

Lead

Curated by Lu Song

MASSIMODECARLO VSpace presents Lead, a virtual exhibition curated by the artist Lu Song. Visible on massimodecarlo.com and in VR via Oculus technology, Lead transforms the artist's research project into a truly visual experience.

In tandem with the virtual exhibition, a new selection of works by Lu Song will be displayed at MASSIMODECARLO Beijing Pop Up. As visitors explore these works, they are also invited to take a virtual walk through Lead, within the physical space of the gallery.

"...This time it is not I who seek it out. It is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me..."

— Roland Barthes "Camera Lucida"

A beautiful encounter starts when the female protagonist meets the dazed male protagonist on the edge of the cliff. This is a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca*. After the opening scene, the first thing that appears on the screen is the confused face of the male protagonist, staring at the bottom of the cliff, seemingly driven by a powerful force, and waiting for the call of a certain miracle to jump down. With the ups and downs of the music and the tension that had been accumulating along the way, the heroine came and saved the life of this unlovable person.

Ironically the two characters that appear most frequently in the film does not include the main protagonist -- Rebecca -- in fact, she does not appear in the film at all. What is the director's intention? Let's not delve into this issue and focus on the ideation instead: suppose that in the real world, we need a bridge to be built between two lands. The construction can be roughly divided into two parts. The main part is what spans across two lands. This is also the most important part, independently existing between the two islands and playing the supporting role. The second part is the bridge approach connecting the lands and the main bridge – the lead.

Its purpose is to connect the main bridge and the embankment, as "a transition between the bridge and the road".

As I believe, art is the shortest distance between people. An artwork is like a bridge between the author and the viewer, or between one viewer and another viewer. It is a form of communication, a language, which can be read and visually attracted. The lead, therefore, constitutes part of the work, or the order in which it is viewed.

Several leads can appear in the same painting. There are connections among them, just like a city has several city centers, and each city center has different landmarks. Hence, the lead can be divided into primary and secondary. As the theme of this article, lead remains secondary in an artwork.

Although it is the first to be observed, it is not the focus of a picture, but a trigger that assists viewers to appreciate the works. This is reflected in most of Turner's works, whereas flags, masts, or figures are described as secondary, but as the sky and waves are relatively abstract, they become important references. Without these concrete forms, viewers cannot identify the terrific waves. The lead provides a clue, or a guidance.

Lead is also present in abstract works. In Robert Motherwell's works, it is proved that in human vision, we always see light and shade, or black and white at the first stance, followed then by color. For Per Kirkeby, the most contrasting part is often seen first, such as black lines on a bright yellow background, or a small amount of fleshy pink patches under green bushes. They are like a sharp sword penetrating the viewer's retina, while following the change of color scales to the deepest of the viewer's brain.

In *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes names the details deviating from the theme in a photo as *punctum*, that is, details with the superior value that can change viewers' attention. A *punctum* breaks the rigid state of the image and makes it refreshing. However, compared with the subject's *studium*, the *punctum* is extra.

In music creation, there is a similar but not completely consistent concept, namely motivation:

“The word ‘leading motivation’ originates from the French term ‘leitmotif’, meaning the main theme. It is also called “Idée fixe”, referring to motivation, or a recurring theme formed by short music clips (usually a melody of one or two bars) that runs through the whole work.”

In 1933, Arnold Schönberg moved to the United States. In his article published the following year, he pointed out that the meaning of motivation lies in unity: “the unity of tonal relations, the unity of sound patterns, the unity of ideas, and the overall unity of music.” In his article in 1948, he indicated the purpose of motivation, that is, the connection and development of each part of the work:

“... not only that, they can also develop, add new features, and transform into a transition. The transition must have a purpose, like a bridge, so that it leads from one side of the river to the other.”

In the following two years, he further clarified that if motivation could not develop and change, it should not appear in the works and should not be used only for musical structures. This seems to disagree with Roland Barthes on the extra in photography. But what they have in common is that they use details to connect every part of the work. The connection is both contradictory and unified, and forms a hierarchical relationship in the “confrontation, separation and intervention” between various parts.

In film art, I believe that an excellent actor not only has to interpret the role in place, but also needs to be the spokesperson of the audience, to express the audience’s feelings. By establishing a connection between the audience and the characters, he/she becomes a lead between the audience and the film. In Lou Ye’s *A Night in the Spring Breeze*, the moment Qin Hao’s character was attacked by the victim’s wife, the corner of his mouth raised helplessly and he let out a “hey” sound, which seemed to imply an indescribable emotion. Everyone will react the same at this moment. Such a performance mirrors the viewers.

A work without a lead is like a magician performing with his back to the audience. Although there is still a sense of magic occasionally, the audience is not clear about what is going on. An excellent magician will fully show the ordinary props to the audience before the performance. The importance is to use things that everyone recognizes from daily life as a connection with the audience, thus making the magic more magical.

Hitchcock sets up multiple leads in *Rebecca*. Rebecca never appeared, but this had no impact on the audience’s perception of the character, instead it created a more mysterious and open image. Paintings are not like films or articles as they have linear reading limitations, but in the human vision, there is focus and virtual focus. Often the out of focus, the part ignored by the viewer, the implicit part is the main body that best reflects the author’s character and style, and is therefore valued by every vigilant creator. It is these instinctive, perceptual, and illogical brush strokes that constitute their innate charm.

Lu Song (1982, Beijing, China) is an artist based in Beijing. Graduated in 2006 from the Wimbledon College of Art London, he has exhibited all over the world since then with shows in Berlin, New York, London, Copenhagen, Sao Paulo in Brazil. His works are greatly influenced by the Western masters especially from the 19th century German romanticism period. He paints surreal landscapes and urban scenes that are atmospheric and contemplative and addresses the co-existence of human and nature. Lu's painting is recognisable by his use of well tempered sepia tone colours and application of tonal range that he applies with bold sweeping brushstrokes. The result is a visual experience that draws the viewers into the scene, evoking a certain mood that is contemplative and surreal. He has exhibited all over the world with solo exhibitions in Hong Kong, Berlin, Sidney, Beijing. He exhibited with Interni romani, at the Mattatoio in Roma (2018) and with an important retrospective titled *Flow* at the OCAT Museum in Xi'an, China (2017). Song's group exhibitions include: *Keep Going John Armleder & Lu Song (Special project)*, Westbund Shangai (2020), *Ulysses's Gaze – the Return of Painterliness and Soulful Contemplation*, Ginkgo Art Center, Beijing (2016); *China Arte Brazil*, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2014); *Das Ichim Anderen*, Mercator Foundation, Essen (2014). His work is included in prominent collections such as the K11 Art Foundation in Hong Kong, the Akagawa Collection in Sao Paolo, Brazil, the Bronner/ Philara Collection in Dusseldorf, Germany and the Dean Valentine Collection in Los Angeles, USA.

Meng Yangyang was born in China in 1983. She graduated from Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts in 2006 with a B.A. and a M.F.A in 2009. Currently, she lives and works in Shanghai. Meng Yangyang's major solo exhibitions include: *To Be Heard In A Whisper*, BROWNIE Project, Shanghai, China (2021); *The Spring Comes*, Gallery55, Shanghai, China, (2018); *Legato*, Gallery55, Shanghai, China (2017); *Alone And Together*, Amelie Gallery, Beijing, China (2015); *Wish the World Treats You Softly*, L—Art Gallery, Chengdu, China (2014); *Searching for the Light*, Nou Gallery, Taipei, China (2012); *Youth*, Gallery Beijing Space, Beijing, China (2011); Meng Yangyang, Gallery J.CHEN, Taipei, China (2010). Meng Yangyang's recent major group exhibitions include:

Right Now Right Here Stand by Her, Shanghai DuoLun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China (2021); *Wu Wai*, AnYi Gallery, Shanghai, China (2021); *Granule*, The Galaxy Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing, China (2021); *Mei Exhibition*, Shanghai Himalayas Museum, Shanghai China (2019); *The Contemporary of Figural Art: Round 4*, Shanghai DuoLun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China (2018).

Ma Ke (b. 1970) lives and works in Beijing, China. Ma Ke was born in Shandong province, China. He finished his undergraduate studies at Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts and taught at the Academy after graduating. Ma Ke was later transferred by the Ministry of Culture to another teaching position in Eritrea, Northeast Africa. He obtained his postgraduate degree from the Department of Painting at Central Academy of Fine Arts. Ma Ke major solo exhibitions include *Hole*, Mingsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, 2021; *Ma Ke*, N3 Contemporary Art, Beijing (2020); *Ma Ke*, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich (2018); *Idioms-Ma Ke*, Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles (2014); *Evidence*, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Hong Kong (2013). Mayor Group Exhibitions includes: *The Order of Time*, HdM Gallery, Beijing, China (2020); *Chinese Whispers: Recent Art from the Sigg Collection*, MAK — Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria (2019). Ma Ke's works are held in private and public collections around the world, including Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland; the Hammer Museum, Chicago; M+ Museum, Hong Kong. His practice is archived in Asia Art Archive.

Nick Goss (b. 1981 Bristol, UK) lives and works in London. After graduating at the Slade School of Fine Art, Nick Goss received his MA in Fine Art at the Royal Academy of Arts in 2009. Goss layers personal and collective history on the canvas through scenes of confident accretion and erasure, constructing and reconstructing phenomena that never had physical form. His paintings clearly summon the space of dreams, where time, space and identity slip, but the sense of a journey propels artist and viewer forward. Goss has been the subject of four solo exhibitions at Josh Lilley, along with multiple solo shows at Simon Preston, New York, and Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin. His first institutional survey, *Morley's Mirror*

at Pallant House, Chichester, UK, was accompanied by a catalogue co-published with Koenig Books, London. His recent mayor Group Exhibitions include: *Margaritas at The Mall*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2021) *Nine Mile Burn*, Josh Lilley, London (2020) *Morley's Mirror*, Pallant House Gallery, London (2019) *Dolphin Express*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2018) *De Ramp*, Josh Lilley, London (2017) *Bluing*, Simon Preston Gallery, New York (2016) *Green Lanes*, Josh Lilley, London (2015) *Like Pineapples In A Greenhouse*, Simon Preston Gallery, New York (2013) *Tin Drum*, Josh Lilley, London (2012) *Herz Man Sky*, Simon Preston Gallery, New York (2011) *Veverka*, Josh Lilley, London (2010) *Paths in the Snow. New paintings by Nick Goss*, Image Contemporary Art Gallery, Arezzo, IT (2006).

Xie Nanxing (b. 1970) lives and works in Beijing and Chengdu, China. Nanxing was born in Chongqing, China. He has exhibited widely in China and Europe with solo exhibitions at Galerie Urs Meile (2020, 2015, 2008); Thomas Dane Gallery (2019); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2018); Kunstverein Hamburger Bahnhof (2005); Manchester Art Gallery (2003); and Pulitzer Gallery, Amsterdam (1998). Recent and notable group exhibitions include: Art Museum of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Chongqing, China (2021); Song Art Museum, Beijing (2020); Hive Center For Contemporary Art, Beijing (2020); The Warehouse Dallas (2020); Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart (2019); MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna (2019); Casa Cavazzini, Italy (2017); Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu (2016); Today Art Museum, Beijing (2106); Shanghai 21st Century Minsheng Art Museum (2015); OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT), Shenzhen (2014); Gerhard Richter and the Disappearance of the Image in Contemporary Art, Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzi (CCCS), Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy (2010); Painting on the Move, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2002); Documenta XII, Kassel, Germany (2007); and d'APERTutto, La Biennale di Venezia, 48. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Venice, Italy (1999).