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VINCENT WARD: Evoking the Harmony between Man and Nature through Art



By Baozhen Zhang, City Herald.

Vincent Ward is the first ever New Zealand artist to exhibit at the Shanghai Biennale. As a film director, screenwriter and producer, his films have received international recognition from Academy Awards and Cannes Film Festival. Recently interviewed in Shanghai, Ward states that although he has produced many films in the past, his creative life originated with painting. The exhibited works at the Biennale combines photography, oil painting, cinematic motion paintings – fully demonstrating the concept of harmonious coexistence

between man and nature; deserving of our utmost attention.

According to Ward, the interior decorations of the Shanghai Union Church – its tall pillars, curved top and elongated stained glass windows all inspire him to explore beyond earthly realms to one of transcendence, evoking us to reflect upon loss, redemption, and the subconscious. Amongst the central images is a woman submerged underwater in a world cast in shadow, surrounded by swimming fish. Ward attempts to explore a raw, primordial, and embryonic experience; whilst bridging an intimate relationship between animals and mankind. His works focus on the transient nature of life and the experiences within. From Medieval tribes, Inuit communities, Chinese scroll painting, Maori carvings and traditional or religious tales; his art provides viewers with an opportunity to enter a state of thought and reflection. Just like life itself, it is a gradual process, Ward's historical responsibilities pushes him to reveal a sense of self-perception through his art. One can no longer be only familiar with one field and expect a clear expression of their relationship with the outside world – film and television have become a central part of our everyday lives.

As Ward recalls, he has been very good at observing nature ever since growing upon a farm as a child, especially when it comes to bonding with animals. He would later receive his honours degree in fine arts and eventually through painting – move onto film directing. By the time his directed his Academy Award winning feature ‘What Dreams May Come’, he was able to make full use of his knowledge of aesthetics and integrate his unique taste in cinematography to create the new visual feast known as ‘motion painting’. Last year, he has successfully held three major exhibitions of his personal work. According to Ward, Shanghai is one of his favourite cities – a terrific place to visit; and hopes to do more international cultural exchanges in the future. Recently he has published three new books, one of which ‘Making the Transformational Moment in Film, Unleashing the power of the image, with the films of Vincent Ward’ has been translated into Chinese, and soon to be published in China. From his books one can experience and investigate meaning of life and nature through the shifting states between flying, falling, colliding; joy, awe and fear.