

## Insurgent

In the most literal interpretation *Insurgent* refers to “the surging or rushing” of water. The most common use of this term is to describe “forceful opposition to a lawful authority”. In Chinese folklore, the hero is nearly always a rebel. Likewise, in American popular culture the anti-hero is celebrated.

In my *Watermark* series I examine two estuaries in Australia: the Tweed River at Ballina and the foreshore at Nightcliffe. These are places where fresh and salt water mix. They are also tumultuous entry points dangerous for vessels to cross. The New South Wales images depict the reflection of light as indicative of hope. Taken from one of Australia’s northern most points, the Darwin images have a very different nature. I use them to reference rising salinity. It is a metaphor for the perceived threat of cultural corrosion imposed by Asian immigration.

In the *Dodge* series, I change the focus from migration to the pillaging of natural resources to sustain our modern conveniences. This imagery emerged through my collaboration with New York artist Kevin Cyr. During my Australia Council for the Arts Residency in February, he imparted his love of 1970s gas guzzlers. The series culminated as part of *Conflux City 2009*, a citywide exhibition of site-specific artworks. *The Greenpoint Historical Oil Plume District*, as executed by the Brooklyn based Eh-Team, paralleled the violence associated with acquiring oil with the release of Dodge models. This artwork formed a perimeter around the Exxon oil leak affected area of Brooklyn. The 11 templates for the panels feature in this exhibition. The associated artworks examine the role oil conflicts have with the rebuilding of Arab and Asian cities using Western contractors.

From one ecological disaster to another, the *Tear* series focuses on the Catkins Willow. Cut into a series of Chinese political posters, this species was introduced by Chairman Mao. It has a lasting impact on Beijing residents, choking the air with “white fluffy stuff” every spring. I created this series in the interest of representing a people displaced by change. I was a resident of the Pickled Art Centre in the winter of 2007-8. Every studio was attended to by a coal man. When ours was not tending to the furnace, he would watch Communist movies on VHS.

My arts practice has always focused on the issue of colonialism and/or conflicting elements within a system. I often use ecological references as allegory for political circumstances. In the absence of a human resistance sometimes it is nature itself that fights back.

Pamela Mei-Leng See, October 2009