



Through the Wormhole

** You are marooned. Rolling hills stretched before you, littered with hundreds of green and brown terraces, tended to by an equal number of farmers. They speak a strange language that you cannot understand and have just watched you appear out of thin air. They speak faster and faster, their frightening pace meaning only one thing; they are about to capture you and set you aflame for being in league with the devil. Your knees are shaky, you must have fudged the calculation on that last one- *what was this, jump 4 or 5? How have you come out of the wormhole slightly at odds with the motion of the world beneath you?* You have minutes, maybe seconds to save your own life. So you pop open the door of your Tachyon 5000 and tinker and turn its many, confusing (*that's why you ended up in 6th century someplace or another anyhow*) knobs and buttons until the engine roars and you disappear in a blink. Let's try this again. You are stranded. Rolling hills stretch before you, littered with hundreds of green and brown terraces tended by...oh my...is that a f\$%^ing dinosaur? You're really bad at this temporal traveling thing aren't you? Now you start remembering the warnings of your mentors- temporal drift, displacement, planetary reciprocity (*or was it velocity?, you really should have listened*), potential for injury, hostile inhabitants etc...) You need a drink. Back in the machine, let's give it another shot. You emerge covering your eyes with your hands, afraid to see where the hell you've ended up this time this time. Velvety trombones, sensuous chatter and swinging beats fill the air as fragrant smoke wraps around your body. You slowly open one eye and find yourself center stage in 1920's Shanghai speakeasy and no one seems to notice your abrupt arrival. *Much better.* **

Welcome, intrepid temporal explorers and chrononauts to *Through the Wormhole*, island6 and the Liu Dao Art Collective's 55th in house exhibition. A continuation of Liu Dao's *Temporal Visions*, *Through the Wormhole* is the tipping of our proverbial hat to the glories of yesteryear as we travel back to the not-so distant past to explore notions of temporality, history and the interconnectedness of the two. Whether a believer or not, the allure of time travel has captivated society for ages stemming as far back as the Hindu epic *The Mahabharata*. In this tale, King Kakudmi and his beautiful daughter, Revati, travel to the court of Brahma for martial advice. After indulging in some tea and conversation, they return home only to find that thousands of years had lapsed on Earth, making them the world's first time travelers. Similarly, the hero of Washington Irving's classic tale, Rip Van Winkle, had an analogous experience after drinking a stranger's moonshine in the woods. He awoke, presumably with the world's worst hangover, to find that 20 years had passed in his drunken sleep. Perhaps it was ol' Rip and the now classic H.G Wells' *Time Machine* that helped to inspire Einstein's Theory of Relativity, the closest thing we have to 'real' time travel. Stating that if a man travels away from his twin close to the speed of light, when he returns (also at the speed of light) he will find that his twin has aged more than he has. Because all processes-chemical, biological, mechanical- are constrained by the speed of light, the traveling twin's biological aging would slow as would the clocks aboard his traveling vehicle. *Trippy*. With such caveats in mind, Liu Dao set out to create our very own flux capacitor so that we can maneuver our time-traversing DeLorian to drive back through the legendary wormhole that is Shanghai.

Through merely walking the city streets of Shanghai one can encounter loopholes to the city's dense and inscrutable past. And as if in the midst of a lucid dream, Liu Dao has awakened just in time to slither into our taut *qipaos* 旗袍 and slick back our pompadour with brilliantine as we light our post-prandial cigar on Avenue Joffre before waltzing up to the Paramount ballroom. As you saunter through the latest exhibition at island6 one will be transported back to far-off and away days of Shanghai's golden era. A period that Liu Dao no doubt draws considerable inspiration from, the 1920's and 1930's provide a myriad of decadent imagery and sensuous charm. A mixed-blood metropolis that up-ended every notion of Orient and Occident, by the swinging 20's this Paris of the East was an exotic



stew of Western opium traders, Chinese compradors and Viennese dancing girls, seduced like so many by this sprawl of humanity. In 1926, Aldus Huxley wrote, "Yes, it will all be there, just as intensely and tenaciously alive as ever...you only have to stroll through the streets of Shanghai to be certain of it"ⁱ. Smitten by the opulence and indulgence of the time, a subject that we proudly boast a considerable familiarity with, the island6 creative portal is transformed into a picture of the past, recreating the bold, unique beauty of a long from forgotten era.

But beyond fashioning itself into the world's greatest boomtown, Shanghai has become a symbol of our modern era. The world's greatest love child, a crossbreed of history, is once again stepping out with global aspirations. No other metropolis better captures the striving spirit of the times, constantly expanding its horizons, transforming itself into the modern realization of East meets West dream in a truly dizzying spectacle inspiring wonder and bewilderment, awe and envy. Through combining traditional Chinese art techniques and appropriated antique furniture in addition with LED's, RGB's, LDR's, TFT's, GSM's, 8-bit microcontrollers, light activated nixie tubes and a smorgasbord of other things seemingly from another time, Liu Dao crafts visions that dreamily combine worlds from opposing temporal planes. LED girls clad in silk *qipaos* 旗袍 with dangerously high slits and iconic blue bobs dance about their paper-cut parlors as glittering butterflies quiver around painted antique ceramic vases. Flickering neon diodes illuminate photographs of the historic Bund while time spent indulging in a smoldering opium den is frozen on canvas, elegantly mixing opulence, pleasure and decay. Evocative of days spend lingering in luxury and irreverence, where the pursuit of pleasure was only second to the pursuit of wealth, *Through the Wormhole* conjures evenings spent on the Cathay dance floor or meandering down Avenue Joffre on the streets in the Paris of the East, no Tachyon 5000 needed.

Dates: From Oct. 18th to December 11th, 2013

Vernissage: Oct. 18th, from 7 to 9 pm

Curation: Margaret Johnson

Art Direction: Thomas Charvériat

Scenographer: Jean Le Guyader, Anto Lau

Research: Antonieta Landa, Jak Mussington, Monica Reyes, Melani Murkovic, Kim Shillam, Weronika Nossowicz

Artistic Research: Xu Yi Han 徐义涵, Jin Yun 金云

Music: David Keohane

Coordination: Guan Yan 官彦, 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://island6.org/ThroughTheWormhole_info.html

Wine Sponsor:



ⁱ An excerpt from Aldous Huxley's diary, 1926