

Liquid Ground

Released September 6, 2022

Exhibition Period:

2022.9.7 – 2023.2.19

Location:

UCCA Dune

Media Contact:

Carmen Yuan

Senior Communications Manager

+86 10 5780 0258

+86 135 7098 6743

jiamin.yuan@ucca.org.cn

Jiannan Hu

Media Relations Supervisor

+86 10 5780 0258

+86 185 1062 2663

jiannan.hu@ucca.org.cn

Press material available at

ucca.org.cn/en/press

UCCA and Hong Kong's Para Site co-present the group exhibition "Liquid Ground" at UCCA Dune, bringing together thirteen emerging artists and art collectives to explore land reclamation, the entanglement between built environment and natural elements, and potential responses to planetary ecological calamity.

From September 7, 2022 to February 19, 2023, UCCA Dune presents the group exhibition "Liquid Ground," which showcases the work of thirteen artists and art collectives to investigate, at a site where land meets water, the material, spiritual and ecological implications of anthropogenic terraforming. Participating artists include Chang Yuchen (b. 1989, Shanxi province), Club Ate (Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra, formed 2014), Cui Jie (b. 1983, Shanghai), Jes Fan (b. 1990, Scarborough), Future Host (Tingying Ma and Kang Kang, formed 2016), Ho Rui An (b. 1990, Singapore), Travis Jeppesen (b. 1979, Fort Lauderdale), Heidi Lau (b. 1987, Macau), Lee Kai Chung (b. 1985, Hong Kong), Yi Xin Tong (b. 1988, Lushan), Alice Wang (b. 1983, Xi'an), Gary Zhexi Zhang (b. 1993, Suzhou), and Zheng Mahler (Royce Ng and Daisy Bisenieks, formed 2015). The exhibition is the product of a yearlong collaboration between UCCA and Para Site in Hong Kong, which first took the shape of an exhibition at Para Site in summer 2021. At UCCA Dune, "Liquid Ground" reprises key artworks from the Hong Kong show—many of which were co-commissioned by the two institutions—along with the addition of new artists and pieces. Operating around the twin themes of the hydrological cycle and island ecologies, the participating artists pursue a variety of the approaches, from keenly analyzing developmentalism, to delving into myth to counter contemporary epistemic crises, and looking towards the future while foregrounding non-human voices. The exhibition is curated by Alvin Li and Junyuan Feng. The curatorial proposal of 'Liquid Ground' was chosen from Para Site's international open call for exhibition proposals from emerging curators.

Coastlines around Asia have long been in a state of flux, and not merely due to eternal cycles of erosion and sedimentation: for decades, sprawling seawalls, otherworldly tetrapods, and other forms of geo-engineering have been used in an attempt to expand or at least maintain the dimensions of shorelines. In recent years, the pace of these interventions has accelerated. Cities from Tokyo and Shanghai to Macau and Singapore are now dumping tons of sand and rocks into the open sea, in the hopes of creating more dry land as a *tabula rasa* for flows of capital. One example of this

hubristic techno-optimism comes from the “Lantau Tomorrow Vision” proposed by Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam in 2018, which would reclaim 1,700 hectares from the sea at a cost of HKD 624 billion, turning the historically peripheral island of Lantau into Hong Kong’s third economic hub by 2030—conveniently ignoring the fact that many Asian metropolises may be submerged under rising seas only decades after that date. While “Lantau Tomorrow Vision” served as a point of departure for the exhibition in Hong Kong and the project writ large, the location of UCCA Dune brings with it additional reference points: the museum is located in close proximity to ambitious geo-engineering projects such as the reclaimed Caofeidian Port and the anti-desertification Three-North Shelter Forest Program. In the age of global warming, each site illustrates the multi-faceted predicaments that are emerging as technocratic statecraft encounters the intricate web of nature.

The artists use a diverse range of strategies to explore the contradictions that arise where solid meets liquid, where humanity confronts nature. Near the museum entrance, Zheng Mahler, Yi Xin Tong, and Chang Yuchen offer unique perspectives on island ecosystems, whether depicting Lantau Island from the viewpoint of feral water buffalos, linking commonplace fish to mythological dragons, or attempting to develop a writing system based on coral, respectively. Moving deeper into the exhibition, Alice Wang, Jes Fan, and Lee Kai Chung (his work located on one of the museum’s outdoor terraces) use a combination of organic and industrial materials to reimagine urban infrastructures and re-link them to natural, or even cosmological, cycles. Further inside, Club Ate, Future Host, Heidi Lau return to primordial waters, creation myths, ancestral spirits, and queer shamans to search for an exit from the straightjacket of modernity. Gary Zhexi Zhang and Travis Jeppesen retrace imaginaries of seaborne colonialism and so-called tropical paradises, locating the roots of the accelerated financial capitalism that is depicted in Ho Rui An’s breathless animated video. Last but not least, Cui Jie’s paintings depict iconic-yet-endangered historic architecture from the maritime metropolises of Hong Kong and Shanghai, spotlighting the aesthetic innovations that emerged alongside past boom times while also pointing towards the destruction wrought by capital’s unchecked desire for endless growth.

By collecting the artists’ engagements with the abovementioned conundrums, “Liquid Ground” also seeks to encourage visitors to consider their own agency and complicity in our age of super-scale land reclamation and other anthropocentric environmental interventions. It is the curators’ hope that the collective effort of the exhibition may help us begin to imagine alternative epistemological frameworks and new networks of

solidarity from which to face deteriorating ecosystems and an unsteady future.

Support and Sponsorship

“Liquid Ground” is co-presented by UCCA and Para Site. Exclusive wall solutions support is provided by Dulux and Genelec contributed exclusive audio equipment and technical support. Gratitude to the members of UCCA Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Lead Partner Aranya, Lead Art Book Partner DIOR, Presenting Partners Bloomberg, Voyage Group, and Yinyi Biotech, and Supporting Partners Barco, Dulux, and Genelec for their generous support.

About Para Site

Para Site is Hong Kong’s leading contemporary art center and one of the oldest and most active independent art institutions in Asia. It produces exhibitions, publications, discursive, and educational projects aimed at forging a critical understanding of local and international phenomena in art and society. Founded in early 1996 as an artist run space, Para Site was Hong Kong’s first exhibition-making institution of contemporary art and a crucial self-organized structure within the city’s civil society. Throughout the years, Para Site has grown into a contemporary art center, engaged in a wide array of activities and collaborations with other art institutions, museums, and academic structures in Hong Kong and the international landscape.

www.para-site.art

About UCCA Dune

UCCA Dune is an art museum buried under a sand dune by the Bohai Sea in Beidaihe, 300 kilometers east of Beijing. Designed by OPEN Architecture, its galleries unfold over a series of cell-like spaces that evoke caves. Some are naturally lit from above, while others open out onto the beach. As a branch of UCCA, China’s leading independent institution of contemporary art, it presents rotating exhibitions in dialogue with its particular site and space. UCCA Dune is built and supported by UCCA strategic partner Aranya, and located within the Aranya Gold Coast Community.

www.ucca.org.cn/en

About the Artists

Chang Yuchen

Chang Yuchen (b. 1989, Shanxi province) is an artist based in New York. She works in an interdisciplinary manner—writing as weaving, drawing as translation, teaching as hospitality and commerce as everyday revolution (see her project “Use Value”). By constantly entering and exiting each medium, she strolls against the category of things, the labor division among people. Chang has received honors such as the Poetry Project Curatorial Fellowship in New York, the Jury Prize of the Huayu Youth Award, and the Lumiarts Art Fund Fellowship in Chicago. She has performed and exhibited at Tai Kwun (Hong Kong), Abrons Art Center (New York), Para Site (Hong Kong), Artists Space (New York), Salt Projects (Beijing), Assembly Room (New York), and others. She has been artist in residence at the NARS x Governors Island Satellite Residency Program, MASS MoCA, Museum of Art and Design, and programs. Her writing has been published in *Black Tooth Magazine*, *Burning Point*, and *Art in Print*, among others.

Club Ate (Bhenji Ra and Justin Shoulder)

Club Ate (formed 2014, Gadigal Country, Sydney) was established by Bhenji Ra and Justin Shoulder to collapse boundaries between “art, club, community, dance, and politics.” Their practice traverses video, performance and club events with an emphasis on community activation. Collaborating with members of the queer Asia Pacific diaspora in Australia, the Philippines, and beyond, the collective are invested in creating their own Future Folklore: a language that merges ancient knowledge with contemporary practice. Past Club Ate events have taken the form of pageants, variety nights, and balls. Club Ate have been invited and commissioned to perform and exhibit their works across Australia and internationally in a diverse range of spaces and settings including festivals, independent and institutional galleries, theatres, nightclubs, and outdoor environments. Their work has been presented at the Sydney Biennale (2020), Enlighten Festival (National Gallery of Australia, 2020); Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (2016); and Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Brisbane, 2015). In 2018 they participated in the Asialink Residency hosted by Green Papaya Arts in Quezon City, the Philippines. Most recently they co-organized *In Muva We Trust* and *Club Muva* for Fierce Festival (Birmingham 2022) and premiered their new film/installation *ANG IDOL KO / YOU ARE MY IDOL* for “Ultra Unreal” at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (Sydney, 2022).

Cui Jie

Cui Jie (b. 1983 Shanghai) creates paintings that, by incorporating diverse real and fantasy layers, explore heterogeneous perspectives in various fields and geopolitical contexts. For the artist, the cities she depicts are closely associated with her personal history: one can identify in the subject matter Bauhaus architectural principles, ideologies of Chinese propaganda art, Soviet Communist aesthetics, or the Japanese architectural movement of Metabolism, among other references. In rendering specific cities, architectures, structures and landscapes, Cui explores the embedded histories of perspectives, and shrewdly proposes the political meanings of distance, angles and time. Select solo exhibitions include “New Model Village” (Focal Point Gallery, Essex, UK, 2022); “From Pavilion to Space Station” (Center for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester, 2019); “The Peak Tower (Pilar Corrias”, London, UK, 2019); and “To Make a Good Chair” (Antenna Space, Shanghai, China, 2019). Recent group exhibitions include the Taipei Biennial (2020), the X Museum Triennial (Beijing, 2020); “China Africa” (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2020); and “An Opera for Animals” (Para Site, Hong Kong, 2019).

Jes Fan

Jes Fan (b. 1990, Scarborough) lives and works in Hong Kong and Brooklyn. Fan originally trained in glass making, but has expanded his practice to encompass diverse mediums and approaches. From videos to sculptures, his trans-disciplinary practice speculates on the intersection of biology and identity in relation to the materiality of the gendered and racialized body. Fan is the recipient of various fellowships and residencies, including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2022), Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2017), as well as the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship (2019-2020). Recent exhibitions have been held at venues including Kunsthall Trondheim (2021); X Museum (Beijing, 2020); Rockbund Art Museum (Shanghai, 2019); Hayward Gallery (London, 2019); Empty Gallery (Hong Kong, 2018); and Museum of Arts and Design (New York, 2017). Fan has also participated in numerous artist residencies with institutions including the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Recess Art, Smack Mellon, and Pioneer Works. He participated in the Venice Biennale (2022), New Museum Triennial (2021), Liverpool Biennial (2021), Biennale of Sydney (2020), Socrates Annual (New York, 2019). In 2023, he will present a second solo show with Empty Gallery titled “Sites of Wounding: Part 1.”

Future Host (Tingying Ma and Kang Kang)

Future Host (formed 2016) is an artist duo consisting of Tingying Ma and Kang Kang,

who consider the world as emotive, sentient, and only able to be processed through epistemic inquiries. Future Host's work has been presented at the Museum of Chinese in America, New York; International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York; UCCA Center of Contemporary Art, Beijing; Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai; Knockdown Center, New York; Movement Research at the Judson Church New York; Institute for Provocation, Beijing; and TPAM Performing Arts Meeting, Yokohama. A finalist for the 2018 Huayu Art Award, their practice has been supported by Shandaken Projects: Governors Island and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Arts Center. Their writing has been published or is forthcoming by *WendyCenter*, *T, T Magazine China*, *LEAP*, and the "Netizen 21" conference at the Institute of Network Society, China Academy of Art. Their publication *The Insatiable* can be found at Printed Matter, New York.

Ho Rui An

Ho Rui An (b. 1990, Singapore) is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Working primarily across the mediums of lecture, essay and film, he probes into the ways by which images are produced, circulate, and disappear within contexts of globalism and governance. He has presented projects at the Bangkok Art Biennale (2020), Asian Art Biennial (2019), Gwangju Biennale (2018), Jakarta Biennale (2017), and Sharjah Biennial (2017). In 2019, he was awarded the International Film Critics' (FIPRESCI) Prize at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany. In 2018, he was a fellow of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

Travis Jeppesen

Travis Jeppesen (b. 1979, Fort Lauderdale) is the author of numerous books, including *Wolf at the Door*, *All Fall: Two Novellas*, *The Suicides*, *See You Again in Pyongyang*, and *Bad Writing*. In addition, he is known as the creator of object-oriented writing, a metaphysical form of writing-as-embodiment that attempts to channel the inner lives of objects. Jeppesen's first major object-oriented writing project, *16 Sculptures*, was published in book format by Publication Studio, featured in the 2014 Whitney Biennial as an audio installation, and was the subject of a solo exhibition at Wilkinson Gallery in London. He is the recipient of an Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. His calligraphic and text-based artwork has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Wilkinson Gallery, Exile (Berlin), and Rupert (Vilnius). In 2023, Itna Press will publish Jeppesen's latest novel, *Settlers Landing*, as well as a 20th anniversary edition of his first novel, *Victims*. Jeppesen curates a living archive of his work at

travisjeppesen.substack.com.

Heidi Lau

Heidi Lau (b. 1987, Macau) lives and works in New York. Lau's work has been exhibited at institutions including the Museum of Arts and Design (New York), Museum of Chinese in America (New York), and BRIC (New York), among others. In 2019, Lau presented "Apparition" as the Macau-China Collateral Exhibition at the 58th Venice Biennale. Select solo and two person exhibitions include "Gardens as Cosmic Terrains" (Green-Wood Cemetery, New York, 2022), "Empire Recast" (Grand Lisboa Palace, Macau, 2021), "Spirit Vessels" (Matthew Brown, Los Angeles, 2020), "Blood Echoes" (AALA Gallery, Los Angeles, 2019), "The Sentinels" (with Rachel Frank, Geary, New York, 2018), "The Primordial Molder" (The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, 2017), "Third Rome" (Deli Gallery, New York, 2016), "The Obscure Region II" (Macau Art Museum, 2014), "In the Garden" (Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, New York, 2012). Lau's practice has been supported by numerous residencies and awards, including the Green-Wood Cemetery Residency, Greenwich House Pottery Fellowship, NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship, Colene Brown Art Prize, Emerging Artist Fellowship at Socrates Sculpture Park, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Process Space, the Martin Wong Foundation Scholarship, and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant.

Lee Kai Chung

Lee Kai Chung (b. 1985, Hong Kong) performs artistic research on historiography, ideology and time-transcendence of emotion. From his early explorations of archival systems for historiography, Lee has developed an archival methodology that extends to research-based creative practices—including publishing, spatial production, public engagement and archives-making. In 2017, Lee initiated a hexalogy of consecutive projects under the theme of "Displacement"—to take a departure from the socio-historical implication under the Pan-Asian context, the series examines human conditions and their geopolitical relations arising from dispersion and material flows. Lee is co-editor of the publication *The (Im)Possibility of Archives: Theory and Experience in/from Asia* (2022), and his upcoming exhibitions include "Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present" (2023). In 2022, he was awarded The Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography from Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of Harvard University.

Yi Xin Tong

Yi Xin Tong (b. 1988, Lushan) studied geology at China University of Geosciences in Beijing and received his BFA in Visual Art from Simon Fraser University and MFA in Studio Art from New York University. He creates objects, moving images, and sound to understand himself, to study human culture's dynamic relationship with nature, and with a wry sense of humor, to intervene in societal beliefs in value, decency, and rationality. Tong's work has been exhibited at BRIC Biennial (New York), Göteborg Biennial, OCAT Biennale (Shenzhen), UCCA Center for Contemporary Art (Beijing), Today Art Museum (Beijing), chi K11 art museum (Shanghai), Museum of Contemporary Art (Toronto), National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Power Station of Art (Shanghai), and Hessel Museum of Art (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York).

Alice Wang

Alice Wang (b. 1983, Xi'an, lives and works in Los Angeles and Shanghai) combines scientific, technological, mythical, and spiritual perspectives to see how matter can be understood to embody existential qualities. Working with the mantra that the Earth is plummeting towards the Sun while just missing it, Wang chooses materials that convey the sentient universe through sensual, tactile, and metaphoric means, and imagines how the nature of reality can be expressed in the language of sculpture and film. Wang received a BSc in Computer Science from the University of Toronto, BFA from California Institute of the Arts, and MFA from New York University. She has been an art fellow at the Sorbonne and a Villa Aurora fellow in Berlin, as well as the recipient of several grants from the Canada Council for the Arts. She is an assistant arts professor at New York University Shanghai, and co-organizes The Magic Hour, an outdoor exhibition platform in the Mojave Desert. Wang has presented solo exhibitions at Capsule Shanghai (2021), OCAT Xi'an (2021), Human Resources (Los Angeles), and 18th Street Arts Center (Santa Monica). Wang has participated in group exhibitions, screenings, and performances at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), K11 Art Foundation (Hong Kong), and Para Site (Hong Kong), among other institutions. Her upcoming projects include solo exhibitions at Kling & Bang (Reykjavik, 2023) and the Vincent Price Art Museum (Los Angeles, 2024).

Gary Zhexi Zhang

Gary Zhexi Zhang (b. 1993, Suzhou, lives and works in London) examines the relationship between speculative belief and the material world through his works in video, installation, and software. Recent projects have explored natural disasters, scam nations, and cosmic economies. In 2022, he premiered *Dead Cat Bounce* (with

Waste Paper Opera), an operatic oratorio about finance and catastrophe, at Somerset House in London. As a researcher, he has held fellowships at the Berggruen Institute in Los Angeles and Sakiya - Art Science Agriculture in Ramallah. He has taught at Goldsmith's MFA program and at Parson's School of Design in the Communication Design program. He is also a co-founder of the design studio Foreign Objects, which was incubated at NEW INC and received the Mozilla Creative Media Award. His writing has appeared in *Frieze*, *ArtReview*, *Art Papers*, *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, and in the books *Steve Bishop: Deliquescing* (Sternberg, 2018) and *Against Reduction* (MIT Press, 2021). His first book as writer and editor, a collaborative collection of essays and fictions called *Catastrophe Time!*, will be published by Strange Attractor Press in 2023. Recent exhibitions include the solo show "Cycle 25" (Arts Catalyst/Bloc Projects, Sheffield, UK) and group exhibitions including "Rehearsing the Future" (Alien Art Centre, Kaohsiung, 2022), "The Principle of Hope" (Inside-Out Art Museum, Beijing, 2022: "Participation Mystique" (Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai, 2020); and "Swamp School" (Venice Architecture Biennale, 2018).

Zheng Mahler

Zheng Mahler (formed 2015) is artist Royce Ng and anthropologist Daisy Bisenieks's collaborative examination of global trade, the relational networks connecting nature and technology and more-than-human geographies, exploring their flows of mutual influence and the environmental architectures they produce. Utilizing digital media, performance and installation they develop speculative scenarios and immersive, sensory encounters that explore the limits and potentials of their respective disciplines. Together they have exhibited, performed and participated in numerous art spaces, institutions, and residencies, working alongside various communities in Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the US. Recent exhibitions include the Shanghai Biennale (2021); "Phantom Plane: Cyberpunk in the Year of the Future" (Tai Kwun, Hong Kong, 2019); and "Suzhou Documents" (2016).