

FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA®

YANG SHUN-FA

THE SUBMERGED BEAUTY OF FORMOSA

Curated by Michael Mehl

2021 SAFOTO Web Galleries Monograph

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With gratitude and appreciation to Mong-jane Wu for curatorial assistance, translations and communications.

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Born in 1964, Yang Shun-Fa was raised in a farming family in Tainan, Taiwan. He knew of the harsh conditions of the land and what it takes to strive in such environment. After military service, he entered China Steel Corporation and worked there ever since. CSC's photo club was where he learned photography and where he delved into the world of image making. For over 30 years, he has produced dozens of projects, many of which have been exhibited at major institutions and festivals worldwide, including Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Grand Palais, Paris, Kosovo Biennale, and the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Lishui Photography Festival, CO4 Taiwan Avant-Garde Documenta.

Yang's artistic approach evolved from the early pictorial style, to a more subjective expression, then to staged photography and digital image manipulations. His experimentations carried throughout the 1990s and 2000s. His reflection on the social atmosphere of Taiwan's post-martial law era were incorporated in projects of social documentary, artistic interventions, performance art, and photo installations. Notable works include *Reconstructed Kingdom* (1993-1997), *Rampant Beasts* (1998-2002), the community intervention project *Embellishing Hongmaogang* (2007), *Home And Rootless* (2004-2008), and *The Island Project* (2014-ongoing).

In recent years he has committed to documenting and representing his beloved island of Taiwan. *The Island Project* was conceived under this goal in 2014, and has been Yang Shun-Fa's ongoing endeavor to this day. *The Island Project* includes four parts: *Homage To Chen Ting-Shih* (Part I), *The Submerged Beauty Of Formosa* (Part II), *The Submerged Beauty Of Formosa—Defending The Nation, The Land* (Part III), *Taiwan To-Go* (Part IV).

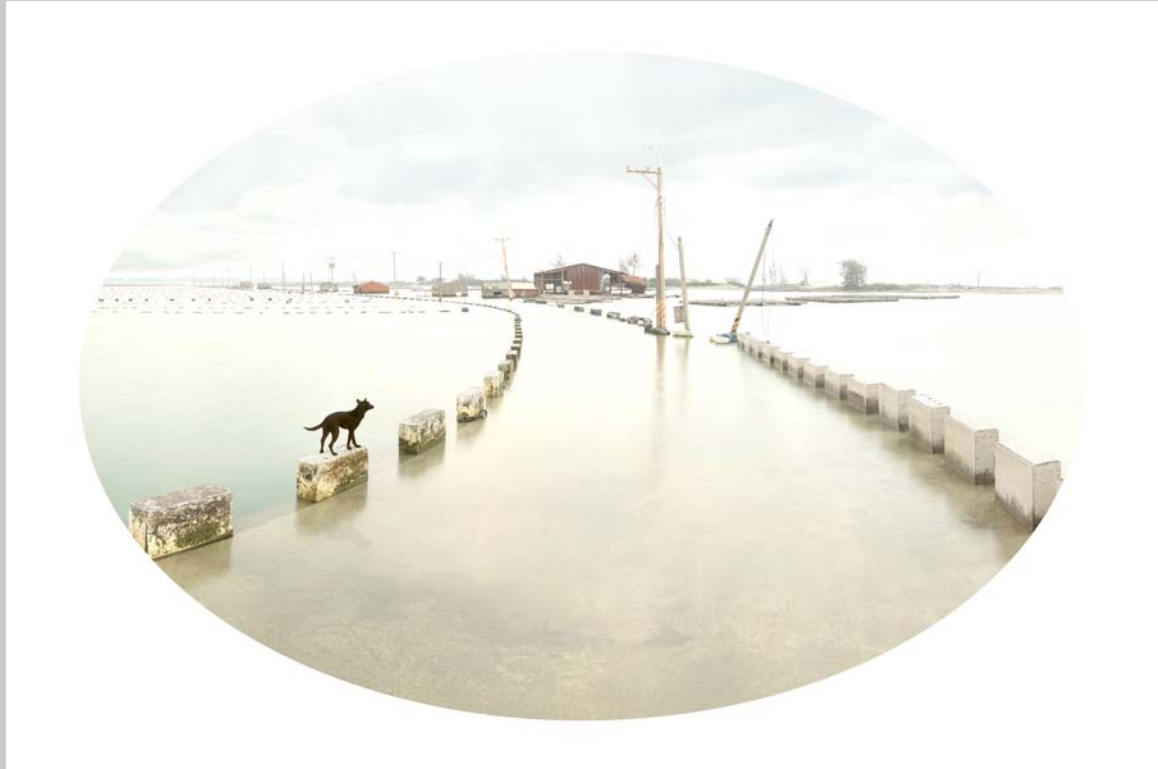
The Submerged Beauty of Formosa –Part II of *The Island Project*– is a series of images depicting man made structures immersed in water along the coasts of Taiwan.

In 2014, Yang Shun-Fa began his photographic field studies along the Taiwanese coastline. When he first saw these brick houses in the midst of fishponds in Chiayi County, he wondered: Why would anyone build their house in the water? After extensive research, he realized that the sight is a result of human behavior, as well as that of climate change. Overdraft of groundwater and the rising sea level have caused land subsidence and seawater intrusion, both of which made these houses uninhabitable, and the land unusable.

The deserted structures are the consequences of human irreverence towards nature; they also stand in for Taiwan's situation in international relations. To Yang, they are as much a warning as a metaphor: the coastal residents' way of living is disappearing, and Taiwan continues to struggle internationally. He is eager to reveal this situation with his work. Only this time, compared to his earlier works, he chooses to be less straightforward with his style. He draws the viewers in with meticulously produced picturesque images, and confronts them with the grim reality that hides within.

Additionally, Yang fuels the Mandarin title of *The Submerged Beauty of Formosa* –*Taiwan Shui Mo*– with a linguistic twist, with which he raises 3 points: First, he implies that Taiwan has sunken, environmentally and politically. Second, he refers to the form and aesthetics of ink wash paintings in his choice of presentation of these images. Lastly, he asks the question: Is Taiwan beautiful?, which sounds similar to both prior questions when pronounced in the Taiwanese dialect. And the answer is for the audience to contemplate.

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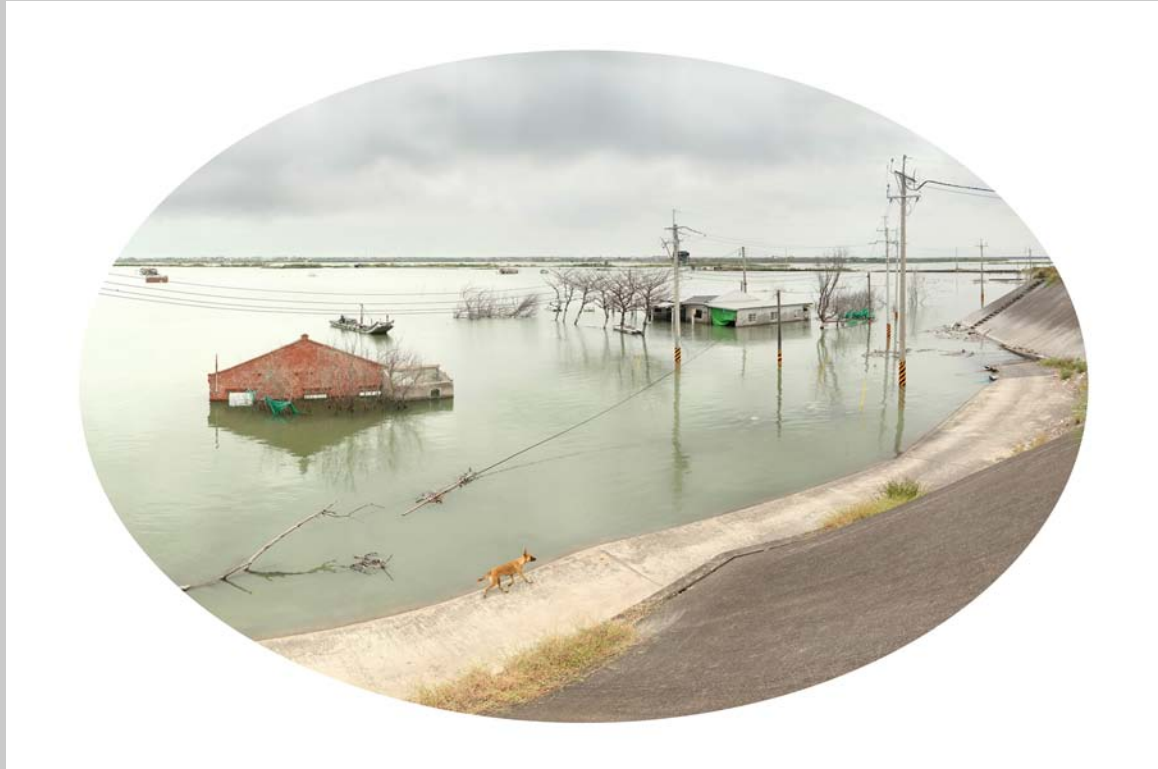
White Water Lake Fishpond



Beach Shaft - Shengang



Aogu Village Fishpond



Aogu Village Fishpond



White Water Lake



Aogu Village Fishpond



Budai Salt Fields



Xinwen Salt Fields Sniper Tower



Jishui River Temple



Zhantang Field Office At Budai Salt Fields



Aogu Village Fishpond



Shoudao Salt Fields At Budai Salt Corporation



Disappearing Windbreaks Near Zengwen River Estuary



Windbreaks At White Water Lake



Yanpu Village Fishpond Shaft



Zhangtang Village Salt Fields



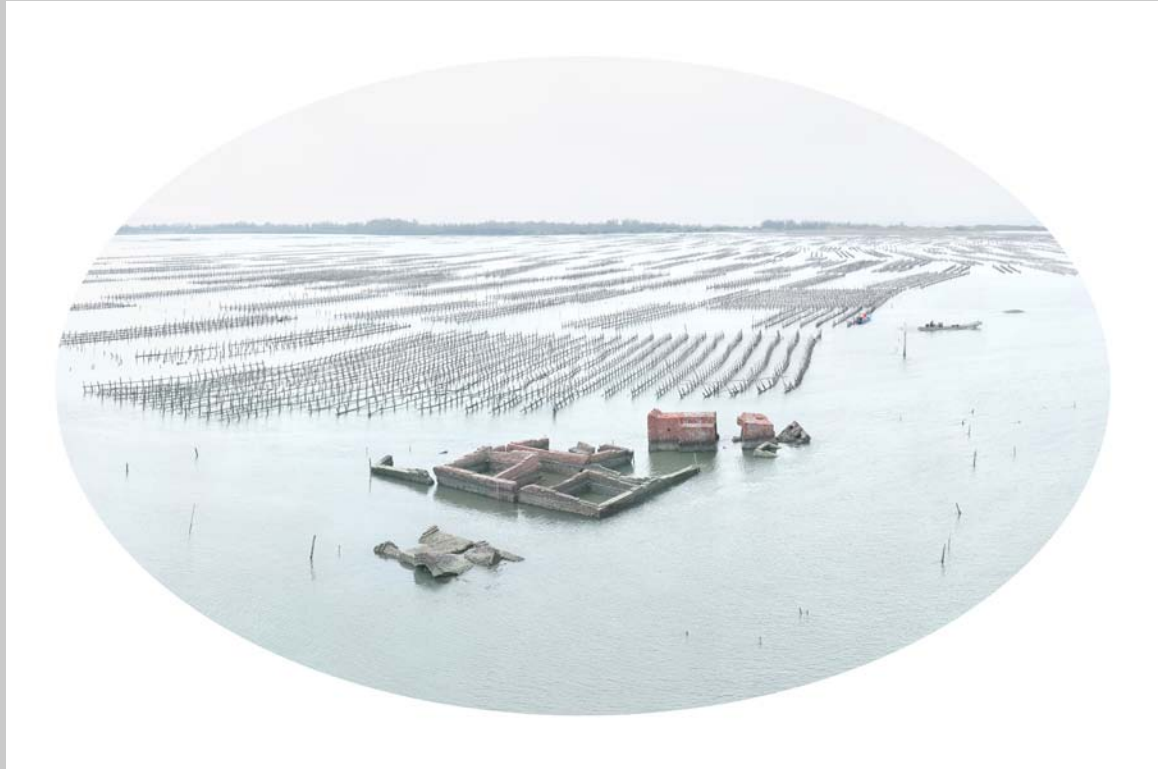
Chenglong Wetlands



Sikunsen Fishing Shaft



Fishponds At The Beigang River Estuary



Fort In Luzhugao



Fangyuan Township Intertidal Wetlands



Over-Water Restaurant At Hanbao Wetlands



Fubao Wetlands



Haikou Vilage



Fort At Zhentou Village



Tank On Oucuo Beach

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