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ARTIST, PHOTOGRAPHERS

Artist HuiMeng Wang shares vulnerability and understanding of the world with worldwide audiences

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Visual artist HuiMeng Wang

Born and raised in Inner Mongolia of China, HuiMeng Wang always had a passion for art. Her mother always had a deep appreciation in literature and the Chinese Opera. Growing up, she read nothing but fictions, and would always fantasize about bringing the narratives to reality, in one way or another. Despite this passion from an early age, Wang did not initially feel she was ready to explore being an artist. That patience is what sets her apart from so many. She studied science and engineering, travelled the world, experi-



enced other cultures and immersed herself in life. It was during her travels that she realized she was ready to be an artist.

"I felt I had enough things to talk about and I felt this strong desire to talk about them. A diverse educational and cultural background has made me immensely conscious about the changes and formation of personal identities, during a socio-geographical, professional and /or cultural transition," said Wang.

During her travels, Wang conducted a 4000-mile road trip in Tibet, photographing its landscape. She created a collection of the photographs, titled *The Isolation Book*, and it is one of her most remarkable pieces. On a plateau in the northeastern Himalaya, at an average elevation of 16,000 feet, Tibet enjoys great natural remoteness. Its extraordinary physical isolation is also reinforced by political complexity, Wang says. She drove through out the vastness of Tibet week after week, as an observer, as well as a bearer of the great isolation and loneliness.

"People's state of mind can heavily change the visual perception of a landscape or cityscape. And in that sense, *The Isolation Book* is a metaphor of my personal struggles through isolation. When one is in isolation, or sometimes self-seclusion, the eagerness of engaging with the outside world always comes hand in hand with the resistance. Such conflict creates great intangible tension, which overrides the reality sometimes, and urgently needs to be described in a form of emotional resonance," Wang described.

Wang's initial interest in the project was to truly understand isolation. From the time she was a child, she always has felt more comfortable by herself than when surrounded by others, so she wanted to understand what it was to be truly alone.

"I wished I could understand the nature of isolation better, how it exerts influence and disguises itself. And that is why I picked up a camera initially," said Wang.

Wang's photography is extremely impactful for all those who see it. It is perfectly framed, shot, and edited, and with *The Isolation Book*, each picture is its own essay, worth far more than the usual "1000 words" mantra.

"HuiMeng is a natural photographer capable of composing visual poetry from any scene. Her intellect is stunning. her insight is incisive and her sensitivity is sublime. she is complex and profoundly complex. She is a dream to work with," said Lonnie Graham, who has worked alongside Wang on various photography projects. "Her uncanny ability to understand a situation and interpret it makes her outstanding. This is what she does with her image making, so that as an installation artist her concepts become dimensional."

Many around the world know Wang for her outstanding artistic abilities. They know her celebrated work, and the exceptional understanding she possesses of her craft. She is more

HuiMeng Wang in Fire Green as Grass

than just an artist, she is a creator and a storyteller. Just last year, she dined by herself on a suspended table for one hour. While trying to cut and eat a 16oz steak, she had to carefully maintain the balance of the table, and put out the fire which the flowers constantly caught from the candles. Titled *Fire Green as Grass*, the piece interprets the mental state of an immigrant, displaced and isolated often, for whom conducting daily activities becomes a struggle in itself.



“The title came from Dylan Thomas’s poem *Fern Hill*. I lived in a place that’s also called Fern Hill in New Zealand for a while. It was the most surreal and beautiful place, but I was also incredibly alone,” said Wang.

Wang normally acts more as a director in her pieces than performer. However she felt the need to perform herself for this piece to truly convey the message.

“I thought I’d be embarrassed to perform in front of the audience. But when I did, even though there were a lot of people watching and the flowers were constantly on fire, I felt peaceful. I also felt like I was saying the things I wanted to say,” Wang described.

Wang’s vulnerability in *Fire Green as Grass* captivated audiences and critics alike. A fellow artist and friend, Jeremy Morgan, says that Wang has an ability to do this with every project she takes on, whether it be a video, photograph, or exhibition.

“Our conversations have always been a meaningful, creative journey, metaphysically moving from one space to another. HuiMeng has a luminous mind, and is self-possessed but without arrogance. Her generosity and original spirit permeate all of her interactions with people around her. In her performance and filmic work, she displays a poetic, philosophic and socio-political sensibility that is noteworthy wherein beauty, elegance and poignancy are perfectly balanced with precision, focused with intelligence and humanity. She is in every sense a creative being, an artist who is both unique and a powerful presence,” said Morgan.

With such a commitment to her craft and respect around the world for what she does, it is obvious to all that sees her work as to why Wang is considered one of China’s best recent visual artists. Not many can achieve what she has, and she still has so much left still to show the world. However, she does have advice for those looking to follow in her footsteps.

“It sounds silly, but my advice is make absolutely sure that you really want to be an artist before you commit. You don’t want to be an artist because of flexible schedules or some certain lifestyle or things like that. You want to be an artist because you cannot imagine yourself doing anything else. You want art to be the center of your life,” she said. “Also, some wise man said: make work, faster. That is my second piece of advice. Always make work, don’t pause for too long.”

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