

## Qiu Mai (Michael Cherney, born 1969)

“Selected Source Images, Fan Motif, #23”

“Selected Source Images, Fan Motif, #24”

Photograph, ink on *mitsumata* paper  
Each 21.0 x 22.0 cm. (8 1/4 x 8 2/3 in.)

“Selected Source Images, Fan Motif, #23” was photographed in Xinjiang province. To create this compelling image the artist selected one portion of the negative that captured the entire scene and greatly enlarged it. The result appears as an almost completely abstract landscape, with serrated peaks separated by cloud barriers and vertical elements suggesting outcroppings of rock. With the format densely packed with solid forms, the work captures the adamant nature of mountain ranges in reality. Conceived as an homage to Gong Xian’s “Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines” (fig. 1), the work does indeed parallel the painting in complexity and mysteriousness of forms. A famous 17<sup>th</sup> century album of reduced-size copies of earlier masterworks was entitled *Xiaozhong xianda*, “The Great Revealed within the Small,” and these photographs in their relationship to the actual physical environment fully warrant similar nomenclature.

“Selected Source Images, Fan Motif, #24” was photographed in Hunan. This type of minimalist, grainy image was described by the artist as his favorite kind of work, akin to 13<sup>th</sup> century landscapes by such as Muqi and Yujian. For the viewer, the visual brain can recognize meaningful patterns even in the presence of extreme noise and makes an effort to impose order on the chaos. Conditions arise that enable the viewer to complete the picture based on his or her own unique experience. Pleasure can be found in this, as it stimulates the creative self. Legend has it that upon viewing a sunset painted by Turner, a young viewer remarked, “I never saw a sunset like that, Mr. Turner,” to which Turner replied, “Don’t you

## 秋麥

扇圖

扇圖

wish you could?”

One would be hard-pressed to find a “more Chinese” artist than Qiu Mai (b. 1969). Photographer, calligrapher, and book artist, Qiu Mai’s work is done with the great sophistication that draws on the subtleties of China’s most scholarly and esoteric traditions. Based in Beijing and a successful artist whose works have been collected by The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Department of Asian Art (the first photographic works ever to enter the collection of that department), Qiu Mai’s art is less provocative than it is intellectually engaging, meditative, and often simply beautiful. What is provocative is his identity: Qiu Mai is the Chinese name for Michael Cherney, born in New York of Jewish parentage. Cherney’s work is the cutting-edge demonstration of artistic globalization: if Asian artists can so readily “come West,” then what is to prevent large numbers of future Western artists from “going Asian”? Or, like Qiu Mai/Michael Cherney, going both ways at once, both American and Chinese, modern and traditional. (Jerome Silbergeld)

Michael’s works can be found in the collection of the following institutions: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Getty Research Institute, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum, Peabody Essex Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, Harvard University Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Berkeley Art Museum / Pacific Film Archive, Yale University Art Gallery, Middlebury College Museum of Art, Middlebury College Wellin Art Museum, and the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

Fig. 56. Gong Xian (1619–1689). *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), ca. 1670. Hanging scroll; ink on paper, 24 1/2 x 40 1/2 in. (62 x 102 cm). **Museum Rietberg, Zurich**, Gift of Charles A. Drenowatz



---

Fig. 1: Gong Xian (1619-89): "Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines," Museum Rietberg, Zurich, after [http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/5808/1/Brinker\\_Masterpiece\\_20.7.pdf](http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/5808/1/Brinker_Masterpiece_20.7.pdf)