

ROCKS !
The mineral world seen by five contemporary artists

Group exhibition

**Artists : Zhan Wang, Jonathan Bréchnac, Charlotte Charbonnel,
Noémie Goudal, Shao Wenhuan**

Exhibition curators : Doors 门艺

Bérénice Angremy, Victoria Jonathan, Gabrielle Petiau

22 september 2021 – 31 january 2022

ICICLE, 35 avenue George V, PARIS VIII^e

Monday to Saturday, 11am – 7pm

To close the year of the Earth, theme of its 2021 ready-to-wear collections, ICICLE is pleased to host the exhibition "ROCKS!" curated by the agency DOORS, from 22 September 2021 until January 31 2022 within ICICLE's cultural space at 35 avenue George V.

"ROCKS!" gathers the outlooks of five French and Chinese artists on mineral: Zhan Wang (1962), Jonathan Bréchnac (1985), Charlotte Charbonnel (1980), Noémie Goudal (1984) and Shao Wenhuan (1971).

The starting point of this exhibition lies in the typically Chinese tradition of stone collecting. Chinese scholars used to pick stones or rocks, preferably those eroded by time or natural elements, in order to decorate their gardens or studios. When combined with water, rocks symbolising the mountain, become miniature reproductions of nature. The result acts as sources of escape from the everyday life, contributing to aesthetic comfort and spiritual enrichment.

This tradition finds a distant echo in cabinets of curiosities, miniature collections of natural and man-made objects that mirror the world. An erudite and aesthetic practice that started in the Renaissance and marked humanity's step forward to a more scientific classification and apprehension of the world.

Like a scholar's garden or a contemporary cabinet of curiosities, the exhibition explores the link between nature and artifice and questions this east-west convergence: hybrid sculptures made of natural stones and composite materials, performances in natural landscapes to create illusionistic photographic montages or forms created by the hands of nature alongside the artist, to chemical experiments in the darkroom of mineral matter itself... The artists of "ROCKS!" question our perceptions and evoke the mystery of stones. Because, beyond their fixed and frozen form, these stones impregnated with the world's movements are the results of successive sedimentations and the witnesses of abyssal times dating back to millions or billions of years.

ICICLE is delighted to invite the Parisian public to be enchanted by the artistic world of minerals, especially during the major Parisian art fairs of the fall.

"ROCKS!" is part of the "À Paris pendant la FIAC" program.

**"Inside a closed fist, one can gather the beauty of a thousand cliffs."
Du Wan, *Catalogue of the Stones of the Cloud Forest* (12th century)**

**"Before being a conscious spectacle, any landscape is a dreamlike experience. One looks at landscapes
with aesthetic passion only after having it seen in a dream."
Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* (1942)**

**"We are so small."
Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Le Massif du Mont Blanc* (1876)**

Stone collecting, a Chinese passion

The veneration of rough stones, found in nature, has been part of Chinese culture for two thousand years. As early as the 3rd century BC, classical texts mention "curious stones" (*guai shi*) offered to the legendary emperor Yu. In the Chinese tradition, mountains are sacred and manifest the fundamental energy of the earth, the most condensed form of *qi* (vital breath that animates the world). As "bones of the earth", stones constitute reductions of mountains, and one can reproduce these forces in a garden or an interior, on a desk or a shelf, using rocks and stones of varying sizes. Initially a privilege bestowed to emperors and princes, scholars would soon get acquitted with this passion for stones that is still widespread in China today. Like a concentrate of telluric forces, the stone testifies of the world's movements into a fixed and static form. It is the form of the formless. A scholar's stone puts within our reach the mysterious powers of nature. Far from being a sacred object or a talisman, it bears witness to the interconnection between the spiritual and everyday life, which is the very core of Chinese culture.

From fake mountains to artificial rocks

In his series of *Artificial Rocks*, initiated in the mid-1990s, Zhan Wang (born in 1962) is inspired by these scholars' stones. To the natural erosion of stones, he opposes the artificial process of sculpturing a time-resistant material, stainless steel. The artist shapes stainless steel sheets around natural stones, before removing and reassembling them to create a hollow form. The sculpture has the shape of a rock but also the reflective qualities of water, combining in one object the two Chinese symbols of nature. But these "false" stainless steel scholars' stones also emphasise their void and artifice. The artist thus questions the relationship between seemingly opposing forces (nature and artifice, past and present, China and the West, full and empty) but also the causality between the work and its context. When moved from their natural environment to a domestic one, the scholars' stones see a change in their status: the natural object becomes an aesthetic object. This change reveals something about traditional Chinese culture and aesthetics. Indeed, a piece of art does not have to be man-made, it can simply be identified and appreciated as such. By creating replicas of the scholar's stones and moving them from the garden or studio to an exhibition gallery or the art market, Zhan Wang gives them a new status and underlines modern society's craving for fetishism. Zhan Wang thus reinterprets the tradition of the scholar's stones and their environmental consciousness, juxtaposed with the evolutions of an industrialised and westernised China that began its great transformation the very same moment the artist began his artistic practice.

Alien stones and strange phenomena

These considerations correspond with Jonathan Bréchnac's (born in 1985) work on the mineral. In his series *Alien Rocks* and *Stone Balancings* (2018), the artist fashions rocks found in nature, in his native Provence or in the creeks of Marseille, into fake stones made in synthetic materials (epoxy resin, polyurethane foam, concrete, acrylic, effect paints...), which are adorned with fluorescent colours and iridescent effects. At the crossroads of popular myths, geology and science fiction, the artist proposes to elevate stones to the rank of living species and puts forward the hypothesis of a new evolutionary theory centered on minerals. He speaks of a "Darwinism of stones". From rocks formation dating back to geological times, to their engraved inscriptions since Antiquity, stones are sacred or endowed with esoteric properties. Their static and unchanging nature has made them the privileged witnesses of History. The Anthropocene era, (which designates the period of contemporary geological history of men's impact on the environment, so visible that it can be compared to a major geological force) inaugurates a new stage of species that rise from the formation of "plastiglomerates": aggregates of natural and synthetic materials, particularly those made from plastic pollution. The *Sailing Stones* project, is a series of trompe-l'oeil painted polyurethane foam stones that come to life through sensors and a specially programmed software. It was named after a natural phenomenon that we are yet incapable of explaining: rocks that move and make long tracks in the Nevada desert and Death Valley. These moving stones generate the craziest hypotheses and open a new line of thought on life: what if rocks wanted to express themselves in a language that we cannot decipher yet?

Nature metamorphosis: making the invisible visible

Through intervention devices and installations, Charlotte Charbonnel (born in 1980) probes the origin of matter and makes forms emerge from environmental and natural phenomena. Between fascination and manipulation, the artist impregnates herself with natural elements while constraining them into forms that she imagines. During her residency at La Halle, she created the *Meteaura* series (2020), as she had access to an extraordinary site in Vercors (France) called the Garden of Petrifying Fountains, where waterfalls enriched in limestone transform any object into stone. She left slates under the fountains for several months, removed a plate every two days and let the water draw the trace of its passage. On some stones, the limestone just grazed the surface, on others, it sedimented. The work is thus a relic that captured material variations under the action of water erosion where the petrifying water seconds the artist in her sculptural gesture. Nature and artist together randomly traced these patterns that are reminiscent of radar images of electromagnetic waves, similar to the skylights of a meteorite fall - as the title suggests. Allowing movement and indeterminacy, the different processes Charlotte Charbonnel puts in place, constitute a lever for magical thinking. By showing the transformative power of nature, the artist awakens our capacity to wonder. Loving neologisms created from technical or scholarly terms, Charlotte Charbonnel resumes to the beginnings of photography with her *Ambrolitotypes* (2017-2019). She uses forgotten 1850s formulas, experimenting with alchemy - wet collodion and ambrotype - to draw portraits of stones. These old techniques, which involve the manipulation of minerals (potassium, sodium, silver crystals...) and the use of glass plates, allow her to play with both material and surfaces to create an impression of depth and perspective. The artist wants us to confuse the perceived object with the real one. She explores the sculptural potential of photography through the superimposition of images and the construction of a geometrical structure that will archive the stone's imprint.

The impossible representation of the landscape?

The work of the artist Noémie Goudal (born in 1984) makes real and theoretical geographies co-exist, creating a space somewhere between physical reality and mental representation. Since the beginning, the artist has been interested in the links between optics and perception, observation and interpretation, science and art. After her three series that explored the theoretical systems of the sky (*Observatories*, *Towers* and *Southern Light Stations*), Noémie Goudal begins in 2017 a new body of work about the history of science and the theories of Earth's formation (*Telluris*, *Uprisings* and *Dismantlings*). Originally inspired by ancient discoveries which revealed the presence of fossils on mountains tops, the series *Soulèvements* (*Uprisings*) (2018) is an interpretation of centuries-old observations of these fossils. *Soulèvements* underlines the absurdity of such an undertaking. *"A first glance at these photographs and we see mountainous rock formations. A second and it becomes clear, from the fine grids of light that shine through the formations like crevasses, and from their often wildly irregular edges, that the rocks were never in fact there at all. To create this illusion, Goudal fixed a stack of around twenty mirrors around each rock at different angles, then photographed this 'edifice' so that we see in the resulting image the many reflections of the rock's surfaces as one. Her constructions symbolise the great uplifts that create mountain ranges, but they also suggest the intellectual revolutions that can shatter the status quo and change a field of knowledge beyond recognition. Slippery to behold, they are a reminder that everything we believe to be true can be turned on its head in a minute."* (Emma Lewis, preface to the book *Soulèvements* published in 2020 by RVB Books). What better tool can illustrate this complex feat than a camera? From the beginning, its importance lies not only in what it reproduces, but in what it is capable of producing within the spectator's mind. Did Arago not see in the daguerreotype both a means of mapping territories and a kind of artificial eye capable of making visible atmospheric matter and celestial bodies?

One (or ten thousand) stone(s)

Trained as a painter, Shao Wenhuan (born in 1971) turned to photography in order to observe "the objective world". But his use of the medium is a simple recording of the outside world; he seeks to grasp the relationship between the objective and the subjective. And photography is the medium that summons alternative realities through the presence of the photographed object. Stones, lakes, stars, moons become hallucinatory landscapes, where the artist blurs our perceptions of reality and links these natural objects with their unknown origins. He seeks to create "landscapes with spiritual depth". In the series *Green Bloom of Decay* (whose Chinese title literally translates as "green of mold"), Shao uses his lens to capture close-ups of stones and rocks found in the mountains and forests of the Yellow Mountains or in the Fuchun region, a stone throw from Hangzhou, where he teaches at the China Academy of Fine Arts. He then develops and prints them on silk and reworks them with acrylic paint. Shao combines mechanical and manual intervention, the so-called photographic "truth" with the expressiveness of painting. His work combines the multiple and the unique. With this series, Shao seeks to manipulate what happens in a darkroom by acting on photo-sensitivity, deliberately leaking light and accentuating corners. He also brushes the picture to give an embossed and eroded texture, alters the development, changing the image density and leaving water marks. But also sends his work through a painting studio in an attempt at deconstructing photography in an "anti-photographic logic". The title of the series evokes both blossoming and decay: the cycle of nature. In China, the number ten thousand signifies a total, it is the symbol of so much greatness that it cannot be named. By manipulating the art of reproduction, Shao Wenhuan create unique images, embraces the infinite through the singular and portrays ten thousand stones from a single one.

Artists biographies



Zhan Wang was born in Beijing in 1962, where he currently lives and work. Trained from an early age in painting and drawing by his grandfather and uncle, he then specialised in sculpture during his studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts of China (CAFA).

In his 1990 series, Sidewalk, Zhan Wang attempts to break with the sculptural tradition of depicting only religious or heroic figures, choosing anonymous people as subject and resin as his medium rather than the traditional bronze and marble. He covered these life-size sculptures with real clothes before painting them. This series is considered the starting point of the hyper-realist sculpture movement in China. In 1994, Zhan Wang began experimenting with conceptual sculpture in his series Free and Natural Space, bodiless shapes contained in Mao suits in distorted postures. The same idea of a empty "shell" presides over his most famous series, Artificial Rock. Zhan Wang painstakingly hammers, bends, heats and moulds stainless steel plates onto traditional scholar's stones, then removes the "skin" in sections and welds them together to create a cold, hollow copy of the rock, whose surface reflects the industrialised world.

Artificial Rock is the first contemporary Chinese sculpture collected by the Metropolitan Museum. From the British Museum (London) to LACMA (Los Angeles) and the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), Zhan Wang has been exhibited internationally. He is represented in France by the Loft Gallery (Paris).

www.zhanwangart.com



photo : © Arnaud Deroudilhe

Born in 1985 in Provence, **Jonathan Bréchignac** lives and works in Paris. He studied graphic design in Marseille and is a graduate of the Graphic Research School ERG (Brussels).

Bioluminescent algae, iridescent beetles, luminous refractions, moving stones, Jonathan Bréchignac's work takes these natural phenomena as starting point. To him, they have retained a power of fascination despite being proven by scientific reasoning. His interdisciplinary practice mixes sculpture, installation and painting. The exploration of material occupies an important place in his work, which follows scientific codes and protocols (collection of samples, experiments and laboratory equipment...). By recreating "life" with synthetic materials, staged with new technologies, Jonathan Bréchignac creates a poetic network of fascination: He questions the border between artificial and natural as well as the relationship we have with life and time. In his work, the evocation of popular myths, scientific and esoteric theories blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. He points out the limits of our capacity to comprehend the world, thus revealing the processes from which emerges our beliefs.

In 2021, Jonathan Bréchignac was the winner of the Art of Change 21 prize, sponsored by Ruinart. His work have been exhibited at Chapelle XIV and at the Guido Romero Pierini gallery.

www.jonathanbrechignac.fr



photo : © Vincent Blesbois

Born in 1980, **Charlotte Charbonnel** lives and works in Paris. After a three-month stay in India at the Sanskriti Kendra Foundation in 2003, she resumed her studies and graduated from the Beaux-Arts in Tours (2004) as well as from the Arts décoratifs (2008).

Named "Woman to Watch" in 2018 by Washington's National Museum of Women in the Arts, (D.C.), she exhibited her works in various institutions including Le Centre d'art contemporain la Maréchalerie in Versailles, the Verrière Hermès in Brussels, the Réattu Museum in Arles, the Domaine de Chamarande in Essonne, the Palais de Tokyo

in Paris, the MAC VAL in Vitry-sur-Seine, or recently at the Abbaye de Maubuisson in St.Ouen l'Aumône and at the Creux de l'Enfer (Hell's Hollow) in Thiers. Her work is present in several public and private collections and has received numerous creative grants. Several catalogs of exhibition have been published as well as a monograph A07-A17 of her work, published by Presses du réel. She is represented by the Backslash gallery (Paris).

'For some years now, Charlotte Charbonnel's aim is to weave the invisible connections between elemental materials of the universe. Her work stems from an empirical research with multiple entries: listening to and capturing material or natural phenomena, exploring different states of matter, and meticulously observing elusive substances'. (Nathalie Desmet)

The artist pushes matter to conceive its own illusion through installations and sculptures. She probes our environment to bring out its natural forces and make us feel its flow. As she listened to the world, she explored and transmitted the acoustic vibration of the places where she was invited to exhibit. Her multidisciplinary practice is linked to space and is nourished by "sciences", collaborations and investigations of different fields and disciplines.

www.charlotte-charbonnel.com



photo : © Alexandre Guirkingner

Noémie Goudal was born in 1984 in Paris where she lives and work. She graduated from the Royal College of Arts and from London's prestigious St. Martins School.

Noémie Goudal examines the potential of an image as a whole using film, photography and installation, she likes to reconstruct its layers and extended possibilities. Oscillating between reality and invention, her images present large-scale installations in natural spaces that renew the very notion of landscape in our contemporary society.

She received numerous awards including the HSBC Prize in 2013 and the RCA Sustain Award in 2010. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions, including the FOAM museum in Amsterdam, the Photographers Gallery in London in 2015, the BAL in Paris in 2016, the Abbaye de Jumièges in 2017, the Finnish Museum of Photography in Helsinki, the Fotografiska in Stockholm in 2018, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Le Locle (Switzerland) in 2019, the Contemporary Art Museum in Ballarat (Australia) as well as the Kundsverein in Hildesheim, (Germany). Her work has been included in numerous public and private collections such as the Centre Pompidou, the Saatchi Gallery, the

Kiran Nadar collection and the FOAM Museum.

In 2018, she completed a residency at the Richard Neutra House in Los Angeles, and is currently in residence at the Manufacture de Sèvres, in the Île de France.

In 2021, Noémie Goudal's work will be showcased in several solo exhibitions: "Post Atlantica" at the Centre d'Art Le Grand Café (Saint Nazaire), a carte blanche at the Musée Delacroix as part of the PhotoSaintGermain festival (Paris), an exhibition at the Arendt House (Luxembourg), as well as solo presentations at the Frieze London and Barcelona's Loop fairs.

Noémie Goudal is represented by the gallery Les filles du calvaire.

www.noemiegoudal.com

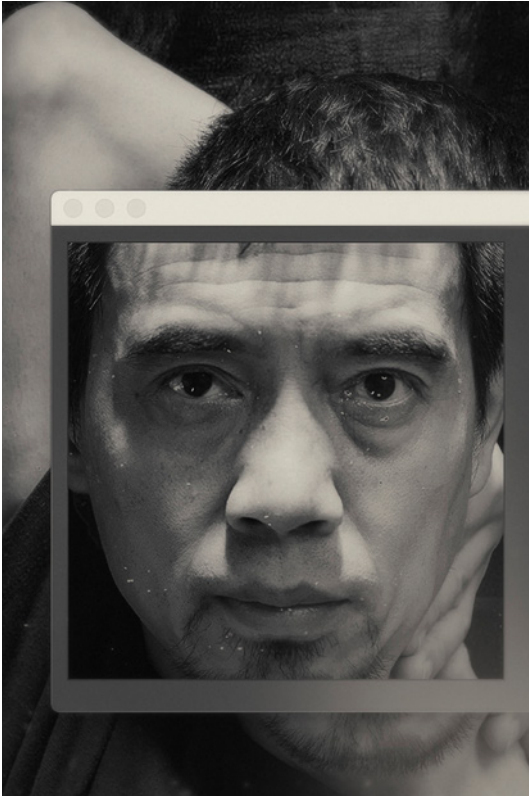


photo : © Shao Wenhuan

Shao Wenhuan was born in 1971 in Xinjiang (China), he lives and works in Hangzhou. He studied at the National School of Art in Dijon and graduated from the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou, where he now teaches.

His practice blends photography and painting to create metaphysical artworks inspired by nature. His work has been exhibited in China (Wuhan Museum, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, China Academy of Fine Arts Museum, Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, among others) and abroad: MOPH San Diego, San Francisco Art Institute (USA), Folkwang Museum (Germany), Lucerne Art Museum (Switzerland). His works have been included in prestigious collections such as the Uli Sigg Collection.

Doors 门艺 biography



photo : © Shen Wei

Created in 2017 by Bérénice Angremy and Victoria Jonathan, Doors 门艺 is a production and promotion agency for artistic projects based in Beijing and Paris.

The agency aims at opening doors and fostering cultural exchanges between China and Europe through creative, innovative and unifying events. It collaborates with artists, institutions (Picasso Museum, UCCA, Giacometti Foundation, Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation) and brands (Hennessy, Lafite, Cartier). In 2021, Doors organises the exhibition "KAIWU. Art and Design in China" at the Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse in Lille (France).

Bérénice Angremy and Victoria Jonathan, graduates from the École du Louvre (Paris) and Columbia University (New York) respectively, and have been living in between Paris and Beijing for twenty years. They directed the Jimei x Arles festival (2017-2019), created in China by 'Les Rencontres d'Arles' and the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre. They curated several exhibitions on Chinese art and photography such as "The Stars. Pioneers of contemporary art in China" (Paris, 2019), "Flowing Waters Never Return to the Source. Photographers Gazing at the River in China" (Abbaye de Jumièges, 2020), "Feng Li. White Night in Paris" and "Luo Yang of every genre" ((Photo Saint Germain, 2021)), "Lei Lei. Romance in Lushan Cinema" (Les Rencontres d'Arles and Jimei x Arles, 2019). In 2019, Gabrielle Petiau, former graduate of the Beaux-Arts de Nantes and former student of the Central Academy of Fine Arts of China (CAFA), joined the Doors team. She is co-director at the Biennale de l'Image Tangible.

www.doors-agency.com

ICICLE Boutique - 35 avenue George V - Paris VIII^e

Inaugurated in September 2019 as ICICLE's first international address, this sculptural and immaculate space extends over three floors of an historical building located on 35 avenue George V, in the heart of the Parisian 'Triangle d'Or'. Designed by the Belgian architect Bernard Dubois, it integrates within nearly 500m², the women's and men's collections and accessories, as well as a bookstore and an exhibition space that reflects the brand's philosophy, based on a natural approach to creation, for a life in harmony with Nature.

ICICLE Cultural Space

With more than 500 works like bridges between Chinese and Western cultures, the ICICLE bookstore, located on the third floor of the George V boutique, explores the ways of being, living and creating according to Nature. It opens onto a gallery, a luminous and airy space designed to host art and design exhibitions.

ICCF Group (Icicle Carven China France)

The "ICCF Group", a Franco-Chinese fashion group with international stature unites since 2021, ICICLE, the established natural and durable fashion brand in China, and the Parisian fashion house CARVEN. ICCF Group reflects the original and fruitful collaboration between western and eastern cultures and their two markets: France, the homeland of fashion, creation and talents and China, the carrier of oriental culture with its industrial power and booming growth. The group's logo, intertwining the initials of the two brands and their origins, illustrates the "Franco-Chinese" synergy that is "key" to the international development of both brands.

PRESS CONTACT – Magna Presse

Sarah Khalil de Limé – skhalil@magnapresse.com

Lou Sotto – lsotto@magnapresse.com

+33(0) 1 58 62 50 79

@ICICLE_ _OFFICIAL #ICICLE #MADEINEARTH #ICICLECULTURALSPEACE

List of Artworks



Zhan Wang, *Artificial Rock*, 2004. Polished stainless steel. 112 x 70 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Loft gallery.



Jonathan Bréchignac, *Alien Rocks*, 2018-today. Silicone, polyurethane foam, resin, jesmonite, plastic, pigments. Variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist.



Jonathan Bréchignac, *Sailing Stones*, 2017. Robotics, artificial intelligence, polyurethane foam, plaster and acrylic. Variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist.



Jonathan Bréchignac, *Stone Balancings*, 2020. Stones, metal, resin, plaster, pigments, concrete and various materials. Variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist.

List of Artworks



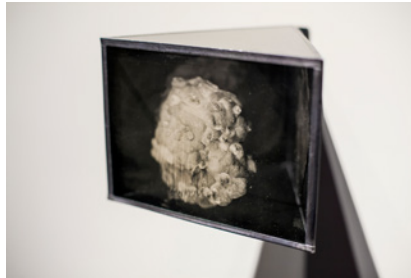
Charlotte Charbonnel, *Météaura 11*, 2020. Calcite on slate. 22 x 32 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Backslash gallery.



Charlotte Charbonnel, *Météaura 8*, 2018. Calcite on slate. 22 x 32 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Backslash gallery.



Charlotte Charbonnel, *Ambrolitotype I*, 2017. Wet collodion on glass. 20,5 x 25,5 x 9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Backslash gallery.



Charlotte Charbonnel, *Ambrolitotype III*, 2019. Movable optical sculpture 3 photographic plates (wet collodion on glass and aluminum glass, lead on pivot). 19 x 17 x 14 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Backslash gallery.



Noémie Goudal, *Soulèvement III*, 2018. Lambda print. 150 x 120 cm.



Noémie Goudal, *Soulèvement IV*, 2018. Lambda print. 150 x 120 cm.



Noémie Goudal, *Soulèvement V*, 2018. Lambda print. 150 x 120 cm.

List of Artworks



Shao Wenhuan, *Green Bloom of Decay 10*, 2013. Silver print on silk, photosensitive emulsion and pigments. 115 x 80 cm.



Shao Wenhuan, *Green Bloom of Decay 4*, 2013. Silver print on silk, photosensitive emulsion and pigments. 115 x 80 cm.



Shao Wenhuan, *Green Bloom of Decay 12*, 2013. Silver print on silk, photosensitive emulsion and pigments. 115 x 80 cm.



Shao Wenhuan, *Green Bloom of Decay 9*, 2013. Silver print on silk, photosensitive emulsion and pigments. 115 x 80 cm.