Time Out Singapore

Zhan Wang: Universe

March 29, 2012.

Chinese sculptor Zhan Wang is known for his fixation with rocks – among other things, he's created a huge series of chrome-plated 'scholar rocks', brought one of his pieces to the summit of Mount Everest and, most recently, created an installation replicating the explosion of a huge boulder in mid-air. Having arrived in Singapore for a residency at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute last year, his resulting show is a continuation of the shattering-rock idea, using techniques and tools at STPI to copy fragmented pieces of stone.

'This work follows a similar conceptual thread to my installation "My Personal Universe" at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, where I re-created an installation of 7,000 suspended stones replicating a still moment as a 20-ton boulder explodes in mid-air. I was in the midst of exploding the giant boulder in Feixian County, Shandong province – there was a misunderstanding with the cameraman the first time we arranged it, which delayed the explosion – when I came to STPI to create a new series of works. I used this as an opportunity to add another layer to the project.

'For the project at STPI, I selected a series of smaller rocks – the "offspring" of a larger rock – similar to the rocks that you might find along the road. Compared to the giant boulder, these were much smaller in scale, but the idea of a universe being born was still persistent, so this series is called "Small Universe" in Chinese.

'I started by shattering a rock with a sledgehammer. My ideal was to create a beautiful starry night of my imagination. To create more layers, I would sometimes shatter the smaller pieces – if one were to continually shatter the pieces, ultimately one is left with dust. This idea is similar to the universe being born from an explosion and then disappearing into nothingness.

'After coming to STPI and seeing their method for making paper, I started contemplating the possibilities of using the dust from the rocks to make paper, fusing the materials with the principles of the boulder's explosion.' *Berwin Song*