

# The Guardian

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**The Observer**  
Art



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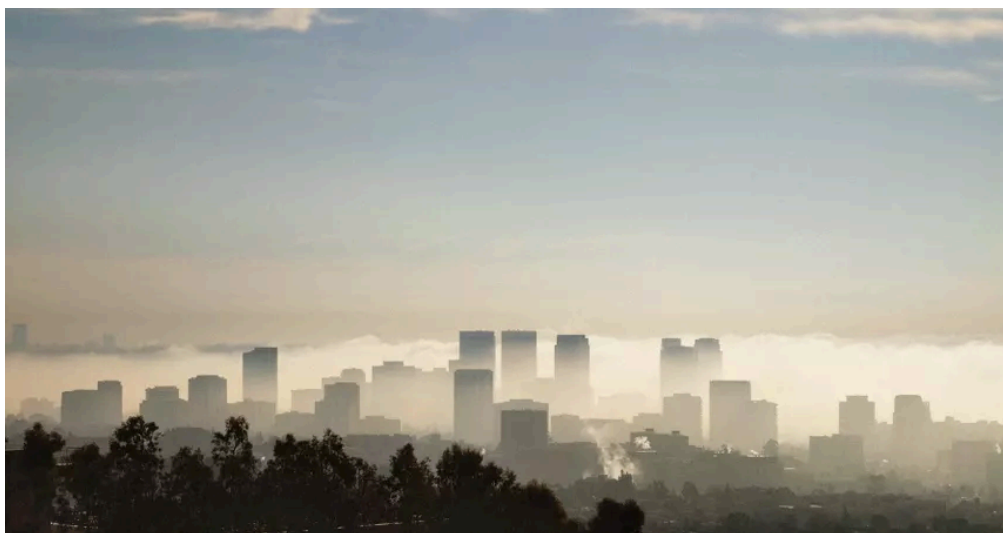
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## Fiona Tan: Elsewhere – review

**Frith Street Gallery, London**

The landscape of Los Angeles, as seen from high up in the hills, is the entire focus of **Fiona Tan**'s latest film installation at **Frith Street Gallery**. To describe this view as captivating would be an understatement. Tan's camera gazes at the scene in long, unhurried takes, watching dawn break over distant canyons and trees, noticing the sun gradually glinting off reflective skyscrapers, witnessing the slow close of day as the lights of cars streaming home describe a silver river through the city.



▲ 'A vision of the afterlife?': a still from Fiona Tan's film *Elsewhere*, 2018. Photograph: Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery

Everything looks strange and new through Tan's pensive eyes. That is one of the great gifts of this international artist, daughter of Chinese and Australian parents, born in Indonesia and based in the Netherlands. She seems to be always coming upon each place for the first time. And soon a voice begins to comment on the enigma of arriving in this land of the angels: perhaps we are to think of it as a vision of the afterlife?

Here, there is apparently no racism or violence, no crime or pollution. There is no more need for money, electricity, government - or even memory, as one day flows peacefully into another. And that is what the film appears to confirm: a utopian vision, unchanging, straight out of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*. But the narrator gradually begins to wonder how she will be able to tell the time, experience spontaneity, remember anything of value. She meets neighbours who express a longing for chance and imperfection. And as this haunting film draws to a close, the lofty view grows dark but also familiar: which would be better, the cinematic illusion or the real world?

*Star ratings (out of 5)*

*Fiona Tan: Elsewhere* ★★★★★

● Fiona Tan: *Elsewhere* is at **Frith Street Gallery**, London W1, until 12 January