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THE LIVES OF FORM: FROM ZHANG JIN TO AARON SISKIND

Consider pictures by three contemporary Chinese photographers: Zhang Jin, Yu Huaqiang, and Xing Danwen. Each of them, I propose, engages with ecological relationships of organic and inorganic forms by drawing upon a modernist aesthetic of flatness and surface.

In *Another Season* (You Yi Ji) (2010–13), Zhang Jin focuses on present-day landscapes of China's far northwest to show the entanglements there of human artifacts and natural forms, nomadism and ecology, the remote past and contemporary life. Zhang connects the aesthetic of his black-and-white photographs—which, he says in an interview in the Chinese



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Figure 1.

Zhang Jin, *Epitaph (Wordless Stele; Wu Zi Bei)*, from *Another Season (You Yi Ji)*, gelatin silver print, 2011. Courtesy of the artist.

edition of *Artforum*, negotiates “between abstraction and figuration”¹—to their depictions of objects and patterns in the landscapes of the Silk Road, the global trade route of the past that had connected China to India, Central Asia, and Europe. These objects, such as the “Epitaph” or, literally, “Wordless Stele” (Wuzi Bei) depicted in Zhang’s eponymous photograph of 2011 (fig. 1), “are no longer in the geographical positions they were in during the Han and Tang dynasties; they had been moved all over the place in later generations. With this migration of position and loss of their own functionality, static objects have become homeless pastoral nomads.”²

Crucially, Zhang Jin’s description of his work draws together the nomad and the migrant, as well as object and landscape, through an interplay of abstraction and figuration. The implicit commentary made by his images on the historicity of nature—as well as his depiction of nature as both process and form—becomes clear when placed in the context of China’s economic development.³

Zhang Jin is one of a number of photographers currently at work in China who, despite their distinct differences, have in common a conception of the emergent forms of surface as constituting ecologies: interactions of animate and inanimate matter, objects, spaces, and markings critical to rethinking relations among human, non-human, and environment. Whether such surfaces are depicted in a photograph, comprise the surface of a photograph itself, or designate the interplay of both, the stakes of the work of all of these photographers lie in picturing ecologies by means of a formalist aesthetics of abstraction. Such work raises questions of how and why such an aesthetic urges a re-evaluation of ecology as constituted by relationships of form and surface.

Yu Huaqiang’s explicit aim in his series *Water, Injury* (Shui, Shang) (2004) is to depict the pollution of an ecosystem. Each photograph in the series follows the same compositional scheme, the center of each square image depicting decaying animal corpses (fig. 2), human-made trash sprouting with life (fig. 3), and other detritus floating at the surface of a dying body of water in the Jiangnan region of southeast China.

Yu’s use of black and white film and a flat composition at first seems simply to collapse the monochrome of his photographs’ surfaces with the grey surface of the body of water they frame. But what actually makes the water’s surface

appear opaque are its murky, polluted depths: Yu composes his photographs so that depth *is* surface—or rather, the water as it appears in his photographs is at once all depth and yet depthless. Given how the figures of a corpse and trash here, as in Yu’s other photographs, appear both to float and to submerge into the watery pictorial ground, “surface” becomes a verb: it denotes a process of emerging and dissolving figures and grounds that picture the process of polluting itself.

Likewise, in *disCONNEXION* (2002–3), Xing Danwen photographs e-trash: discarded electronics, computer, and communications equipment exported from the West, South Korea, and Japan to the southern coastal region of China (fig. 4). Xing’s chromogenic film photographs indicate the intersection between the global routes of e-trash—the material basis of digital and internet culture—and the specific environmental and social conditions of over 100,000 people from Guangdong Province and migrant workers from western China, whose livelihood is to recycle it.⁴ My interest here is in Xing’s mode of depicting innumerable entangled cords, wires, chips, and parts—what she describes as “vast piles of dead and deconstructed



Figure 2.
Yu Huaqiang, Water, Injury (Shui, Shang) 2, gelatin silver print, 2014.
Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3.
Yu Huaqiang, Water, Injury (Shui, Shang) 3, gelatin silver print, 2014.
Courtesy of the artist.

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machines”—by spatially compressing them against the picture plane and cropping them so that, as Richard Vine puts it, “their ‘found’ compositions [exhibit] a kind of Ab[stract]-Ex[pressionist] sublimity.”⁵

Xing writes in her statement on the work that “the aesthetic beauty of . . . imagery [that] almost transports the photographed objects from their social and economic context” becomes a crucial strategy for addressing the forces of “modernization and globalization . . . under the influence of Western modernity.” Such forces, she continues, are “complicit in creating the environmental and social nightmare experienced in remote corners of China.” In other words, she confronts environmental degradation with an aesthetic of abstraction “to sketch a visual representation of 21st-century modernity.”⁶

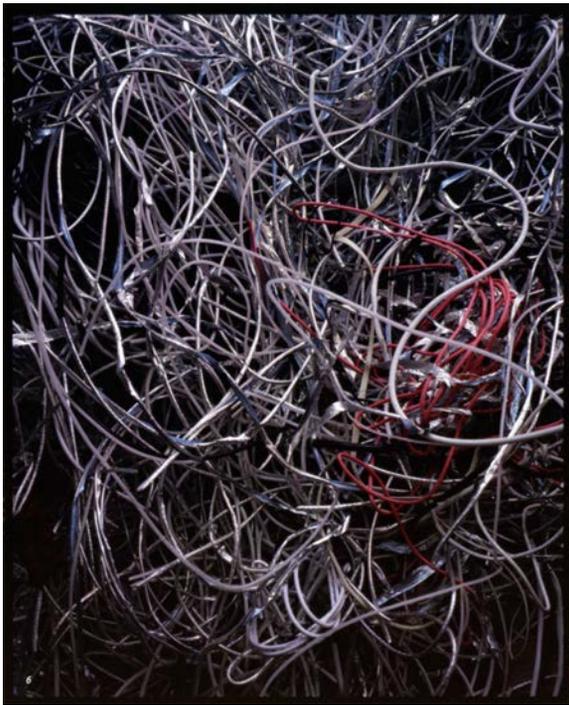


Figure 4.
Xing Danwen, disCONNEXION, image a12, chromogenic print, 2003.
Courtesy of the artist.

These and other contemporary Chinese photographers are keenly attuned to questions of surface, form, and life, as well as to how their work can picture organic and inorganic ecosystems as systems of meaningful and relational configurations. When Xing Danwen’s photographs transform e-trash and their nightmarish economy into pictorial abstractions, or when Yu

Huaqiang's pictures animate forms decaying into bodies of water as inanimate forms sprouting with life, what, we might ask, are the larger structures—the histories, the ecosystems—of which these formal relationships are the expression? How indeed can one hope to picture forces as large and as abstract as an economy, a history, an ecosystem, an environment? These artists suggest that whereas such forces may not be visually representable in themselves, their forms nonetheless become visible in, and emergent from, the materiality of the objects such photographs depict: their movements and placement, as well as their weathering, growth, and decay.

In what follows I trace a genealogy of abstract form in the work of Zhang Jin, Yu Huaqiang, and Xing Danwen that aims both to illuminate their approaches to histories of the environment and environmental degradation and to disclose a transnational conceptual ecology at work in their approaches to form. As the critical discourse about them suggests, the abstract forms and flat surfaces characteristic of the work of these Chinese photographers invites us to recognize the traces of earlier, American and European discourses of abstraction at work in their conceptions of form. Illuminated by the photography of Zhang, Yu, and Xing, this earlier formalism discloses the extent to which its ideas about abstraction were already profoundly ecological in themselves, grounded in embedded modernist conceptions of nature and the environment. Reciprocally, the reimagined discourse on midcentury U.S. formalist art this juxtaposition yields not only offers a new approach to Clement Greenberg's modernist aesthetics and Aaron Siskind's postwar photographic abstraction, but it also illuminates in turn the formal and ecological stakes of contemporary Chinese photography.

Zhang Jin's body of work to date manifests an ongoing preoccupation with such questions. In *Ant Crossing River* (Mayi guo he) (2014), Zhang used X-ray sheet film in place of gelatin silver photographic paper to make pictures of plant forms. As a result, Zhang writes, the plants appear as if they were "human veins or cells under a high-power microscope." By depicting fractal forms that appear transposable from the structures of plants to those of the human circulatory system, *Ant Crossing River* offers a "transformation in the manner of viewing plants," as Zhang puts it, which "indicates the vertical relation between person and world."⁷ In 2013, Zhang produced a complementary series of photographs, *Broken Flowers*, which depict the visible signs of the corrosion of plants by lower-atmosphere ozone formed from chemicals emitted from fossil fuel combustion; he describes

the “symbiotic wounds on the flowers [that] also locally affect the surrounding environment and human bodies.”⁸ Both projects shed light on Zhang’s earlier *Another Season* series, whose logic they extend: namely, his exploration of the traces of how humans make environments and how environments make humans across historical time.⁹ In interviews, Zhang, who holds a Ph.D. in chemistry from the Polytechnic Institute of New York University, frequently sums up what links together his photographs of the entanglement of historical traces and natural scenes: “life flows and circulates, grasses and trees wither and flourish” (*shengming liudong, caomu ku rong*).¹⁰ The stakes of this poetic linkage of biological processes and cycles of ecological change become explicit when he describes his technique of engaging photographically with “northwest [China], its poverty, and its perplexing environmental problems.” As Zhang continues, this technique eschews explicit critique or description in favor of what he calls a “method of the ‘latent’” [or “hidden,” *yin*], in which he eliminates obvious symbols of the historical era and instead attends to the withering and flourishing of grasses and trees, one season after another.¹¹

In this essay, I want to pursue a connection Zhang Jin suggests in his *Artforum* interview, which indicates in turn how we might think pictorially about the forms of ecology and the ecology of form—or indeed, about ecology itself as form. In his discussion of the environment and history of the landscapes depicted in *Another Season*, Zhang invokes the problem of “flatness” in modernist painting and “the many experiments carried out by photographic artists in China and abroad with the compression of space, the weakening of perspective, and the cancelling of the illusion of three dimensionality.”¹² Zhang alludes specifically to the writings on formalism and abstract painting by the U.S. art critic Clement Greenberg, particularly to their emphasis on flatness as integral to a pictorial medium.¹³ Moreover, Zhang’s reference to photographers outside China who likewise experiment with pictorial flatness invites us likewise to consider the artist perhaps most crucial to establishing this aesthetic in photography, namely, Aaron Siskind (see fig. 5).¹⁴

Within a few years of the publication of Greenberg’s influential essay, “Towards a Newer Laocoön” (1940), Siskind began to explore the kinds of aesthetic practices the essay propounds; indeed, Elaine de Kooning later called attention to the relationships between Siskind’s photographs and the kinds of abstract paintings Greenberg would theorize and promote.¹⁵ “I accept the flat plane of the

picture surface as the primary frame of reference of the picture,” Siskind would later write, in an apparent echo of Greenberg’s text. However, in contrast to Greenberg’s insistence on line as “one of the most abstract elements in painting since it is never found in nature,” Siskind’s discussion of “the picture” leads from objects to the abstract shapes and forms that emerge from them. This signaling of abstraction, Siskind writes, emerges through an entangled array of natural and human-made materials in which “rocks are sculptured forms; a section of common decorative iron-work, springing rhythmic shapes; [and] fragments of paper sticking to a wall, a conversation piece.” He concludes, “these forms, totems, masks, figures, shapes, images must finally take their place in the tonal field of the picture and strictly conform to their space environment.”¹⁶

While one can catch a distinct echo of Greenberg’s and Siskind’s rhetoric in Zhang’s own terms, and while one can see how a formalist aesthetic of flatness, line, contour, geometry, and surface plays out in the “space environments” of Zhang’s, Xing’s, and Yu’s pictures, I want to suggest that there is at work here something more than mere analogy or resemblance. Zhang explicitly proposes a conjunction between the practices of contemporary Chinese and other photographers and a mid-twentieth-century moment in the history of abstraction over which the Americans Greenberg and Siskind each loomed. Such a conjunction at once brings into focus and calls into the present an alternative possibility within that history: the possibility of deploying formalism as a mode of picturing (rather than necessarily representing) nature and the environment at



Figure 5.
Aaron Siskind, Seaweed 8, gelatin silver print, 1947. © Aaron Siskind Foundation.

a contemporary moment of crisis. Taken together, these two historically and culturally disparate moments of photographic formalism constitute a dialectical image of history: as Walter Benjamin wrote (in the same year in which Greenberg traced his history of the flattening of the picture plane), “A past” that “can only be seized as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability . . . an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.”¹⁷ Benjamin defines an image in which a rediscovered past inspires the present through the latter’s recognition of affiliation, and in which the present also brings to visibility, and reconfigures, a moment of the past as a critical possibility that had always been present yet always latent.

Of course, to make visible an ecological politics of formalism is to run counter to a long-standing tendency of postmodern photographic theories to critique the presumed split between form and politics in the postwar era—particularly in Siskind’s later work. At times, Siskind himself called attention to the ways in which his photographic formalism divorced his subjects from their geographical, cultural, environmental, and political contexts. In an interview late in his life, for instance, Siskind discussed a picture he made in Peru in 1981: the image depicts a single letter painted on a wall, a fragment of a name that, in the context of a political struggle, had been overwritten to the point of illegibility. What fascinated Siskind, he explains, was that the letter “became just a shape, an intriguing, beautiful shape, which has nothing to do with the political motivations that resulted in the shape. I made the shape float in that area, divorcing it from other things which surrounded it.”¹⁸

Such sentiments have enshrined Siskind’s art as emblematic of the disengagement of postwar radical formalism from social or political realities. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau has argued, this shift was “signaled in Siskind’s zealous embrace and assimilation of Clement Greenberg’s doxology of modernism.”¹⁹ Siskind himself noted in an interview that he shared with abstract expressionist painters an “absolute belief” in the notion “that the canvas is the complete total area of struggle”—a belief that “reassured” him in his “work on a flat plane, because then you don’t get references immediately to nature.” For Solomon-Godeau, such a belief is a sign of what she scathingly (and not without justification) calls Siskind’s “macho posturing,” a “heroicizing of self-expression . . . so extreme as to border on the parodic.”²⁰ The force of

Solomon-Godeau's critique depends, however, on the assumption that engaging with politics and attending to natural forms are opposed. For Siskind, this was simply not the case. As he opined in an 1984 interview—the year after Solomon-Godeau's essay first appeared—"I am in contact with the world in my way, but in order to make contact with that world while I'm working, I have to remove myself from the world of events. When you're making a picture, you have to be alone with what you're making the picture with. You're having a conversation with that stuff, you see?"²¹ Far from being a disengagement from social and political realities, Siskind's formalism emerges out of a dialectic of critical distance and contact with the world that, reinterpreted by Chinese photographers in the present, suggests the possibility of a politics of natural forms.

Xing Danwen seems to echo Siskind's claim when she writes in 2002 that "the aesthetic beauty" of her images of e-trash dismantled and recycled by migrant laborers "almost transports the photographed objects from their social and economic context."²² But the vehemence of the word "almost" in her statement should give us pause: what does it mean "almost" to transport objects from their social, economic, political, historical, and indeed environmental contexts by photographic means? Does any such pictorial decontextualization necessarily amount to an act of depoliticization? Or is it even a matter of decontextualization at all, but rather of a making visible of the contexts in which those objects are entangled, or from which they emerge, or indeed which they form, by means of what Siskind called the "space environment" of the picture plane? The practices embodied in the photographs by Xing, Yu, Zhang, and Siskind (if not always the rhetoric in which they are embedded)—their insistence on "being alone with" the objects they depict—ask us to reconsider what we mean by the politics of form. In this light the "almost" of Xing's formal disengagement stands as the trace of how form persistently emerges from, depends upon, and even acts within the very milieu from which it becomes abstracted.

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Greenberg seems to have detested Siskind's work. On the occasion of Siskind's first show at the Charles Egan Gallery in New York in 1948—an exhibition that also featured work by Robert Rauschenberg and Willem de Kooning—"Greenberg insisted to Siskind that he couldn't do that with photography, photography had to be anecdotal, to tell a story."²³ Greenberg had elaborated

two years earlier, in a review of an exhibition of Edward Weston's photographs, just what one "couldn't do" with photography. In a characteristic series of moves, Greenberg declares that photography, like any other medium, must "be completely true to itself." He takes it upon himself to define what the characteristics and boundaries of the photographic medium are, and then vehemently objects to the work of artists that transgress those boundaries.²⁴ For Greenberg, avant-garde painting is characterized by the resistance of its medium, the denial of perspectival space, the flattening of the picture plane, and the abstraction of line, as he declares in "Towards a Newer Laocoön." In the Weston review he adds that avant-garde painting also involves a reduction of its subject matter to "impersonal still life or landscape," or pure abstraction. Photography, by contrast, "achieves its maximum effect through naturalism" as well as by putting "all emphasis on an explicit subject, anecdote, or message."²⁵ Thus for photography, to emulate "the abstract or impersonal arrangements of modern painting" is not to "be completely true to itself."²⁶ To Greenberg, the fatal flaw in Weston's photography is that "his camera defines everything, but it defines everything in the same way—and an excess of detailed information ends by making everything look as though it were made of the same substance, no matter how varied the surfaces. The human subjects of Weston's portraits seem to me for the most part as inanimate as his root or rock or sand forms."²⁷ Furthermore, "Weston tries to achieve decorative unity . . . by arranging his subject in geometrical or quasi-geometrical patterns, but these preserve a superimposed, inorganic quality."²⁸ Greenberg believed that a painting's picture plane and formal organization should be geometric; Georgia O'Keeffe's biomorphic paintings were thus, he wrote elsewhere, "little more than tinted photography."²⁹ Apparent in Greenberg's dislike of Siskind's work, then, is not only his stricture that photographers should not emulate the abstract arrangements of modern painting, but also his abhorrence of an abstraction that is biomorphic—an organic formalism. Hence given his belief that photography should be naturalistic and not abstract, Greenberg chastises Weston for the "geometrical or quasi-geometrical patterns" and "inorganic quality" of his work, and even an apparent confusion of the organic and inorganic in which "a cow against a barn looks like a fossilized replica of itself; a nude becomes continuous with sand"—in short, a sort of photographic monism that makes "everything look as though it were made of the same substance."³⁰ What Greenberg disparages in Siskind's work is precisely the biomorphism that will, over half a century later, be recuperated in contemporary Chinese formalism.

The terms by which Greenberg mounted his arguments had already been set, by and large, by Alfred H. Barr, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, in his catalog essay for the 1936 exhibition on “Cubism and Abstract Art.”³¹ Barr’s account of abstract art is structured by an underlying narrative of withdrawal, as an “impulse away from ‘nature.’”³² Barr divides modern art into “pure-abstracts,” such as the works of Malevich and the late Mondrian, “in which the artist makes a composition of abstract elements such as geometrical or amorphous shapes,” and “near-abstracts,” such as the works of Arp and Picasso or Mondrian’s early “plus and minus” seascapes, “in which the artist, starting with natural forms, transforms them into abstract or nearly abstract forms.”³³ In pure-abstraction, “resemblance to nature is at best superfluous and at worst distracting,” and “may easily adulterate” the “purity” of abstract art.³⁴ In short, and crucially, Barr divides abstract art into that which is “organic or biomorphic” and that which is “geometrical in its forms.” “The shape of the square,” Barr concludes, “confronts the silhouette of the amoeba.”³⁵ In an essay published the following year, Meyer Schapiro also defines abstract art in terms of its “exclusion of natural forms.” However, in “Nature of Abstract Art”—an intentional pun, one can only hope—Schapiro characterizes this exclusion in terms that anticipate Solomon-Godeau’s critique of Siskind, criticizing Barr for speaking of abstract art independently of historical conditions.³⁶ Schapiro instead historicizes abstraction, describing its fundamental condition as the opposition between mind and nature. He situates these conditions and the aesthetic practices of abstract art in the context of modernization and modernity’s pervasive and destructive ideology of nature.³⁷ “The thousand and one ingenious formal devices . . . which affirm the abstract artist’s active sovereignty over objects,” he writes, “are discovered experimentally by painters who seek freedom outside of nature and society and consciously negate the formal aspects of perception—like the connectedness of shape and color or the discontinuity of object and surroundings—that enter into the practical relations of man in nature.”³⁸ In Schapiro’s account, both the devices of modern art and modern ideologies of nature and society are instances of what Jason Moore has recently called modernity’s originary “violent abstraction”: the dualism of Nature/Society in which the mutual relations that constitute nature and society and “co-produce manifold configurations of . . . humanity-in-nature/nature-in humanity” are suppressed, and nature and society are treated as discrete from each other. This violent abstraction, Moore contends, is fundamental to authorizing modernity’s destructive exploitation of nature.³⁹

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Even the flattening of the picture plane... is implicated in a history of exploitation and exhaustion of the environment.

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While Greenberg hews closely to Barr’s rhetoric of purity and the opposition between the geometric and the organic, he also offers a historical account of his own that accounts for the shift in Western art from representational art to abstraction. Not only is this history reminiscent of Schapiro’s account of modernity as an alienation from nature, but it also identifies the historical conditions of abstraction as complicit in modernity’s exploitation of the natural world.⁴⁰ Thus even Greenberg’s account of abstraction ultimately acknowledges the historicity from which its formalism withdraws. The “three-dimensionality of the Renaissance” owes directly to its historical access to technology: as Greenberg wrote in 1944, the “stimulus” for Renaissance painting “was a fresh awareness of space provoked by expanding economic and social relations in the late Middle Ages and by the growing conviction that man’s chief mission on earth is the conquest of his environment.”⁴¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this illusionist technology exhausted itself: “the earth would no longer afford to Western man or his economy infinite space in which to expand.”⁴² While alienation from nature has a very long history, industrial modernity changes everything. But whereas Schapiro decries the disconnection of humanity from nature under the conditions of modernity that yielded abstract art, Greenberg asserts that early twentieth-century abstract art “permitted the claims of the medium to overrule those of nature almost entirely.”⁴³ And yet he also claims, dialectically, that nature stamped itself indelibly on modern painting as well—not nature’s “appearance,” but its “logic.” The upshot of this is that the triumph of the pictorial medium over nature came with the “realization that only by transposing the internal logic by which objects are organized in nature could aesthetic form be given to the irreducible flatness which defined the picture plane,” as he wrote of Picasso and Braque.⁴⁴ Greenberg thus based his account of abstraction on a divide between the organic/biomorphic and the inorganic/geometric. This opposition played out, however, within the broader historical context of the alienation of human culture from the natural world in industrial modernity. Even the flattening of the picture plane, in Greenberg’s terms, is implicated in a history of exploitation and exhaustion of the environment.

I cite this discourse on abstraction and nature so extensively because it sets out the terms Siskind most often used to describe his own aesthetic practice: this was not depoliticization or a heroic struggle with the medium, but rather a concern for how his abstract pictures almost always “contained [both] a formal element and an organic element.”⁴⁵ The flat picture plane did not stand as the index of the medium’s domination of nature; instead, it functioned as the site at which the formal and the organic intersect or coalesce. In photographs such as “Gloucester Rocks 1” of 1944 (fig. 6) or “Seaweed 8” of 1947 (fig. 5), the opposition Barr and Greenberg posit between the biomorphic and the geometric is broken down by the forces of erosion and decay that play across the picture plane. The lichen that textures the rocks in “Gloucester Rocks 1” also eats the rocks away, reshaping them, even as they constitute what Siskind referred to as “a texture derived from its form.”⁴⁶

In “Seaweed 8” the forces of waves and tides sculpt the two rocks and bring them into proximity, so that their mineral forms come to have rounded and amorphous, seemingly organic shapes. At the same time, the lighting, the placement of the camera, and the tonal structure and texture of the film makes “everything look as though it were made of the same substance,” to redeploy Greenberg’s complaint about Edward Weston’s photographs. Even so, Siskind’s rock forms are not “inanimate,” as Greenberg might put it; rather, as Siskind later said of his experience making the photographs, he “could hardly bear to walk over the rocks” because they were



Figure 6.
Aaron Siskind, Gloucester Rocks 1, gelatin silver print, 1944. © Aaron Siskind Foundation.

“very alive things.”⁴⁷ Their very flatness and movement toward abstraction becomes, I maintain, a product of this living dynamism, rather than a marker of its erasure.

Siskind wrote his fullest account of his photography in 1945, in light of his discovery of abstraction in the natural forms and environments he encountered in Gloucester and Martha’s Vineyard. Describing the “drama of objects” that animate his photography, he writes:

These pictures . . . are informed with animism—not so much that these inanimate objects resemble the creatures of the animal world (as indeed they often do), but rather they suggest the energy we usually associate with them. Aesthetically, they pretend to the resolution of these sometimes fierce, sometimes gentle, but always conflicting forces.⁴⁸

Perhaps now we can see why Greenberg reacted to Siskind’s photography with such ire. Siskind certainly does buy into Greenberg’s concept of the flatness and isolation of the picture plane. But far from being a mere acolyte of Greenberg, Siskind systematically recites and then thoroughly violates and mixes Greenberg’s terms for rejecting both organic form and photographic abstraction. Indeed, Siskind’s self-imposed limitation of edge, depth, and even context in his photography enables other crucial things to become visible: the kinds of relationships between human and nature, organic and inorganic, figure and environment that can be traced or that emerge through form. Abstraction is a form of life.

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Siskind worked toward an understanding of abstraction nearly contemporaneously with a line of thinking with which his work eventually crossed paths. In addition to the doxologies of Barr and Greenberg, Siskind’s abstraction developed contemporaneously with a line of nondualist thought about form, organic life, and the ecosystems that create and are created by them that appears in the work of Henri Focillon, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Rudolf Arnheim during the decades spanning from 1934 to 1954. For all three of these thinkers, form is not a violent abstraction negating relations between humans and nature, but rather is both constitutive of and emergent from nature. This understanding of form, the organic, and ecosystem is key to the formal logic of Zhang’s, Xing’s, and Yu’s photography.⁴⁹

In his influential book *The Life of Forms in Art* (1934), for example, Focillon treats art and nature as both expressive of biological forces and expressive through form. He writes, “Life is form, and form is the modality of life. The relationships that bind forms together in nature cannot be pure chance, and what we call ‘natural life’ is in effect a relationship between forms, so inexorable that without it this natural life could not exist. So it is with art as well.”⁵⁰ To understand life as form and form as life, Focillon claims, one must reject the dualisms of spirit and matter and of matter and form, in favor of a relationship in which form and matter emerge from each other—much as the interactions between inorganic and organic matter would later constitute the shapes, the “live” forms playing out their dramas on the unyielding spaces of Siskind’s photographs.⁵¹ Form, that is, is not an external force impressed upon matter, nor does it constitute a withdrawal from nature and matter, nor is it an abstract element never found in nature, as Greenberg had claimed of line; rather, for Focillon, “between nature and man form intervenes.”⁵² Likewise, for Maurice Merleau-Ponty, form does not simply intervene in nature but instead integrates what he called the physical, vital, and human orders—the inorganic, the organic, and signification—“as three types of structures surpassing the antinomies of materialism and mentalism, of materialism and vitalism.”⁵³ In *The Structure of Behavior* (1942), Merleau-Ponty proposed a “philosophy of form” in order “to understand the relations of consciousness and nature: organic, psychological, or even social.”⁵⁴ His philosophy of form draws upon the concept of *gestalt*: a form that not only comprises the relationship of figure and ground, but, more broadly, is any emergent whole that is dependent on but not reducible to its parts, a form that is dependent on and interactive with its milieu but not reducible to it, and, indeed, a form—to use a term Merleau-Ponty and Greenberg share—that can be “transposed,” as an organism, an ecosystem or the composition of a picture.⁵⁵ Form in Merleau-Ponty’s early work characterizes the natural world itself as “a self-organizing system of ‘gestalts’—embodied and meaningful relational configurations or structures.”⁵⁶

In *Art and Visual Perception* (1954, rev. 1974), Rudolf Arnheim brought to bear much of the same research concerning gestalt structures to conceptualize the dynamic relationships between figure and ground, as well as the tensions between mutually independent spatial structures as they meet on a picture plane.⁵⁷ Indeed, seeming to anticipate Zhang Jin’s photographs of plants in *Ant Crossing River*, Arnheim’s discussion of negative space and “the delicate

task of determining the proper distances between pictorial objects [that] probably requires a sensitive attention to physiologically determined attractions and repulsions in the visual field” leads him to contemplate “a similarly subtle balancing of objects and interstices under physical or physiological field conditions, e.g. in the . . . blood capillaries in organic tissue, and the venation of leaves.”⁵⁸ Arnheim seems to have recognized that such subtle relationships among objects and interstices, organic forms and abstractions constitute the flat picture planes of Siskind’s photographs: thanking the photographer for a print Siskind had presented to him upon his retirement from Harvard in 1974, Arnheim wrote of how the print “draws meaning and the presence of reality from merely presenting the subtleties of a surface in all its immediacy. The rough skin of the natural wood and the stroke of a human hand—a combination that means much to me.”⁵⁹ It is not known what Siskind photograph Arnheim received, but certainly,

“Chicago 22” (fig. 7) is one that does indeed depict the rough skin of natural wood as they are brought out by broad brushstrokes left by a human hand—a surface that in turn is overlaid with narrow strokes of black paint to the lower left, the burnt remnant of a wooden sign, and, if not the venation of leaves, the similar capillary forms of branches delicately traced in shadow across the picture plane.

Such a combination, Arnheim observes in his note to Siskind, “draws meaning.”

Siskind’s term for the force emerging from the composition of organic and geometric forms in his photographs—what Arnheim characterized as “attractions and repulsions in the visual field”—was “contiguity.” As he described this discovery in an interview in 1963,



Figure 7.
Aaron Siskind, Chicago 22, gelatin silver print, 1960. © Aaron Siskind Foundation.

I had objects [which] were all organic-looking objects, shapes, and they were in a geometrical setting, or flat . . . [so] that the objects themselves no longer functioned as objects. Although I would find a hunk of wood and put it there, it was no longer a piece of wood. It was still the piece of wood, it was photographed sharp, but you felt it more as a *shape*. . . . In the pictures, you have the object. But you have in the object, or superimposed on it, a thing I would call the image. . . . And these things are present at one and the same time and there is a business going on. . . . This ambiguity, this conflict, this tension that the object is there and yet it's not an object. . . .

And so I began to feel the importance of how these rocks hovered over each other, touched each other, pushed against each other, see, this whole business of *next* to each other—or what I call contiguity.⁶⁰

For Siskind this transformative process of composition carried a strong affective charge, for “this whole business of contiguity” was “the whole ‘realization’ of the importance of how people feel in relation to each other . . . the nearness and the touch, the relation.”⁶¹ Thus for Siskind, the stone walls of Martha’s Vineyard became “conditions of contiguity” in his photographs, and certainly the suggestion of an animal or humanoid form emerges from the placement and contiguity of the rocks and seaweed in “Seaweed 8.”⁶² More complexly, each form in “Chicago 22” registers traces of the relationships between force and wood, whether it is the force of brushstrokes that highlight the grain or conceal it, the force of fire that has partially consumed the sign hanging diagonally across the flat picture plane (or the force of wood combusting), or the forces of wood and light tracing the shadowy forms of living branches across the entire surface. The contiguity of all these forms makes visible the intersection of human social activity and natural ecosystem over time. The flat picture plane of the photograph is far from being a mere arena of isolated confrontation. And the situation such a picture manifests is a far cry from “the abstract artist’s sovereignty over objects,” and the negation of “the connectedness of shape and color or the discontinuity of object and surroundings” that “enter into the practical relations of man in nature,” as Schapiro had put it.

As he worked with his camera in natural and human-built environments, Siskind looked for places where natural forms and human traces come together, not in moments of harmony or confrontation, but of contiguity. But the meaning that emerges from such connections is always in question.

Such pictorial contiguity is, I believe, what Xing Danwen, Yu Huaqiang, and Zhang Jin draw upon in their evocations of abstract expressionist painting, the depthless surface of a picture plane, or the living forces of geometric and organic forms as they deny representation in favor of contiguous environments. When Xing’s photographs transform e-trash and their terrible economy into pictorial abstractions, or when Yu pictures animate forms decaying into bodies of water as inanimate forms sprouting with life, or when Zhang frames the intersections of a patterned, eroded dune and trees or of drifting sand, cloth, and human bones (fig. 8), relationships of contiguity lead us to wonder about the forces that bring such disparate objects into relation and the nature of the larger ecosystems of which they are a part.

In these artworks, such forces are not visually representable because they are assumed to be both organizing and emergent from the materiality of objects. Such an aesthetic has political implications. What might it mean, for example, to assert an aesthetics of contiguity in a present characterized by the mass

displacement of populations and the degradation of the environment? How might such an abstract aesthetic emerging from the interrelationships among objects and spaces enable critical engagement of the forces of nature, culture, economy, history, and social change?

Such questions permeate Zhang Jin’s project, *Another Season*. “Month of Falling Leaves” [Ye Yue] (fig. 9), for instance, juxtaposes the persistence of three varyingly full trees against a sand dune marked by its own ongoing patterns of growth and collapse, whose traces are the ripples and diamond shape that form its surface.



Figure 8.
Zhang Jin, *Skeletons in the Temple (Miaozhong Shigu)*, from *Another Season (You Yi Ji)*, gelatin silver print, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.

Such patterns and shapes, however, are the visible manifestations of an environmental history of deforestation and desertification that extends two millennia into the past.⁶³ Zhang Jin photographed the Hexi Corridor, which extends northwest from the Yellow River to Dunhuang between the Tibetan Plateau and the Gobi Desert, and through which the Silk Road once connected a series of oases.⁶⁴ The surrounding region had once been a mosaic of forest and grassland populated by pastoral nomads with whom the Chinese were in conflict for centuries. One of the key strategies of the Chinese for annihilating these peoples was, as Robert Marks observes, to transform the



Figure 9. Zhang Jin, *Month of Falling Leaves (Ye Yue)*, from *Another Season (You Yi Ji)*, gelatin silver print, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.

“ecological basis for the nomadic lifestyle” by uprooting forests and ploughing grasslands into farms.⁶⁵ The unintended consequence of this colonizing project, first ordered by Emperor Wu (r. 147–87 BCE) of the Chinese Han Dynasty, was to set in motion a pattern in which the plowing of grasslands led to wind erosion and thence to desertification that would be repeated again and again over the ensuing centuries. In the present day, it is not warfare but economics that drives the transformation of the landscape: the global demand for cashmere and the resulting pressure to graze increasing numbers of goats on what grassland remains has driven the further desertification of the region.⁶⁶

This is the ecological history of desertification, commerce, and circulating cultures forming a history and a network of “forces” and relations for what Zhang Jin calls objects that have become “homeless pastoral nomads”—objects that Zhang frames in photographs, such as in “Wordless Stele” (fig. 1 above).⁶⁷ This photograph marks what Zhang has called the “junction” at which his project turned toward an aesthetic “between abstraction and figuration.” The photograph shows an interplay of erasure and marking: a wooden memorial tablet is

shown uprooted, the words engraved on its surface and the historical moment they commemorated having been eroded away by wind and sand. The tablet is shown re-embedded in the “flowing sands,” as the critic Hai Jie puts it, that are themselves marked with “ripples [literally “pattern-routes,” *wenlu*] left by the sweeping winds.”⁶⁸ These ripples in the sand are patterns that emerge from a self-organizing process of the fall, collision, piling up, and saltation (or downward bounce) of windborne grains of sand.⁶⁹ This process amplifies any small disturbances in the movement of sand, and indeed in Zhang’s photograph the flow patterns of the sand ripples appear to have organized themselves around the wordless stele embedded in them—an interplay of the textures of sand ripples and wood grain that Zhang specifically sought to bring out through low-contrast printing in the darkroom.⁷⁰ As Focillon observes in a discussion of the materials out of which artworks are constituted, “Matter, even in its most minute details, is always structure and activity, that is to say, form. . . . Form does not behave as some superior principle modeling a passive mass, for it is plainly observable how matter imposes its own form upon form.”⁷¹ In Zhang’s photograph, “Damaged Fresco” [“Lou Hen”] (fig. 10), the interactions between inorganic and organic matter would later constitute the shapes, the “live” forms of the nomadic history signified by galloping horses and their riders as they are overtaken by their own medium and reformed by traces of water dripping through the course of time.

The forms that emerge from the natural and human-made objects in Zhang’s photographs are themselves manifestations of the multiple forces of the ecological histories that shape the environments that Zhang depicts.

The work of Zhang Jin, Yu Huaqiang, and Xing Danwen suggests that history and ecosystems are not fully representable or opaque but rather can only be expressed through gestalts, contiguities, and configurations of abstractions and figurative forms of matter. Reality constitutes traces where human and natural histories visibly produce each other and are framed and processed by the photographer. Contemporary Chinese photographers have turned to mid-twentieth-century aesthetic and philosophical explorations of abstraction, form, and nature, not as a turning away from history and politics, but precisely as a mode of rethinking the interrelationships among culture, economy, history, social change, and nature in a present moment of ecological crisis in which the nature of nature is the most urgent of questions. To juxtapose the photography

of mid-twentieth century America and contemporary China is to ask how we might reevaluate the politics of formalism and think pictorially the forms of ecology and the ecology of form. But to do so ultimately urges that the debates about nature and culture that frame debates about form and abstraction in both places and times need to be incorporated into contemporary debates about art's ecological turn.

————— / **Notes** / —————

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¹ Daozi, "Zhang Jin tan 'You yi ji' " [Zhang Jin Discusses "Another Season"]. *Artforum* (Chinese online edition) (2013), <http://artforum.com.cn/words/6099#>. For a provocative roundtable discussion on the relationships between the Silk Road and other premodern trade routes and globalization from the perspective of contemporary art, see Barry Flood et al., "The Global before Globalization," *October* 133 (2010): 3–19.

² Daozi, "Zhang Jin Discusses *Another Season*."

³ This is the claim of Cao Liangbin, "Dark and Nostalgic Words for a Golden Age: Zhang Jin's *Another Season*," in Zhang Jin, *You yi ji (Another Season)* (Beijing: Three Shadows + 3 Gallery, 2013), n.p.

⁴ Xing Danwen, "disCONNEXION: Statement" (2003), www.danwen.com/web/works/dis/statement.html.



Figure 10.
Zhang Jin, Damaged Fresco (Lou Hen), from Another Season (You Yi Ji), gelatin silver print, 2010. Courtesy of the artist.

⁵ Richard Vine, “Beijing Confidential: Xing Danwen,” *Art in America* 98, no. 2 (2010): 87.

⁶ Xing Danwen, “disCONNEXION: Statement.”

⁷ Zhang Jin, “Mayi guo he” (Ant Crossing River), <http://lakezhan.com/cn/works/ant-crossing-river/>.

⁸ Zhang Jin, “Hua jie” (Broken Flowers), <http://lakezhan.com/cn/works/broken-flowers/>.

⁹ On historical change as the co-production of humans and environment, see Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015).

¹⁰ Zheng Ziyu, “Jingzi li de dongfang: Zhang Jin shying zhong de lishi yu richang” (The East in the Mirror: History and the Everyday in Zhang Jin’s Photography), interview with Zhang Jin, August 2013, <http://news.lakezhan.com/index.php?m=08&y=13&d=02&entry=entry130802-100817>.

¹¹ Wang Congyun, “Zhang Jin: guiqulai *You yi ji*” (Zhang Jin: Return to *Another Season*), interview with Zhang Jin, December 2012, <http://news.lakezhan.com/index.php?m=12&y=12&d=02&entry=entry121202-222657>.

¹² Daozi, “Zhang Jin Discusses *Another Season*.”

¹³ In his classic 1940 essay, “Towards a Newer Laocoön,” Greenberg identifies what he called “the flat picture plane’s denial of efforts to ‘hole through’ it for realistic perspectival space.” He goes on to claim that “line” is “one of the most abstract elements in painting since it is never found in nature as the definition of a contour,” and that “under the influence of the square shape of the canvas, forms tend to become geometrical.” See Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoön,” in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O’Brian, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 34–35.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Elaine de Kooning, “The Photographs of Aaron Siskind,” in *Aaron Siskind: Toward a Personal Vision 1935–1955*, ed. Deborah Martin Kao and Charles A. Meyer (Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College Museum of Art, 1994), 59.

¹⁶ Aaron Siskind, “Credo,” in *Photographers on Photography*, ed. Nathan Lyons (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 98.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al., vol. 4, *1938–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press), 390–91.

¹⁸ Jeannine K. Lee, “Interview: Aaron Siskind,” *Contact Sheet: Newsletter of the Allen Street Gallery* 2, no. 1 (August 1986): 4–5.

¹⁹ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Armed Vision Disarmed: Radical Formalism from Weapon to Style,” in *Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography from the 1850s to the Present*, ed. Liz Heron and Val Williams (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 113–14.

²⁰ Ibid., 114. The interview Solomon quotes from is Aaron Siskind, “Thoughts and Reflections,” *Afterimage*, 1, no. 6 (March 1973): 2. It is clearly a critical commonplace that Greenberg’s critical coordinates may orient our understanding of Siskind’s abstract photography and its emphasis on the flat, depthless picture plane. For some, this connection is neutral or even salutary, as in Elaine de Kooning’s account; for others, it is deleterious, a marker of and explanation for Siskind’s apparent withdrawal from history and politics, as Solomon-Godeau suggests. And yet both such accounts leave out too much: about Greenberg, about Siskind’s rhetoric and photographs, and most of all, about our understanding of what formal abstraction has been thought to do and to be in relation to nature.

²¹ Janis Bultman, “The Conflicting Rhythms of Aaron Siskind,” *Darkroom Photography* 6, no. 2 (1984): 22.

²² Xing Danwen, “disCONNEXION: Statement.”

²³ “Aaron Siskind: The Egan Gallery Years 1947–1954,” press release, Robert Mann Gallery (2008), www.robertmann.com/2008-siskind-press.

²⁴ Clement Greenberg, “The Camera’s Glass Eye: Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston,” in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O’Brian, vol. 2, *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 61.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 62.

²⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁹ Cited in Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 154, 158. Jones’s discussion of what she calls Greenberg’s [Alfred] “Stieglitz Problem” of “biomorphically inclined modernists,” as well as the larger argument of her brilliant book concerning how Greenberg’s positing of an abstraction that abstracts away from the body and from all the senses but “eyesight alone” have been essential to developing my argument here.

³⁰ Greenberg, “The Camera’s Glass Eye,” 62.

³¹ Before Barr, Wilhelm Worringer’s classic text of 1908, *Abstraction and Empathy*, had formulated an account of abstraction in part in terms of a “suppression of life,” and empathy as an expression of “organic life” and of naturalism. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 14 and *passim*.

³² Alfred H. Barr, “Cubism and Abstract Art,” in *Abstraction*, ed. Maria Lind (London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 28.

³³ Ibid., 29.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 33.

- ³⁶ Meyer Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," in *Abstraction*, ed. Maria Lind (London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 35.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ³⁹ Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 5, 20–21, 47–48. Moore adopts the term from Derek Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
- ⁴⁰ Jones thoroughly explores the links between industrial urban modernity and Greenberg's formulation of abstract art throughout *Eyesight Alone*, e.g., p. 70.
- ⁴¹ Clement Greenberg, "Abstract Art," *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, 199.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁴³ Clement Greenberg, "The Role of Nature in Modern Painting," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 2, *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 272.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.
- ⁴⁵ Jaromir Stephany, "Interview with Aaron Siskind," in *Aaron Siskind: Toward a Personal Vision 1935–1955* (Boston College Museum of Art, 1994), 44.
- ⁴⁶ Aaron Siskind, miscellaneous notes including brief biography, ca. 1956, file AG30:28:18, Aaron Siskind archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.
- ⁴⁷ Quoted in Carl Chiarenza, *Aaron Siskind: Pleasures and Terrors* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1982), 57.
- ⁴⁸ Aaron Siskind, "The Drama of Objects," in *Photographers on Photography*, ed. Nathan Lyons (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 97.
- ⁴⁹ The Chinese philosopher Jiang Yuhui also draws together the work of Merleau-Ponty, Focillon, Arnheim, among others in his own recent reflections on the phenomenology of pictorial space in Chinese landscape painting before the twentieth century. See Jiang Yuhui, *Hua yu zhen: Meiluo-Pangdi yu Zhongguo shanshui huajing* [Painting and truth: Merleau-Ponty and Chinese Landscape Paintings] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 2013), 131–35 and *passim*.
- ⁵⁰ Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles B. Hogan and George Kubler, rpt. (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 33.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 95.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 124.
- ⁵³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 131.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 87. On figure and ground in the context of the relationship of organism and milieu as a gestalt structure, see *ibid.*, 92.
- ⁵⁶ Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 21.

⁵⁷ Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 281–98.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁵⁹ Rudolf Arnheim to Aaron Siskind, 6 June, 1974, file AG30:11, selected correspondence A-B, Aaron Siskind archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.

⁶⁰ Stephany, “Interview with Aaron Siskind,” 43–46. I have slightly altered the transcript according to the tape of the interview in the Aaron Siskind archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.

⁶¹ Stephany, “Interview with Aaron Siskind,” 45. Contiguity also informed Siskind’s understanding of historical temporality. Despite his apparent disengagement from historical realities, Siskind applied to the Guggenheim Foundation in 1954 and 1962 for funding for “a photographic study of the architecture of Rome in such a way as to document the succession of cultures that have existed and still exist there. Rome is the best center for such a study; numerous architectural remains covering a period of about 2500 years are present in layers or in close contiguity in a relatively small area.” Aaron Siskind, Statement of Aim and Plan of Work, application to Guggenheim Foundation, 1962, file AG30:37, Aaron Siskind archive, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.

⁶² Aaron Siskind, “Notes on the Photographic Act,” *Spectrum*, publication of the Rhode Island School of Design VI, no. 2 (May 1956).

⁶³ Ferdinand von Richthofen, the German geographer who first coined the term “Silk Road” during the late nineteenth century and wrote extensively on the intertwining of geology and economy in northwestern China, remarked on the ongoing destruction of vegetation in the region, writing that “the ancestors of the present generation exterminated the forests; after that the last remnants of shrubs were also consumed.” Quoted in Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105.

⁶⁴ What would come to be called the Silk Road—the network of trade routes and the histories of cultural circulation they drew—originated during the Han Dynasty in Emperor Wu’s push westward in search of allies against the pastoral nomads he was trying to destroy. See Robert B. Marks, *China: Its Environment and History* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 82–83.

⁶⁵ Marks, *China*, 79.

⁶⁶ I am greatly simplifying Marks’ detailed and subtle environmental history. See Marks, *China*, 77–86, 106–11, 150–56, 162–65, 184–93, 230–43, 265–93.

⁶⁷ Prasenjit Duara formulates the concept of circulatory history in the context of environmental sustainability in his book, *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶⁸ Hai Jie, “Zhang Jin: Cong diqi dao xinxing” (Zhang Jin: From Local Climate to Mental Disposition) (2013), <http://news.lakezhan.com/index.php?m=01&y=13&d=02&entry=entry130102-223356>.

⁶⁹ Philip Ball, *Nature's Patterns: A Tapestry in Three Parts*, vol. 2, *Flow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 75–110.

⁷⁰ Wang Congyun, “Zhang Jin: Return to *Another Season*,” and Zheng Ziyu, “The East in the Mirror.”

⁷¹ Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, 97.