

Strata of Relations: Tales Across Asia and Beyond

Curated by Yixuan Wang

Presented in conjunction with New York Conference on Asian Studies

Beihua Guo	Hafsa Nouman
Cheng Xinhao	Huiqi He
Christy Phimmasone	Xingyan Guo
Siyang Dai & Zijun Zhao	Pejvak (Rouzbeh Akhbari & Felix Kalmenson)
Chen Xiaoyi	

October 16 — November 22, 2026

Palmer Gallery, Vassar College Center
100 Main Campus Dr, Arlington,
Poughkeepsie, NY, 12603

Opening reception: October 23, at 7-9 p.m.
Opening hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.



Beihua Guo, *Designated Ground Zeros*, uranotypes (uranium prints), 7x7 in., 2023-ongoing
4150-12355 — 095 (EARTH MOVING EQUIPMENT). 250 (MINING MACHINERY). 275 (POPULATION). FU SHUN
MANCH, 1956 // West Open-Pit Mine, Fushun, 2025 (printed 2026)

Strata of Relations: Tales Across Asia and Beyond approaches Asia not as a fixed geographic entity, but as an evolving constellation of relationships reshaped by colonial histories, infrastructure expansions, local communities, and natural processes. Bringing together artists based across Asia and its diasporas, the exhibition examines how landscapes are traversed, contested and remembered across shifting cultural and geographical boundaries.

History rarely reveals itself as a monolith. Like the terrestrial crust, it often accumulates through relentless stratification, burying its formations beneath the sediment of time. Working through archival research, field investigation, speculative storytelling and material experimentation, the

artists in this exhibition excavate the many strata embedded within particular landscapes. From Cold War nuclear targets and abandoned cinnabar mines to contested waterways and sites of urban displacement, many of their practices develop sustained, personal relationships with the places they investigate, often taking forms that resonate with ethnographic research. These projects engage landscape not as a passive setting, but as an active archive where power relations, ecological processes and localized knowledge accumulate and transform over time.

Ranging from photography, video, painting, and installation to artist books, the works explore diverse modes of representation, positioning material evidence and publication as vital sites of counter-storytelling. By bringing minor narratives into dialogue with physical remnants, *Strata of Relations* aims to unsettle singular accounts of history. Together, the works open up a space for viewers to move between these layered geographies, tracing poetic and situated resonances across sites, stories, and ways of knowing that extend across Asia and beyond.

About the artists:

Beihua Guo (b. 1998, Shanghai, China) is a visual artist working in photography, video, and installation. He holds a B.A. in Studio Art and Environmental Analysis from Pitzer College and is currently pursuing an M.F.A. in Studio Art (Photography, Video and Imaging) at the University of Arizona. His work investigates how histories are remembered, buried, or erased, particularly in landscapes marked by colonialism, extraction, and displacement.

Hafsa Nouman (b. 1998, Lahore, Pakistan) is a Pakistani visual artist based in New Haven, Connecticut. She received her B.F.A. from National College of Arts, Pakistan and her M.F.A. from Yale School of Art. Her practice engages memory, ecology, and decolonial inquiry through painting and installation. Having lived within economies shaped by IMF-led reform and neoliberal extraction, she approaches decolonisation as a mirage, a horizon structured by desire, always visible yet endlessly deferred. Through reflective surfaces that glimmer and oscillate, she complicates flatness and destabilises the act.

Cheng Xinhao (b.1985, Yunnan, China) currently lives and works in Kunming, China. He received his Ph.D. in Chemistry from Peking University in 2013. Cheng's works are usually based on long-term field studies, centered around his hometown in Yunnan Province. With videos, installations, photographs and words, he personally investigates the polyphonic relationships between logic, discourses, knowledge, and the ways in which nature, society, and history play within them.

Huiqi He (b. 1994, Changsha, China) works at the porous intersection of contemporary art and experimental ethnography. Rooted in local rituals, myths, and memories, her practice is based on field research and visual ethnography conducted in Xiangxi and Guizhou, focusing on the shamanistic practices and rituals of the southern mountainous regions in China. By merging ethnographic fieldwork with embodied sensory engagement, her transdisciplinary work spans video, installation, performance, and workshops, creating a sensory terrain that allows the ghostly and the marginalized to permeate the contemporary.

Siyang Dai (b. 2001, Shanghai, China) is a cultural anthropologist and social practice artist whose work explores the intersections of material culture, vernacular practice, and public storytelling. Trained in cultural and museum anthropology, her research uses applied ethnography to examine how everyday objects, such as DunDun, exercise agency within networks of people and things. She is interested in developing collaborative narratives rooted in local knowledge and daily experience.

Zijun Zhao (b. 2002, Hebei, China) is a spatial and furniture designer whose work bridges architectural thinking, craft-based making, and community engagement. Trained in both woodworking and design, he approaches furniture not as static objects, but as relational tools that mediate between people, space, and everyday life.

Christy Phimmason (b. 2004, Philadelphia, USA) is an artist who works primarily with sculpture and video. She is currently studying Psychology and Studio Art at Vassar College. Her work investigates themes of Asian identity, interpersonal connection, and alternative culture in New York City.

Pejvak is the long-term collaboration between **Felix Kalmenson** (b. 1987, St. Petersburg, Russia) and **Rouzbeh Akhbari** (b.1992, Tehran, Iran). Through their multivalent, intuitive approach to research and living they find themselves in a convergence and entanglement with likeminded collaborators, histories and various geographies.

Xingyan Guo (b. 2002, Qinghai, China) is an anthropologist and artist living between Brooklyn and Mexico City. She indulges in the ephemeral and unexpected encounters produced by transnational processes. Through performance, image-making, and translingual writing, she plays with the beauty of differences. As a Ph.D. student in Sociocultural Anthropology at Columbia University, she learns and writes about the politics of Chinese infrastructure in Latin America and the intimacies among U.S.-bound migrants in Chinese-owned extralegal commercial spaces in Mexico.

Chen Xiaoyi (b. 1992, Sichuan, China) is an artist currently living and working in Chengdu. With an M.A. Photography from London College of Communication in 2014, her work is based on photography but not confined to specific media, focusing on the subtle perceptions of human beings by producing images. She is dedicated to exploring how cosmic landscapes and "Deep Time" manifest within contemporary materiality.

About the curator:

Yixuan Wang (b. 2002, Beijing, China) is an emerging curator based between New York and Beijing. He holds a B.A. in Media Studies and Studio Art from Vassar College and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Experimental Humanities at New York University. His research explores the anthropology of lines and the intersections of art and environmental humanities. He is also the founder of CHANG Assembly, an interdisciplinary art initiative and studio complex in Beijing.

About Palmer Gallery:

The James W. Palmer III Gallery is situated at the heart of the College Center between the North and South Atriums. The gallery serves as an exhibition space for artwork created within and beyond the Vassar community, displaying the art of diverse mediums, themes, and origins.

Constructed in 1996, the gallery was named and endowed by the Palmer family in 2000 in memory of their son James, a member of the class of 1990.

For more information, please contact Edward Cheetham at edcheetham@vassar.edu