

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

Dreaming Together: New-York Historical Society and Asia Society Museum
October 23, 2020 – July 25, 2021

Selected PR Images

As part of the Asia Society Triennial: We Do Not Dream Alone—a multi-venue festival of art, ideas, and innovation—the New-York Historical Society and Asia Society Museum open their first ever collaborative exhibition, Dreaming Together. More than 35 interwoven works drawn from both art collections generate dialogue about the urban and natural environments, protest and rebellion, individuals and identities, borders and crossings. Highlights include the Canal Street diptych (1992) from Martin Wong’s Chinatown series, 98-foot hanging scrolls by Dinh Q. Lê featuring abstractions of the World Trade Center towers (2016), and a dystopic video narrative of war and destruction by Shiva Ahmadi (2014). The result is a powerful reflection on the possibilities unleashed when people, cultures, and institutions dream in tandem.

Nature

teamLab (Collective formed in 2001 in Tokyo, Japan)

Life Survives by the Power of Life, 2011

Single-channel digital work; calligraphy by Sisyu

Duration: 6 minutes, 23 seconds

Asia Society, New York: Gift of Mitch and Joleen Julis in honor of Melissa Chiu, 2015.14

Video still courtesy the artist © teamLab, courtesy Pace Gallery

The interdisciplinary artist collective teamLab is known for its fusion of classical Japanese aesthetics with 21st-century technology. It created this poetic rumination on life and death in the wake of the 2011 tsunami and subsequent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan. In the animation, the Japanese character for “life”—written by contemporary calligrapher Sisyu—grows into a branch that turns in space and moves through time. Drawing from the traditional motif of the four seasons, it withers and blooms in an endless cycle of decay and renewal.



Thomas Cole (1801–1848)

The Course of Empire: Savage State, ca.1834

Oil on canvas

New-York Historical Society, Gift of the New-York
Gallery of the Fine Arts, 1858.5

Cole's Course of Empire forms a monumental series concerned with the relationship of humankind to nature. His five paintings chart the course of an imaginative empire as it appears in the midst of wilderness, expands into a glistening metropolis, and collapses into ruin as nature takes back over again. An early environmentalist, Cole expressed despair over human incursions into the landscape. As he stated, "We are still in Eden... shall we turn from it?"



City

Zhang Dali (b. 1963 in Harbin, China; lives and works in Beijing)

Demolition: Forbidden City, Beijing, 1998

Chromogenic print

Asia Society, New York: Gift of Christopher Phillips,
2018.24

Photograph © Bruce M. White, 2019

This image belongs to a series of more than 2,000 photographs that Zhang produced in Beijing between 1995 and 1998 to critique the city's aggressive urban renewal program. Each photograph features a national monument, imperial palace, or new development along with a silhouetted self-portrait of the artist. Here, Zhang's profile cuts into a wall that opens onto a view of the Forbidden City. Coincident with the urban wreckage, it serves as a reminder of the individual lives disrupted in the name of social and economic progress.



Martin Wong (1946–1999)
Canal Street, 1992
Acrylic on canvas
New-York Historical Society, Purchase, Watson Fund,
2000.6ab

Wong's painting belongs to a larger series exploring Chinatown as, in his words, "an exotic Oriental extravaganza." Canal Street juxtaposes two nearly identical scenes in New York City, each with a red pagoda-style building, pagoda-style payphone, subway entrance, and traffic lights. The doubled vision creates an uncanny scene over which the artist himself—wearing a Stetson hat, purple cowboy shirt, and Fu Manchu mustache—presides. The strangely empty, set-like environment shows the openly gay and mixed-race artist (self-described as Chino-Latino) engaging as much with his Chinese American heritage as with touristic perceptions of it.



Protest

Dinh Q. Lê (b. 1968 in Hà Tiên, Vietnam; lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City and Los Angeles)
Scrolls #1 and 4 from *WTC from Four Perspectives*, 2016
Two C-print scrolls (exhibition prints, 2020)
Asia Society, New York: Purchase with funds donated by Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz, 2018.10-11
Exhibition prints courtesy of the artist © Dinh Q. Lê
Photography credit: Photography by Perry Hu © Dinh Q. Lê

Vietnamese-American artist Dinh Q. Lê presents the World Trade Center towers—abstracted almost to the point of unrecognizability—in the form of Asian hanging scrolls. The manner in which they pool onto the floor evokes the towers' physical collapse during the attacks of 9/11, while their abstraction transforms the traumatic event into lyrical but suggestive cascades of color—steel grey, sky blue, and a burning orange. This image shows a work similar to the one installed in the exhibition.



Betye Saar (b. 1926)

Extreme Times Call for Extreme Heroines, 2017

Mixed media and wood figure on vintage washboard, clock
New-York Historical Society, Purchased through the
generosity of Louise Mirrer; Ernest Tollerson and Katrinka
Leefmans; Pam and Scott Schafler; Marilynn Gelfman Karp;
Margi and Andrew Hofer; Linda S. Ferber; Frances Ann
Schulman; Nicole, Nathan, and Brian Wagner; an anonymous
donor; and members of the Frederick Douglass Council.
Additional support provided through the Women Artists Fund
in memory of Mildred Mirrer, 2019.76



In this assemblage, Saar intervenes in a Jim Crow-era stereotype. She transforms a mammy figure originally designed to denigrate African American women into a heroine fighting that very denigration. The woman now wields an assault weapon. She breaks out of a space of oppressive labor demarcated by the frame of a vintage washboard. And she carries with her—emblazoned on her shield-like apron—slaves packed into the cargo hold of a ship.

People

Huang Yan (b. 1966)

Chinese Shan-Shui (landscape)—Tattoo, 1999

Thirteen chromogenic prints

Each: H. 47 1/4 x W. 59 1/16 in. (120 x 150 cm)

Asia Society, New York: Gift of Ethan Cohen in honor
of Professor Jerome A. Cohen and Joan Lebold Cohen,
2016.1.1-13

Photography by Synthescape © Huang Yan



The 13 larger-than-life-sized photographs from Chinese Shan-Shui (landscape)—Tattoo feature the artist's body as painted by his wife, the classically trained Zhang Tiemei, with traditional Chinese landscapes. By wearing the painted landscapes on his skin, Huang conflates himself with his classical artistic heritage. At the same time, he breaks with that heritage by focusing on the traditionally taboo subject of the nude body.

Louise Lyons Heustis (1865–1961)

Annie R. Tinker (1884–1924), 1899

Oil on canvas

New-York Historical Society, Gift of the Annie Tinker
Association for Women, Inc., 2016.27

Anne Tinker rebelled against the strictures of upper-class Gilded Age womanhood. Among her many accomplishments, she joined the Women's Political Union and recruited like-minded society women to lead local suffrage parades. This painting navigates the geopolitics of fashion and taps into a broader period vogue for the perceived exoticism of Orientalist attire but appropriates it specifically to defy American gender norms. Tinker wears a loosely fitting man's smoking jacket that breaks the traditionally corseted female profile, and she hooks her thumbs over her belt in a casual and conventionally masculine pose.

