



REN HAN

SELECTED WORKS



Ren Han (born in 1984 in Tianjin, China)
lives and works in Paris.

Ren Han's practice explores how images persist, transform, and reappear over time, and how acts of making, construction, and commemoration intervene in their becoming. Through cutting, carving, sawing, and scraping, he works directly into the material, allowing images to take shape. Through these actions, traces remain, and images gradually emerge. Images unfold through cuts, fragments, and layers, moving between appearance and concealment.

Natural forces, mythological figures, animal symbolism, and images drawn from contemporary media and social networks continually migrate through his work. They take different forms across materials, scales, and spaces. An image may remain on paper or extend onto wood, walls, building panels, old books, discarded furniture, or an entire site. As they migrate, images continually transform the ways they appear across different materials and spaces.

In his installations and site-specific works, images enter space. As the viewer moves closer, passes through, or walks around them, looking becomes more than recognizing an image; it becomes a way of entering and reorganizing the relationships between images. The structures in his work are always being built, and always shifting. They carry the posture of monuments without ever becoming fixed, holding a tension between commemoration and dissolution.

His work has been exhibited at institutions including the Monnaie de Paris; CENTQUATRE-Paris; Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; the Sino-French Institute Museum in Lyon; the Musée des Arts Asiatiques, Nice; the Jimei × Arles International Photo Festival; Today Art Museum, Times Art Museum, and Taikang Space, Beijing; the Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai; the Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts (AMNUA); OCAT Xi'an; and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. He has held solo exhibitions in Paris, Lyon, Berlin, and Beijing. He was commissioned by UCCA Lab in 2024 to create large-scale site-specific installations for the ARC'TERYX Museum Shanghai and the Zhoushan Art Museum.



Spectacle

Ren Han begins with landscape images circulating online—advertising wallpapers, travel photographs, technological renderings, and posts shared across social media. Captured, reproduced, and endlessly recirculated, these images become the source material for his drawings on paper and site-specific interventions.

Working through graphite, incision, and his method of Destructive Drawing, he brings forth mountains, waterfalls, and expansive landscapes from black surfaces. Rather than recovering an original or authentic nature, these works reveal images already transformed through their continuous circulation within the digital sphere. While their visual language may occasionally recall German Romantic painting or the tradition of Chinese landscape art, these references serve primarily as a framework for examining how images are produced, disseminated, and consumed.

Situated between the sublime and contemporary visual culture, the works in this section explore how our experience of the world is increasingly mediated by an uninterrupted flow of images, in which sustained contemplation gradually gives way to the continuous consumption of the visible.

Ascent 24d01

Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
2024

ARC'TERYX Museum, Shanghai
commissioned by UCCA Lab



Untitled (23d01)
Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
2023
Musée du Nouvel Institut Franco-Chinois, Lyon



Detail



"Cháo" is the Chinese word for "tide(潮)," reflecting the thousand-year tradition of observing the tidal bore of the Qiantang River. It also carries the contemporary meaning of "trend" in Chinese pop culture. Through a series of destructive actions, the artist reassembled and reshaped social media photos shared by Qiantang tidal bore spectators, fixing them onto the wall. The work explores how natural phenomena are reconstructed, disseminated, and absorbed into the context of popular culture through modern network technology. In the age of the internet, the "flow" of tides is not merely a physical event in nature but also a metaphor for the flow of data, cultural trends, and individual perception.

Cháo

Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
H300 × W1200 × D25 cm

2024

Winland Center, Hangzhou



Labyrinth of Water

Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled, Found books
Variable dimensions (total carved wall surface approx. 350 m²)

2024

Zhoushan Art Museum, China
Commissioned by UCCA Lab



A bird carved onto the spines of books originates from the ancient Zhoushan myth of “Jingwei Filling the Sea.” These books are all documents related to the city. The bird is placed on top of the wall structure of the installation.

Labyrinth of Water

Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled, Found books
Variable dimensions (total carved wall surface approx. 350 m²)
2024
Zhoushan Art Museum, China
Commissioned by UCCA Lab





Labyrinth of Water creates an immersive space imbued with uncertainty and a sense of weightlessness. Comprising six slanted black walls, one of which is suspended above the others, the installation forms an intricate, maze-like layout. Artist Ren Han employs his signature technique of “damaged drawing” to carve fluid shapes into the walls using tools such as axes and chainsaws.

As the audience navigates the space, they experience a disorienting sense of confusion, as if caught in chaotic motion. The work is inspired by the historical symbiotic relationship between humans and the ocean in Zhoushan. From fishing to sailing, the people of the Zhoushan Islands depended on the sea for their livelihood while grappling with its unpredictability and inherent risks.

This piece seeks to capture humanity’s simultaneous dependence on and lack of control over the raw forces of nature. Through its symbolic labyrinth, it invites philosophical reflections on the boundary between humans and the sea. It highlights the interdependence between the people of Zhoushan and the ocean, evoking a sense of danger, vulnerability, and transcendence in the face of nature’s power.

Labyrinth of Water

Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled, Found books
Variable dimensions (total carved wall surface approx. 350 m²)

2024

Zhoushan Art Museum, China
Commissioned by UCCA Lab



Ren Han transforms the corner of this lakeside building into a black visual landscape. He covers two facades of the building with black panels and, using his "destructive drawing" technique, carves away the surface to reveal a scene of cascading water intertwined with the building's framework. In Chinese feng shui, water symbolizes wealth, and its fluidity and transience also reflect the traits of consumer culture. The artist collages digital images, presenting them in a solidified, rough form to establish multiple contrasts—between nature and artifice, destruction and creation, the sublime and consumerism—initiating a dialogue on humanity, nature, and contemporary culture.

Fountain

Calcium silicate wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
Variable dimensions (two facades of the building)

2024

CPI, Chengdu

commissioned by A4 Residency Art Center



Fountain

Calcium silicate wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
Variable dimensions (two facades of the building)
2024
CPI, Chengdu
commissioned by A4 Residency Art Center



Detail

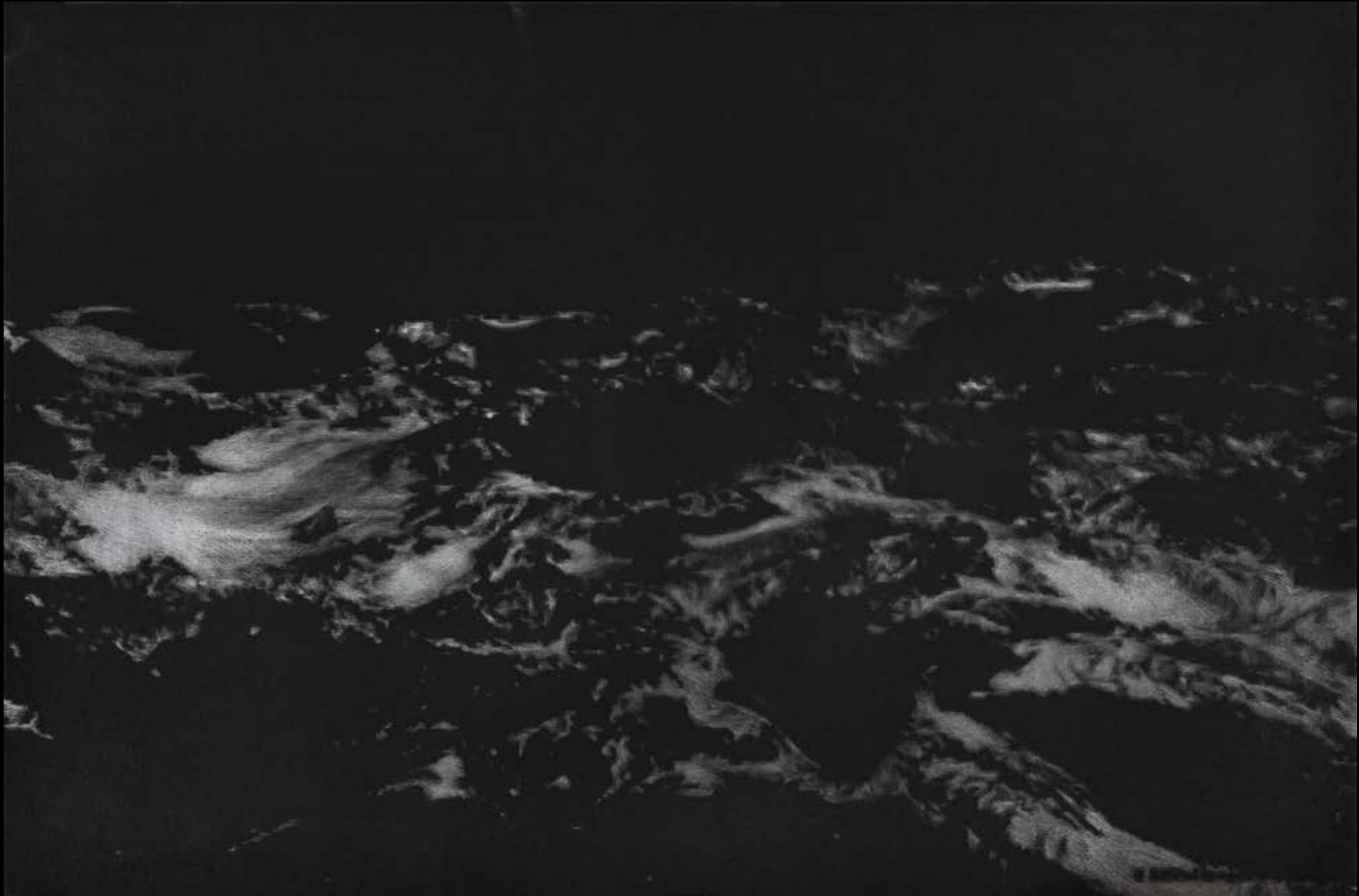


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White flag, Plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
2019

Le Beffroi, Montrouge, France

With the support of: Ministry of Cultural Affairs of France,
Department of Hauts-de-Seine,
City of Montrouge
and RAIBAUDI WANG Gallery



Cc8MuGAjZ7a
Graphite on paper
80 × 120 cm
2021



In the Air #1

Installation view under UV light

Mixed media, incised and carved sculptures

245 × 123 × 5 cm

2026

Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai

Suspension

Suspension, in Ren Han's work, is neither a pause nor a moment before impact. It is a state in which bodies, images, and meanings remain unresolved, held between appearance and disappearance, ascent and collapse.

Throughout this section, mythological figures, birds, body fragments, and drifting forms occupy spaces where gravity no longer provides a stable order. Icarus appears not as the tragic hero of a completed fall, but as a figure suspended within an endless attempt to exceed human limits. The Falling Pigeons, whose erratic flight results from deliberate human training, similarly remain caught in a condition where control and disorientation become inseparable.

Rather than depicting moments of failure, these works explore suspension as a way of inhabiting instability. They ask what becomes possible when equilibrium can no longer be assumed, and when neither ascent nor descent can be fully completed.



In the Air consists of three Destructive Drawings suspended above a staircase. The images gradually emerge from the surface of black architectural panels through scraping, incision, and cutting. Mythological creatures, bones, and fragments of the human body appear to float in space, briefly revealed under ultraviolet light. They evoke human imaginings of flight, transcendence, and the transformation of the body.

In the Air

Installation view under UV light

Mixed media, incised and carved sculptures

3 × 245 × 123 × 5 cm

2026

Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai



Detail view under natural light



Untitled-The Four Disgracers
 plasterboard wall, sawn, chopped and chiselled
 180 × 250 × 25 cm
 2022
 Zeto Art, Paris



Detail



20f01
Carved found books
2020
Yishu 8 chez Tante Martine, Paris



Detail



Untitled (Roller #4)
Carved found books
30.5 × 34 × 22.5 cm
2022



Untitled (Roller #3)
 Carved found books
 35 × 25.5 × 17.5 cm
 2022



Untitled (Roller #1)
 Carved found books
 38 × 24 × 18 cm
 2022



Untitled (Volcano #1)
Purple carbon paper, pastel
83.5 × 65 cm
2023

Clouds

Clouds appear throughout this section not as natural motifs, but as a way of thinking about images. Without stable contours or fixed forms, they remain in a constant state of transformation, resisting any definitive appearance. Rather than representing the visible world, they reveal images as something that is always forming, dissolving, and becoming otherwise.

Across works ranging from the Disaster Landscape series to drawings of mist, smoke, fragmented waterfalls, and vaporous forms inspired by digital imagery, Ren Han repeatedly turns to phenomena that evade fixed definition. Emerging through graphite or destructive drawing, these shifting masses condense, disperse, and reconfigure themselves before they can settle into stable forms. Drawing does not seek to complete the image; it allows it to remain in flux.

Through these atmospheric forms, Ren Han explores how images persist precisely because they are never fixed. Their permanence lies not in stability but in continual transformation. Clouds thus become more than a recurring image: they offer a way of understanding the visible as something perpetually unfolding, where appearance and disappearance are inseparable.



Untitled (Debris Flow #1)
Purple carbon paper
118 × 176 cm
2016



17e01
Wood, chopping and cutting
2017
Qi Mu Space, Beijing



23e03
Craved bamboo screen
165 × 250 × 0.3 cm
2023
Galerie Met, Berlin



24902

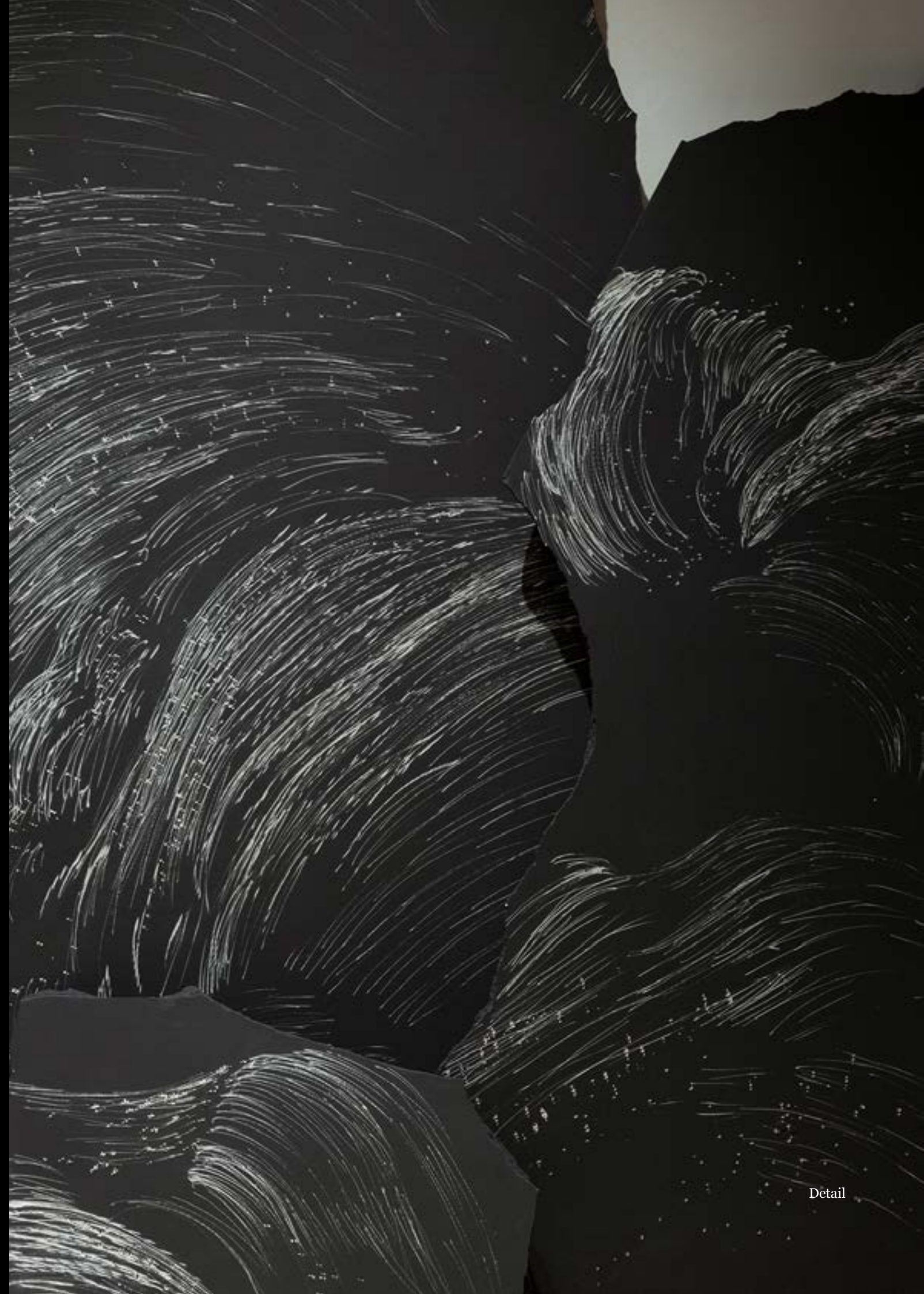
Calcium silicate board, sawn, chopped and chiselled
dimensions variable

2024

haus101, Chengdu



24902
Calcium silicate board, sawn, chopped and chiselled
dimensions variable
2024
haus101, Chengdu



Detail



Cloud in the Imaginary Temple
Printing PVC, laser sticker, graphite, paper
2023
PARADISE AIR, Matsudo
collaboration with Daniel Kessner

1984 Born in Tianjin, China
Lives and works in Paris

Education

2011 DNSEP(MFA), Art – École Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Nice, Villa Arson
2006 BA, Oil Painting – Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts

Awards

2019 Artist Fellowship, Ministry of Culture, Department of Hauts-de-Seine, City of Montrouge
2017 The Rock Award, Wang Shikuo Award, Today Art Museum, Beijing

Residencies

2026 SSR AIR – Dunhuang Contemporary International Artist-in-Residence, Dunhuang
2024 A4 Residency Art Center, Chengdu
2023 PARADISE AIR, Matsudo
Nouvel Institut Franco-Chinois, Lyon
2020 Yishu 8 Chez Tante Martine, Paris

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2023 *The Myth of The Absurd*, Galerie Met, Berlin
Inferno & Elysium, Musée du Nouvel Institut Franco-Chinois, Lyon
2022 *After All That Fell*, Zeto Art, Paris
2020 *Bibliothèque de Ren Han*, Yishu 8 Chez Tante Martine, Paris
2017 *Void and Ashes*, Qi Mu Space, Beijing
2016 *Mirror Image*, C-Space, Beijing

Selected Group Exhibitions

2026 *How Long Is The Silk Road?*, Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai
2024 *Sailing Home*, Zhoushan Art Museum, Zhoushan
Dreamland/Homeland, Carte Blanche - Winland Center, Hangzhou
RE-CREATE Residency Art Season, A4 Residency Art Center+CPI, Chengdu
Brennen Glühen Flirren, Artburst x Erstererster, Berlin
2022 *A Crack In The Wall*, Asia Now, Zeto Art, Monnaie de Paris
2021 *Symbiose*, Asia Now, Zeto Art, Paris
2020 *A Kind of Form*, Song Art District, Beijing
2019 *A Ten Year*, OWSPACE X Taikang Space, Qinhuangdao
64e Salon de Montrouge, Le Beffroi, Montrouge
2017 *A New Collection of Poetry*, AMNUA, Nankin
Amassing Force – 2017 Wang Shikuo Award, Today Art Museum, Beijing
2016 *Puzzles*, OCAT Xi'an
Up-Youth, Beijing Times Art Museum
Ghost in Flash: After Photography, Taikang Space, Beijing

Selected Site-Specific Commissions

2026 *Starmap*, site-specific installation for the exhibition Sign-Recording Deep Space, Shuangxi Culture Center, Jiaxing
2024 *Ascent 24d01*, site-specific installation commissioned by UCCA Lab for the exhibition Evolution of the Legendary ARC'TERYX, ARC'TERYX Museum, Shanghai
Fountain, site-specific installation commissioned by A4 Residency Art Center, CPI, Chengdu
2017 *Meili*, site-specific installation at Yunhaiyao, Kunming



Detail of *Ascent 24d01*

Stock

Philippe Saint Marc
Socialisation de l

Jean Teulé Je, François Villon

CHRISTINE
DE RIVOYRE

le petit
matin

« Romantic Vandalism »

— comment by Mathieu Mercier

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