



Press Release

Semi-Permanent Occupy Initiative

Claudia Comte

There Was No Up, There Was No Down, There Was No Side To Side

Duration: May 24, 2024 -

Organizer: Rockbund Art Museum

Support: Pro Helvetia Shanghai



In 2024, Shanghai Rockbund Art Museum is proudly launching a new long-term project, the *Semi-Permanent Occupy Initiative*, which invites the most creative minds of our time to offer alternative definitions of museum spaces traditionally seen as marginal. The museum commissioned a mural from Swiss artist Claudia Comte titled *There Was No Up, There Was No Down, There Was No Side To Side* (2024), occupying the wall of the whole staircase of the museum from the first to the fifth floor, and eventually stretching its body into the west hall on the first and second floor.

Growing up in the forests of the Jura mountains in Switzerland, Claudia Comte has been exploring the complex expressions in rendering nature. Her paintings and sculptures are inspired by organic patterns such as waves, sonar, cacti, and strata, and often manifest as large-scale outdoor installations that respond to their surroundings. *There Was No Up, There Was No Down, There Was No Side To Side* is the largest staircase project Claudia Comte has made to date, in which she introduced the pattern "bloom" for the first time. The building that houses the Rockbund Art Museum was built in 1933, one of China's first natural history museums. Inspired by this history, Comte transformed and abstracted, through digital means, a series of 18th-century scientific graphics of jellyfish into 10 groups of multi-sized "bloom" patterns that swim across the five floors of the museum.

Influenced by Op Art, Claudia Comte's works are characterised by precise geometric compositions and repetitive patterns, creating striking visual effects that challenge the viewers' perception. By incorporating optical and illusive manipulations, *There Was No Up, There Was No Down, There Was No Side To Side* skilfully combines traditional mural techniques with modern technology to form a full-angle mural sensation that drives audiences into the history and memory of marine life. *Semi-Permanent Occupy Initiative* offers an immersive experience for the audiences to lose their orientation in Comte's world and reach a perceptual environment beyond the boundaries of space and time.

About Claudia Comte

Born in Grancy, Switzerland in 1983, currently lives and works in Basel.

Claudia Comte's practice is guided by a longstanding interest in teasing out the history and memory of biomorphic forms through traditional hand processes, industrial and machine technologies. Comte's site-specific installations bring together monumental wall paintings and sculptures playfully inspired by organic patterns and morphology, paying testament to the intelligence and transformative capacities of the ecological world.

Comte's work has been widely presented in solo and group exhibitions, including: *Cacti and Sunsets*, Globus Public Art Project in collaboration with Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2023); *From Where We Rise*, Casa Wabi, Puerto Escondido, Mexico (2023); *Desert X AIUla*, Saudi Arabia (2022); *Tree Line Curve*, Rolex Learning Center, EPFL Lausanne (2021); *The Dreamers*, 58th October Salon, Belgrade Biennale (2021); *After Nature*, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (2021); *How to Grow and Still Stay the Same Shape*, Castello di Rivoli (2019); *I have Grown Taller from Standing with Trees*, Copenhagen Contemporary (2019); *Zigzags and*

Diagonals, MOCA Cleveland (2018); *Swiss Performance Now*, Kunsthalle Basel (2018). Passionate about using art as a tool for connecting marine conservation, policy change and climate education, Comte has collaborated with several organisations on projects, including a residency and underwater commission developed with TB21-Academy in 2019 to raise awareness of coral health around the Alligator Head Foundation in Jamaica.

About Rockbund Art Museum

Inaugurated in 2010, the Rockbund Art Museum (RAM) is a contemporary art museum located on the Bund in Shanghai. The museum is housed in a historic Art Deco building from 1932 that was originally built for the Royal Asiatic Society. The landmark building was restored by David Chipperfield Architects.

In considering what it means to be an Asia-based contemporary art museum in the 21st century, RAM aims to explore the importance of “archipelago thinking”: connecting to artistic culture across Asia and beyond to gain richer perspectives on today’s challenges, practices, and networks within contemporary artistic practices. We wish to build constructive, creative relationships between multiple localities in Asia and different cultures globally, to create a hub for working with a broad range of artists, researchers, and scholars, and to dive into subtle and dense layers of new experiences with our audience.

With a strong reputation for an innovative curatorial approach, RAM experiments with different models of what an art project can be, from research to alternative learning programs, from exhibition-making to unexpected performative formats. By supporting bold contemporary art practices, we aim to recognize local histories while responding to global art challenges and social change.

RAM is proud that two of the artists commissioned in X Zhu-Nowell’s inaugural 2023 Exhibition Program – **WangShui** and **Evelyn Taocheng Wang** – will be part of the main exhibition of the 60th Biennale di Venezia this year. The museum is also proud that the film installation *In Her Time*, which RAM commissioned from **Diane Severin Nguyen** in the 2023 program will be included in the next Whitney Biennale.
www.rockbundartmuseum.org

About Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council

Pro Helvetia supports artists and cultural practitioners from Switzerland and is committed to international cultural exchange. Pro Helvetia Shanghai is founded in 2010 and represents the Swiss Arts Council in China. Its aim is to encourage dialogue between Swiss and Chinese cultural practitioners and institutions by supporting projects that enhance the exchange of knowledge and experience in the cultural field. For Pro Helvetia’s latest projects in China, please check our website: www.prohelvetia.ch.

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