

Cindy Yuen- Zhe Chen: Spaces to Stir

Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen: Spaces to Stir focuses on the fundamental natural elements of Chinese gardens—water and stone—to give prominence to the stories and voices of women living and working in Gadigal, Wallumedegal, Gai-mariagal, Burramattagal and Wiradjuri Countries, New South Wales, and Guilin, southern China.

The earliest gardens in China date back to the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE) and were sprawling parks used by the aristocracy for leisure and private hunting. With the introduction of Buddhism and the instability following the fall of the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), gardens refined the vastness and diversity of China’s natural landscape into intimate venues for a quiet and reflective alternate lifestyle. Home to the displaced scholarly elite the garden was the site of discussion, artistic expression and contemplation for the owner and like-minded friends.

Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen’s installation, sound and video artwork explore concepts of labour and its relationship to both domestic life and creative art practice. This exhibition contains field recordings of women scrubbing clothing in the Li River in Guilin, southern China, gestures the artist has performed to create flowing ink on paper drawings articulating water and stone.

This recording also soundtracks Chen’s new video work *In Neither Shan nor Shui*, presenting a miniaturised landscape composed of hand-wrung paper soaked with Chinese ink and water.

Lastly, Chen interviewed fellow women artists Nicole Barakat, Madison Gibbs and Kirtika Kain harkening back to the creative exchanges that traditionally took place in gardens, reflecting upon life and art with excerpts visually transformed into sonic paintings created with sound vibrations, ink and water.

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