



PLATE 22
Square Apple

Sold in a department store in South Korea, these square apples were created as gifts for students taking the College Scholastic Ability Test, with some inscribed with the words 'pass' or 'success'. A similar square watermelon was developed in Japan in the 1980s. The cubic fruits are created by stunting their growth in glass cubes.



PLATE 24
Unbreakable Egg

A company in Japan has developed a technique to create eggs that are so strong that they cannot be broken. The only way to access its contents is to puncture a hole in its shell with a pointed tool. The egg was created by adding the plant protein of a banyan tree to a chicken, thus creating an egg with a bark-like texture.

Robert Zhao Renhui was born in 1983 in Singapore where he lives and works today. His practice is closely informed by science, in particular zoology, and he creates and publishes works with the fictional organization The Institute of Critical Zoologists which "aims to develop a critical approach to the zoological gaze, or how humans view animals." Renhui has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions including the Rencontres d'Arles Discovery Award 2015, Daegu Photo Biennale 2014, Busan Biennale 2014, Moscow International Biennale of Young Art 2014, PhotoIreland 2014 and Singapore Biennale 2013.

To what extent can we trust photography and science? Robert Zhao Renhui explores these questions in *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World*, which appears to be an authentic catalogue of plants and animals but is in fact entirely fictitious.

Renhui's guide ostensibly "documents" 55 different animals, plants and environments that have been manipulated by man but do not appear to be, and examines the myriad ways in which humans are altering nature. Here are curious creatures that have evolved in often unexpected ways to cope with our changing world, including rhinoceroses with barely visible horns and monkeys dependent on food handed out by humans. Other organisms in the series are the products of human intervention, mutations engineered to serve various purposes from scientific research to the desire for ornamentation, such as man-made gelatin grapes, genetically modified tomatoes and "unbreakable" eggs.

All living things constantly adapt to the various pressures they face including predators, pollution and environmental change. Yet the human species has undeniably emerged as the main perpetrator of the dangers that threaten the survival of other life forms. *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* reminds us of this fact, and above all to retain a critical, cautious and ironic attitude to the "real."

Primarily photographic, Zhao's practice is drawn from observations and research into the natural world. But it is not direct documentation; instead, he constructs and layers the subject with narratives, interweaving the real and the fictional, sowing a seed of doubt in viewers about the objectivity of the image before them.
Sylvia Tsai, *ArtAsiaPacific*



Robert Zhao Renhui A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World

Text by Robert Zhao Renhui
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PLATE 36
Fat Polar Bear
swimming in Hudson Bay

A polar bear weighing around 950kg, the heaviest ever recorded, was spotted swimming towards Hudson Bay, Canada. As winters – the hunting period for polar bears – get shorter because of global warming, polar bears must fatten themselves up or perish in summer.



PLATE 52
Monkey that talks

Adam became the first proboscis monkey with human speech ability. Scientists in Japan managed to engineer the human version of the *foxp2* gene – commonly known as the language gene – into the monkey.

