

Traceable to sanctioned markets during the Tang and Song dynasties (10th-13th centuries), night markets have emerged in variegated forms across the globe according to the needs, history, politics, and culture of the local people. Today, they function as highly accessible grounds where tourists and locals are brought together: where regional cuisine, sociality, cultural exchange, and economic interests (all not without inflections of imperialist interventions) are presented out in the open. In Taiwan, the first night market emerged in the early 1900s to feed and supply migrant workers. Thailand has become infamous for some of its night markets, which sprung up as R&R stops for American soldiers fighting in Vietnam. Vietnam's famous *Benh Thanh* Market began as an informal market in the 17th century, but was formalized and reconstructed by French colonizers who renamed it "Les Centrales Halles". In contemporary China, strict regulation has given way to government encouragement of night markets for economic and cultural stimulation.

Night markets are comforting, yet mysterious places where deep history rubs against a blissfully ignorant present. They simultaneously promise the exciting sheen of convenient modernity and nostalgia for a less regulated, more free-for-all past. At the night market, the tensions between modernity and tradition, the culturally authentic and the kitschy, evaporate like sweat into the warm summer air.

Civil Art's *Night Market* draws from the democratic, highly-stimulating, and anthropologically rich ethos of real-life night markets to showcase a selection of intergenerational artists whose work is informed by different cultural contexts, offering nuanced views on themes of displacement, self-discovery, and identity. An iconic photo from Zhang Huan's *1/2 Series* deploys a butchered rack of animal ribs draped over his graffiti-ed torso as a visual metaphor for one's illegibility when relocating to a vastly different society. Artists such as Dominique Fung, Su Su, Shyama Golden, and Bony Ramirez look toward the traditional visual motifs and mythologies of their respective backgrounds, re-galvanizing them for contemporary interpretation. Drew Dodge, Yoor Lee, Wanki Min, and Sarah Lee offer us more introspective and sensitive moments where we locate our emotional affect in nature. Sung Hwa Kim's painting, KangHee Kim's photograph, and the hybrid performance-painting-photograph collaboration between Liu Bolin and Annie Leibovitz all use different mediums to imbue a fierce sense of locality, as they draw inspiration straight from New York, the city in which this exhibition takes place. Participating in *Night Market* comes with an understanding that the artists in the show gather not in pristine harmony, but with all the cacophony and liveliness of a night market's numerous vendors. – Amanda Ba