

# SHEN XIN

b. 1990, Chengdu, China. Lives in London, UK, and Miní Sóta Makhóche, the land of the Dakhóta Oyáte.

Every exchange involves some kind of translation—if not always between languages, at any rate between judgments and belief systems. In Shen Xin’s practice, which consists predominantly of moving images and performances, fictional (and oftentimes queer) encounters become a primary means of confronting the layered complexities of the world in its multitude—with all its historical traumas of colonialism and racism further exacerbated by emergent technologies and ecological meltdown—and a stage on which to rehearse methods of undermining dominant power structures, starting at the interpersonal level. ▲ In the four-channel video installation *Provocation of the Nightingale* (2017), Shen casts two Korean women as lovers—one playing a Tibetan Buddhist, the other in the role of a DNA analyst—to converse on stage at the Asia Culture Center in Gwangju, South Korea. The other three channels, all taking place in the same solemn space of the theater, display, respectively, an animation composed of yellow rings made by motion-capturing YouTube users sharing their DNA tests; a compilation of found footage documenting the complex consequences of religious practices being variously assimilated around the globe; and a scene of two dancers in non-verbal exchange. These juxtapositions invoke the power of affective bonds and their ability to open up marginal spaces in oppressive environments, through acts driven as much by emotional intensity as by the practical and at times arduous process of working through differences. Instead of presenting cohesive narratives that suture viewers inward, Shen structures their multichannel installations so as to demand constant negotiation (and, to be sure, translation) from the viewer between the artist’s constructed world and inhabited reality. ▲ *Brine Lake (A New Body)* (2020) centers iodine, a chemical found in biodiverse deep-sea brine pools, as a way to think with metabolic rifts between peoples throughout history. The multi-channel installation features two visible protagonists who speak directly to the camera in Korean, Japanese, and Russian, oscillating between allusive revelations about origins and corporate lingo drawn from the complex processes of iodine extraction, assimilation, and interaction facilitated by new technologies. Two unseen interlocutors’ identities are concealed and their speech muted by fictional redaction, forcing viewers to fill in the gaps with their own interpretations. Commissioned by the 13th Gwangju Biennale, the distinct multilingualism of *Brine Lake (A New Body)* nods to the Zainichi and Koryo-saram people, descendants of ethnic Koreans who migrated to Japan and Sakhalin Island under Japanese rule in the early 1940s and who now inhabit a stateless identity. *Brine Lake (A New Body)* affirms the power and autonomy of many wayward modes of living in the confines of capitalist nation-state governance. ▲ ALVIN JIAHUAN LI

- \* 1–2  
**Brine Lake (A New Body)**, 2020 (stills), five-channel video and sound installation, 43:44 min. Kadist Collection
- \* 3–4  
**Warm Spell**, 2018 (stills), digital video, single-channel video installation, 34:22 min. Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art and University of Salford Collection; Wang Bing Collection; Meikailong Collection; and Points Collection
- \* 5  
**Provocation of the Nightingale**, 2017 (still), four-channel video installation, 64:35 min. M+ Museum HK Collection and Wang Bing Collection
- \* 6  
**Commerce des Esprits**, 2018, four-channel video installation, 17:25 min. Installation view: *To Satisfate*, Madeln Gallery, Shanghai, China, 2019. New Century Art Foundation Collection
- \* 7  
**Provocation of the Nightingale**, 2017, four-channel video installation, 64:35 min. Installation view: *BALTIC Artists’ Award*, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK, 2017. M+ Museum HK Collection and Wang Bing Collection



\* 1



\* 2



\*3



\*4



\*5



\*6



\*7