ALMINE RECH

Cosmos Cinema
The 14th Shanghai Biennale

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We have always looked to the night sky to make sense of ourselves, as we might look to a screen onto which the past and the future is projected. *Cosmos Cinema* offers visitors a spacetime in which to reflect on the operations of the cosmos and our place within it. The Greek word kosmos (κόσμος) connotes not only the universe but also beauty and harmony; the Chinese term yuzhou connotes infinite time and space, resonating strongly with the cinematic.

The cosmos shapes every aspect of our lives, whether wittingly—the interpretation of stars and planets, after all, gave rise to our origin stories, religions, systems of time, economies, means of navigation, agricultures, sciences, and social orders—or unwittingly, in the movement of the tides or the effects of solar flares. *Cosmos Cinema* considers how the terms of our relationship with the cosmos condition all life on earth.

Alexander Kluge suggests that the universe is the original cinema, in which all past events are stored as visible "tracks of light." André Bazin states that cinema "has not yet been invented," and so contains boundless potential. Combining these two perspectives—one looking to the past, the other to the future—Cosmos Cinema posits that cinema is not only a modern technology but a cosmic phenomenon, with the potential to recode our relationship to the universe.

The works included in the exhibition are as various in their forms and approaches as are readings of the constellations. They reflect on diverse cosmologies and microcosmic realities, indicating the different ways in which humanity interacts with and understands the cosmos. But they might all be said to begin from a point of wonder: how do we fit into the systems that govern time and space? Do the same principles operate at every scale, and how might our understanding of the cosmos change our terrestrial behavior? How do we live together, as a species and with nonhuman others, on earth and beyond?

Cosmos Cinema proposes that contemplations of the cosmos—ancient and modern—might work against the alienation that is endemic to our historical moment: alienation from each other, from nature, and even from time itself. As no part of our world can be separated from the effects of the sun, the moon, and the heavenly bodies, *Cosmos Cinema* suggests that reframing our connection to the cosmos might encourage more complex ways of thinking about the ever-more entangled challenges that face the world today.

That we are all equal under the stars and in front of the screen does not mean that we are all the same, as the diversity of work included in this exhibition will attest. Every culture interprets the universe differently and builds from those interpretations their identifying philosophies. If it is a marker of human similitude that we all look to the skies in awe, then it is a marker of our difference that we each discover different affiliations in them. Like an experimental film, *Cosmos Cinema* montages its independent constituent elements into novel relations. Not to illustrate a fixed idea, but to encourage the audience to find new meanings by forging unexpected connections.

The constellation of artists from China and around the world reflects Shanghai's position as a cosmopolitan city and birthplace of Chinese cinema, in a country with a long philosophical and artistic engagement with the cosmos. *Cosmos Cinema* aspires to contribute to that tradition.