



## The Art of Wu Wei

*An ancient Chinese tale speaks of a certain province that was suffering a terrible drought. The land had once been an area of plenty; mystical mountains surrounded by crystalline waters and streams where the noblest of pines and cypress trees flourished. The people had tried all the usual magical charms, chants and potions to produce rain to their once harmonious, verdant land, but to no avail. An eager old woman said that she had once heard of a 'rainmaker' in a distant province who had brought nourishment to many people. The local officials quickly found, invited and sent a carriage to the shaman to bring him to their barren land. As soon as he arrived, the rainmaker sniffed the air, looked around and pointed to a small cottage high on a mountain cliff. He quickly said that if he could reside there for three days perhaps he could try to remedy their situation. Excitedly the people waited. Their collective hope and anticipation consumed all conversation and banter. Days later, the blackest storm clouds gathered and there was a torrential downpour of rain. Everyone rejoiced and profusely thanked the talented rainmaker. But he only shook his head and replied "But I didn't make it rain". Everyone gasped and exchanged looks of disbelief. "You don't understand. You see, where I come from everything happens as it is supposed to. It rains when it is supposed to and stops when it is supposed to stop. It is the same in your land as well. But when I stepped down from my carriage, I realized at once what was the issue. No wonder this land is dry and barren, you are all out of sorts. I knew that if anything could be done I would have to restore unity back into your town. You needed something to hope for as a whole, to focus on. So first, I pointed to the farthest house away from you and all I have been doing for the past three days is... Nothing! You have done it all."*

The Shanghai based arts collective brings you our 53rd in house exhibition, the *Art of Wu Wei* commemorating and celebrating these phenomenal moments of harmony, when man and nature are one. Wu Wei itself is defined as being an action that takes no action; a response that falls into place only if there is universal harmony, typifying the saying from the Tao Te Ching, "The Tao does nothing, yet leaves nothing undone". Through the use of LED technology intermingled with traditional Chinese Shan Shui (山水) and paper cutting techniques, island6 (*Liu Dao*) combines their contemporary and collective spirit into the traditions of Chinese art and mythology, creating a truly 'harmonious' techno vision of man and his environment. Traveling all the way from Bangkok where it debuted at the esteemed Lotus Arts de Vivre, *The Art of Wu Wei* will take over the island6 Arts Center from June 29th and run until the end of August, showcasing the collective's illuminating insight and reverence for the intersection of traditional and contemporary, mixed with irreverence, humor and compassion.

Taking inspiration from traditional Chinese *Shan Shui* (山水) paintings that depict images of dreamy and idyllic landscape, Liu Dao depicts not what you have seen in nature, but the nature that lies in our imaginations. A world in which flickering LED's shine upon the painted spaces around them, containing the endless possibility for transformation, a central component in Taoist thought. From blue haired dryads tending to *Jian Zhi* (老子) trees, flickering LED goldfish that move with the dynamic fluidity of water or butterflies



that effortlessly float above Ming Dynasty vases, Liu Dao tells a story of a world in which what we have seen is not always the world we perceive.

From the earliest of Chinese painting and mythology, trees have represented the power, flow and mystery of nature. Large, ancient trees seemed immortal, demanding respect and reverence. They bear crops of seed and grow forests full of their own offspring, with seeming effortless. When struck by lightning or set aflame, trees, even in their demise, were creatures of worship, awe, and fear- the subject of numerous masterpieces . In several of Liu Dao's newest works, Jian Zhi trees appear side by side with lone LED figures peering out from under their canopies, reminiscent of traditional Chinese landscape paintings that depict small figures blending harmoniously into the vast world around them. The topic of the journey or search is an enduring theme in Chinese traditional art, representing the yearning, the spiritual, the remote or the unattainable. Liu Dao frequently portrays their characters as lone figures, romantic fugitives searching and wandering into the uninhabited parts of human nature where their iridescent presence seems to linger effortlessly in their imagined landscapes. In the immortal words of *Laozi* (老子), "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished".

Always taking inspiration from the traditional and timeless Chinese art and poetry of the past, Liu Dao delightfully and playfully aspires to speak to the same ideals. The *Art of Wu Wei* serves as an ode of convivial observance to not only the dynasties and myths of our antecedents, but the ability of their stories and ideas to come back to life, with fingers firmly on their new electrical pulse. Creating a world of illusions and perception, a vision between dream and reality, futuristic and age-old at one time; a dreamy techno vision of man and his environment. In doing so, Liu Dao hopes to examine and explore the creation of meditative spaces, the tension and harmony between the elements of old and new, flickering and static, urban and urbane into a modern demonstration of traditional elements.

**Dates:** From June 29 to August 29 2013

**Vernissage:** TBA

**Curation:** Margaret Johnson

**Art Direction:** Thomas Charvériat

**Scenographer:** Fabrice Amzel, Jean Le Guyader

**Research:** Cecilia Garcia, Guan Yan 官彦, Melani Murkovic

**Music:** David Keohane

**Coordination:** Yeung Sin Ching 杨倩菁

**Venue:** island6 Shanghai, 2F, Bldg 6, 50 Moganshan Rd, Shanghai

**Artist:** island6 art collective (Liu Dao 六岛)

**Link:** [http://www.island6.org/TheArtOfWuWei\\_Shanghai\\_info.html](http://www.island6.org/TheArtOfWuWei_Shanghai_info.html)