ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI

HU Yun: Quantified Self



Installation view of *Quantified Self* at ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI, Shanghai, China, 2026.

Artists	:	**HU Yun**
Title	:	***Quantified Self***
Dates	:	11 November, 2026 – 2 January, 2027
Venue	:	ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI (2F-205, 30 Wen'an Road, Jing'an District)
Artworks	:	13 pieces in total

[Artwork images and Installation view]
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ePZ0Xsfr8kCv3D9UXI3YD5_IHTzVF5th?usp=drive_link

[Inquiry]
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Table of Content	**1. Exhibition Overview**	----------3
	2. Exhibition Theme	----------3-4
	3. Artworks	----------5-7
	4. Installation View	----------8-9
	5. Artist Introduction	----------9
	6. Artist CV	----------9-10

1. Exhibition Overview

ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI is pleased to present "**Quantified Self**", a solo exhibition by **Hu Yun**. The exhibition opens on **November 11, 2026** and runs through **January 2, 2027**.The expansion of human civilization is also a history of the migration of life. From early expeditionary fleets to today's spacecraft, vessels have carried seeds, crops, and specimens across land and ocean, and even into outer space. Living things are collected, named, and relocated, put to use for "me." From Crosby's "ecological imperialism" to the "Plantationocene" discussed by Haraway and Anna Tsing, this logic has been questioned again and again: when did making nature serve human ends become the self-evident premise of civilization?

2. Exhibition Theme

The expansion of human civilization is also a history of the migration of life. From early expeditionary fleets to today's spacecraft, vessels have carried seeds, crops, and specimens across land and ocean, and even into outer space. Living things are collected, named, and relocated, put to use for "me." From Crosby's "ecological imperialism" to the "Plantationocene" discussed by Haraway and Anna Tsing, this logic has been questioned again and again: when did making nature serve human ends become the self-evident premise of civilization?

On the shores of Lake Ohrid, Hu Yun encountered a plant that can grow in soil with a high metal content and draw nickel into its own body. In today's world of pervasive contamination, such weeds, recently classified as "hyperaccumulators," are seen as a two-in-one solution: they "improve" the soil while supplying the raw materials needed to produce batteries. What fascinates the artist most is the logic behind this seemingly perfect solution. Once we redefine a plant long regarded as a weed as a "metal crop," the soil that was once "barren" becomes a "mine" overnight. Has exploitation in the traditional sense been eliminated? Or has it been transferred onto the plants, these "invisible laborers"?

The exhibition comprises five groups of works. The electroformed copper plant reliefs things in nature merely grow (2026) are based on plant specimens collected during a 2025 research trip to Lake Ohrid. The specimens were molded, then re-formed through electroforming in an electrolytic bath, and cut to the "standard" dimensions of a botanical herbarium collection. The entire surface is nickel-plated, giving a dark silver finish. The installation is lit by indoor grow lights that simulate sunlight, recreating the conditions in which these hyperaccumulators are artificially "tended" in research laboratories.

At the center of the main gallery hangs the wool tapestry Untitled (Atom) (2026), made by a handweaving workshop from the Balkans. Its seemingly abstract pattern derives from synchrotron-scanned images of hyperaccumulator cells, which the artist collected while researching his commissioned work for the 10th Asia Pacific Triennial. The punch-card logic of European looms was a forerunner of binary code, and weaving was among the earliest forms of mass image production, a logic that today's datafied world continues. Our

boundless desire for ever sharper images thus raises questions about the visible and the invisible, the real and the fictional.

The glass sculpture carving water, melting stones (2021) continues the artist's commissioned work for the Singapore Biennale. Filipino woodcarvers of religious statues, "trained" during the Spanish colonial period, have now been forced out of work and turned to performing ice carving on ocean-going cruise ships. The sculpture uses ultra-clear glass to present a block of ice that never melts. Its model is the right forearm of a wooden statue of Jesus, carved by a Filipino woodcarver in an attempt to restore it to the original state of a tree branch.

The palm-leaf works on paper scattered throughout the exhibition come from the artist's palm series, which he has continued for more than ten years. Each palm corresponds to a specific place, mostly chance encounters during research trips for various projects. Drawing these plants one by one is also a way for the artist to ask, repeatedly, of everyone including himself: why are we so endlessly drawn to the "exotic"?

At the end of the exhibition is a black silk embroidery, modeled on a white silk handkerchief that Feng Yuxiang gave to Sun Yat-sen, now in the collection of the Shanghai Sun Yat-sen Memorial Museum. Working with a traditional Suzhou embroiderer, the artist enlarged the handkerchief's design and embroidered it by hand in black thread on black silk. The image and text can be made out only when light falls on them.

From the metal content within a plant, to the resolution of an image, to each self that is counted and assessed, "quantification" determines what is seen and what is counted as value. In these processes, the many kinds of "light" are both a basic condition for growth and a means of measurement and imaging. The wool yarn dyed with mineral pigments and the pattern worked in black silk thread appear under light, and as we too are illuminated, reading is taking place. Quantified Self swallows plant specimens, traditional weaving and carving, and digital images whole.

3. Selected Artworks

*The high-resolution images can be downloaded via the Google Drive link provided on the first page.

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HU Yun
Things in Nature Merely Grow - South, 2026
Electroformed copper plates, nickel coating
42 × 29.7 cm
Edition of 3



HU Yun
Things in Nature Merely Grow - North, 2026
Electroformed copper plates, nickel coating
42 × 29.7 cm
Edition of 3



HU Yun
Things in Nature Merely Grow - West, 2026
Electroformed copper plates, nickel coating
42 × 29.7 cm
Edition of 3



HU Yun
Things in Nature Merely Grow - East, 2026
Electroformed copper plates, nickel coating
42 × 29.7 cm
Edition of 3

HU Yun has spent a decade tracing how natural history—a discipline that expanded alongside colonialism—continues to determine where bodies, plants, and resources end up. His research turns to hyperaccumulators: over 700 documented species able to draw extraordinary concentrations of metal into their tissue, long dismissed as weeds until phytoremediation and biomass mining reframed them as resources. His 2021 APT commission, *It is not mine to five, nor yours to take*, paired eight-metre scrolls of watercolours mixed from metal-matched pigments — zinc, nickel, cadmium, cobalt, selenium, manganese—with X-ray fluorescence elemental maps of the same species, generating the custom palette, including a signature nickel-derived pigment, that recurs throughout the new work. In the Balkans, among Europe's most extensive serpentine soils, he collected *Alysum murale* along Lake Ohrid. The resulting series, *things in nature merely grow* (2026), transforms field specimens into electroformed copper reliefs finished in nickel, each cut to standard A3 herbarium dimensions, plants bent and trimmed to fit—a literal act of labour discipline applied to a plant, like the shaping any migrant undergoes for a shift pattern, visa category, or quota. HU Yun treats each specimen's positioning—upright, falling, lying flat—as a decision about dignity under those terms, resisting the flattening of nature into evidence. The electroforming bath runs deep blue while active, its dissolved metals settling into crystal over months — the one part of the process he leaves unshaped. Of industrial-scale farming, already underway commercially in parts of the Balkans, he offers little optimism: "the beginning of another tragedy."



HU Yun
Palm 26 (The Wave), 2025
Mineral pigment on paper, lightbox
29.7 x 42 cm, 58.5 x 70.5 x 5 cm (framed)



HU Yun
Palm 31 (sunrise) , 2026
Chinese ink and graphite on paper
36.7 x 73.7 x 5 cm



HU Yun
Palm 33 (Helmet), 2026
Color pigments on paper
23 x 15 cm, 55 x 55 cm (framed)



HU Yun
Palm 32 (Fossil), 2026
Color pigments on paper
12 x 37 cm, 42 x 67 (framed)



HU Yun
Palm 34 (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters), 2026
Color pigments on paper
46.5 x 39.5 cm, 100 x 100 cm (framed)



HU Yun
Palm 29 (Dual Suns), 2025
Color pigments on paper
23 x 36 cm, 46.5 x 60 x 10 cm (framed)

In his painting series *Palm* (2018-present), HU Yun chooses palm leaves as the subject matter. His interest in palm doesn't derive from botany but the intricate colonial contexts and histories behind it. As a trophy of imperial colonization, palm as a tropical plant is frequently seen in museums, monochrome photos and book illustrations and widely bred and cultivated in the context of globalization. Every painting from this series makes a record of the artist's intuitive perception of the different shapes, sizes and colors of palm leaves. Moreover, light, temperature and humidity of the environment they are in have also affected the artist's choice of medium.



HU Yun
Untitled (Atom), 2026
Handwoven wool tapestry
160 x 200 cm

HU Yun
Carving Water, Melting Stones, 2021
Glass
20 x 20 x 50 cm

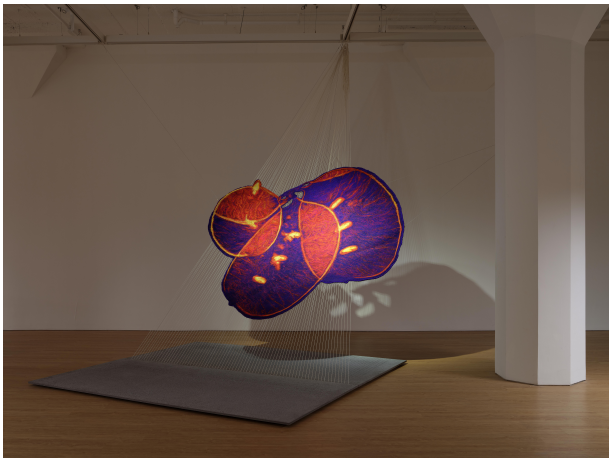
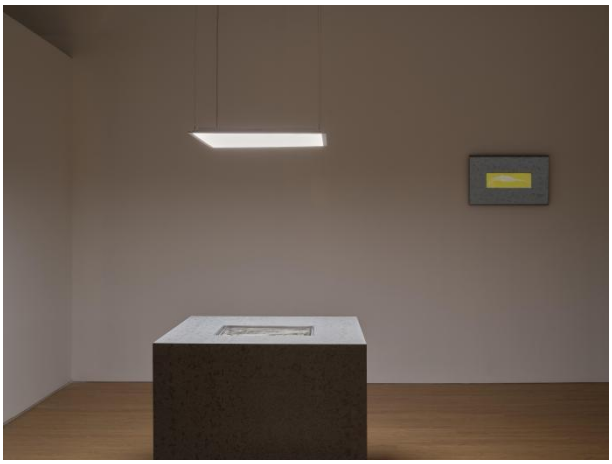


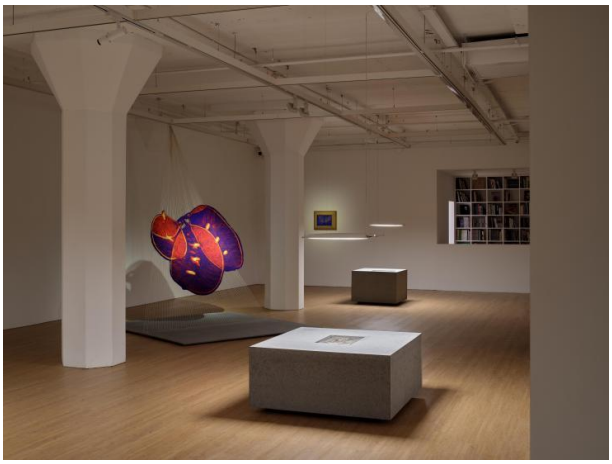
HU Yun
You Are the Light of the World, 2015
Embroidery on black silk
250 x 300 cm

In this black silk embroidery, the words "You are the light of the world" are delicately stitched into the surface. The image derives from a handkerchief that Feng Yuxiang presented to Sun Yat-sen in the 1920s; the artist discovered it in a museum and commissioned a master Suzhou embroiderer to enlarge it to its present scale over seven months. The work extends the exhibition's inquiry into "quantification": enlargement from a single handkerchief to a monumental piece is at once a quantification of scale and a redistribution of visibility—black thread on black satin, the image and text discernible only when light falls upon them, just as the metals within hyperaccumulators and the "tended" specimens in laboratories yield their value and meaning only under specific conditions of illumination and measurement. The word "ye" brings out the "plurality" of these figures as universal human beings—a plurality that erases nationality, race, and creed, leaving only the qualities of "the human." If we regard HU Yun's practice as a particular form of writing, the figures he portrays often have experiences unlike those of ordinary people, yet in his sustained depiction their life trajectories sometimes overlap, even becoming strikingly identical in structure—like islands separated from the world, which the artist visits at irregular intervals, sometimes discovering something new along the routes between them, sometimes carrying something from "here" to "there," until gradually they become cousins to one another, acquiring a deeper relationship. The labor-intensive handcraft of embroidery itself echoes the counted, evaluated, and often invisible working bodies that recur throughout the exhibition.

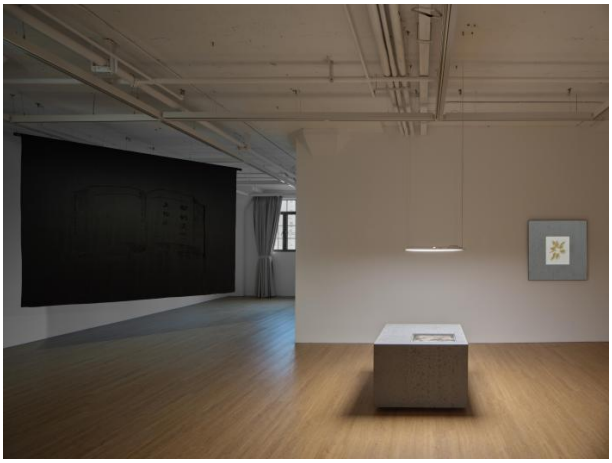
4. Installation view

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Installation view of *HU Yun: Quantified Self* at ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI, Shanghai, China, 2026.

5. Artists Introduction



Hu Yun (born in 1986 in Shanghai, China) graduated from the China Academy of Art. He currently lives and works between Shanghai and Belgrade. Hu Yun's artistic practice is a sustained process of revisiting various historical fragments, through which he also engages in self-reflection.

His solo exhibitions have been presented at institutions including the Natural History Museum, London (2010); Goethe-Institut Shanghai (2012); OCAT Xi'an (2017); NUS Museum, National University of Singapore (2019); and the Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2024). His works have also been shown at the Power Station of Art, Shanghai; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Belgrade Cultural Centre; Para Site, Hong Kong; Parsons School of Design / The New School, New York; and the Times Museum, Guangzhou, among others. Hu Yun has participated in major international exhibitions such as the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, the 4th Guangzhou Triennial, the 11th Gwangju Biennale, the 6th Singapore Biennale, and the 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Brisbane, Australia). He is also one of the co-founders of the electronic art publication PDF.

7. Artist CV

HU Yun

b. 1986, Shanghai, China

Live and works in Shanghai and Belgrade

Education

2008 China Academy of Fine Arts, Department of Comprehensive Art, Undergraduate

Solo Exhibitions

2024 Mount Analogue, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China
2023 distantia, AIKE, Shanghai, China
2021 Untitled (Scattered Chapters), Tsutaya Books, Shanghai, China
2019 Another Diorama, Archaeology Library, NUS Museum, Singapore
2017 We've been here before - Hu Yun's Solo Project, OCAT Xi'an, China
2016 Narration Sickness, AIKE, Shanghai, China
2014 Not My Intention, AIKE-DELLARCO at Art Basel HK, Discoveries Sector, Hong Kong, China
2013 Lift with Care, AIKE-DELLARCO, Shanghai, China
2012 Our Ancestors, Goethe Open Space, Goethe Institut, Shanghai, China
2011 Image of Nature, Natural History Museum, London, UK
2010 Up To Sky - Hu Yun's Solo Exhibition, Magician Space, Beijing, China

Selected Group Exhibitions

2025 *Summer Drift*, Capsule, Shanghai, China
Fluid in Forms, ARARIO Gallery, Shanghai, China
2024 *The Exhibition of Annual of Contemporary Art of China 2023*, Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China
2023 *Someone has been disarranging these roses*, Beiqiu Museum of Contemporary Art, Nanjing, China
Projection, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China
The first Trans—Southeast Asia Triennial research exhibition series, Art Museum of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Guangzhou, China
You as Me, Hold the Gaze, HOW Art Museum, Shanghai, China
2022 *Nature of work*, Warin Lab Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand
The Archival Impulse: an exercise in counter-narrative and counter-memory, AIKE, Shanghai, China
2021 *The 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT10)*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
Curtain, Para Site Art Space, Hong Kong, China
2020 *Study of Things*, Times Museum, Guangzhou, China
2019 *Capital Plan*, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China
*every step in the right directio*n, The 6th Singapore Biennale, Singapore
the atonal river, AIKE, Shanghai, China
botanical drift, Motto Berlin, Germany
Pas de printemps pour MARNIE, GDM Paris, France
2018 *Imagining Memory: Between Anaesthesia and Amnesia*, 1335 Mabini, Manila, Philippines
Mapping the City, a vision of history and city, OCAT Xi'an and OCAT Anren, Xi'an and Chengdu, China
Spiral Stairs, AIKE gallery, Shanghai, China
2017 *Shanghai Galaxy II*, YUZ museum, Shanghai, China
When the other meets the other other, Cultural Center of Belgrade, Serbia
Pan Yuliang- A Journey to Silence, Villa Vassilieff, Paris, France
2016 *Scarcity & Supply- The 3rd Nanjing International Art Festival*, Nanjing, China
Topography – Chapter II, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China
Museum on/off, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
The Eighth Climate - 11th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea
2015 *Copyleft: Appropriation Art in China*, Power Station of Art, Shanghai
Small is Beautiful, Jewelvary, Shanghai, China

2014 *You Can only Think about Something if You Think of Something else*, Times Museum, Guangzhou, China
Stone, Wood and Paradise Syndrome, 1933 Contemporary, Shanghai, China
Shanghai Gesture, GDM (galerie de multiples), Paris, France
Just as money is the paper, the gallery is the room, Osage Gallery, Shanghai, China
2013 *Degeneration*, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shanghai, China
Evolution: A Question, Yuan Space, Beijing, China
Cross-Strait Relations, Anna - Maria and Stephen Kellen Gallery, Parsons The New School for Design, New York, USA
The Sun, V Arts Centre Space 1, Shanghai, China
Revel – Celebrating MoCA's 8 Years in Shanghai, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China
Alternatives to Ritual' part II, OCAT, Shenzhen, China
Come Rain or Come Shine, AIKE-DELLARCO, Shanghai, China
2012 Alternatives to Ritual, Goethe Open Space, Goethe Institut, Shanghai, China
The Unseen - The 4th Guangzhou Triennale, Guangzhou, China
Accidental Message — Art is not a system, not a world, The 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, Shenzhen, China
Focus on Talents Project, Finalists Exhibition, Today Art Museum and
Martell Arts Fund, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China