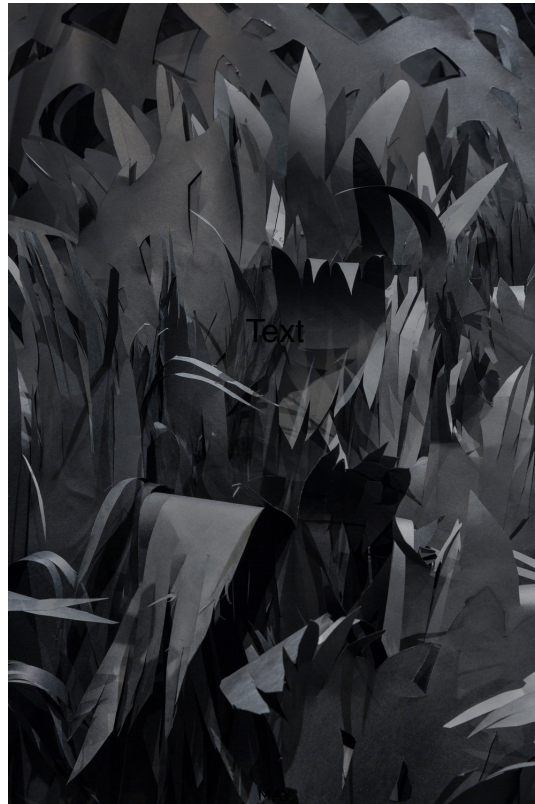


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Jennifer Wen Ma

Yasemin Vargi

Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted

Sandra Gering Inc. (<http://www.sandrageringinc.com>)

New York, 14 East 63rd Street

Blending characteristics of traditional Chinese art with a contemporary approach, Jennifer Wen Ma creates delicate, ephemeral installation **Sandra Gering Inc.**, the artist presents a body of work that borrows elements from the traditional Chinese literati landscape painting trope about her recent work and art practice.

Y.V: *You work with a wide range of mediums that range from performance to public commissions. Over the years, you*

J.W.M: Yes turning more theatrical and larger scale had a lot do with my experience on the Olympics Beijing 2008. I was always very into advertising design, not painting, I didn't really have an idea of artistic hierarchy. I experimented with what resource I had, what I was comfortable with. Certainly Olympics give you an appetite for something on a huge scale, and theatrical. It allowed me to play in arena and it influenced my



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Jennifer Wen Ma, Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted , Ink, paint, acrylic panels, paper, projection. Sandra Gering Inc, New York, 2017 Photo by Daniel Terna

Y.V.: *After studying advertising, you changed your focus more towards art. Do you think getting a degree in advertising*

J.W.M.: What I took away from studying advertising was really helpful in that advertising is about communication of a message that is often of artist communicates an idea or a thought.

In advertising the first things you talk about is your audience, the target market, and the demographics. It helped me understand whom I want to deliver the message so that your idea is conveyed in the most effective way. I have dedicated a portion of my practice in public art and it is in museum setting and create work for people, thinking about my audience, the neighborhood, the area and how do I reach out to them.

I do a lot of research and it is an important part of my process. I love learning about the area, the history, and the people. I look at cultural interest and find resonance with what I am doing artistically.

Location gives me new ideas, but it is also tied in with artistic trajectory of something I am currently drawing or painting in the studio or work in work, but I always start with the research. And it is important to keep a rigorous studio practice.



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Jennifer Wen Ma, *Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted*, Ink, paint, acrylic panels, paper, projection. Sandra Gering Inc, New York, 2017 Photo by Daniel Terna

Y.V.: For your opera productions, you work with many talents from different disciplines. How do you bring your team together?

I like talented people and I like making friends with artists so I mix business with pleasure. I love working interactively, cross discipline with our friends and artists I work with and turn to for certain things. Whether it is a multimedia, technology based project or if it is something architectural.

The opera *Paradise Interrupted* is a combination of both. There are people I have known for 20 years, my roommates from grad school, one of whom worked on the opera with me. I met new people such as our composer who later became one of my closest partners on the opera, and the librettist I met her. I like working with a group because you can open yourself to new ideas, can push yourself and learn a lot.





Jennifer Wen Ma, Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted , Ink, paint, acrylic panels, paper, projection. Sandra Gering Inc, New York, 2017 Photo by Daniel Terna

Y.V: *You have a strong relationship with nature. What inspired you to incorporate ink and plants which are two distinct*

J.W.M: I've thought that if I couldn't be an artist, I would be a gardener, who are artists as well, especially in traditional Chinese and Japanese, very connected to the process of painting. Well, I live in New York City and I don't have a garden.

I have been working with live plants for almost ten years as an important part of my practice. That almost came accidentally; I was really led by

The way I came at this, I was exploring ink and its properties doing videos, drawings, all these different ways of exploring landscape painting in a contemporary way of approaching that. After a series of video works, which were a time-based painting process, I wanted to bring the medium to hand, the way it smells, how it is so rich and it covers everything but can just wash away with water. There was something so malleable and experiential with the audience.



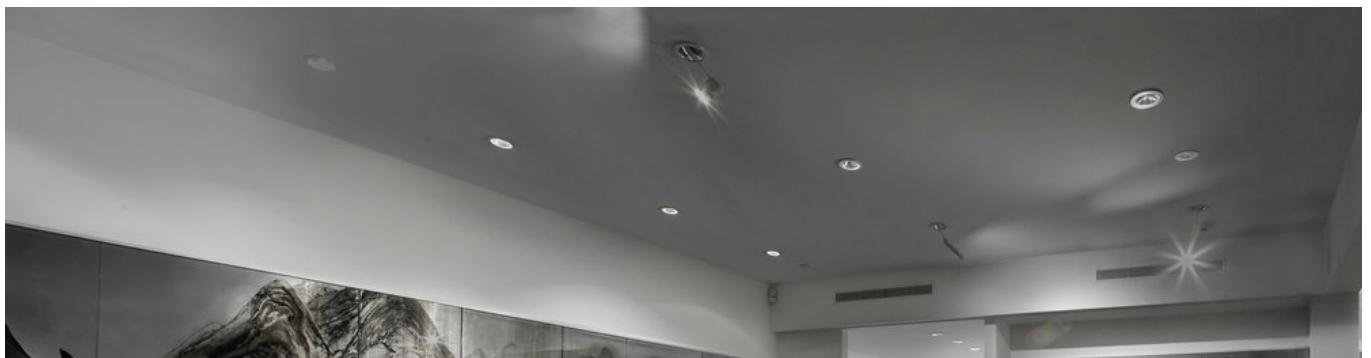


Jennifer Wen Ma, Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted , Ink, paint, acrylic panels, paper, projection. Sandra Gering Inc, New York, 2017 Photo by Daniel Terna

Y.V: How did you start using painted live plants in your project in such a distinct way?

J.W.M: I had an invitation to work at Echigo Tsumari Triennial in Nigata Japan and it was in the wilderness, in the forest and there was a little idea of painting the plants. Every time they did an installation in that area they kill the weeds around and on top of the brick structure, so I thought I discarded. Inside the structure, I had 21 black ink pools. I thought the painted plants looked like all of the plants sucked up the black ink and okay because the weeds were going to be killed anyway. I did not think they would survive.

In anticipation of that show in my studio, I cut leaves and painted it, let it dry to see how it would work. Once the ink dried, it would stay on the leaves and didn't take into consideration of how live plants would interact as I thought they would die. It took two weeks to install the project on this little patch of area we painted, because some plants were already grown out with green! I was so amazed at the vitality and the energy of this live system is not damaged, in this case not, with sun and rain, it will grow and green will come into it. Right there I saw, this is a live landscape so we left it there for three months towards the end of the exhibition half of it was already green.





Jennifer Wen Ma, *Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted*, Ink, paint, acrylic panels, paper, projection. Sandra Gering Inc, New York, 2017 Photo by Daniel Terna

Y.V: Could you talk about your current exhibition *Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted*?

J.W.M: This exhibition is another step and experiment into this whole trajectory of working with ink and landscape painting. In *Paradise Interrupted* I create a three-dimensional version of a Chinese scroll painting—a rolled up painting that a collector can easily carry and go anywhere.

Often collectors would take the most beloved scrolls along with them on long trips. When they would want to view the painting they would unroll it with the other hand opens the other, and they would scroll through the painting, and read through the painting, through its mountain ranges sometimes seasons change, and the perspectives are always shifting, as the landscape changes. It may start out in a mountainous region and opens up in front of you when the painting is open, then when you close it you just put it in your travel pouch.

I wanted to create something similar for the opera set as an extension of this artistic exploration. Also, this was a woman who has lost her utopian very surreal, fantasy garden, they could come out of nothing, not through projection, something physical that you can touch and see and it raises questions, was it real, was it a dream, was it delusion or magic?

It took a long time to figure out and invent this way of creating a landscape with a stack of constructed paper, that when the papers are pulled together paper construction can create a panoramic view. It took two years of a journey from the inception of the opera to the world premiere. The opera has a continued life. But the bulk of its creative process is behind me and there have been so much thinking going into this opera, that I want

I borrowed this Chinese literati landscape painting trope of *Eight Views of Xiaoxiang*, which is a particular type of painting that began in the 12th century when officials were exiled. The idea of the exhibition came to me during the 2016 election, with its uncertainty and questions in my mind. A thousand inner emotional and intellectual life, when it is at odds with the external world at large. I borrowed that idea for *Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted* making the opera. I created the works in this exhibition that had to do with this artistic cerebral space but also my personal trajectory, one that is

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