

# JOHN YOUNG



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MOORE CONTEMPORARY

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# JOHN YOUNG

NONE LIVING KNOWS and SHIVA

7th October - 12th November 2022

Cover:  
*Shiva XXIV*, 2022  
Oil on Belgian linen  
71 x 89.5cm

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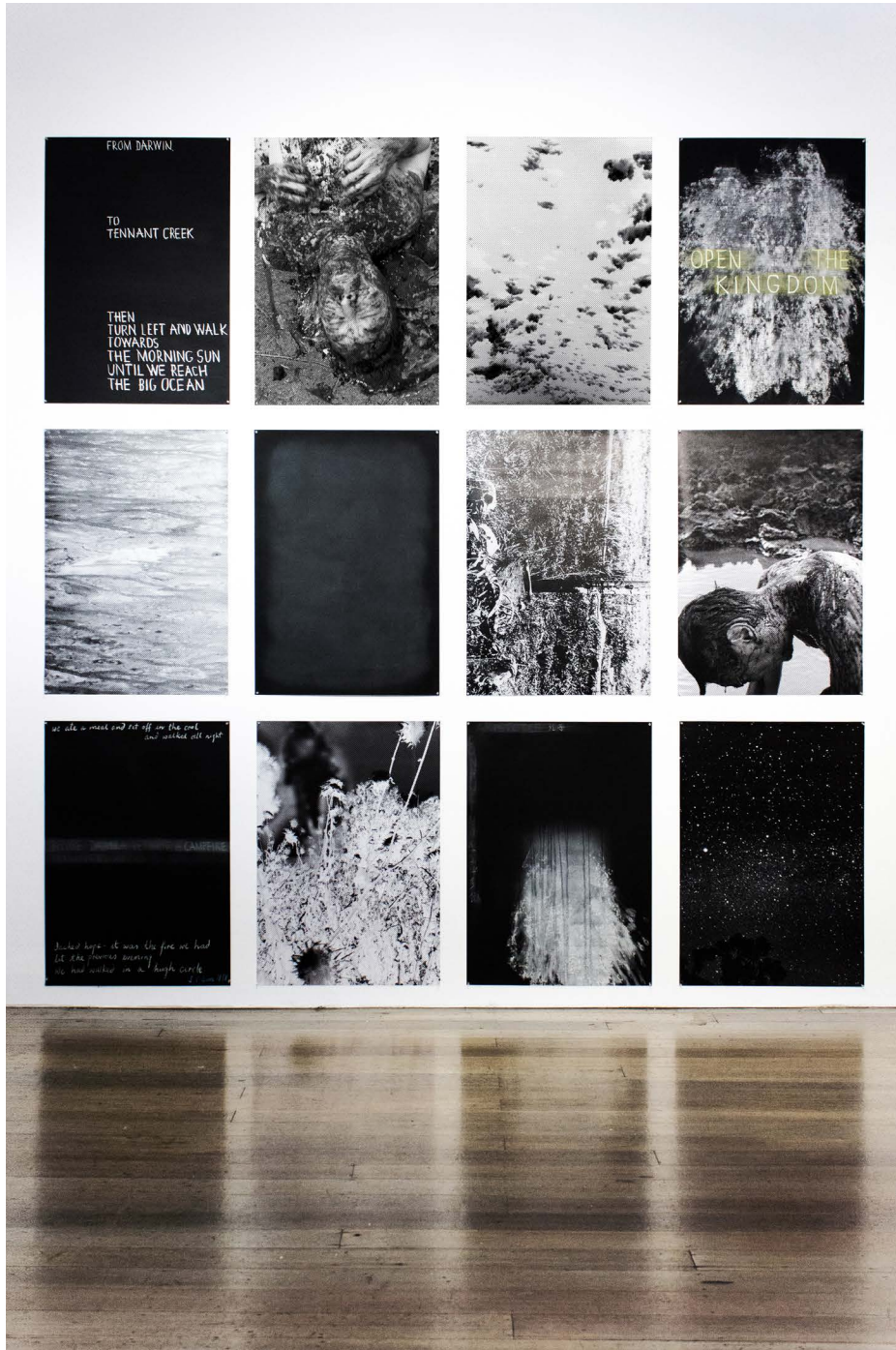
At MOORE CONTEMPORARY, John Young presents two projects: *None Living Knows* and *The Shiva Paintings* from two cycles of works that have occupied him for the last fifteen years - *History Projects* (2007-2022) and *Abstract Paintings* (2006-present).

The *History Projects*, focussing on the history of violence and benevolence, also later developed a visual history of the Chinese in Australia since 1840. The *Abstract Paintings*, a reassessment of technology's devastation to bodily skills.

Within the realm of art making, Young incorporates elements of trans-cultural art history to consider the culture surrounding globalisation and migratory dislocation; the sociological impacts of technology; as well as notions of memory, affect, resonance and melancholia.

*Oval I (Version 2)*, 2022  
Oil on linen  
97 x 72cm

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## NONE LIVING KNOWS

*Perhaps in the world's destruction it would be possible at last to see how it was made. Oceans, mountains. The ponderous counterspectacle of things ceasing to be. The sweeping waste, hydroptic and coldly secular. The silence.*

- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

*The stranger's out on the road . . . not just wandering about, with nowhere to go. All the time, he's coming closer to a place he can call his own.*

- Martin Heidegger

*None Living Knows*, 2017

Digital print on photographic paper and chalk on blackboard-painted archival cotton paper  
12 units, 100 x 70cm each, overall dimensions variable

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*None Living Knows* are words taken from W.B. Yeats' *His Memories*, perhaps evocative of an event in Australia that to this date, has barely been documented.

In the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Chinese immigrants walked some 2,500 kilometres through Australia to avoid the poll tax and other forms of restriction to Chinese migration introduced from 1855. As well as the better known walk from Robe, South Australia to the Victorian goldfields of Ararat, Ballarat, Castlemaine and Bendigo (16,261 Chinese men, and one woman landed in Robe between 1857-1863), smaller numbers of Chinese also travelled by foot over 2,500 kilometers from Darwin through the Northern Territory to the Queensland border towns of Burketown, Camooweal and Urandangi, with some settling in far North Queensland where gold had been found at the Palmer River. Unguided and often alone, the walkers trailed a perilous and unmapped route, with little water, no supplies, and risking attack by Aboriginal clans and arrest as illegal migrants, a tenacious endeavour that resulted in many deaths.

The work is a meditation on this walk, a walk by men who had departed their original Chinese world, and denied their new on arrival.

*This momentous event can and will only be posed as a question. When an event is drained of historical facts, whether it's devoid of reportage, or its remoteness in time - we will never know what inhabited the minds of those who took the 2500km walk - the wretchedness, the demons, the lost, the transcendence, the acceptance of the present - which in the end may have proved to be their life's salvation.*

- JY

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This is the fourth project in the series by John Young that is dedicated to the history and stories of the Chinese diaspora in Australia since 1840. The artist would like to thank and acknowledge Gordon Grimwade, a north Queensland based historical archaeologist, for introducing this event to the public with his travelling display exhibition in 2013.

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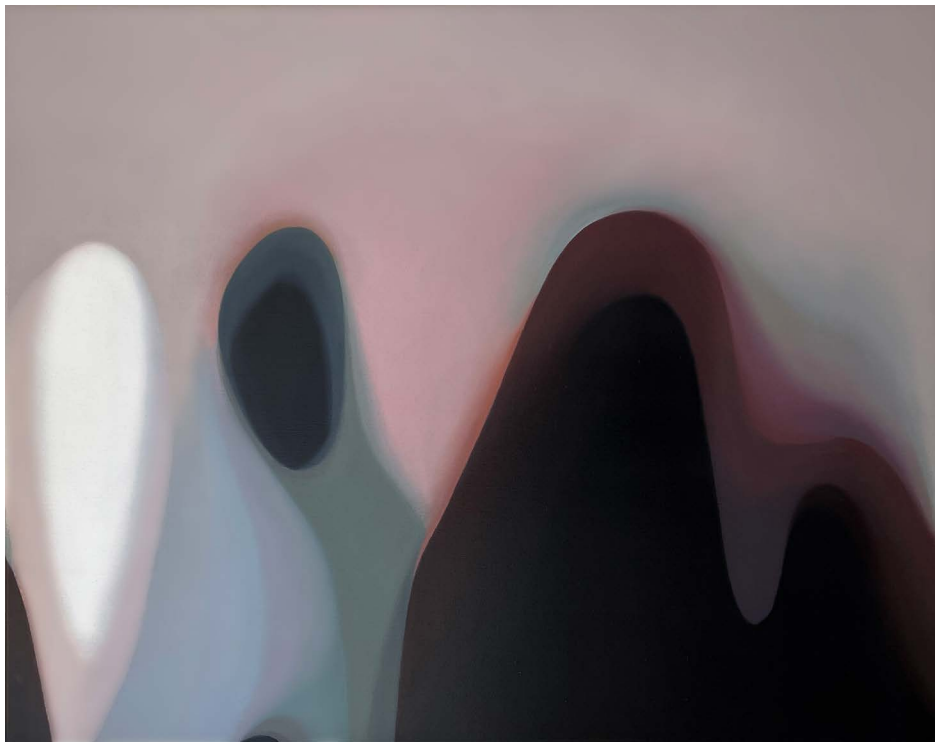
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## THE SHIVA PAINTINGS

*Gustav Mahler, born Jewish and then converting to Christianity later in life, often started his symphonies with an ending - life's ending. The first movements are often a melody of funerary marchers, as if these endings mark a time of beginnings for the living. In Judaism, when a dear one passes, one sits for seven days in silence. This ritual is "sitting shiva". In silence, the sitter attunes themselves to the passing memories, of experiences, of meaning, of hope - like Mahler's Adagiettos - and all the while, the passage of time heals.*

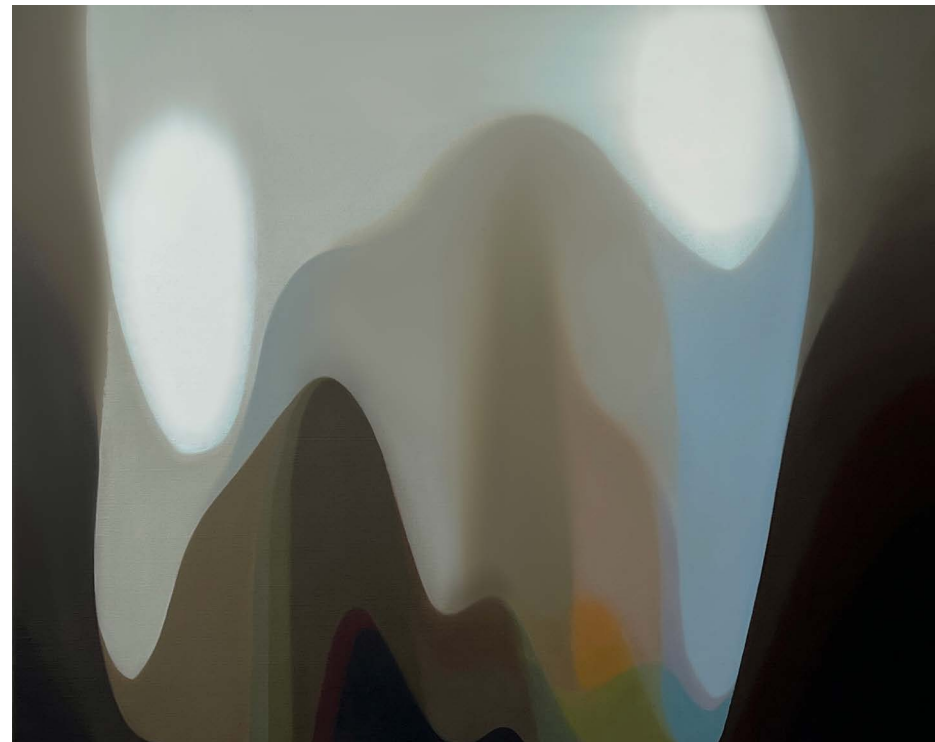
*And so it is in the world, when those dear ones pass, as with the life and work of Colin McCahon, of Ian Fairweather, or Hilma af Klint, or when we are tested by those life arresting events that stop it in its tracks; a flood, a fire, a plague, a war, a climate crisis. We then sit in patience, in shiva. That time in stillness is healing, almost unbeknownst to us, so that one day beauty and presence can return.*

- JY



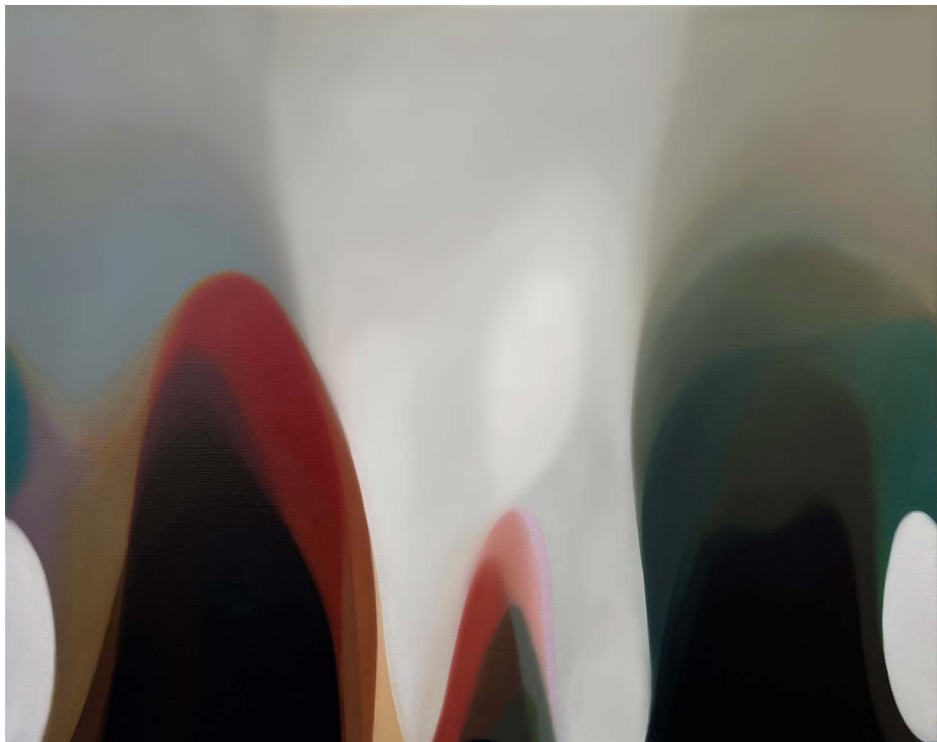
*Shiva XXVII*, 2022  
Oil on Belgian linen  
71 x 89.5cm

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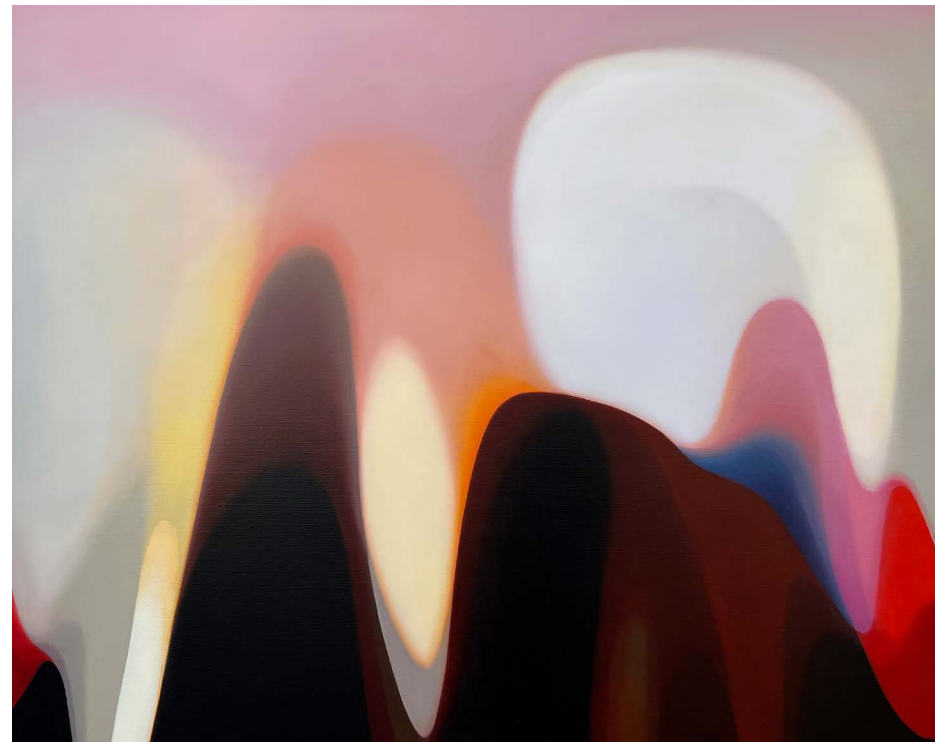
*Shiva XXXVII*, 2022  
Oil on Belgian linen  
71 x 89.5cm

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*Shiva XXVI*, 2022  
Oil on Belgian linen  
71 x 89.5cm

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*Shiva XXVIII*, 2022  
Oil on Belgian linen  
71 x 89.5cm

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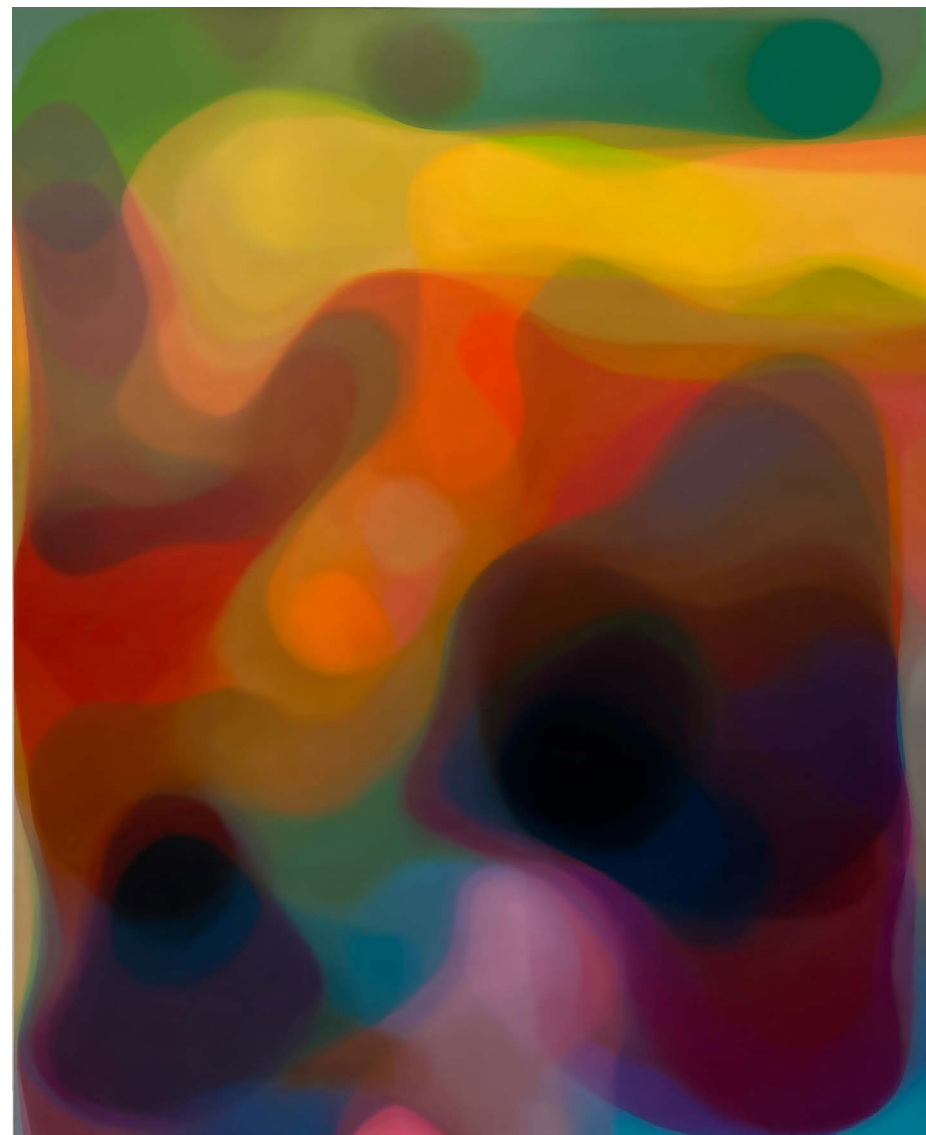
## BIOGRAPHY

John Young Zerunge AM (楊子榮) was born in Hong Kong and moved to Australia in 1967. His first solo exhibition in 1981, *The Second Mirage*, was held on the front door of a small stone cottage in the fishing village of Rosroe, Connemara, on the extreme west coast of Ireland. Having begun his artistic activities in the 1980s with writings on conceptualism and postmodernism, Young's continued investigation of Western late modernism prompted significant phases of work from a transcultural viewpoint with a focus on the regional development in the Asia-Pacific, including series of paintings in the last four decades: *The Silhouette Paintings*, *The Polychrome Paintings*, and *The Double Ground Paintings*.

In the past decade or so, he has concentrated on two main projects: *The History Projects*, focusing on the history of violence and benevolence, which in later projects developed the first interpreted visual history of the Chinese in Australia since 1840; and *Abstract Paintings*, a reassessment of technology's devastation to bodily skills.

Young has had more than 80 solo exhibitions in Australia and abroad, exhibiting regularly in Berlin, Hong Kong and Shanghai. His work has been shown in major exhibitions, including at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, is collected by the M+ Museum, Hong Kong as well as all national museums around Australia. Young has also completed four survey exhibitions, including at the Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Victoria, and Drill Hall Gallery, ANU, Canberra. There are three monographs on his work, as well as the forthcoming *John Young: History Projects* published by the Power Institute of Fine Arts, at the University of Sydney, 2023.

Young was seminal in establishing the 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney - a 25-year-old centre for the promotion of Asian philanthropy and the nurturing of Australasian artists and curators. He was the recipient of the Australia Council Fellowship in 2012. He was also made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2020 for significant service to the Visual Arts as a contemporary artist and painter. Young is now a Trustee at the McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery, Victoria.



*Head-On, 2022*  
Oil on Belgian linen  
183 x 150cm

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# MOORE CONTEMPORARY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The daily life in the studio is almost impossible without the efforts of these wonderful individuals: Noël Skrzypczak, Mateja Simenko, Genevieve Trail, Edie Duffy and studio co-ordinator Sarah Lammardo. My life is made richer by the day with my wife Kate Mizrahi and our children Jasper and Charlotte-Persia. Heartfelt thanks to Margaret Moore, for her exceptional commitment to the art our country has to offer, her astute care and friendship over many decades, and to Moore Contemporary for their professional support.*

- JY

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