

# WIND FROM THE EAST



Featuring the drawing installations of Montreal-based artists Jing Yuan Huang and Jerry Ropson, Modern Fuel's newest exhibition, **Wind from the East**, offers varying interpretations on what it means to come from the East, and whether or not geographical directions have any bearing on today's globalized art practice.

Allowing their work to be influenced by the space they are in, Ropson and Huang take differing approaches in displaying their artwork, from variation in scale to drawing directly on the wall. Narrative elements are prominent in both artists' works which share a foundation in sketching and drawing.

Ropson's installations reveal a strong bond to his small-town beginnings on the Canadian East Coast. His work examines how rural identity is transformed within transient and urban settings and strives to create a sense of place no matter how displaced. Huang's work synthesizes two traditions, Eastern and Western, counter-balancing historical and spiritual weight with playfulness, refusing origins through a process of transmigration.

To complement this exhibition, on the night of the opening reception (March 7th) from 11pm to 7am, there will be an improvisational concert based on South-Asian traditions, performed by the Toronto-based artist, Debashis Sinha. Tea will be served.

## Wind from the East Photos

## Debashis Sinha Video

**Jing Yuan Huang** (Montreal, QC) received a BFA from Concordia University, Montreal in 2005 and completed her MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is a recent immigrant from China and has exhibited in many provinces across Canada.

**Jerry Ropson** (Montreal, QC), completed the MFA Studio Arts program at Concordia University, Montreal, where he also currently teaches drawing.

**Debashis Sinha** (Toronto, ON) is a Toronto based percussionist, composer and sound designer. He has appeared and recorded with a wide variety of ensembles performing everything from French Canadian to Yiddish New Music.

## Essay by Andrea Terry

### FROM WHENCE YOU CAME

In this age of global transmigration, the inherent significance of place in one's personal and professional life, along with the impact of change, evolution, displacement and metamorphosis, becomes increasingly important. While one might be tempted to explore the original source of this show's title almost capriciously chosen by curator Michael Davidge, that being *Wind from the East/Vent d'Est*, the 1969 movie directed by self-proclaimed "ex-great (bourgeois) filmmaker" Jean-Luc Godard, I prefer to investigate the suggestive nature of the "Wind" as a natural entity, in order to subvert the imposition of cultural relativism. The concept of "the East," be it cultural, geographical, political, societal, etc. can prove to be contentious in that it means, and rightly so, different things to different people, particularly in the works of each artist included in this particular show. I have decided, then, to explore the relationship between the transitory nature of wind, as a natural entity, and migration, as an experience, in order to make apparent the commonalities between the artists' works.

Jin Yuan Huang's work exists as a confluence of media as well as that which complicates issues related to space. Taking contact prints of original drawings to produce photograms – silver gelatine prints – which are then scanned into the computer, she has produced a site specific work, tiled prints that co-mingle/exist/come together to create a grid-based image. Taking her original hand-drawings through a series of experiences and metamorphic processes, her art explores, in her words, the "aesthetic of interchange." Furthermore, however, her work is site-specific and, by its very nature and design, forces spaces to conform based on her intervention(s).

Similarly, Jerry Ropson's installation employs various media in order to examine the concept of displacement. In his pieces, Ropson explores how, as he puts it "a 'sense of place' remains, despite a transient and displaced disposition." In so doing, through his drawings and arrangements located in the gallery space, Ropson investigates the transformation of identity as well as, more specifically, the influences and imprints created by places experienced in the past. As a result, history, memory, visualization and placement feature prominently in his work.

While both Huang and Ropson explore notions of place, transience and mediation in installation works, percussionist and new media artist Debashis Sinha performs a seven hour percussion, electronics and sound improvisation that acts as an amalgamation of his musical and familial background. What is more, he bases his work on what he calls "post-traditionality," the deployment of a tradition, as a device, to explore cultural evolution. Bringing a traditional practice into present-day reality allows Sinha to investigate, through both physical and aural gestures, the imperatives of past actions and contemporary reception.

We've all felt the wind, we've all fallen prey to its haphazard nature – an invisible entity that seemingly moves without rhyme nor reason. As it moves from place to place, wind passes unhindered, overcoming whatever obstacles in its way across the globe. Similarly, globalizing processes, such as technological communications that have facilitated the expansion of financial markets as well as migratory patterns, have spread across the world, allowing people to explore, move to and exist in different places, be they cities, regions, nations, countries and/or continents. Such movements facilitate change, internal, subjective and/or personal. Visualizing changing forms, feelings, experiences and/or concepts has proven to be a provocative and increasingly relevant form of expression. To complicate the concept of movement and change further, however, it is paramount to remember that places one leaves also leave an impression, an indelible imprint on one's experience, perceptions and prerogatives. Thus, change occurs based on the relinquishment of something in order to produce something new, but what was left behind remains part of that process – a perpetual mediation.

**Andrea Terry** is a PhD candidate at the Department of Art at Queen's University. Her research interests include contemporary art, Canadian heritage, museum representation and the relationship between memory and history.