

# apexart

2023-24 NYC Proposal  
submitted October 2022

## ***If Shadows Could Shine*** **submitted by: Yi Cao**

A shadow proves that one exists and occupies space in this world. Unspoken traumas, erased histories, forgotten memories, and invisible lives of marginalized communities have no seeming existence in society, residing in a shadowless void. Creating a shadow for something nonexistent is as unthinkably challenging as making the neglected and ejected visible and shiny. The exhibition calls for one step toward this critical request.

The three artists in the show visualize the removed, erased, and displaced to problematize the brutally and unjustly established world order. The works curated in the show share the commonality and urgency involved in reconceiving forgotten worlds in various visual representations and interpretations of shadows. The gradient shades of gray are illuminated through diverse medium experimentations such as ash, carbon, cement, ink, and silver leaf stimulated through digital moving images and sound.

The first artist focuses on family displacement from their Pakistan village due to the Tarbela Dam building on the Indus River in 1974. The second artist delves into her personal and collective experiences as a first-generation Chinese immigrant in the United States. The last artist probes global capitalization's impact on labor migration in and beyond South Korea. By tracing family lineages, inserting the positions of immigrants, and filling the volumes of social oppression, the artists legitimize their existence, assert their value, and disrupt the predominant narratives materially, metaphorically, and gesturally.

A grand-scale drawing collage of small works on paper will occupy the wall on the right side of the gallery. The American-born Pakistani artist makes delicate hand-cut stencils to rub and stamp dirt and ink onto the paper sheets. Through family interviews, archival and library research, and conversations with engineers and environmentalists, the artist investigates the messiness of barriers, walls, and borders, excavating a global history of broken rivers and broken promises.

An installation that combines digital animation with a site-specific 10 feet long panoramic drawing will be displayed across the room. The drawing visually connects cultural motifs to a site and narrative concerning migration and dislocation, showcasing the reinvention of the symbolic and poetic context of traditional Chinese ink painting. The Texas-based Chinese artist deliberately uses "anti-perspective" in Chinese landscape drawing to confront the Western-dominated visual perspective.

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The back of the gallery will be divided into a "dark room" showcasing an interactive installation concurrently staged in New York and Chicago. Under a surveillance camera, when visitors in Chicago look through second-hand t-shirts, calligraphed with news stories about the life and death of migrant workers in South Korea, their counterparts in New York can observe the hand movements on the monitor in the gallery space in real-time. During the exhibition run, the Chicago-based Korean artist will also present a performance that cross-examines the different social tolerance and acceptance around taboos such as rape, depression, and gender discrimination by comparing the Korean and English languages.

Unearthing the true bearing and semblance of something elusive and obscure requires collective efforts. The exhibition offers programmatic opportunities to engage with the audience through a stencil workshop, a vision board activity, and gallery conversations.

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