
綢料	四塊	✓西服褲	壹条		
格子被單	貳条	✓旧呢帽	壹頂		

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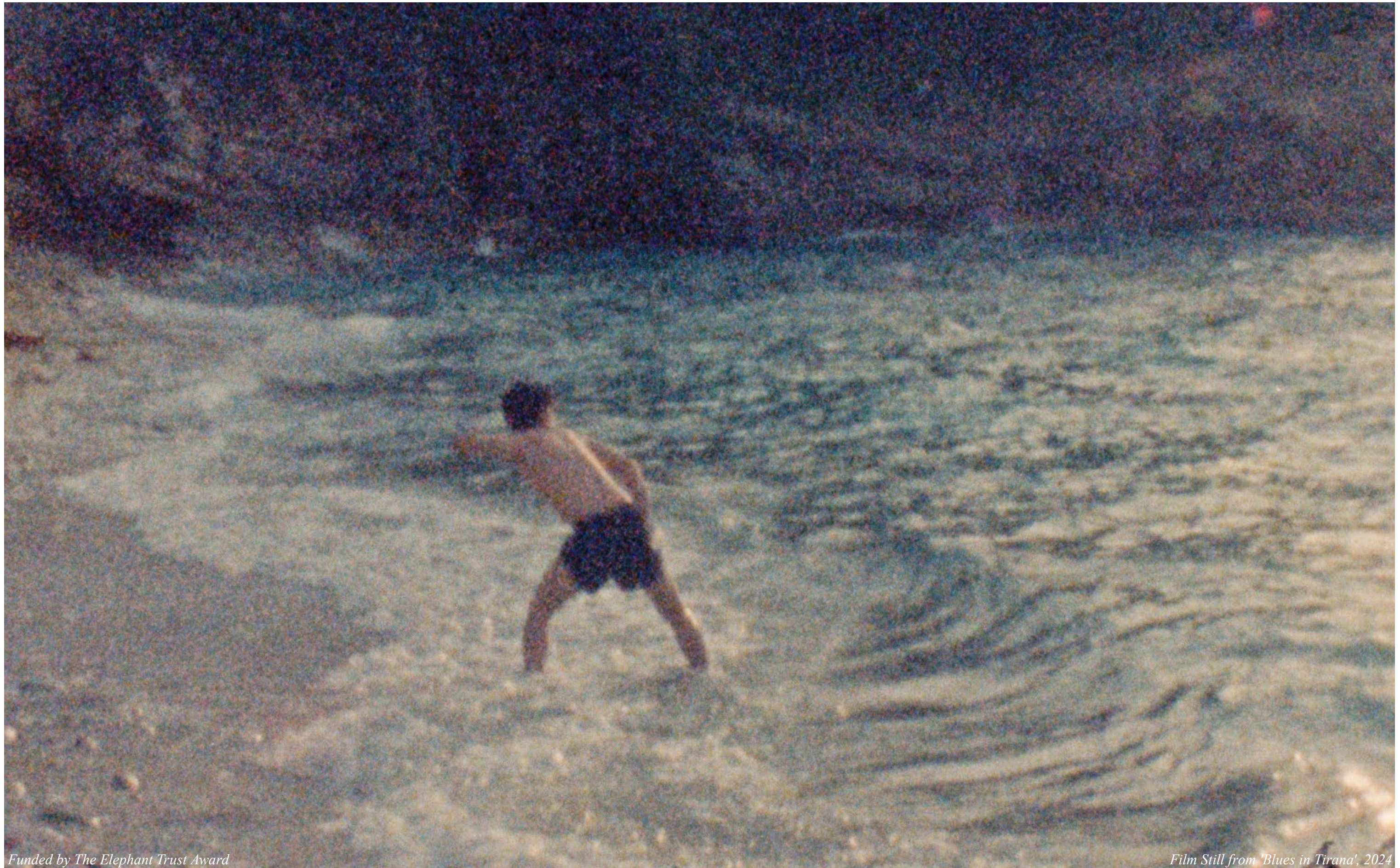
1966年9月4日

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This image is titled "Evidence of Crime of Jia Binyan" (Dino's great-grandfather). It is a confiscation checklist detailing items looted from his apartment during the Cultural Revolution. A partial translation reads: golden rings, 29; golden bracelets, 8; 14k watch, 1; silver chain, 1; bank statement, 50 yuan. The list also includes ties, blankets, jackets, mirrors, and nearly every item in the apartment. Dino's great-grandfather was required to sign his name at the bottom of the list, dated September 4th, 1966.

Blues in Tirana

Film
Single channel, Super 8mm film transferred to 4K video, Stereo Sound, 15'00
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/1041451427/fb7e959982>



Funded by The Elephant Trust Award

Film Still from 'Blues in Tirana', 2024



Project Statement:

A year before Mao’s death in 1977, Dino's grandfather spent six months in Tirana, where he and his colleagues built a radio and television tower as part of a national assistance project between China and Albania. Shortly after the deaths of Mao and Hoxha, both countries began gradually moving away from rigid socialist ideologies. In 2024, Dino went on a road trip across Albania to visit the places his grandfather had traveled to decades before.

Reflecting on the socio-political transitions in the late 20th century, *Blues in Tirana* (2024) serves as a travel diary, using an autoethnographic approach to trace the dissolution of former socialist regimes up to the present day. Every city conceals desires and fears like dreams.¹ By juxtaposing past and present, the film examines the transformation of Albanian urban sites since the 1970s, ultimately connecting this journey back to Dino’s hometown of Shanghai, drawing links between his childhood and a shared, transnational experience circulate post-socialist landscapes.

¹ Calvino, Italo. (1972). *Invisible Cities*. Translated by William Weaver. Random House.

Film Stills from 'Blues in Tirana', (2024 -)



Exhibition plan proposal:
Contextual materials include: Dino's granddad's photo album, photos of Dino revisiting the sites, magazines purchased in Tirana (printed during the Cultural Revolution by China), diaries purchased in Shanghai (written by a 15-year old student during the Cultural Revolution).



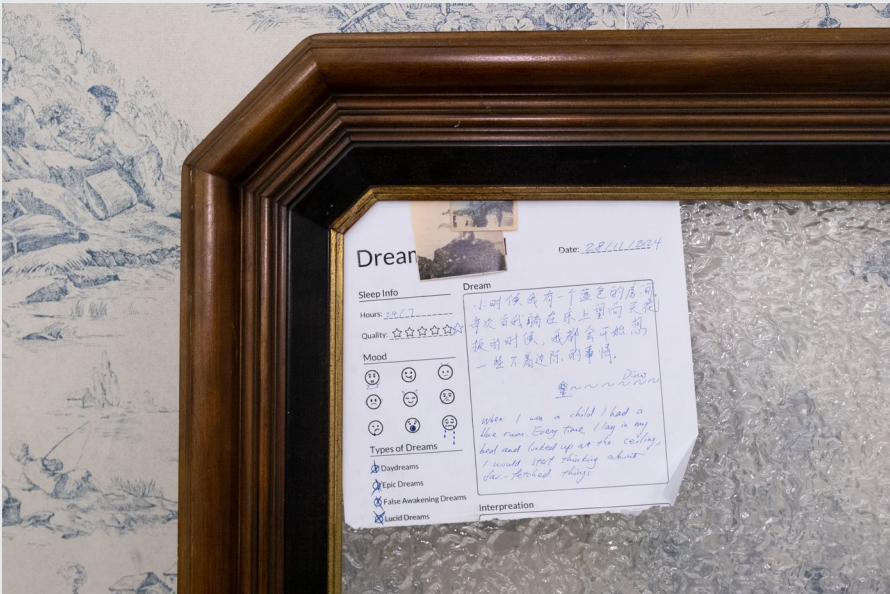
Installation
Plaster panels with photographic transfers, Wooden frames, Paper, PVC panel
Size Variable

The Ceiling of My Bedroom was Painted in Blue



Supported by the Associate Studio Programme & Acme Studio

Installation view at Acme Studio, London, as a part of the exhibition 'Thresholds of Perception', 2024



Details of *The Ceiling of My Bedroom was Painted in Blue*, 2024

List of Elements (From left to right, top to bottom):

- 1 Great grandparents at their wedding, 1920s; Great grandparents by a river, 1930s.
- 2 A portrait of the artist on a date, summer 2023.
- 3/4 A dream diary, 2024; Window panel; Mum's family photo, 1970s.
- 5 Mum & dad in park, 1990s; Grandad with auntie & mum in park, 1970s; Great grandparents in park, 1930s.
- 6/7 A poem "Blue" by Derek Jarman, 1993; Grandparents at their wedding anniversary, 1990s.
- 8 Excerpt from "One Hundred Years of Solitude", 1967; Grandparents' first date during the Cultural Revolution, 1967.

Project Statement:

Consisting of collages of imageries from family albums and lyrical text, *The Ceiling of My Bedroom was Painted in Blue* (2024) draws upon Dino's childhood memories in his family home. The series of works primarily made from scattered plaster panels, uses the colour blue as both a visual and emotional current, stretching and enveloping the space. These imageries, either transferred onto the panels or placed alongside them, present love stories spanning three generations of Dino's family.

When memories fall to pieces, we organize them and fall into pieces ourselves.¹ Through this series, Dino explores the complexities of home as an impermanent threshold of personal history and an enclosed space for grieving its loss. By capturing fragments of fading memories, the works invite recollection, and manifest a phenomenology of place where collective notions of grief and the passage of time both set in motion and paralyze.

¹ Rilke, Rainer Maria. (1923). *Duino Elegies*. Translated by Richard Howard.

Upon that River

Film
Single channel, 4K video , Stereo sound, 28' 44
Full Film: <https://vimeo.com/856231297> Password: dino2023
Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/923762810/125b943be0>



Quarterly Honorable Mention
Shanghai
International Short
Week
2024

OFFICIAL SELECTION
2023 BEIJING INTERNATIONAL
SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Slow Film
Festival
2024

Film Still from "Upon that River", 2023

Project Statement:

In the 24th year of the Republic of China, Dino's great-grandfather traveled by boat with his classmates in Hangzhou, capturing photos that he carefully preserved and annotated in a family album. In 2023, Dino revisited the locations depicted in these photos, journeying along the Fu Chun River to the Qiang Tang River—also known as Zhi Jiang. Drifting on the water, he gazed at the rippling waves as nearly a century of historical change converged into a luminous line.

Upon that River (2023) begins with a conversation between Dino and his family, unfolding as an autobiographical exploration of regional migration following the Chinese Civil War. It evokes a hidden diaspora brought on by social transformations, serving as a cognitive contemplation¹ that revives historical events and figures in spectral forms. In examining the archivability of time, the river becomes a metaphor for the boundless memories shared by his family, and a thread that interweaves temporalities where time has been brought to a standstill.²

1 Jameson, Fredric. (1993). *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.

2 Benjamin, Walter. (1940). *On The Concept of History*. Translated by Dennis Redmond.

Selected Screenings:



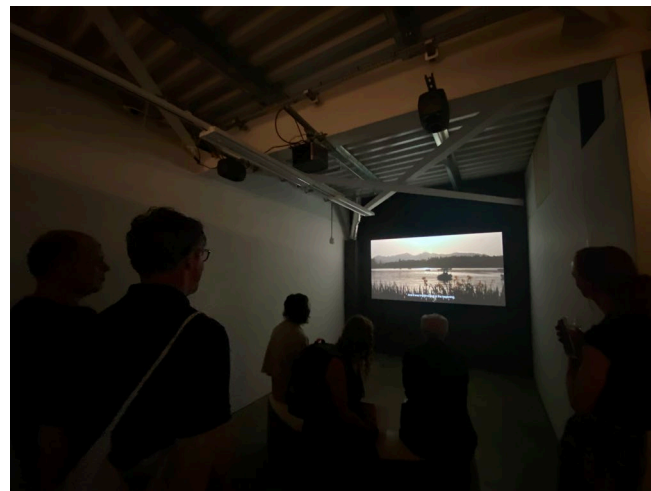
Screening at Nanluo Theater, Beijing on Dec 9th 2023, as a part of *Beijing International Short Film Festival*



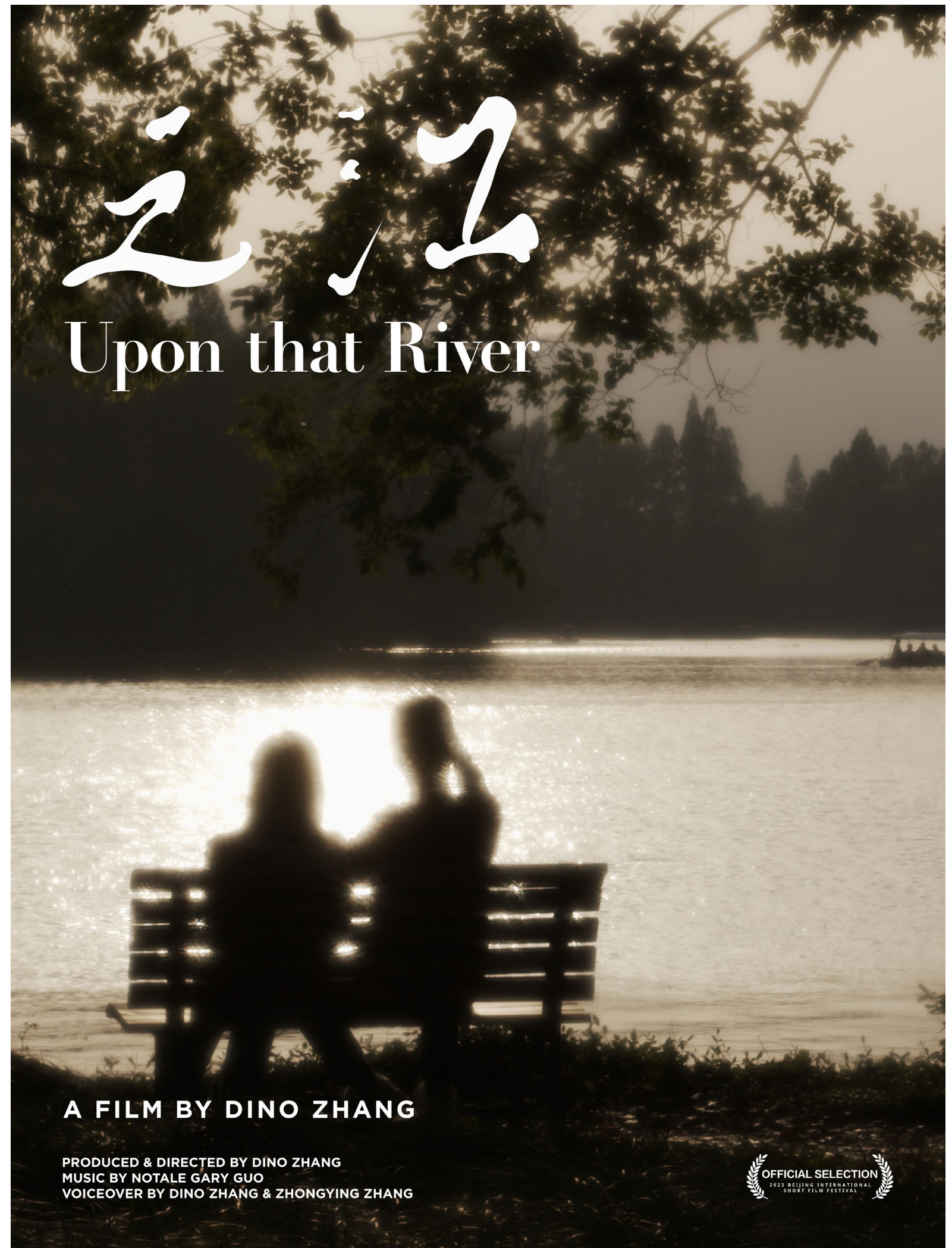
Screening at Goethe Institut, Shanghai on Dec 15th 2023, Special Screening Program



Screening at Roseberry Road Studios, Bath, as a part of *Oversounds* exhibition (Dec 16th - 23rd 2023)



Screening at The Ruskin School of Art Degree Show, Oxford (Jun 16th- 21st 2023)



God of the Soil and the Ground

Film Installation
Single channel, HD Video, 9'45, Plaster, Paper, Plastic Sheet
Size Variable

Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/1030312279/485898d17f>



Installation view at Chelsea College of Art, London, 2022

Project Statement:

God of the Soil and the Ground (2022) is a cinematic installation consisting of a film projection and a series of sculptures. The film features a protagonist who, by choosing death in the ruins, connects her spirit to the earth and defies time, transforming into the *God of the Soil and Ground*.¹ Her colossal form, overlooking the viewers, symbolizes a resistance against the hegemonic past. Twelve casts arms appear to emerge from the ground, representing nameless figures reclaiming their place from repression. On the floor, torn and rearranged pages from *Five Thousand Years of Chinese Nation*, an emblem of authoritarian history, lay scattered.

¹ *God of the Soil and the Ground* is a kind of tutelary deities in Chinese folk religion.



Details of the installation - Plastic sheet with an image of Yuanmingyuan Palace printed

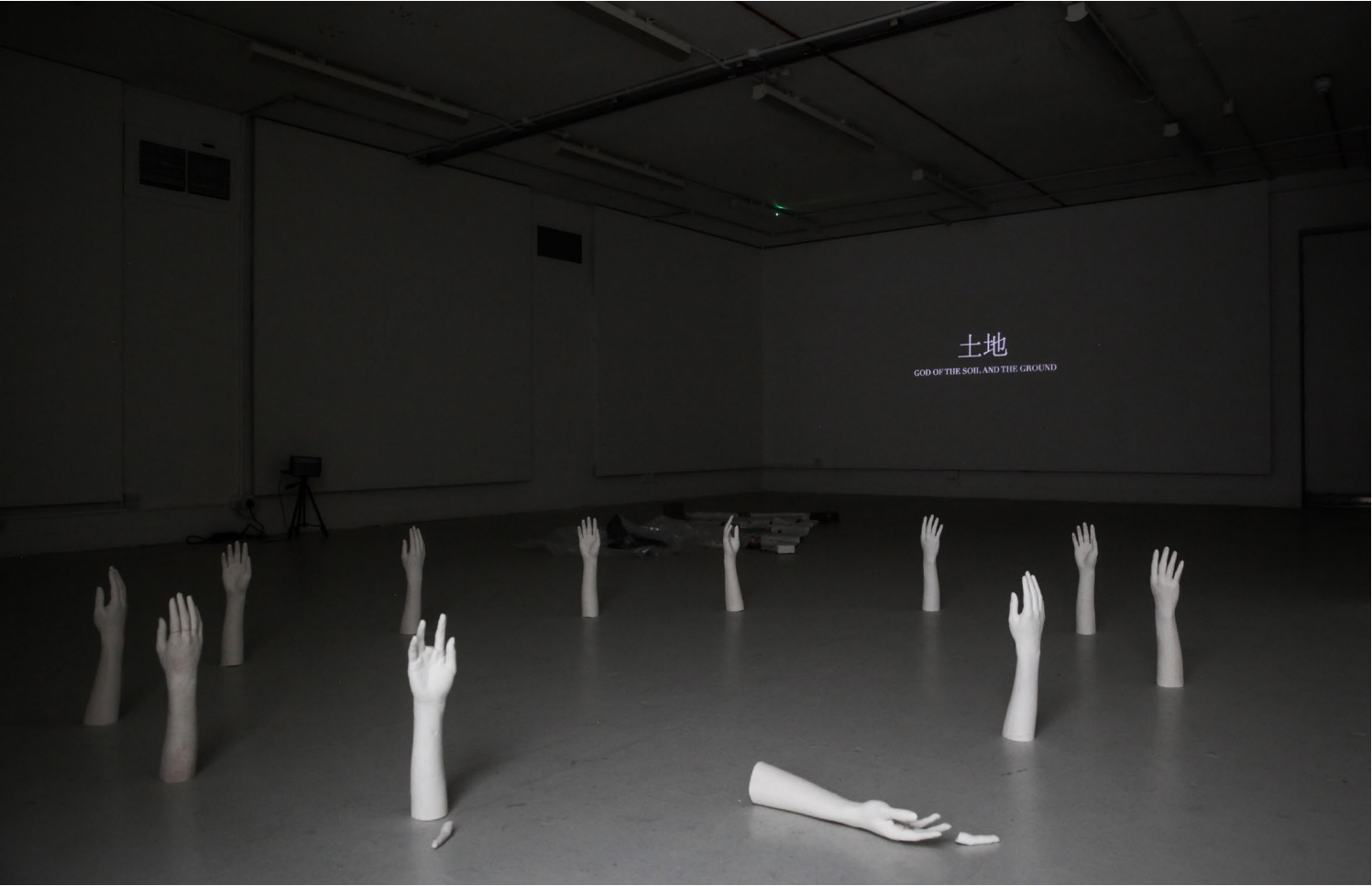


Details of the installation - Paper sheet made from the book *Five Thousand Years of Chinese Nation*



Film Still from '*God of the Soil and the Ground*', 9'45

Installation view, Chelsea College of Art, 2022



Inspired by Bei Dao's *In the Ruins*¹, Dino retraces the historical oppression inflicted on our physical bodies in form of the law and regulations by the social systems in China. The work endeavours to create a history for the body, challenging narratives of oppression by positioning the body as a symbol of resilience and transformation.² By supernaturally bridging the physical and spiritual realms, Dino invites viewers into a public space where historical trauma can be acknowledged, oscillating between the lived experience of memory and the multi-millenary speculation on the order of time.

¹ Beidao. (1990). *Waves: Stories*. New Directions.
² Stewart, Susan. (1993). *On Longing Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Duke University Press.

Installation view at Central Saint Martins, London, as a part of the Graduate Degree Show 2022



Installation view at The Bomb Factory Art Foundation, London, as a part of the exhibition '*Lucky Number 8*', 2023



Film Installation
Two-Channel, HD Video, Stereo Sound, 19' 28, Plaster, Pigment, Paper, Wood
Size Variable
Full film: <https://vimeo.com/834774979> Password: dino2023
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/893486083/d2197ff692>

The Book of Meng Jiang



Project Statement:

Comprising a two-channel film and a series of dispersed sculptures, the film installation follows a female protagonist as she encounters an ancient myth woven into her daily life. On the left screen, she reads its narrative, while on the right, a male voice recounts the myth's patriarchal version. As she contemplates her own connection to the story, it begins to surface in her dreams—her journey questions whether she can defy the constraints of a predetermined fate and reclaim her power from the myth without being confined to a pre-written script.

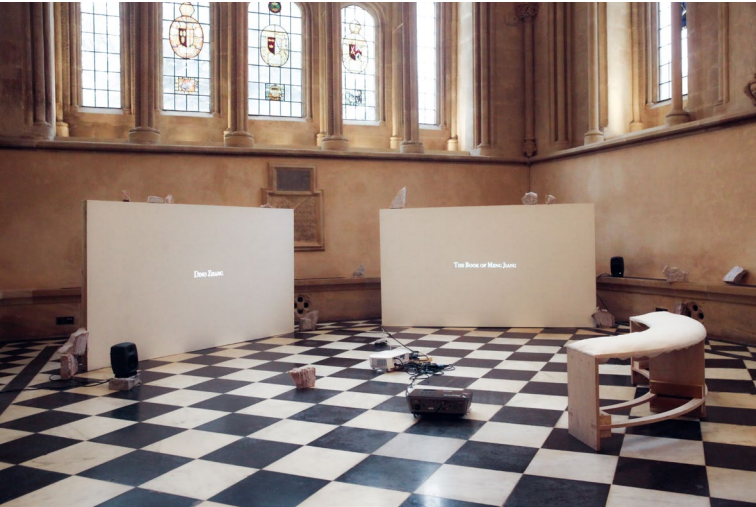
Drawing from the evolving myth of Lady Meng Jiang—a Chinese mythical figure shaped by feudal and patriarchal values¹—*The Book of Meng Jiang* (2023) probes whether a historical event and its literary forms can be reinterpreted through a perceptual approach where the spectators’ role becomes paramount.² Notably, prints of historical texts are attached to scattered plaster casts on the ground. These texts originate from records of different versions of this mythical story throughout history, as an aporia of incoherence unable to reconcile. By reimagining the myth in an expanded cinematic space where contradictory terms collides, in dialogues, the work challenges traditional retellings and explores a form of female agency that seeks to infiltrate and reshape the inherited narrative.

1 Originally as a folktale, Lady Meng Jiang's husband was conscripted to build the Great Wall. Hearing no news, she traveled to bring him winter clothes, only to find he had died. Overcome with grief, her bitter tears caused the Wall to collapse. In despair, she finally took her own life in a river.
2 Benjamin, Walter. (2003). *Understanding Brecht*. London: Verso.



Film Stills from 'The Book of Meng Jiang', 19'28

Installation view at Christ Church College, Oxford as a part of the exhibition 'Grounded, Not Mounted', 2023



The Oriental Pearls

Film Installation
Multi-channel, 4K video & Super 8mm film transferred to 4K video, Stereo Sound, 20' 00
Full Film (Single Channel Version) : <https://vimeo.com/946797260> Password: dino2024
Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/945270669/deb5772baf>



Designs of the Oriental Pearl Tower in Shanghai, as part of the project The Oriental Pearls (2024)

OFFICIAL SELECTION
2024 BEIJING INTERNATIONAL
SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

影展入圍作品
二〇二四·北京國際短片聯展

Supported by The White Pube Creatives Grant

Project Statement:

In the late 20th century, the need for a new radio and television tower led Dino’s grandfather and his colleagues to conduct a feasibility study for the Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower. Following China’s economic reform, Shanghai—Dino’s hometown—rapidly evolved, with its urban landscape transforming daily throughout the modernization process. Today, it is a city almost unrecognizable from the one he knew as a child. At times, he finds himself losing track of time, drifting through memories in circulation.

Through a multi-channel film, a collection of diaries, family photos, and architectural blueprints, *The Oriental Pearls* (2024) reimagines an alternative future and explores how state and societal changes shape the individual. It reflects on how personal experiences contribute to the broader historical narrative, and presents a heterochronic formation, capturing Dino’s childhood during these transformative years. The newly built TV tower, a symbol of urbanization in national discourse, stands as a defining feature of Shanghai's skyline. The place is where the body is.¹ The project seeks to challenge the hegemonic past by placing and displacing oneself through fragmented memories, treating the history as a temporality to be continuously engaged with.

¹ Ricoeur, Paul. (2006). *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. University of Chicago Press.

Film Still from 'There, there', 2024



Exhibition proposal for *Sanmei Gallery*, London.
Supporting materials include: radio signal maps of Shanghai, my granddad's photo album, books and magazines from my granddad's collection, desings of the Oriental Pearl Tower, and a page of my diary in 2005.

