

World's Shadows: Zhang Dali documents nature through cyanotypes

艺中ArtCentral 5月4日



Bamboo Series 2018

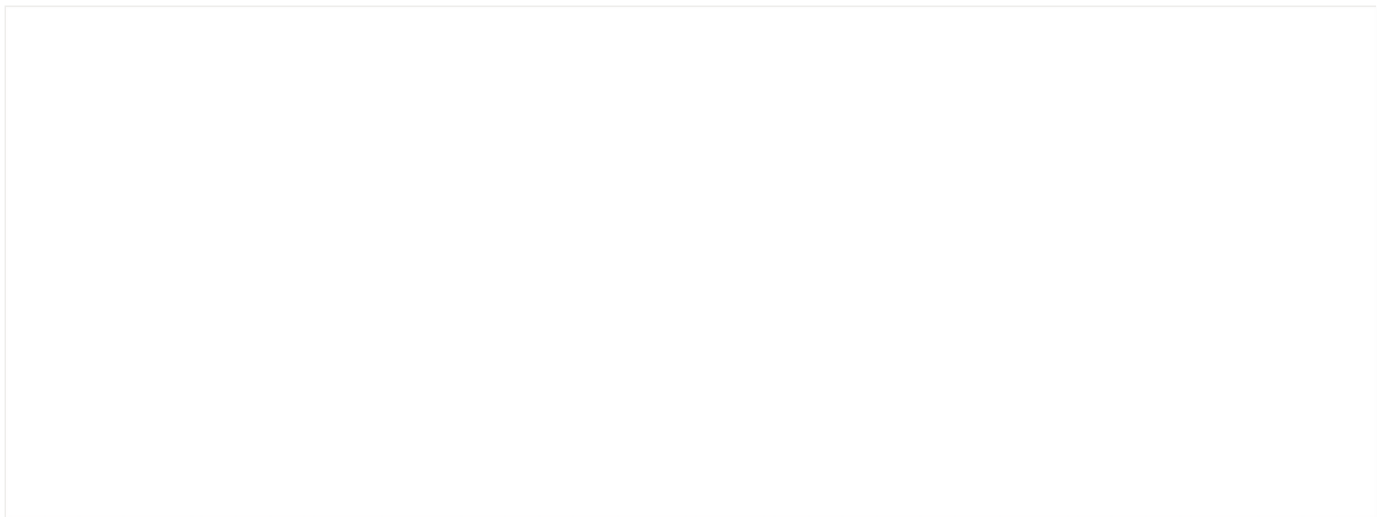
On the west side of my studio in Heiqiao Village (the Black Bridge Village east of

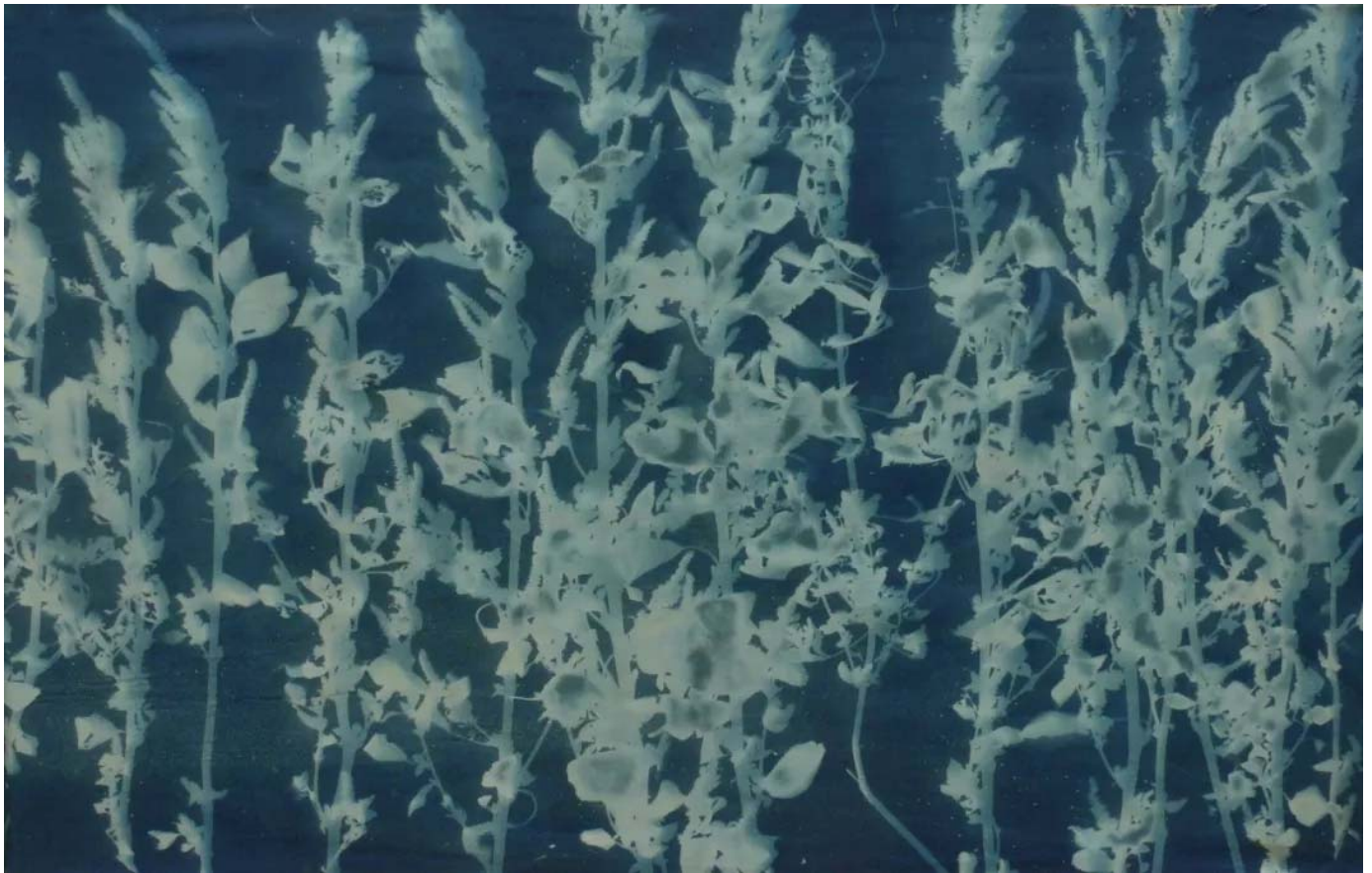
Beijing) there is an abandoned field, where wild grasses of unknown names grow. In springtime the field is covered with small purple wild flowers. I know this space is all too temporary: soon bulldozers will come and flatten the field, Heiqiao Village and my studio will cease to exist, remaining perhaps as a baffling and bygone name on a map, or maybe not even the name will remain, and no one will remember the history of this place, and all memories related to it will also be gone.





Soul of the Wild Grass Series 2009





Soul of the Wild Grass Series 2009

In future, the field will likely be covered by rows of ugly buildings made of concrete and steel. In the gigantic and unfriendly metropolis of Beijing, people live like recluses, each hidden away in his/her high-rise burrow of concrete and steel. When venturing out, Beijingers jump into cars, creating torrents of metal flowing non-stop and without rules.





Pine Series 2016

Beijingers have little chance to look out from their homes on to nature. They only see flowerbeds and trees artificially and neatly planted by government workers on the side of the road. In the spring of 2009 I passed through that field and

suddenly thought about its mode of existence and its coexistence in this rapidly urbanizing environment. Before that time I had already done some research on photograms, as a tool for creating non- alterable and lasting images. I documented the life around my studio, the people and objects of daily life, like the grass in my field they will also soon disappear and be moved to new neighborhoods.



Delivery Bicycles (8) 2011



Life (2) 2011

I also went to the northern outskirts of Beijing, to Changping County, to a mountain called Yinshan Talin (the Pagoda Forest of the Silver Mountain), where there is a Liao Dynasty (907-1125) site of pagodas. I used large size cotton canvas to record the shadows, and on the canvas they look like the soul of the pagodas, and made me think of the Shroud of Turin. The shadow is the soul impressed on the land, after a short time it disappears, and my photogram canvas tries to retain it.





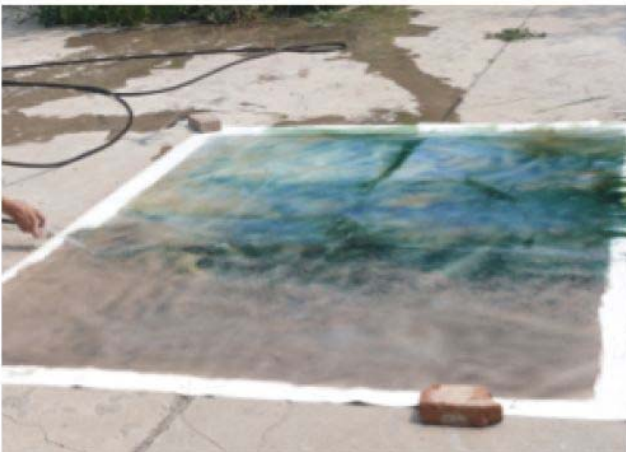
Cyanotype in the making Changping County 2010



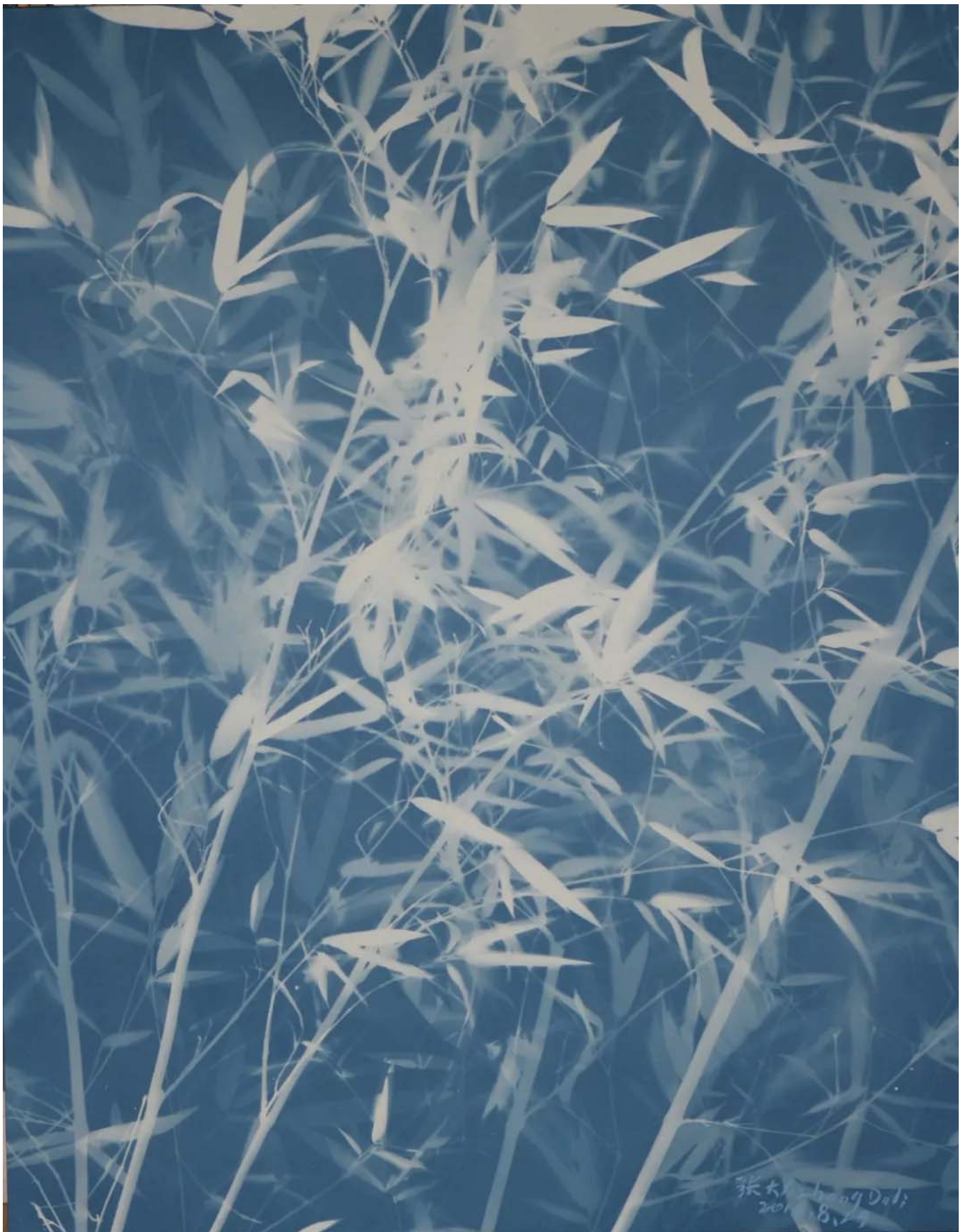
Pagoda No. 3 2010

Technicalities

A cyanotype is an image produced without a camera, instead by painting a surface with a solution of ammonium ferric citrate and potassium ferric cyanide then exposing it to sun light. UV rays react with the solution and produce ferric chloride. Because of the different level of transparency of the objects, their shadow varies in tones: areas of the photo-sensitive material that have received no light (the shadows) appear white; those exposed appear coloured, just like a negative or silhouette.

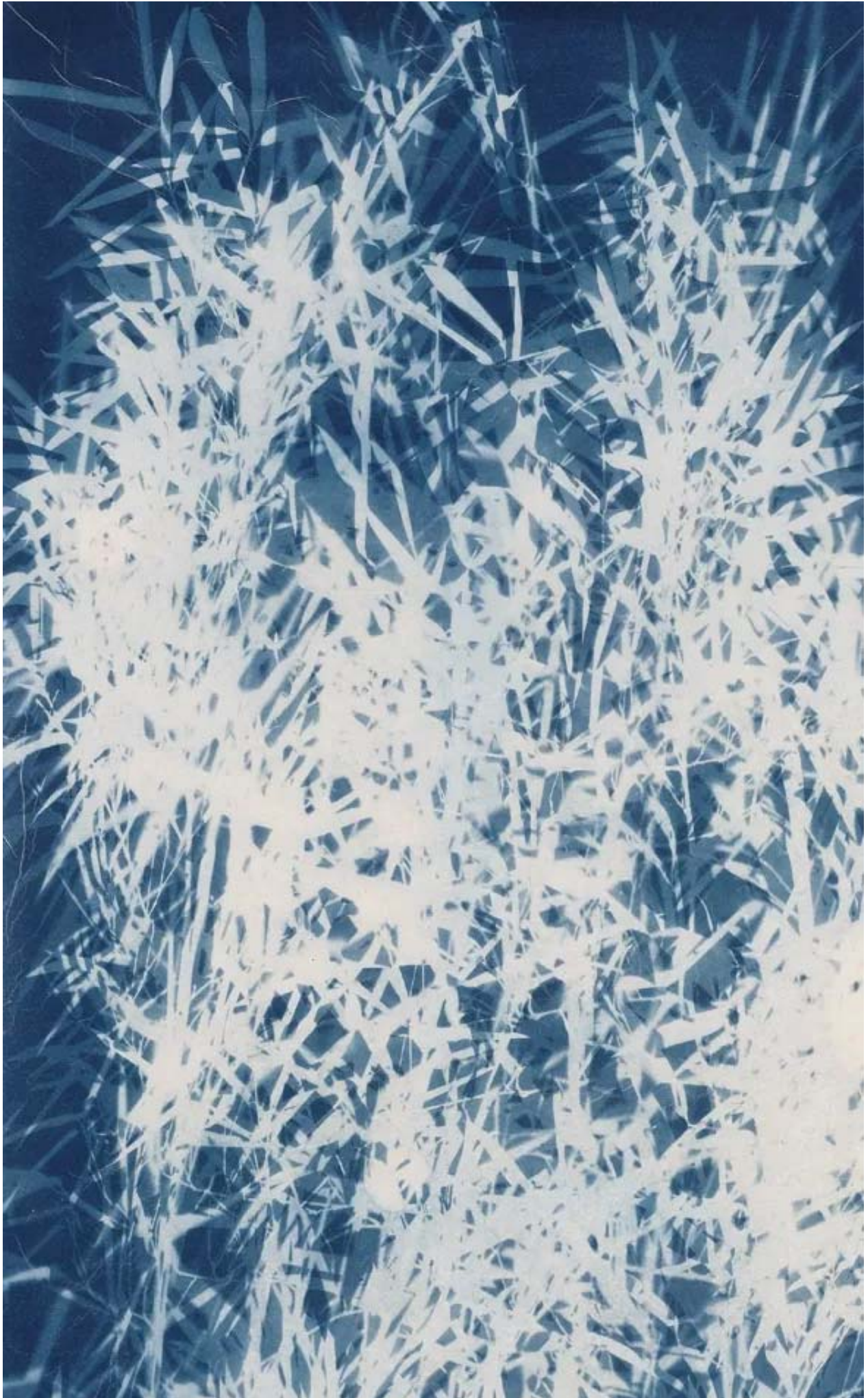


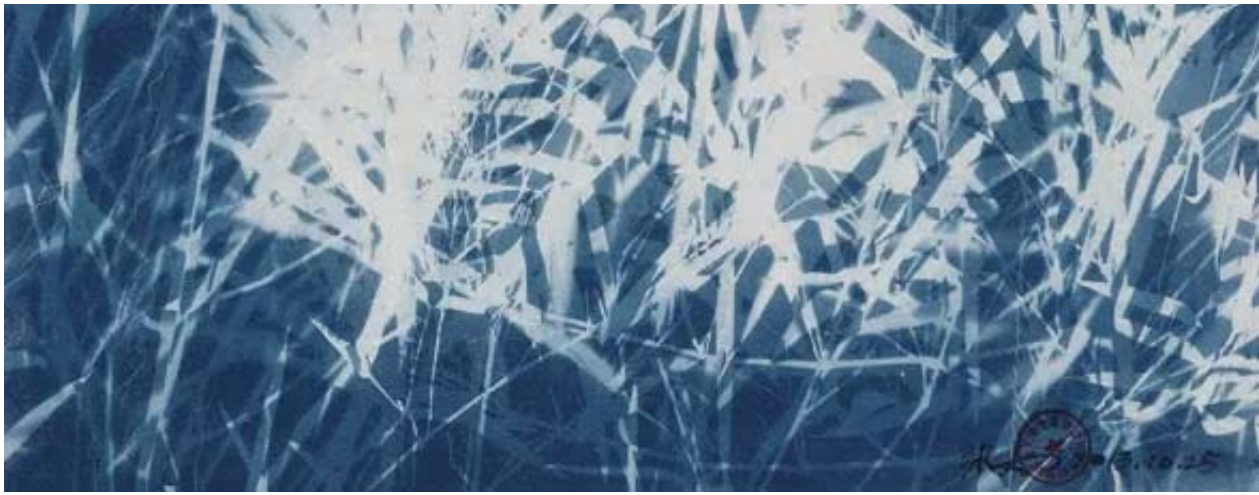
Cyanotype in the making at the artist's studio



Bamboo Series 2016

In 1842, only 3 years after the invention of photography, John Herschel found out the technique to fix a bluish image for a long time, he was the first to use ferric chloride, and not silver chloride photo technique (Argentotype).





Bamboo Series 2013

In 1843 a British woman, Anna Atkins, produced *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, an illustrated book with over one hundred images of seaweed specimens. Atkins used the cyanotype process learned directly from Sir John Herschel, a family friend. Only 13 copies of her book remain in world museums. It can be said that Atkins was the first photographer to use iron-based photograms.



Square 2013



Moonlight (17) 2015

I believe I am among the first to use cyanotypes of living and material objects of such large format.



张大伟
2013.11.16



AK-47 Cyanotype and Ink 2013

I will continue to explore this non-digital, unique photogram print methodology, as a means of interacting with and memorializing the temporary environment that

surrounds me in Beijing. “

-Zhang Dali

**Cyanotypes are still on show at
Pékin Fine Arts Gallery
until May 20**





张大力 Zhang Dali
自然的纪念碑 Monumental Nature

北京艺门画廊 (北京)
Pékin Fine Arts (Beijing)
展览时间：2018年3月10日 — 2018年5月20日
Duration: Mar. 10, 2018 – May. 20, 2018
开幕时间：2018年3月10日 (周六) 14:00 -18:00
Opening Reception : Sat. Mar. 10, 2018 2 - 6 pm

Wechat : 北京艺门画廊
北京艺门画廊 Pékin Fine Arts

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