

GLADSTONE GALLERY

“Oceanographic Museum”, E-Flux, Feb. 5, 2011

e-flux

Oceanographic Museum / Nouveau Musée National de Monaco



"Méditerranée"

20 November 2010 – 20 May 2012

www.oceano.mc

The Oceanographic Museum unveils a site-specific commission by Huang Yong Ping as part of a major exhibition dedicated to the Mediterranean Sea

The Oceanographic Museum in Monaco hosts a unique exhibition dedicated to the Mediterranean Sea, bringing together contemporary art and science. The exhibition presents a monumental installation by the celebrated Sino-French artist Huang Yong Ping and features an exceptional collection of maritime objects that illustrate the rich biodiversity of the Sea. The exhibition, which is on view from 20 November 2010 to 20 May 2012, is presented with the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco.

Huang Yong Ping's 25 metre installation, "Wu Zei", is a site specific commission for the Museum's Salon d'honneur and alludes to the 9 metre octopus from the Museum's collection that is exhibited on the floor above (1st Floor).

"Wu Zei", a gigantic hybrid animal—an octopus and a cuttlefish—is inspired by the sea and refers to the maritime disasters caused by man. While its head is suspended around the Medusa chandelier, designed by the German biologist, philosopher and free thinker Ernst Haeckel, its tentacles invade the gallery space. One of the tentacles circles around the column, another stretches out towards the first room of the exhibition, and others reach out towards the sea and the statue of Prince Albert I.

The hybrid animal's head is red like that of an octopus; its tentacles are black like those of a cuttlefish. One of the tentacles looks set to suck in, like a vacuum cleaner, the different objects and blackened animals lying on the floor.

Wu Zei's body and tentacles are made of a flexible material around a metal frame. The bulb-like head is slightly transparent to allow for the light of the chandelier to shine through in the evening.

By calling his installation "Wu Zei", Huang Yong Ping creates ambiguity in the meaning of his work. The title "Wu Zei" (乌贼) is the Chinese name for a cuttlefish. "Wu" (乌) is the character for the colour black and "Zei" (贼) is the symbol for stealing. Huang Yong Ping plays with language and semiology juxtaposing cuttlefish ink to oil spill and corruption to regeneration.

The Mediterranean is a major reservoir for the world's biodiversity. The increasing urbanization of the coast, overfishing, exploitation of the natural resources, proliferation of invasive species, maritime transport and pollution of different kinds such as toxic waste are daily dangers facing the Mediterranean Sea and can lead to biodiversity impoverishment, with irredeemable cultural, economic and ecological consequences.

"Méditerranée" is accompanied by an illustrated book, produced by the Oceanographic Institute, Albert 1st Foundation, Prince of Monaco and published by Les Editions Rocher.

An artist's book is co-edited by Galerie kamel mennour and the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco including a text by Jessica Morgan, Daskalopoulos Curator International Art at the Tate.

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Huang Yong Ping: Biography

Born in 1954, Huang Yong Ping participated in the seminal exhibition "Magiciens de la Terre" at Centre Pompidou, Paris in 1989, and represented France at the 1999 Venice Biennale. In 2006, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized and premiered his retrospective "House of Oracles," which travelled to Mass MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts; Vancouver Art Gallery; and Ullens Center, Beijing. Other solo exhibitions include: CCA Kitakyushu, Japan; De Appel, Amsterdam; Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris; Atelier d'Artistes de la Ville de Marseille; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo; Barbican Art Gallery, London; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; and Musée des Beaux Arts, Paris. In 2007, Huang Yong Ping participated in the exhibition "Why Sculpture, Why Here?" at the Tate Modern, London.

Huang Yong Ping is represented by Galerie kamel mennour, Paris, and Gladstone Gallery, New York.