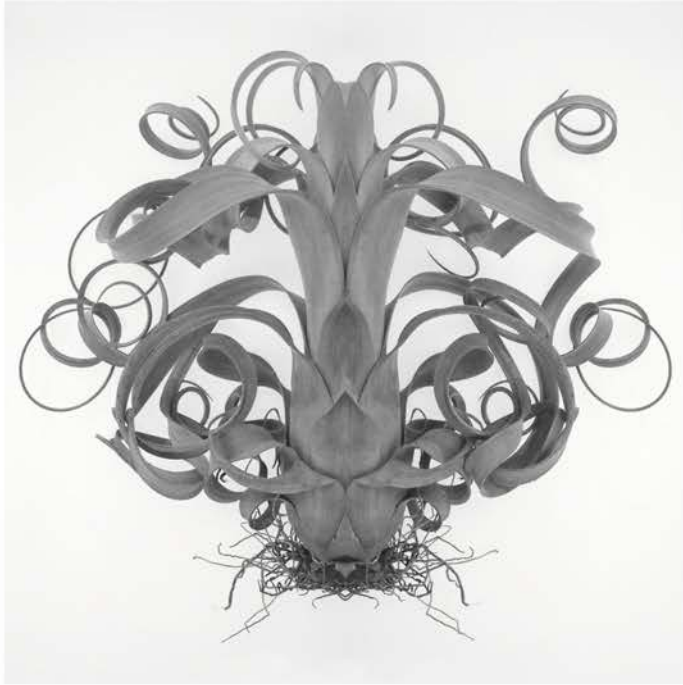
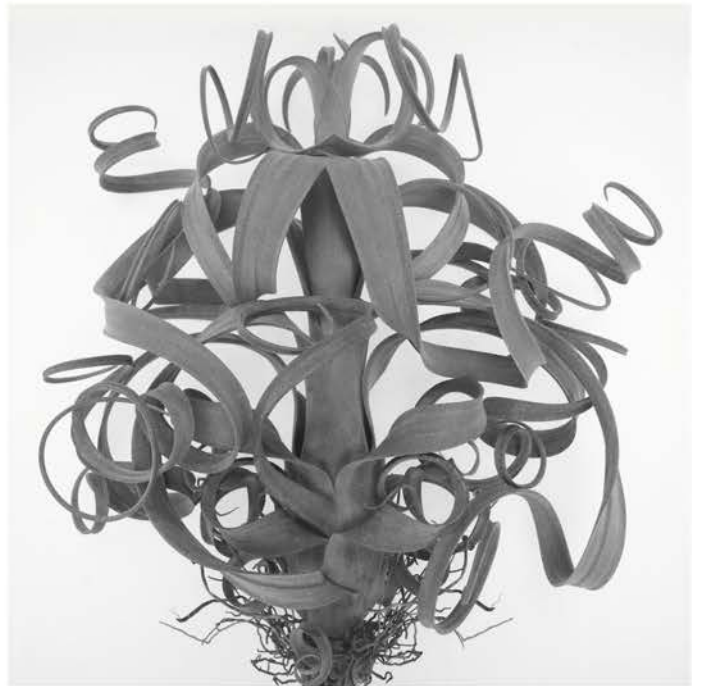




## ji zhou



Plant Portrait - Tillandsia



Your name

ji zhou

Ji Zhou

**Place of birth**

Beijing

**Place where you live now**

Beijing

**3 words to describe you**

Optimistic, anxious, curious

**Why do you take pictures?**

I see photography as a lingual vehicle that materializes my artwork. Moments captured through the borders of a viewfinder are like phrases. The "story" they form can accurately convey my feelings for the world.

**Where do you get your inspiration?**

It comes from my experiences in everyday life, and is transformed into artwork from my perspective. Themes are constantly changing, just like our unknowable tomorrow.

**Who are your influences?**

At different points of my life I was influenced by different people, which helped me grow as a person. Those who have influenced me are various, but also momentary.

A photographer that has impressed me recently is Karl Blossfeldt.

**What determines the subject matter you choose?**

The materials for my works are intimately related to my everyday life. The past few years of the pandemic have caused great change to the whole world! I am especially overcome by life's fragility! My recent works largely focus on expressing the human condition through studying plants.

**What impact would you like your art to have?**

I hope I can provide a very subjective perspective to audiences, so that every viewer can make their own discoveries.

**What artwork do you never get bored with?**

NONE

**Is there anything you want to add?**

N/A

Full Bloom



Prosperity



Hasht Bihisht



**"Symbiosis" by Ji Zhou: The Hidden Beauty of Nature**

Text by Nadia E Carrizo

Ji Zhou's work is characterized by being contemplative, asking questions through various photographic techniques that consider common ideas about objectivity and photographic certainty, and reflect on the current situation of the contemporary environment.



"Symbiosis" brings together a series of photographic works of plants that reveal to us their formal beauty. The varied methodologies he uses allow the artist to highlight the sculptural and graphic values of the plants. The result is striking hybrid works, crossing the sculptural and photography, which shows a new perception of nature, more austere and objective, but at the same time provoking great emotion in the viewer.

Ji Zhou's artistic production is reminiscent of the plant photographs of the German Karl Blossfeldt, one of the major references of Modernist photography. Blossfeldt enlarged his photographs and turned them into slides to observe the plants in detail. The excellent quality of his photographs made him a pioneer of the New Objectivity, an artistic trend that sought to capture reality as objectively and truthfully as possible.

However, while Blossfeldt's photographs have come to be used as learning material, Ji Zhou's pieces aim to go beyond the conquest of technique. The works presented in "Symbiosis" contrast nature and artifice, or in the artist's own words, a symbiotic relationship between nature and that which is altered by humans.

Plant portrait-Tillandsia (2022) may allude to our broken world that somehow manages to survive, echoing how tillandsia itself- a tenacious air plant - blooms despite the difficulties it faces. And by combining two separate parts into one image a new hybrid is born.

In the series "Metempsychosis" (2022), the concept of the real and the illusory enters into tension. The work consists of a group of conceptual photographs of flowers inspired by Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionism. Ji Zhou plays with reality and the artistic effect of lighting to depict the life cycle of flowers, challenging the limits of objectivity, as the formal beauty of the flowers is revealed through the decontextualization of the images.

Continue reading below

## Metempsychosis







Something similar happens in "Twining Florets" (2021), a lightbox containing flowers that form different and beautiful patterns. According to the artist, this work is inspired by the lack of contact with nature during the pandemic. Under a monochromatic filter, Ji Zhou created a Valdivia effect as a metaphor for memory and nostalgia for lost reality. As in "Metempsychosis", this work again produces a contradictory encounter between fantasy and reality.

In this sense, photography -and the image itself- in "Symbiosis" plays an interesting and experimental role. For a long time, the image has served as a way to immortalize the moment, to make visible the history of every individual or the mass through visual media. The first intention of the image is to remember and justify the moment. However, we know that with the advance in technology, this is already an



easy task.

The reinterpretation of manipulation goes beyond the barrier of the real, challenging photography to go beyond the "documentary" and the observable. The artist deposits his gaze on the inner life in the outer natural order. Ji Zhou's pieces combine the objectivity of photographic technique with human subjectivity, specifically highlighting an introspective look at the contemporary way of life.

Ji Zhou's photographs portray an intimate link between people's lives and the plant kingdom. Beyond vindicating the beauty of nature, these pieces make the viewer connect with their experiences and feelings, making it clear that "Symbiosis" is not only about capturing realistic nature as we perceive it, but merging with the sensations experienced both socially and personally.

In an age where we live surrounded by meaningless images, Ji Zhou's works lead us to slow down the daily maelstrom to place us in a contemplative and reflective role. It leaves us wondering, what are we missing? In today's world, individuals are like children fascinated by bubbles: they go after something beautiful like brightness and colors; the image traps them with its superficiality and the moment they possess the bubble they burst it, find nothing inside and go for the next one.

This is how we behave on a daily basis. The excessive consumption of information images and objects leaves the being aside and only the object as novelty matters, maintaining a state of caprice and dissatisfaction, and frustration. In contrast, "Symbiosis" stops time, and collapses the omnipresent artificial wall between human beings and nature that disconnects us day by day as a collective.

Ji Zhou, "Symbiosis" is currently showing at [Eli Klein Gallery](#) in New York. Closes August 27, 2022







## **Symbiosis**

### **Project statement**

Throughout my creation of this work, every piece was shot laid out on a specially designed light structure. The reason for this is to allow me to isolate and inspect each plant with a focus on their pattern.

For the Plant Portrait series, I chose tillandsia as my motif. It is a magnificent species because it doesn't need soil to survive. Water is absorbed from the air and then stored in the leaves. It shows me what vitality looks like. Each work was made from the combination of two shots: the left half and the right half. Each time I would arrange them slightly differently to create the difference but the combination of the two would still seem very much in sync with what they might have grown into themselves.

The Metempsychosis series shows an arrangement of plants in different textures, some in full blossom, some wilted. I took inspiration from Jackson Pollock's



paintings and wanted to let plants, which are alive, do the gesture. "Vitality in Action" is the keyword for this series. This status of in between real and illusion showcases the full cycle of plants' lives.

In Hasht Bihisht 3, Full Bloom and Prosperity, I rearranged the plants to create a more organized but man-made arrangement. The goal of this is to look at the plants as a gateway that can potentially lead us to somewhere else. It is also a "middle" space in between an arrangement of reality and an arrangement of illusion.

In the lightbox work Twining Florets, I created a pattern that is the zoom-in of a floral pattern that seems to be able to be generalized and applied repetitively.

[Ji Zhou @ Eli Klein Gallery](#)  
[@jizhouji](#)

Twining Florets





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