



Meditations in an Emergency

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UCCA

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Exhibition Period:

May 21, 2020 – August 30, 2020

Location:

UCCA Great Hall, Open Gallery

Press material available at

ucca.org.cn/en/press

“Meditations in an Emergency” is the first exhibition to open in 2020 at UCCA Beijing, bringing together 26 Chinese and international artists reflecting on the role of art during a time of crisis.

From May 21 to August 30, 2020, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents the group exhibition “Meditations in an Emergency.” The exhibition emerges in the wake of the pandemic which has created the first truly global moment of the twenty-first century. As it marks UCCA’s reopening after the longest closure in its history, since late January, the exhibition looks to art as a source of solace, reflection, and solidarity. Structured in five sections—focused on everyday life, the body and biopolitics, the human/animal dichotomy, migration and borders, and the information landscape—the exhibition includes works by 26 artists. These engage with the currents that have led to our present circumstances, and what futures we might find in the aftermath. The exhibition takes its title from an anthology of poetry by Frank O’Hara (1926-1966), better known during his short life as a curator at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. As O’Hara wrote in one of the included poems, “In times of crisis, we must all decide again and again whom we love.”

Participating artists include Lawrence Abu Hamdan (b. 1985, Amman), Musquiqui Chihying (b. 1985, Taipei), Forensic Architecture (est. 2010, London), Han Bing (b. 1986, Shandong province), Christopher K. Ho (b. 1974, Hong Kong), Joyce Ho (b. 1983, Taipei), Hsu Chia-Wei (b. 1983, Taichung), Hu Rui (b. 1990, Liupanshui, China), Pierre Huyghe (b. 1962, Paris), Jiang Zhuyun (b. 1984, Hangzhou), Oliver Laric (b. 1981, Innsbruck, Austria), Amiko Li (b. 1993, Shanghai), Li Liao (b. 1982, Honghu, China), Lu Lei (b. 1972, Jiangsu province), Shana Moulton (b. 1976, Oakhurst, USA), Qiu Anxiong (b. 1972, Sichuan province), Mika Rottenberg (b. 1976, Buenos Aires), Angela Su (b. Hong Kong), Wolfgang Tillmans (b. 1968, Remscheid, Germany), Yi Xin Tong (b. 1988, Lushan, China), Wang Bing (b. 1967, Xi’an), Yang Fudong (b. 1971, Beijing), Zhang Hui (b. 1967, Heilongjiang province), Zhang Peili (b. 1957, Hangzhou), Robert Zhao Renhui (b. 1983, Singapore), and Payne Zhu (b. 1990, Shanghai).

“Meditations in an Emergency” is curated by the UCCA exhibitions team: Guo Xi, Luan Shixuan, Ara Qiu, Lin Luqi, Duffy Du, and Neil Zhang.



Like art institutions all over the world, in an unpredictable year UCCA has learned to prioritize adaptability and flexibility in light of changing conditions. Previously planned exhibitions for the spring and summer have, regrettably, been rescheduled for later in the year or farther in the future. “Meditations in an Emergency” marks an adjustment to new realities, coming together in a world demarcated by new logistical restrictions. Despite these parameters, the exhibition also offers UCCA an opportunity to think nimbly, allowing our curatorial team to re-focus on regional context and urgent artistic currents. It juxtaposes emerging artists with more established figures from China and abroad, and engages with pressing concerns that previously lurked beneath the surface. The works mostly predate January 2020, but have taken on new significance in this changed world.

The first section, “The Fragile Everyday,” examines the practice of everyday life. It includes Zhang Hui’s paintings of masked nurses and Shana Moulton’s eccentric, isolated pseudo-sitcom *Whispering Pines* ∞. Both date to 2018, yet will be instantly recognizable to anyone who has recently found themselves glued to news updates or practicing social distancing. The next section, “Vital Signs,” gestures towards the potential new biopolitics which may arise from the current moment, yet Wang Bing’s delicate documentary portrait of illness and aging in *Mrs. Fang* (2017) and Li Liao’s investigations of contemporary beauty standards and “gym bodies” speak to physical anxieties that are already well-cemented. “Beyond Animality” coalesces out of stark reminders of the connectivity and thin boundaries between human and animal, with Oliver Laric’s shape-shifting animations and Robert Zhao Renhui’s studies of environmental destruction questioning longstanding ideas of human exceptionalism. As borders have slammed shut to a degree not seen for decades, “Othered Movements” addresses how global flows of people and commodities have become at once taken for granted and contested, through works such as Mika Rottenberg’s surreal parable of international capitalism, *NoNoseKnows (50 Kilos variant)* (2015), and Christopher K. Ho’s installation *CX 888* (2018), which restages a diasporic journey. The final section, “Out of Focus” features works including Yang Fudong’s blurry pairings of Nietzsche quotes and photographic prints, and Wolfgang Tillman’s reflection on time and history through the medium of collected news data, cutting through media noise to ponder the ultimate accessibility of cold hard facts.

By reopening with “Meditations in an Emergency,” UCCA is proud to serve our



community as we best know how, while also humbled by and deeply appreciative of the sacrifices that have been made by many around the world. Special measures to ensure the safety of all museum guests will be in place throughout the duration of the exhibition, and free entry will be granted to medical professionals. We hope that viewers may find comfort and joy in the familiar experience of visiting a museum, while also reflecting upon the experience we have all shared, the fascinating complexity of our planet, and the common challenges faced by all humanity.

Sponsorship and Support

UCCA Strategic Partner Dulux provides environmentally friendly solutions for wall painting. Genelec provides exclusive audio equipment support. UCCA thanks the members of its Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Annual Strategic Partners Aranya, Bloomberg, Barco, Clivet, BenQ, and Active House, for their support.

About UCCA

UCCA 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.

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