Exhibition Overview

*Garden of Seasons* is an exhibition by Wang Xu set to take place at the Vincent Price Art Museum in Monterey Park, California from December 8, 2018 through March 9, 2019. The exhibition is produced and curated by Equitable Vitrines, a Los Angeles-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to expanding the collective understanding of art in the public sphere by advancing forms that are at once nuanced and widely accessible.

*Garden of Seasons* constitutes a lyrical reflection by Wang on an attempt made by Equitable Vitrines in 2017 to temporarily place one of his sculptures (entitled *Eve*, from Wang’s 2015 project *Eve and David*) in a public park in Monterey Park, California. The exhibition will consist of a new, monumentally-scaled figurative sculpture and a film documenting its creation. What follows is a brief recapitulation of *Eve and David*; followed by an account of Equitable Vitrines’ campaign in Monterey Park; and finally a description of the sculpture at the center of *Garden of Seasons*—which is most profitably considered within the context of these two antecedents.
In 2010, Wang completed a five-year course in sculpture at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, where he was trained to create the sort of realist statuary that is produced en masse in China, both for export and for display within the country’s expanding urban areas. Upon graduating, Wang elected to pursue an MFA at Columbia University in order to augment his rigorous technical education with an understanding of Western, conceptual modes of artistic production and analysis. *Eve and David* was Wang’s first major project following the conclusion of his studies, and it serves in many ways as a reconciliation of these two influences.
Wang produced *Eve and David* at a marble quarry and commercial sculpture factory in Dangchen, Quyang County, China, where he had been employed years prior during time off from his undergraduate studies. Quyang has served as the seat of stone carving in China since the time of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 AD), however, in recent decades the sculptors working there have overwhelmingly adopted classical and Renaissance-era representational styles in response to demand for such statuary in the marketplace. In order to produce *Eve* and *David*, Wang recovered two damaged, discarded statues representing the Biblical characters and proceeded to re-carve them in the image of two workers (one female, one male) that he met on-site.
Wang first exhibited *Eve and David* at SculptureCenter in New York, and in a manner typical to the artist, he displayed the statues alongside a projected film work that reveals in cinematic detail the circumstances under which they were produced, while employing narration (in Mandarin with English subtitles) to relay provisional, often poetic interpretations of their significance. In the film Wang observes that, like himself, “most people here...have not seen the original David by Michelangelo.” Similarly, “As for Eve's appearance, it doesn't seem to matter here. The sculptors work from their imagination.” The statues produced in Dangchen are functional: no matter where in the world they are placed, they transmit a sense of culture, however ambiguous. The relation of these reproductions to their historical referents is contained within a few formal signifiers: a pose, a snake, an apple. Everything surrounding such points of reference subtly bears the individual style of the statue's creator.

While *Eve and David* undoubtedly draws attention to people, places, and processes that lie behind these pervasive, vague signs of civilization, it ultimately comes to refute the oft-repeated notion that such things are “invisible.” Wang looks actively and compassionately at these pieces of the earth—extracted, manipulated, distributed—and asserts that their most essential, remarkable qualities are perfectly evident.

Installation image: *Under Foundations*, SculptureCenter, New York
In late 2016, Equitable Vitrines identified Heritage Falls Park as a potential site for public art. This identification was initially based purely on the site's compelling aesthetic attributes: it consists of a verdant hillside bisected by an ornate, tiered fountain executed in the Spanish colonial style. After conducting independent research and consulting with Monterey Park’s Historical Society, Equitable Vitrines became convinced that the park also provided an exceedingly rich historical context in which to stage an intervention. What is now Heritage Falls Park was initially built by developer Peter N. Snyder in 1929 to serve as the center of an ambitious, racially-exclusive real estate development called Midwick View Estates. Shortly after the onset of the Great Depression, plans for Snyder’s “garden community” were scrapped, and, as the story goes, a marble statue of Athena that Snyder had placed in the niche at the fountain’s source went missing under mysterious circumstances. In 1937 the site was deeded to the City and officially became a public park, but it wasn’t until 2011 that Monterey Park’s Historical Society was able to raise the necessary funds to purchase and install a new Athena in the niche. Curiously, neither the original statue, nor its replacement bore any of the formal qualities traditionally associated with the Greek goddess Athena: archival photos of the original statue reveal an anonymous figure holding a Grecian urn, while its replacement portrays Flora, a minor Roman deity.
In addition to the interpretive inertia surrounding the past and present statues at Heritage Falls Park, an aspect of Monterey Park’s history became central to Equitable Vitrines’ choice of artwork to be used in its proposal: in the time between the disappearance of the original Athena and the importing of its replacement, the city had undergone a massive demographic shift, in which people of Asian descent had come to represent upwards of 66% of the city’s total population. Since the 1980s, Monterey Park has been known for its position at the forefront of national debates surrounding issues of diversity, inclusion and assimilation, and so it seemed logical to engage with an artist whose work was not blind to such issues. Equitable Vitrines approached Wang, who agreed that placing Evé, a Western-style sculpture with a Chinese face, in the fountain at Heritage Falls Park would provide a thought provoking—though aesthetically congruous—juxtaposition to Athena and prompt the City’s residents to consider what values are transmitted through artworks placed in public spaces—and why, and how. After Equitable Vitrines determined that the incumbent Athena had been imported from Quyang, China, the project took on increased significance: two nearly identical pieces of stone—each imbued with a unique identity through collective acts of projection and interpretation—could, through an act of hospitality, be temporarily reunited thousands of miles from their point of origin.
Equitable Vitrines spent months meeting with residents and community leaders in Monterey Park, explaining the proposal, discussing the value of public art in general, and addressing a range of concerns both technical and conceptual. During the same period, Equitable Vitrines secured letters of support for the project from representatives of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and Monterey Park's own Vincent Price Art Museum. After the City's Recreation and Parks commission voted unanimously in support of the project, EV's proposal was publicly debated for approximately three-and-a-half hours at a City Council meeting on April 19, 2017. The Council was open to the display of Eve, but not at Heritage Falls Park, due to the vocal resistance of a group of residents who claimed that Wang's sculpture, placed even temporarily, would irredeemably disturb the historical nature of the Park, and the perceived social cohesion of the city. Equitable Vitrines rescinded its proposal, citing its site-specific nature. The debate over Eve was covered in a variety of local, national and international news outlets.
Following the city council meeting in which its proposal was considered, Equitable Vitrines was invited to produce an exhibition at the Vincent Price Art Museum that could serve as an extension of its efforts in Monterey Park. In lieu of creating an exhibit about the political process it had initiated and the controversy that the proposal generated, Equitable Vitrines invited Wang to conceive of a new artwork that could in some way—and in good faith—respond to all that had transpired.

Wang has taken inspiration from Heritage Falls Park’s so-called Athenas, and is currently working with sculptors in Quyang to produce a replica of *The Hope Athena*, a sculpture he looked to for solace during a trip to LACMA shortly after Equitable Vitrines rescinded its proposal. While *The Hope Athena* is widely considered to be an iconic example of Classical statuary, it is itself a replica, produced in second-century Rome after a Greek original from the fifth century BCE. Wang’s *Athena* will be perfectly faithful to the original, with the exception of one detail: the figure will be grasping an urn in a manner that is based on archival photos of Peter Snyder’s original, lost *Athena*. *Garden of Seasons*, and Wang’s work more generally, focus on the ever-shifting stories that animate enduring forms, ultimately suggesting that history itself is a myth in a perpetual state of collective revision.
Equitable Vitrines

Artist CV
Wang Xu
Born in Dalian, China.
Lives and works in New York and China.

Education
2009 Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI.

Exhibitions
2018
Forthcoming Solo Show, Vincent Price Art Museum, CA
Season 2 Residency Artists Exhibition, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
2017
The Socrates Annual, Socrates Sculpture Park, New York
47 Canal, Mosquitoes, Dusts, and Thieves, New York
Seeds of Time, Shanghai Project Chapter 2, Shanghai, China, curated by Yongwoo Lee & Hans Ulrich Obrist
DRAW/Boston, Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Boston, organized by Tomas Vu
2016
APEC, 67 Ludlow Street, New York
This one is smaller than this one, GALERIST, Istanbul Turkey, curated by Paulina Bebecka
This one is smaller than this one, Postmasters, New York, curated by Paulina Bebecka
2015
In Response of Repetition and Difference, Jewish Museum, New York
Under Foundations, SculptureCenter, New York, curated by Jessica Wilcox
Draw: Mapping Madness, Inside-out Art Museum, Beijing
‘What’s the Weather Like Today?, Gallery 46, New York, curated by Pieter Vanhove
2014
MUU, Street Art Museum, Zagreb, Croatia
UNITED AGAINST SPECULATION, Neiman Gallery, New York, curated by Rikrit Tiravanija
Upon the Skin, 19B Studio, New York, curated by Hanlu Zhang
2013
Columbia MFA Thesis, Fisher Landau Center for Art, New York, curated by Fionn Meade

Screenings
2016
A Frame Apart, Queens International 2016 Short Film Program, Queens Museum, curated by: Prerana Reddy (Director of Public Programs, Queens Museum)
QI 2016 guest curator Lindsey Berfond, and Adrianne Kooceen, guest Public Program Associate
Flaherty NYC
Anthology Film Archives, New York, curated by Lana Lin and Cauleen Smith

Residencies and Fellowships
2018
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
Taipei Artists Village Residency
2017
LMCC Workspace Fellowship, Lower Manhanttan Cultural Council, New York
The Socrates Annual Fellowship, Socrates Sculpture Park, New York
2016
The Shandaken Project, Storm King, New Windsor, NY
Pioneer Works, New York
Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York

Awards
2018 Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Project Grant
2013 Final list, Emerging Artist Grants, Rema Hort Mann Foundation
2013 Joan Sovern Award

Bibliography

Public Collection KADIST
RAIN BIRD, 2017

Polystyrene, scrap aluminum and cans, vinyl, rocks, shell, and water spout
48 x 68 x 70 inches

This portrait of the Park's resident horticulturist, Yousif Dawud, evolved from the artist shadowing Socrates’ grounds crew during the artist's summer residency. Composed of materials found on site, polystyrene washed up from the East River, and an aluminum mask cast from scrap metal, Rain Bird reflects Socrates' homegrown spirit, restorative origins, and dynamic evolving character.

SUMMER WIND BEFORE RAIN, 2017

“Summer Wind Before Rain” (2017) was shot in upstate New York at Storm King Art Center during Wang Xu’s residency there. Nestled in the mountains and greenery of the Hudson Valley, the center sites more than 100 sculptures over a 500-acre landscape. The work is an attempt to place the body and creation within the context of the wilderness. Wang explains, “I collected clay and plants from the mountain, using them as raw materials for the sculpture, through a process of mixing and drying. In the attempt to relocate the body and art making into the wilderness, I also recorded the process of producing a bust for a gardener who works at the Art Center. As the two of us stood across from each other by the landmark tree at the edge of the outdoor park, I picked up a pile of corn silk to portray the gardener’s mustache; from this silent exchange, a strange murmur transpired in the convergence with nature.”

Considering Storm King’s collection mostly consists of large-scale public installations, the video captures the action of preparing for the resulting sculpture. The atmospheric shots of the natural surroundings serve as a foundational backdrop for the portrait. Wang’s tireless labor is a reminder of the way we control, and are controlled, by nature.
Equitable Vitrines

Supplemental Images
Google Street View of Heritage Falls Park and historic photo of Heritage Falls Park

“The Hope Athena”, a Roman reproduction of a Greek original, now in the William Randolph Hearst Collection at LACMA

Fabrication in process
Artist painting a fresco of Athena at the Skowhegan Residency
Monterey Park's Official City Seal
Equitable Vitrines

Letters of Support for Public Art Proposal
Wednesday, March 1, 2017

To the Monterey Park City Council:

As the director of the Vincent Price Art Museum (VPAM) at East Los Angeles College, it is my duty to be cognizant of projects happening in our city that closely align with our museum’s mission and philosophy, and to provide support and community partnership where appropriate. VPAM serves as a unique educational resource for the diverse population of Monterey Park. Through our exhibitions, collection, programming, and preservation efforts, we promote knowledge, inspire creative thinking, and deepen the understanding of and appreciation for the visual arts.

Equitable Vitrines’ public art proposal for the temporary installation of Xu Wang’s sculpture in the Cascades fountain at Heritage Falls Park is a thoughtful and invigorating project that will undoubtedly contribute to the enrichment of Monterey Park's residents. I am writing to express my support of this project and have confidence that it will be executed in a professional manner. Equitable Vitrines has clearly expressed its goals to catalyze conversations and provide educational programming in Monterey Park’s community which encompasses the project’s themes.

Xu Wang’s Eve sculpture, a portrait of a female stone sculptor who works in a factory that mass-produces marble figures, was created at the very same quarry as the Athena sculpture currently housed in the fountain. It would be a gesture of inclusivity, open-mindedness, and progressive thinking to allow for the sculptures to coexist in the fountain for a limited period, with the aim of inspiring meaningful conversations about the invisible labor behind the objects we purchase globally, what it means to be a hospitable city today, and “acceptable” depictions of beauty in public art.

I have been a Monterey Park resident for four years and drive on Atlantic Boulevard daily. This subtle, considered, and temporary introduction of a new sculpture will bring many new visitors to the historic, oft-overlooked park. We have invited Equitable Vitrines to make use of our lecture hall for impactful programming that will be free to the public. All of us at VPAM hope that the City Council will vote in favor of allowing Equitable Vitrines to fulfill its mission to share contemporary artwork with populations that do not normally engage with art on a regular basis.

We fully support and look forward to having a compelling reason to direct thousands of ELAC students to Heritage Falls Park to experience a critical historical site and interact with an energizing public artwork.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Pilar Tompkins Rivas
Director, Vincent Price Art Museum
Dear Mayor Theresa Real Sebastian and the Monterey Park City Council Members,

I am writing from my position as Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) to recommend that the Monterey Park City Council vote to approve Equitable Vitrines’ proposal for the installation of Xu Wang’s sculpture Eve in the fountain at Heritage Falls Park. Equitable Vitrines (EV) is a young and promising nonprofit organization representing a model heretofore unexplored in this region: their projects are formed around specific sites, with primary consideration given to the audiences in closest proximity to where the work will be installed. EV considers the work it does with local populations, and the governing bodies that serve as prospective “hosts” for their projects, as part of the artistic process. By bringing art into unexpected places and initiating conversations about the importance and meaning of art in forums where such issues are rarely considered, EV provides a valuable educational service to LA County. I watched as Equitable Vitrines developed their approach through two years of impressive programming in the lobby of Los Angeles’ Equitable Life Building, and am thrilled that they have decided to expand their operation into the municipal realm.

As a curator and museum professional who has been working in the field for over a decade, I can assure the council that the project’s concept is sound and the educational and artistic benefit to the City of Monterey Park and its residents is undeniable. Ellie Lee, the director of Equitable Vitrines, has been in conversation with LACMA’s very own Community Engagement Manager, Marvilla Muro, whom is currently engaged in off-site programming at the Vincent Price Art Museum and the Bruggemeyer Library. It is clear that Equitable Vitrines is very serious about organizing events that will be relevant and appealing to Monterey Park’s residents.

If the Monterey Park City Council has the foresight to approve Equitable Vitrines’ proposal, I am confident that they will be rewarded with a meaningful and professionally managed project that engages with and energizes the City’s residents, while drawing a significant number of visitors from throughout LA County and beyond. From my perspective, the City of Monterey Park should be thrilled to have the opportunity to be the first in what I imagine to be a long line of successful public art projects initiated by Equitable Vitrines.

Sincerely,

Christine Y. Kim

Associate Curator, Contemporary Art
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Monterey Park City Counci
320 W. Newmark Avenue
Monterey Park, CA 91754

To the Honorable Mayor Teresa Real Sebastian and the Monterey Park City Council:

I am writing to encourage the Honorable Mayor and City Council of Monterey Park to vote in favor of Equitable Vitrines’ proposal to install public art in the fountain at Heritage Falls Park.

Before being hired at Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) where I currently work as the Director of Education and Public Programs, I served as associate curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem in New York. During my tenure at the Studio Museum, I worked in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, along with the Marcus Garvey Park Alliance to curate inHarlem: Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk and Rudy Shepherd, an exhibition of site-specific, commissioned public works made by contemporary artists at each of the four Historic Harlem Parks. The works will remain on view through July 25, 2017, and have been a meaningful addition to each of their sites; social media and personal correspondences have proven their continued impact. Having organized and produced this initial phase of inHarlem, I feel suited to speak to the benefits of public artworks as a potential site for meaningful conversation surrounding contemporary art, culture, and pertinent social issues. It is work that I began doing during my first tenure as a curator at LAXART in Los Angeles, and it is work that I plan to continue well into my future here in Los Angeles.

As the director of Education and Public Programs at MOCA, it is my responsibility to speak knowledgeably and authoritatively of the value of artworks both within and outside of the museum. When I learned of Equitable Vitrines’ proposal to install Xu Wang’s Eve in the fountain in Monterey Park’s Heritage Falls Park, I was thrilled. This project would situate a museum-quality artwork in a context that is rich, not just aesthetically but culturally and symbolically. By placing Eve in proximity to the existing Athena statue, which was sourced in 2005 from the same region in China, Equitable Vitrines is inviting visitors to think past trite ideas of “authenticity”, in order to more deeply consider the unique virtues and complex history of Monterey Park. I anticipate that Equitable Vitrines' programmatic collaboration with Monterey Park’s own Vincent Price Art Museum will only further serve the surrounding public in order to expand the impact of this project.

If Equitable Vitrines’ proposal is accepted by the Monterey Park City Council, I will use my position at the museum to help give visibility to the project to MOCA’s members and annual visitors toward the City. Through the simple act of hosting Equitable Vitrines and Xu Wang, Monterey Park can make a gesture of hospitality that will reach far beyond its own borders.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hunt
April 10, 2017

Mayor and City Council
City of Monterey Park
320 West Newmark Avenue
Monterey Park, CA 91754

Dear Mayor Teresa Real Sebastian and Monterey Park City Council:

I am submitting this letter of support for a proposal by Equitable Vitrines to temporarily install artist Xu Wang’s sculpture of Eve at the Cascades fountain. This proposal is meant to complement the existing sculpture of Athena and represents an opportunity for Monterey Park residents to learn the role in which public art and the spaces that house them play in understanding an area’s history, it’s culture, and how this dynamic evolves over time and is preserved.

The Cascades Fountain is an important iconic landmark that is synonymous with Monterey Park’s early history and is well-known as a symbol of the City of Monterey Park’s municipal government. The Cascades has also been witness to our city as a place where generations of newcomers from throughout the United States and around the world have arrived to Monterey Park and called it their home. It is therefore fitting to have the Cascades as the focal point to have a conversation about our community’s rich history of diversity and inclusion as well as its current role as a global cultural gateway. The installation of Eve will be installed in a manner that would require no permanent alteration of the Cascade fountain and Heritage Falls Park.

Furthermore, inclusion of Eve and its subsequent temporary term of placement at the Cascades Fountain has the potential to spur an opportunity for the City Of Monterey Park to partner with our local institutions of learning, such as East Los Angeles College, and the several school districts that serve our residents, to use this installation as learning tool on a rich variety of topics within the context of art, culture, recreational spaces and its ability to enrich civic life.

Art and its inclusion in our public facilities has a long history in the United States. Therefore, as a long-time resident of Monterey Park, I hope you will approve the proposal and recognize its potential to further enhance Monterey Park’s image as an inclusive and dynamic city that is also a welcoming place to its residents and visitors, alike.

Sincerely,

HENRY LO
Board Member
Garvey Elementary School District
March 21, 2017

Mayor Teresa Real Sebastian and the Monterey Park City Council,

I write to express my support of Equitable Vitrines’ public art proposal to temporarily install artist Xu Wang’s sculpture of Eve at the Cascades, as a guest of the existing Athena sculpture that stands at the top of the waterfall.

Intended to be a focal point for development in the early stages of our city’s history, the Cascades have long served as a symbol of Monterey Park, including prominent display on our city seal. Over the decades, our city has grown and served as a gateway and home for immigrants from throughout the world. Monterey Park has welcomed and continues to welcome families like my own, striving to make a new home in a strange land.

The proposal for Athena to “welcome” Eve to the Cascades would be a wonderful gesture of hospitality and inclusiveness, reflective of our city’s evolution into a mosaic of diverse cultures, languages, and lived experiences.

Art in public spaces contributes to a richer community and the development of a sense of place and belonging. The temporary installation would expand on recent efforts to beautify the city (e.g. painting of utility boxes, park clean ups, upgrading median landscaping, etc.) and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to more fully experience Monterey Park and its many assets.

As a life-long resident of the city, I hope you will approve the proposal. I hope and believe it will serve as a catalyst for thoughtful community dialogue and perhaps inspire further ideas to expand public art and make our city more vibrant and engaging for residents and visitors alike.

Sincerely,

Thomas Wong
President, San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District