

# Returning: the Rhododendron

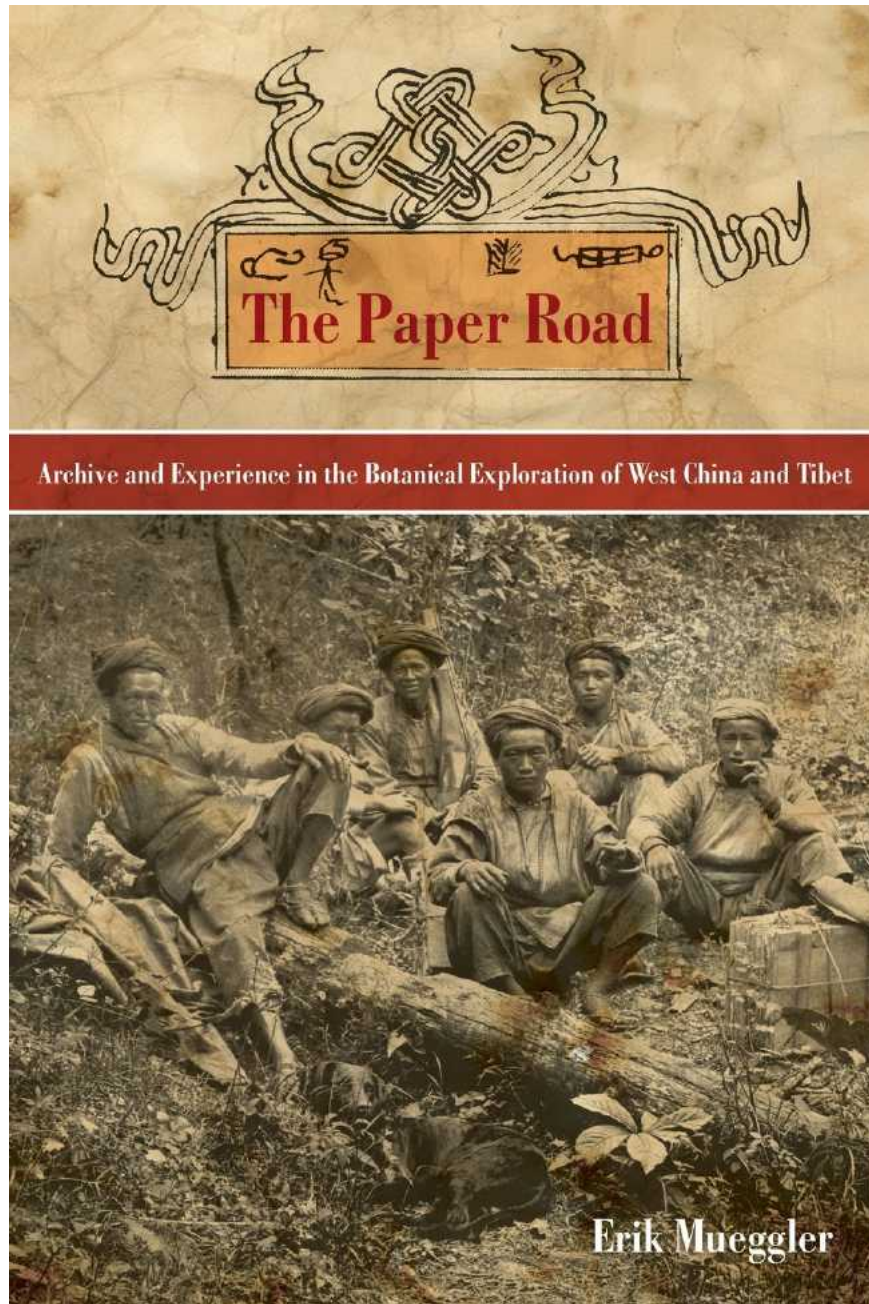


Jo Naden was one of the artists, musicians, botanists and anthropologists invited to Lijiang Studios, Yunnan, China during the summer of 2019. The preparatory reading, 'The Paper Road', Archive and Experience in the Botanical Exploration of West China and Tibet by Eric Mueggler, 2011, inspired her to focus on the rhododendron.

Many of the 1,024 species of the genus were collected from this geographical location, and with an awareness of the national attitude towards the much-maligned Rhododendron Ponticum, engaged others, in small workshops, applying Goethean Processing to re-acquaint with this woody plant. A sheet of paper made from the pressed petals of the plant, was carefully carried to Lijiang; a gift, a small gesture of all that been given, in essence returning the rhododendron.

The work made in China uses materials available there; bringing her practice full circle as similar materials had been explored in the early years of her artistic development.

2020.



# Stourbridge, England to Lijiang, Yunnan, 2019

Key text:

The Paper Road:

Archive and Experience in the  
Botanical Exploration of West  
China and Tibet

Eric Mueggler. 2011

ISBN: 9780520269033

# Botanists

George Forrest: 1873-1932



GEORGE FORREST, V.M.H.

Joseph Rock: 1884-1962



Joseph Rock with the Prince of Choni

### George Forrest:

Scottish explorer - thought of as the Indiana Jones of the plant world, was of the first western explorers of the remote south-west province of Yunnan, making his first expedition in 1904.

Genuine respect and concern for the indigenous people of Yunnan later paying for many to have small pox injections from his own pocket.

He discovered 1200 plant specimens new to science. In particular primulas and rhododendrons.

### Joseph Rock:

By contrast Joseph Rock an Austrian-American, was a self taught botanist and he was already 36 years of age at the time of his first expedition to Asia.

He had made a name for himself in the Botanical world through his work on Hawaiian species, while his expedition to Yunnan resulted in the collection of some 80,000 specimens he never published his findings aware that he was in the footsteps of others, he kept diaries and accounts of his explorations in addition to photographic documentation.

“Rock’s real competence lay in the identification and collection of plants, the decipherment of Naxi pictograms, and the compilation of maps, visual skills requiring enormous mental determination and physical stamina. His photographs too, often taken under very difficult circumstance, provide eloquent testimony for his drive for classifiable visual evidence.”

# Rhododendrons with Pines, Stourbridge. U.K.



## gatherings and recollections

*'Building a hut, with  
my younger brother.  
Climbing in deep vegetation,  
spaces and dens, hide and seek.'*

*'The colour is always purple,  
always sticky.'*



*'looking recalls  
Cicely Barker's  
'Flower Fairy' books'*



## gatherings and recollections

*'loathe them,  
they are not native,  
spoil the landscape.'*

*'associate them  
with stately homes.'*



Rhododendrons at Caerhays Castle in Cornwall.

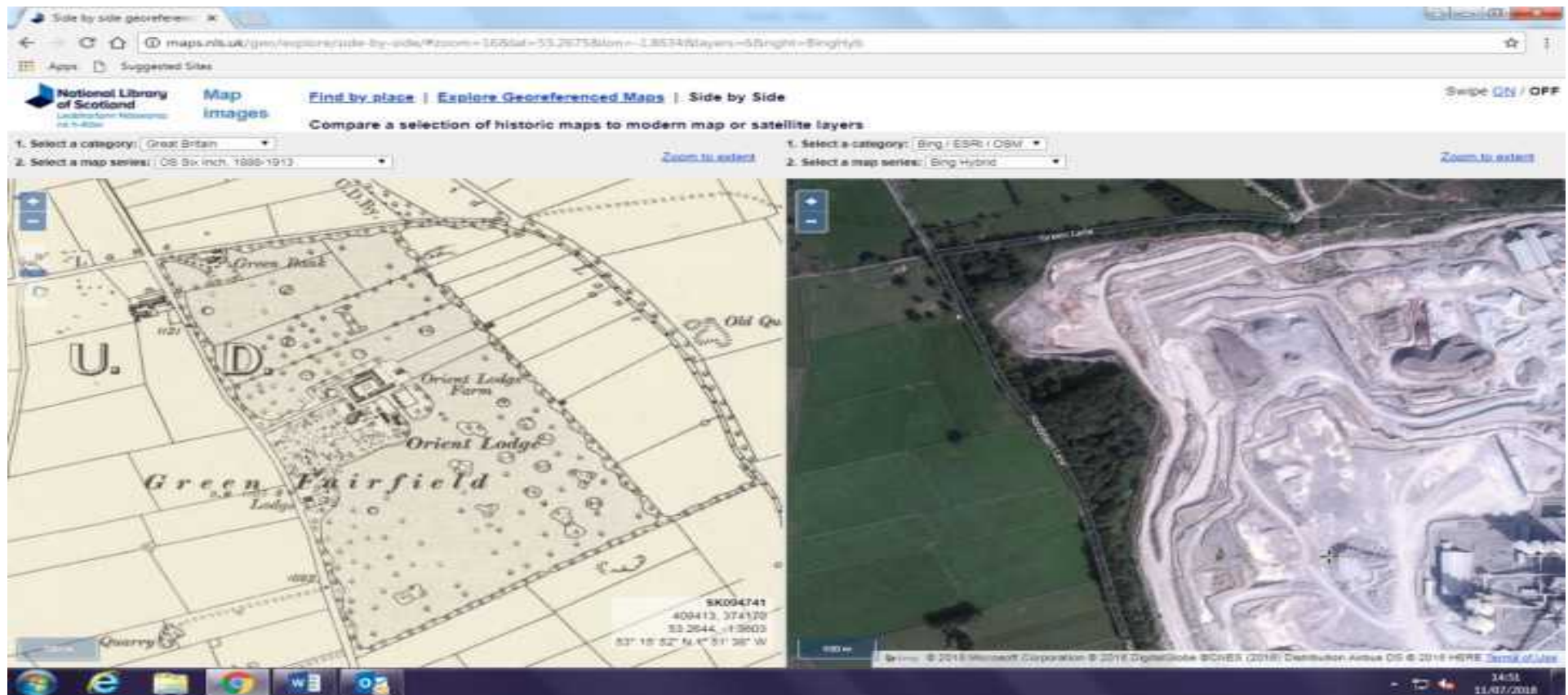
*'It was here where the  
rhododendrons grew, and here a  
generation earlier curious  
deferential children were ferried  
on their Sunday School trip, and  
here again, where I, as a child  
would wind in-between the  
branches of this world far away'*



**Orient Lodge:** Fairfield, Buxton; built 1869 for Samuel Swann Brittan and his Arabic wife, Emma.  
Formal gardens and mature trees, an orangery with exotic fruits, beautifully built stables and shipens with luxuriously tiled interiors.

then

now



# gatherings and recollections

then



now



*‘all that remains is an overgrown tree-lined driveway, leading to a great cliff edge, the huge Tunstead Quarry.’*



## Hawkstone Park

Sandstone Ridge, Shropshire Borders UK



*In this cleft of landscape I had  
sensed a cleft in my own life, as  
an awakening of severance in my  
marriage manifest*

# looking and seeing

Plant:

Tapered

Harder at bottom than top

Variance in spacing of leaves

Gesture, spreading, upwards

Planes of lozenge shape

Planes underside lighter gold

New planes more vertical

Reach apogee then invert

Neat nibbled holes

Yellow banding on plane  
edges



flower bud:

Ridged case

Like fingers, claws

Overgrown balloon

Deflated

Dried grapes



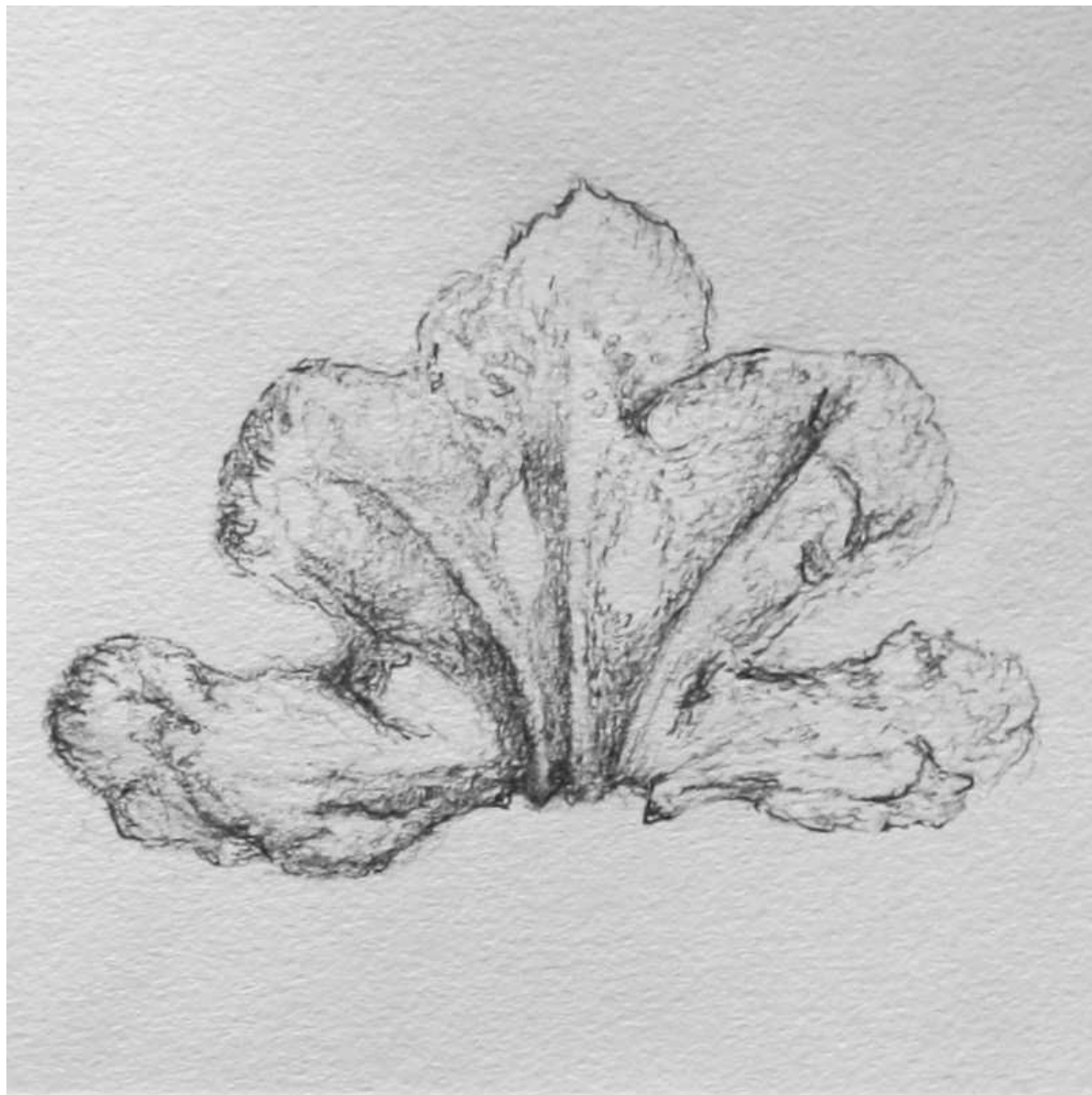
# looking and seeing



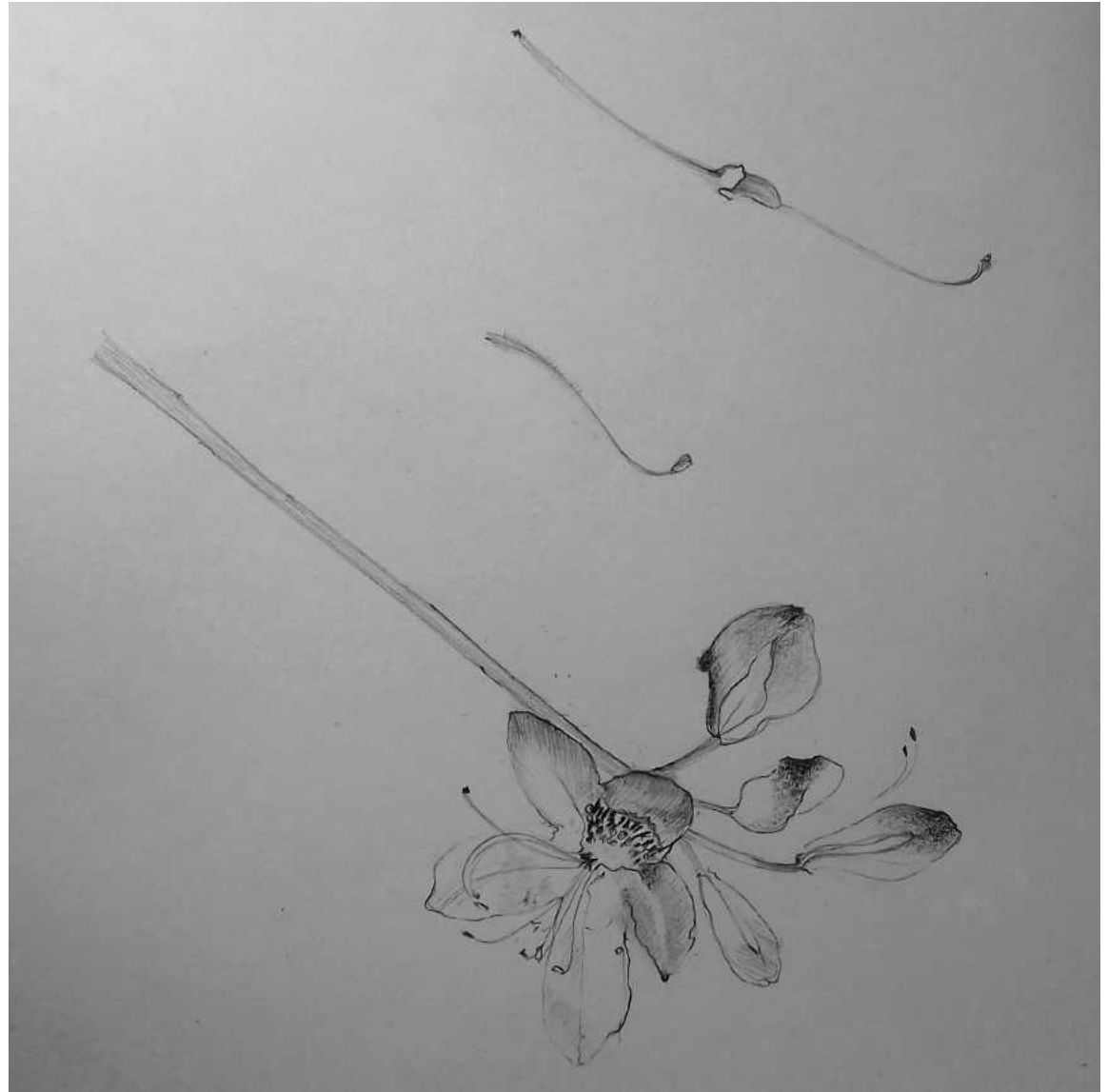
Rounded flower-head  
5 petals three joined  
Mustard pattern in centre  
Leopard spots  
Crocus-like  
Yellow powder  
Hairy snake  
Opalescence  
Base like pastry cutter  
Cups flute out slightly  
Space for uprights within  
circular collar  
Trumpet flower  
Five frilly edges  
Spread, fan-shaped  
Semi-circle

Image credit: Helen Garbett



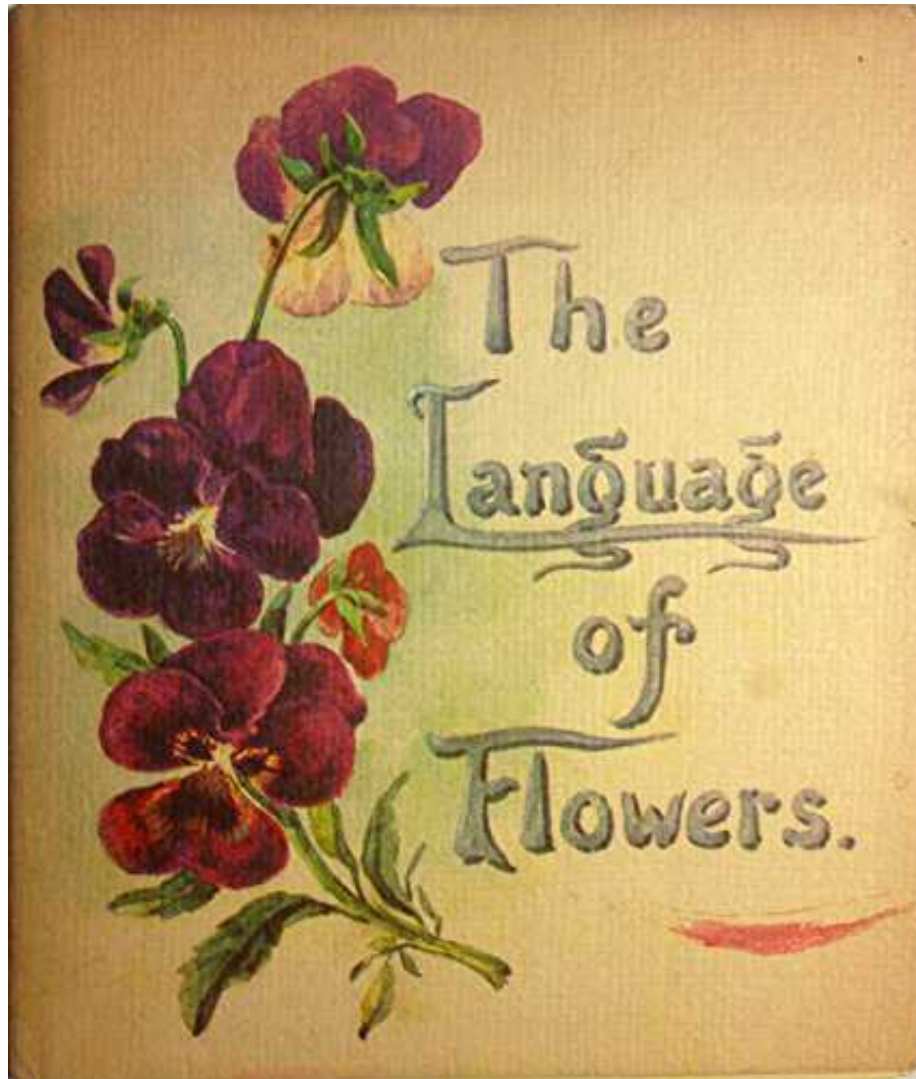


looking and seeing



Drawing credit: Jo Newman

meaning and healing



Temperance  
Balance  
Danger  
Poisonous honey

Edible flowers  
Sedative  
Rheumatism  
Bronchitis

Cuck-coo, cuck-coo, cuck-coo,



*'A single cuckoo by day splits the mountain bamboo  
with an initial cry upon first hearing about Du Yu'*  
Yang Wanli



Hokusai: woodblock print. 1834

## Yunnan: south of the misty mountains



# Lijiang studio



*...we came to a road, all in newness; straight as far as the eye could see, should I bend low to the hard pressed surface to catch a tremble in the remote distance, would some sound alert me to the expected.*

# The Herbalist

*under the verandah a wood fire  
cooks a large pot of potatoes, a  
line hold's the skin and paws of  
a white rabbit, next to these  
something resembling an animal  
gut dries*

*he goes into his dark sleeping  
quarters and brings forth a  
herbalist's guidebook*

*he say's he has two copies one  
of his father's and one for his  
son, identical apart from the  
signs of wear; he only uses his  
father's.*



## Lijiang Studios: the older area





*The buildings face outwards to the three directions with a screen-wall across the southern end enclosing a pebbled, central courtyard.*



*Rigged and pegged washing sets the courtyard to sail, baffling through doors in northern corners, winds to twine through, pining needles; rooves upturn, ships of the dragon clouds drift by.*

## Lijiang Studio

*A pine tree in the courtyard;  
at the end of each needle a  
blob of water hangs, an optic  
thread of light.*

*The scale of it seems like a  
bonsai, the trunk is spiraling  
round, I sense I am Alice in a  
new world.*



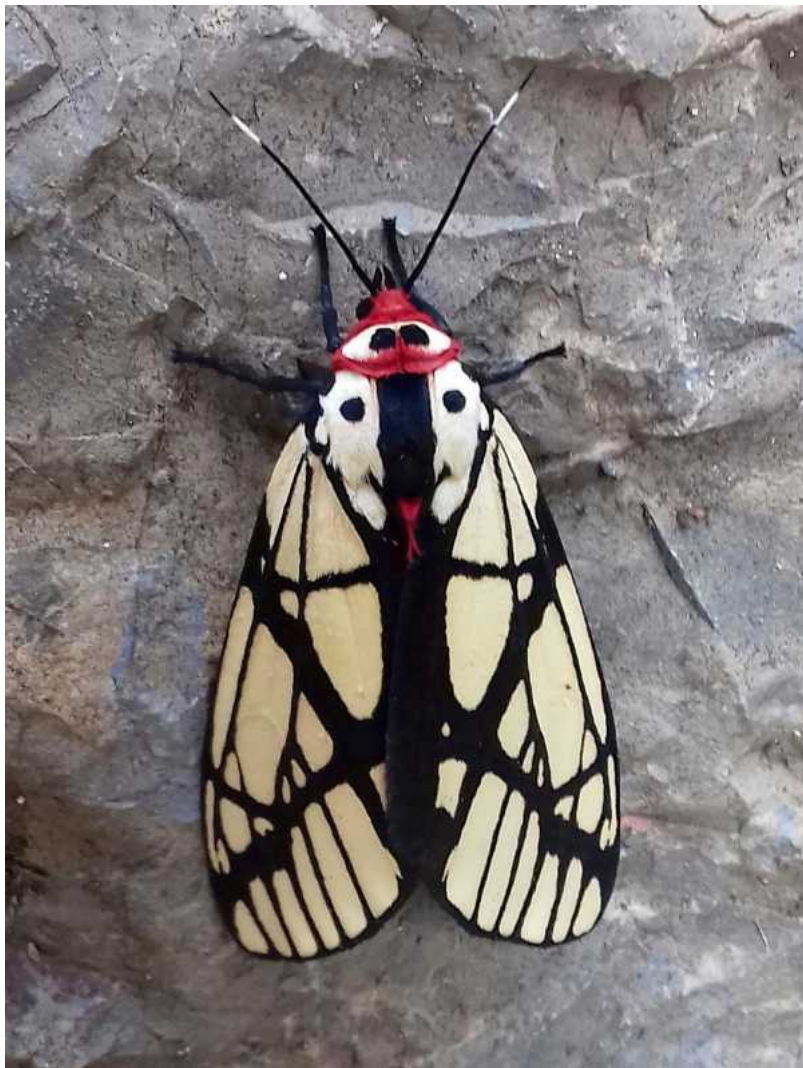
## Plants



## Animals



## Insects



## Birds



## Fungi



## Markets



Carriers



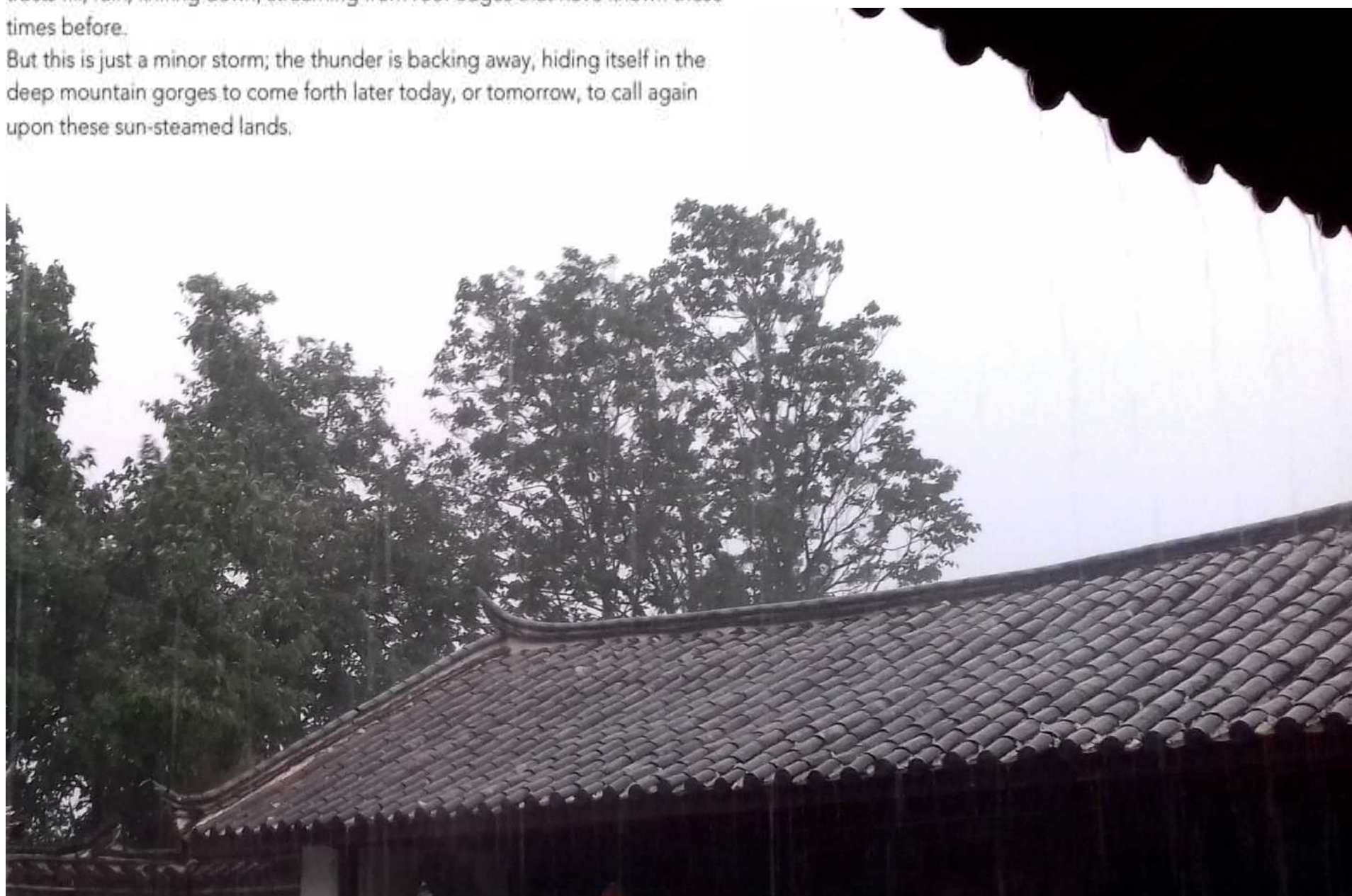
Barriers



A flat valley surrounded by mountains, worlds of gods and demons.  
Hot thermals meet with cold; the rain is now torrential, butterflies and birds take  
refuge under the eaves; beautiful, raw; a force of natural power; gullies and water-  
tracts fill; rain, knifing down, streaming from roof edges that have known these  
times before.

But this is just a minor storm; the thunder is backing away, hiding itself in the  
deep mountain gorges to come forth later today, or tomorrow, to call again  
upon these sun-steamed lands.

rainrainrainrainrainrain



## working space



## water meditation



## water meditation



sharing

water meditation

cat's cradle

string games



## Lijiang market: searching for materials



# SOUTH OF THE CLOUDS





Dongba Script

## SOUTH OF THE CLOUDS





making



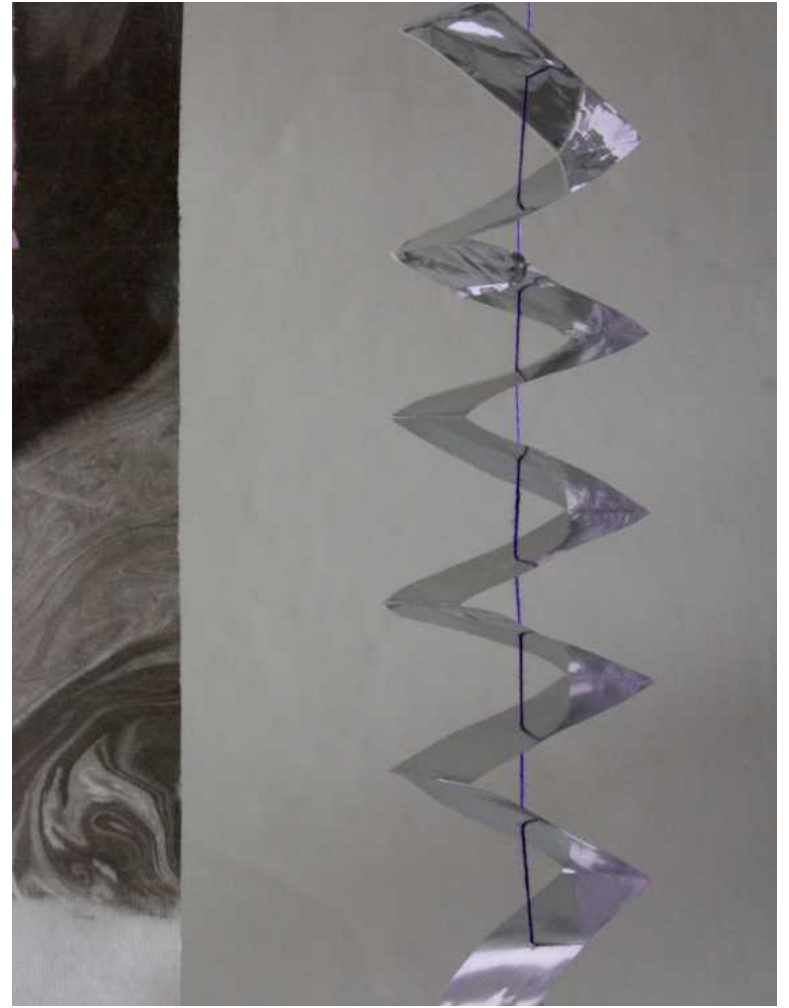
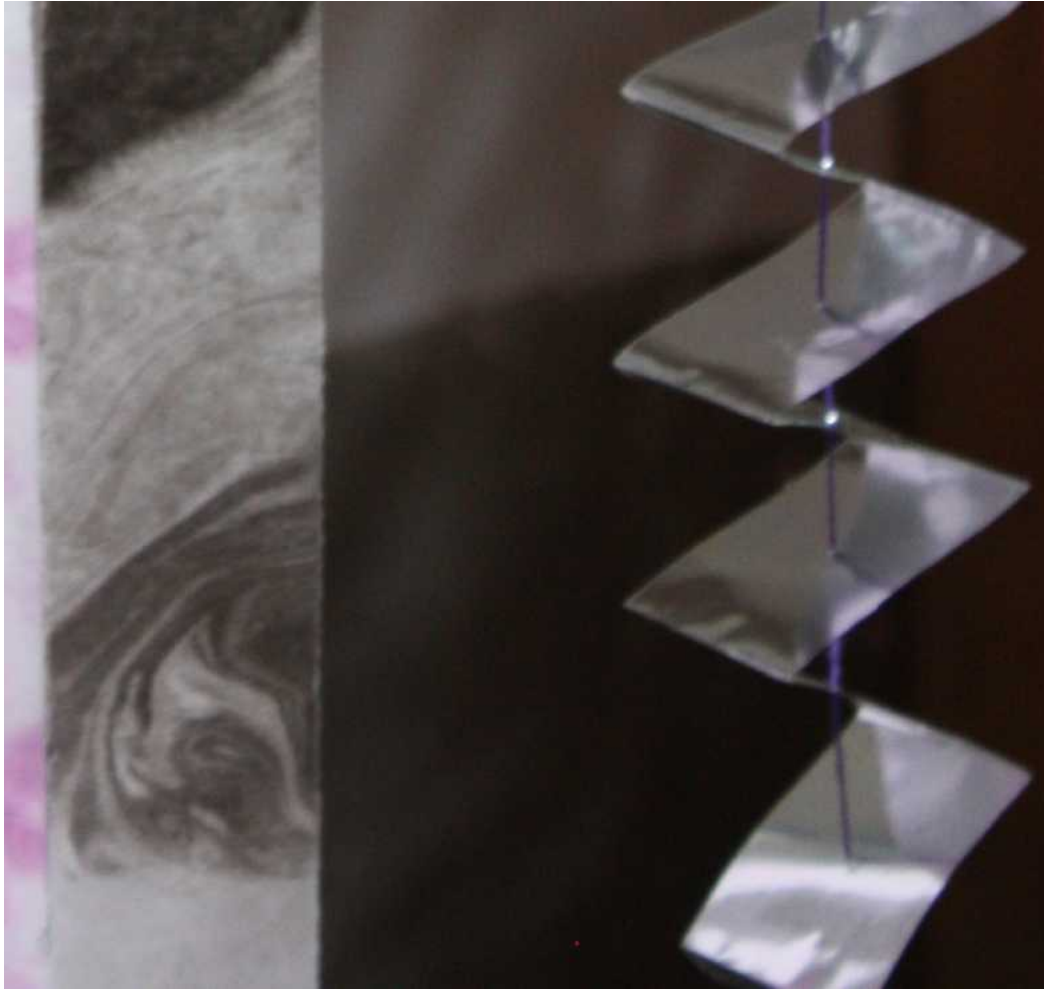
# CLIMBING WATERFALLS IN LIJIANG



# CLIMBING WATERFALLS IN LIJIANG











Rhododendron: paper petals returned



# Returning the Rhododendron

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