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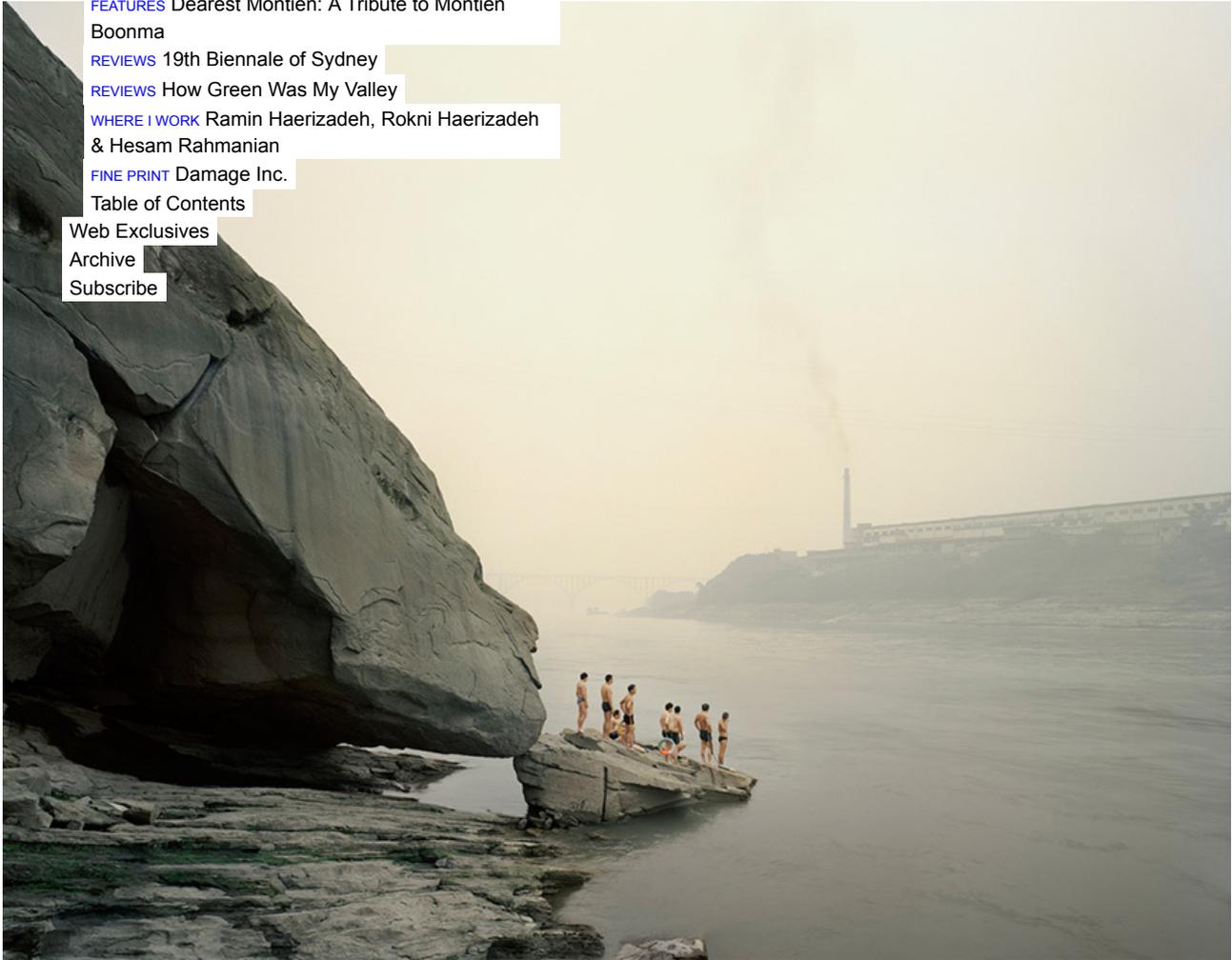
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NADAV KANDER, *Yibin I (Bathers)*, Sichuan Province, 2007, C-print, 117 x 149 cm. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong.

## CURVES OF MOON AND RIVERS OF BLUE NADAV KANDER

WEB EXCLUSIVES BY JACQUELINE LIU  
BLINDSPOT GALLERY

HONG KONG



NADAV KANDER, *Qinghai Province II*, 2007, C-print, 117 x 149 cm. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong.

The atmosphere surrounding numerous industrial buildings in Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong, echoes the subject of “development” examined in “Yangtze, The Long River,” one of the two photographic series by Nadav Kander presented at Blindspot Gallery. Along with his other series, “Bodies. 6 Women, 1 Man,” the Israel-born, London-based photographer’s solo exhibition, entitled “Curves of Moon and Rivers of Blue,” explores the theme of human vulnerability. Kander asks, “What is it to be alone in the world?”

A winner of the 2009 Prix Pictet award, “Yangtze, The Long River” contains color photographs of the eponymous Chinese landmark, with shots taken of the river from its mouth to its source. At



**NADAV KANDER**, *Yibin VII, Sichuan Province*, 2007, C-print, 117 x 149 cm. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong.

Blindspot Gallery, viewers first encounter *Chongqing IV (Sunday Picnic)*, *Chongqing Municipality* (2006), in which five presumably Chinese citizens are enjoying a “picnic” under a bridge by the Yangtze River. The small-sized figures are pressed against large and tall bridge pillars, and the misty river in the background contrasts with the sharp focus of the people in the foreground. One participant’s uneasy stare seems to convey people’s powerlessness and discomfort associated with the rapid and dramatic change happening alongside the Yangtze River. Another photograph, *Yibin I (Bathers)*, *Sichuan Province* (2007), captures a group of half-naked men standing on a large rock next to the Yangtze River. Standing with their hands at their waists and backs against the lens, the bathers stare at the other side of the river bank. Across the river is a factory sitting in the misty background, with smoke coming out of its chimney. Again, the body gestures of the figures suggest a sense of powerlessness that people feel in response to the uncertain future brought by extensive development.



**Nadav Kander**, *Chongqing IV (Sunday Picnic)*, *Chongqing Municipality*, 2006, C-print, 117 x 149 cm. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong.

Walking further down the aisle, viewers will notice a slight change of subject in Kander’s photographs—that human figures are no longer necessarily involved. *Qinghai Province II* (2007) features a broken and worn bridge over the icy yet polluted section of Yangtze River in Western China. A line of copper-toned pollutants on the river echoes the brown-toned mountains in the background, creating an overall lifeless feeling, urging viewers to reflect on the environmental costs of rapid economic growth. *Yibin VII, Sichuan Province* (2007) leads viewers further down this reflective path, with its image of an adult holding a toddler, who stands on a rocky construction ground next to a large, chunky bridge pillar by the river. Against the foggy river in the background, the figures accentuate people’s struggle in finding their place and identity under the country’s aggressive pursuit of economic prosperity. How significant is the common man in China’s fast-paced development? What would his homeland be like when his children grow up? Centering on the country’s longest river, “Yangtze, The Long River” captures how

insignificant and vulnerable people can be in China's era of change.



**NADAV KANDER**, *Elizabeth Sitting*, 2012, C-print, 135 x 180 cm. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong.



**NADAV KANDER**, *Isley Arched With White Mice*, 2010, C-print, 135 x 180 cm. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong.

Behind *Chongqing IV* is an L-shaped, dimly-lit space featuring “Bodies. 6 Women, 1 Man.” For this work, which utilizes strong contrast rather than misty backgrounds, Kander created a series of photographs and one video of painterly nudes. All of the models are positioned against black backgrounds, each in a different angular posture. With the exception of the only male model (who is pictured in just one shot), all of the female models have their faces covered or tilted away from the camera. The models are covered with white paint, and a few are posing with animals. *Elizabeth Sitting* (2012) features a plus-size woman sitting with her head buried in her arms. Her twisted body results in the folding of tissues at her waist. Clearly visible brushstrokes on her body lead viewers to see the body's texture as being a series of continuous curves, which—added with the lines and shadows created by the photography lighting and the pose of the body itself—almost resembles a landscape painting. Yet this feeling of peace and beauty is contrasted with the figure's strong sense of shame and vulnerability communicated through her body language, leaving viewers in a state of disquiet.

The choice of surrounding models with a black background isolates and dehumanizes them, thus objectifying them under spotlight. The introduction of mice in *Isley Arched With White Mice* (2010) pushes this thought further; with the model arching her back with her hand above her head, and having three mice running along her physique, her figure communicates to viewers as being not merely a human body but also a natural landscape. Mice symbolize experimentation and curiosity, which aligns with the photographic series' attempt to explore the notion of beauty. Through objectifying human figures, Kander encourages viewers to see these photographs from a distance, allowing room for critique on what it means to be beautiful.

Though focusing on different subjects, “Yangtze, The Long River” and “Bodies. 6 Women, 1 Man” nevertheless explore the same condition shared by all humans—namely, vulnerability. While being vulnerable is commonly portrayed as a sign of weakness, Kander takes viewers on a sensual and emotional journey to show that vulnerability can be absolutely beautiful.

“[Curves of Moon and Rivers of Blue](#)” continues at Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong, until July 19, 2014.

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