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| **Editorial Contact:****UCCA**Danyu Xu,Supervisor of International Media Relations +86 10 1381 082 9590danyu.xu@ucca.org.cnExhibition Period:August 31, 2019 – November 24, 2019Location:UCCA Central Gallery, New GalleryPress material available at <ucca.org.cn/en/press> | Society Guidance: Part IIReleased August 31, 2019From August 31 to November 24, 2019, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents the group exhibition “Society Guidance: Part II,” featuring work by Chen Zhen (1955 – 2000, Shanghai), Huang Jingyuan (b. 1979, Xi’an), Li Juchuan (b. 1964, Shashi, Hubei province), Double Fly Art Center (established 2008), Shi Yong (b. 1963, Shanghai), Xing Danwen (b. 1967, Xi’an), Xu Tan (b. 1957, Wuhan), and Xu Yong (b. 1954, Shanghai), made during, or in relation to, the 1990s. Also included is a special presentation devoted to Wildlife Art Project (initiated 1997), a unique art program of the period. The exhibition is a continuation of “Society Guidance: Part 1,” exhibited from May 18 to August 18, 2019, which presented artworks together with a reading room of archival materials, to outline for viewers the wider context of rapid economic and social change in 1990s China. Artists responded to changing moral standards and incipient commercialism through a variety of strategies, some retreating from the social sphere while others dove headlong into emerging consumer culture. The second installment of “Society Guidance” focuses on the latter half of the 1990s, a time of profound change, which deepened and continued the economic reforms first initiated in 1978. The transformation of China’s economic system, social structures, and cultural life in the beginning of the decade prompted an uncertain atmosphere that carried over into the following years, which would see the further decline of the Enlightenment culture that defined the country’s intellectual life in the 1980s, along with the emergence of the Internet, and increased awareness of the outside world. The artworks gathered here encapsulate how the artists understood and reacted to the era, as they expressed themselves through a wider range of mediums and artistic languages than previously available to their predecessors. Artists explored themes including individual identity, feminism, economic marketization, urbanization, and personal mobility, attempting to find artistic truth or a spiritual center in the midst of the constantly changing reality around them. “Society Guidance: Part II” presents a snapshot of the 1990s as a moment when a multitude of new directions emerged in Chinese society and contemporary art, while also sharing a range of differing perspectives on the ostensibly “incomplete” cultural landscape of the time. The exhibition is curated by UCCA Head of Exhibitions Bian Ka, who has previously engaged with related themes through his own practice as a critic and curator of independent projects.“Society Guidance” (*Renjian Zhinan*, 人 间 指 南) takes its title from the fictional magazine at the center of the 1991 Chinese television comedy *Stories from the Editorial Board* (*Bianjibu de Gushi*, 编辑部的故事). Featuring some of the biggest stars of the day, including Ge You and Lü Liping, the program humorously introduced emerging social phenomena, shaping the public imaginary of the period. As such, the title may also be understood as referring to the desire for a new and durable system of values at a time of constant change, defined by new economic paradigms, shifting social norms, and collective feelings of anxiety and confusion.In the last decade of the twentieth century, the majority of people in China—artists included—faced the same rapidly evolving reality, and used whatever means possible to make themselves part of the ongoing transformation, in the hopes of coming out on top. Whether one is undertaking academic analysis of the period, or attempting to indirectly grasp recent history through art, this specific context must be taken as a starting point to understand and evaluate artistic practices of the 1990s.In theory, discussing Chinese art of the 1990s is not so difficult: in the context of wider society the era is very clearly bookended, its beginning and end marking major historical turning points. Furthermore, a select group of Chinese artists experienced their first encounter with international acclaim and market success. However, this does not mean the decade can be defined according to a single set model, or that its art historical significance has as yet been definitively determined. The 1990s are still an open structure, a condition stemming from their “incompleteness.” This unfinished state can be understood in two ways: artists of the time were still at the stage of experimenting with their personal languages, and in the midst of societal change, it remained uncertain what space would remain for the survival of artists and creative expression.By the last few years of the 1990s, a handful of young people in China were already using modems (nicknamed *mao*, meaning “cat”) to access the internet over telephone lines, stepping into unexplored vistas and forming new connections. But the online age had not yet arrived in a meaningful sense: the 1990s were still defined by traditional media. At the same time, people were already considering what it might mean to be a global citizen. Embarrassed by the relative economic situation of their country, Chinese artists oriented themselves towards the wider world, working between local realities and international aspirations. Yet at the time the majority of them had no way to obtain any real support, nor the chance to form anything approaching today’s international art system. Failing to receive a warm welcome either at home or abroad, artists instead looked inward to progress through their own cultural consciousness. They believed that through continuing their own practice, they could eventually achieve cultural liberation. In this sense, artists were optimistic, looking forward to a more receptive future. In the 1990s neither the art market nor museum system were well established in China, though the “incompleteness” of contemporary art was not merely due to these material circumstances. The struggle to survive and create art in a semi-underground setting, detached from official systems, also originated from a more philosophical uncertainty, that of contemporary art’s own doubts over its own growth and maturity. This led artists to focus on the act of making art itself, rather than creating a finished product. Meanwhile, accelerated urban change and a re-ordering of personal relations threw into question the role of the artist within society. In the 1990s Xu Tan and Shi Yong lived in China’s south and east, respectively (as they still do). These two regions were already the country’s most prosperous areas, so compared to elsewhere there was space to accommodate art. But the issue of how artists fit into the rest of society remained unsettled, and this tension came to define their experience, fueling their practice. In Beijing, Xing Danwen and Xu Yong worked with their cameras at hand. They were not particularly enthused about joining the art community, and instead drifted around its periphery. As an architect Li Juchuan espoused an attitude of wandering without fixed address to build his understanding of urban space. Chen Zhen settled in France, yet in his hands references to global issues and identity always returned to Chinese classical literature and philosophy. As an experimental art program, Wildlife Art Project proposed a way of thinking about art without an exhibition space or form, instead taking place over an undefined number of locations according to the individual circumstances of participating artists, who created work all around the country over a set time period. This project by 27 artists presents a fairly comprehensive view of the breadth of art practices present in the 1990s, along with a glimpse of the “wild,” quasi-underground conditions of the contemporary art scene. Throughout the 1990s, artists were able to build new knowledge, imagery, and structures, though they operated in separate groups, unable to construct a sense of wholeness across geographic distance and differing understandings of identity and the body. “Society Guidance: Part II” attempts to present a vision of the 1990s true to the decade’s fragmented nature. The inclusion of work by Double Fly Art Center and Huang Jingyuan helps the viewer locate traces and afterimages of the 1990s in the practice of artists that did not actually enter the art world until after the new millennium. For their pieces in the exhibition, these artists from a younger generation have not re-imagined or paid tribute to the 1990s, but instead re-examined and reviewed the decade. In doing so they expand our understanding of the state of Chinese contemporary art as it stood poised to enter a new century. About the Exhibition:Fengmi Technology and Shanghai HELU Culture Communication Co., Ltd. provide video equipment support. Excusive audio equipment support comes from Genelec. About the Artists:Chen ZhenChen Zhen (1955-2000, Shanghai) grew up in a French-speaking medical family in Shanghai’s former French Concession, which fueled his interest in the links between traditional Chinese philosophy and Western culture at a very young age. From 1973 he studied at the Shanghai School of Fine Arts and Crafts, where he started teaching in 1976. In 1978, he continued his studies at the Shanghai Drama Institute, where he specialized in set design. In 1986, Chen Zhen moved to Paris in pursuit of higher artistic freedom, for which he enrolled at the École national supérieure des Beaux-Arts and, in 1989, the Institut des Hautes Etudes en arts plastiques. His works have been shown around the world, and his major solo exhibition venues include: ICA Boston (2002), MoMA PS1, New York (2003), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2003), Kunsthalle Wien (2007), MART, Rovereto (2008), Musée Guimet, Paris (2010), Faurshou Foundation, Beijing (2012), and Rockbund Museum, Shanghai (2015). Moreover, HangarBicocca in Milan will dedicate an extensive posthumous retrospective on the artist in 2020.Huang Jingyuan Huang Jingyuan (b. 1979, Guangxi province) is an artist of Zhuang minority descent. She received her BFA from Concordia University, Montreal, in 2005 and her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2008. Since returning to China in 2010, her work has focused on the contradictions and disconnections within Chinese society and between China and the world. Two major series were produced in the period following her return: the “Confucius City Project” and “I Am Your Agency.” Since 2014 Huang has worked with the idea of socialist realism, attempting to subvert the key mechanics of this historically complex genre. Notable projects from this period of work include “Civility Trilogy,” “Invitation of Models,” and “Mao's Love Letter.” Since 2017, her exhibitions and residencies have focused on exploring the conflicted inner strength of people within provincial settings, for example *Right to Write* at the Shanghai Biennale, and the making of film *Solutions* (2018). Li JuchuanLi Juchuan (b. 1964, Shashi, Hubei province, lives and works in Wuhan) graduated from the Department of Urban Planning of Wuhan Urban Construction Institute. From 1986 to 2006 he worked as an architecture teacher in the Department of Architecture at Wuhan University of Technology, and in the graduate program for architecture at Nanjing University. Since the 1990s he has utilized performance, video, photography, and on-site installations as part of his architectural practice. His work also involves writing, lectures, pedagogy, and exhibition. Double Fly Art CenterDouble Fly Art Center (established 2008) was founded by nine artists who all graduated from the China Academy of Art, Department of New Media Art, in Hangzhou. Double Fly uses the title of “Art Center” to organize and produce projects that are seemingly related to contemporary art. They specialize in a great variety of artistic media and formats: traditional ones including Chinese ink and sketches, and new ones including modern dance and 3D animation. As multi-media artist Wang Twoball has commented on Double Fly: “They are sometimes precise and sharp on problems of the social system, sometimes carefree and happy, separate from the noise of the world. They do not deliberately maintain a high profile, but always attract attention. They are natural stars, gaining approval from both their audience and experts.” Their members maintain their individual artistic practices, but the group often appears together at different types of events and settings, such as art openings and public spaces frequented in daily life. Here they perform actions that may appear confusing or ironic. For example, they once posed as bank robbers to steal building materials from a bank that was under construction; they groaned like porn stars while getting foot massages; they used computer games to form a rock and roll band and performed live; they shot their own MTV-style content to help sell records; and much more. They do not think their activities have any connection with artistic creation, so when they are invited to art shows, they always transform the exhibition hall into a space for play rather than the display of artworks. Shi YongShi Yong (b. 1963, Shanghai) is a representative figure of the contemporary Chinese artists who first started working with installation and video media. Since 1993, his works have been widely exhibited both in China and abroad. His earliest artistic practice focused on revealing the subtlety of our reality and the inherent tension of the “system.” Since the end of the 1990s, Shi has focused on the idea of Shanghai’s transformations under the Chinese economic reform, which contributed to the discussion of globalization and consumerism. Since 2006, with the work *Sorry, There will be no Documenta in 2007*, he turned his attention to the art world itself, pondering how to provide a more rational perspective through his creative works. Shi Yong’s 2015 solo exhibition “Let All Potential Be Internally Resolved Using Beautiful Form” continued his artistic practice, disclosing his intention to expand the reflection and practice of “control” under the seemingly “abstract” future. Recent solo exhibitions include “A ( ) Bird be Released from the Top of a Certain Tower” (Boxes Art Museum, Foshan, 2018); “Shi Yong: Under the Rule” (ShanghART, Shanghai, 2017); and “Let All Potential be Internally Resolved Using Beautiful Form,” (MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, 2015). Group exhibitions include the Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art (Ekaterinburg, 2015); “Essential Matters: Moving Images from China” (Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, 2015); the Second Guangzhou Triennale, (Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, 2005), XXV Biennale de Sao Paulo (2002); the Fourth Shanghai Biennale (Shanghai Art Museum, 2002); “Unpacking Europe,” (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam); “Living in Time” (Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, 2001), the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1999), “Art for Sale” (Shanghai, 1999), “Cities on the Move” (touring exhibition, 1997- 1999), and more. Xing DanwenXing Danwen (b. 1967 Xi'an, China, currently lives and works in Beijing) received her BFA from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, in 1992, and completed her MFA at the School of Visual Arts, New York, in 2001. She is internationally recognized as a photographer and new media artist. Her work is frequently discussed by internationally respected scholars, appearing in monographs and journals on contemporary art, and has been shown at exhibitions including the Sydney Biennale, Whitney Biennial, and Yokohama Triennale, and at museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, International Center for Photography, New York, J. Paul Getty Art Museum, Centre Pompidou, Victoria and Albert Museum, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, and more. The aforementioned institutions have collected her work, as have the Uli Sugg Collection, UBS Art Collection, and France’s Fonds national d'art contemporain. In 2017, she staged a solo retrospective at Beijing’s Red Brick Museum, and in 2018 received the Silver Trophy for Best Artist of the Year from Award of Art China. In the fall of 2019, celebrated publisher Prestel plans to publish a catalogue documenting her 25 years of artistic practice.Xu TanXu Tan (b. 1957, Wuhan, lives and works in the Pearl River Delta and New York) was educated at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, and in 1993 joined the Big Tail Elephant Working Group. In 2002 he was the recipient of an Asian Cultural Council fellowship in New York, and in 2004 he was awarded an artist’s residency fellowship from DAAD Berlin. His work has been exhibited or otherwise implemented at Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, Location One, New York, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, among other venues. Key exhibitions include Big Tail Elephant Working Group Guangzhou exhibition (1992), “Cities on the Move” (touring exhibition, 1997-1999); the Berlin Biennale (2001); the 50th and 53rd edition of the Venice Biennale (2003, 2009); Jakarta Biennale (2013), Shanghai Biennale (2014), and Sharjah Biennial (2015). Xu YongXu Yong (b. 1954, Shanghai) was raised in Beijing, graduated from Henan University of Science and Technology in 1978, and worked as a photographer for an advertising agency in Beijing before dedicating himself to art. He is also one of the main initiators behind the development of Beijing’s 798 Art District. His work has been collected by the Walter Foundation, George HW Bush, and many other art institutions and individuals. His early work documenting Beijing’s *hutong* wasincluded in Naomi Rosenblum’s *A World History of Photography*. Recent solo exhibitions include “Negative/Scan” (Zentralbibliothek Bücherhallen Hamburg, 2019); “Xiao Fangjia Hutong Project” (Chaonei Residential District, Beijing 2017); “Hutong” (Vermillion Art, Sydney, 2017); and at Galerie Julian Sander (Koln, 2016). Group exhibitions include “Body Search I” (Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 2019); “Resist!” (BOZAR, Brussels, 2018); “Simultaneous Eidos”(Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, 2017); “Beyond the Sphere of Reproduction” (Whitebox Art Center, Beijing, and Städtische Galerie Kubus, Hanover, 2017); “Planet 9” (Kunsthalle Darmstadt, 2017); “Jie Bi” (Museum of Visual Art, Beijing, 2017); Festival Images Vevey (Switzerland, 2016); BredaPhoto Festival (Netherlands, 2016); Darmstadt Days of Photography (German, 2016); and “History and Spirit of Northeast Asia” (U-Find Infinity Contemporary Art Gallery, Xi’an, 2016).Wildlife Art ProjectWildlife Art Project (initiated 1997) was a program curated and established by artist Song Dong and his friend Guo Shirui (who at the time was in charge of Beijing’s Contemporary Art Center). Zhang Xin in Shanghai, Dai Guangyu in Chengdu, and Lin Yilin in Guangzhou coordinated work in their respective regions. In total, 27 artists around China participated in the project. The program maintained a stance of “no exhibition space, no exhibition form.” Within a set time period, artists separately completed pieces, and then sent documentation to Beijing over express mail, which Song Dong and others compiled into a publication. This included sketches, writing, and images related to the work. The volume might at first appear somewhat simple or even rudimentary, but it is more than just a collection of artists’ work. It is better understood as an alternate form of existence for art and artworks, comprehensively presenting the work of Chinese artists in the 1990s and indirectly showing the “wild,” underground state of contemporary art at the time.About UCCAUCCA Center for Contemporary Art is China’s leading contemporary art institution. Committed to the belief that art can deepen lives and transcend boundaries, UCCA presents a wide range of exhibitions, public programs, and research initiatives to a public of more than one million visitors each year. UCCA Beijing sits at the heart of the 798 Art District, occupying 10,000 square meters of factory chambers built in 1957 and regenerated in 2019 by OMA. UCCA Dune, designed by Open Architecture, lies beneath the sand in the seaside enclave of Aranya in Beidaihe. Formally accredited as a museum by the Beijing Cultural Bureau in 2018, UCCA also operates non-profit foundations, licensed by the Beijing Bureau of Civil Affairs and the Hong Kong government. UCCA’s commercial ventures include the retail platform UCCA Store, the children’s education initiative UCCA Kids, and collaborations and projects under the rubric UCCA Lab. Opened in 2007 and revived by a committed group of Chinese and international patrons in 2017, UCCA works to bring China into global dialogue through contemporary art.<http://www.ucca.org.cn/en> |