

Modern Time: Masterpieces from the Collection of Museum Berggruen / Nationalgalerie Berlin

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2023.6.22 – 2023.10.8

Exhibition Location:

UCCA Edge
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China

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In collaboration with Museum Berggruen, UCCA Edge presents “Modern Time,” an exhibition tracing the evolution of European modern art in the twentieth century through major works by six modern masters, and showcasing styles including Cubism, Surrealism, and various strands of abstraction.

SHANGHAI, China — From June 22 to October 8, 2023, UCCA presents “Modern Time: Masterpieces from the Collection of Museum Berggruen / Nationalgalerie Berlin” at UCCA Edge in Shanghai. Organized in collaboration with Museum Berggruen, Berlin, the exhibition features nearly 100 pieces by modern masters Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Paul Klee (1879-1940), Henri Matisse (1869-1954), Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), and Georges Braque (1882-1963), each carefully selected from Museum Berggruen’s unparalleled collection. Shown in China for the first time, these works by the six artists span painting, sculpture, paper cut-outs, and other media, allowing viewers to experience the development of modern art through styles such as Cubism, Surrealism, and various strands of abstraction. One of Europe’s leading museums of modern art, Museum Berggruen is a member of the Nationalgalerie and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums). “Modern Time” marks the third stop of Museum Berggruen’s international exhibition tour following its debut in Tokyo and subsequent installment in Osaka. At UCCA, the touring exhibition has been installed in a rigid chronology, allowing visitors to grasp an artistic dialogue that developed across the oeuvres of different artists, and to understand the exhibition as arising from the collection of a single individual: Museum Berggruen’s namesake, legendary art dealer and collector Heinz Berggruen (1914-2007). Following its display at UCCA Edge, the exhibition will travel to UCCA Beijing, where it will run from November 11, 2023, to February 25, 2024.

“Modern Time” invites viewers on a walk through the history of twentieth-century art, offering a close-up view of the creative processes and thinking of six major figures. The Chinese translation of the exhibition title aptly references the idea of a leisurely stroll, promising an excursion that reveals the diverse artistic

approaches and radical transformations found under the umbrella of Modernism. The exhibition is organized in strict chronology according to the completion of each work, rather than in thematic or artist sections. It thus introduces in sequence the new developments that marked the flourishing of creativity in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Visitors are guided through the exhibition by wall texts contextualizing individual artists, artistic movements, and major historical events, the last being of particular significance considering the impact of the period's upheavals on many of the featured artists, as well as Berggruen's personal background as a German Jew who fled the Nazis.

"Modern Time" sets the scene with two artworks from a slightly earlier era, portraits that Cézanne, an acknowledged influence on Matisse, Picasso, and Giacometti, painted of his wife around 1885 and 1890. The next artist to appear is Picasso—with 40 of his pieces, the exhibition provides all-encompassing overview of 8 decades of his artistic career. A wealth of works from Picasso's Cubist period are complimented by the inclusion of Braque's *Still Life with Pipe (Le Quotidien du Midi)* (1914), which demonstrates the latter's refined approach towards composition and texture while underscoring how the two artists closely collaborated to radically re-imagine perspective.

The exhibition also features ten pieces by Matisse, originator of Fauvism and Picasso's friendly rival for the leadership of the early twentieth-century avant-garde. These works begin with sculptural and charcoal studies of the human body, move into interior scenes boasting vivid Mediterranean colors, and conclude with his final innovation, the paper cut-outs, or papier découpé, which allowed him to unite form and color. More than 30 pieces by Klee, meanwhile, constitute the most comprehensive presentation of his art in China to date. His works in the exhibition range from elegantly abstracted landscapes, evoking Cubism and bearing the influence of his time teaching at the Bauhaus, to the whimsical figuration of *Child's Play* (1939). Found on UCCA Edge's fourth floor, the piece's lightheartedness seemingly offers a riposte to the political violence of the preceding decade and the darkness of incipient conflict. Other works from the same period, such as Picasso's *Large Reclining Nude* (1942), speak to the claustrophobic, anxious atmosphere of the war years.

Moving forward chronologically, visitors will encounter two sculptures by Giacometti, their stark forms speaking to a sense of existential doubt and isolation felt by many European artists and intellectuals in the aftermath of World War II. Yet the exhibition concludes with a touch of brightness, underscoring the continued relevance of these modern masters through the joyful exuberance of Matisse's paper cut-outs and the defiant energy and eroticism of late period Picasso pieces such as *Matador and Nude* (1970).

The works on display in the exhibition are from the collection of the Museum Berggruen, which takes its name and owes its origins to Heinz Berggruen. Berggruen was a close confidant of Picasso and other artists, and throughout his life built an unmatched collection of modern art. Today that collection forms the core of Museum Berggruen's holdings. UCCA is honored to welcome art from this priceless collection to China as part of the ongoing international exhibition tour which began at The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, and The National Museum of Art, Osaka. Following the two stops at UCCA museums in China, in autumn 2024 the exhibition will travel to Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris for its final installment. UCCA and Museum Berggruen are excited to work closely together to share this veritable feast of modern art with audiences in China and foster further Sino-European cultural exchange.

"Modern Time" is among a number of recent major UCCA exhibitions focused on major modern artists, which seek to locate the roots of the contemporary in the modern. Artworks by Picasso in the exhibition expand the exploration of the artist's career begun by the 2019 UCCA Beijing exhibition "Picasso – Birth of a Genius," while pieces by Matisse provide a broader perspective on the artist at the heart of "Matisse by Matisse," another upcoming 2023 exhibition. Furthermore, "Modern Time" compliments artistic discussions sparked by other recent exhibitions in Shanghai, such as "Botticelli to Van Gogh: Masterpieces from the National Gallery" at the Shanghai Museum. Audiences may move from Renaissance art and Impressionism to the experimental spirit of twentieth-century Modernism, experiencing half a millennia of European art history without leaving the city.

Gabriel Montua, Head of Museum Berggruen and exhibition co-curator, comments, "I am very excited to see how the works from Museum Berggruen's

collection, all on view in China for the very first time, will be appreciated by local audiences. This is a great honor and we at Museum Berggruen can learn a lot from the reaction of visitors who see these works with fresh eyes and with a different visual heritage in their minds. I am very grateful to UCCA and its director Philip Tinari for this unique and wonderful cooperation.”

UCCA Director and CEO Philip Tinari notes, “UCCA is extremely grateful and excited to be able to present this body of work to viewers in China. That this collection, some two decades after finding its place in a rich constellation of German state museums, can travel in its near entirety to the other side of the world is something worthy of celebration, particularly at a moment when such motion and the dialogue across eras and cultures that it sparks feel more urgent than ever.”

“Modern Time: Masterpieces from the Collection of Museum Berggruen / Nationalgalerie Berlin” is curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Director of Neue Nationalgalerie, Gabriel Montua, Head of Museum Berggruen, and Veronika Rudorfer, Curator at Museum Berggruen, and is presented in collaboration with UCCA.

Support and Sponsorship

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Exhibition Catalogue

In conjunction with “Modern Time: Masterpieces from the Collection of Museum Berggruen / Nationalgalerie Berlin,” UCCA will publish a catalogue that features full reproductions of all the artworks from this exhibition by six masters of modern art. These works are accompanied by an essay jointly written by the curatorial team of Klaus Biesenbach, Gabriel Montua, and Veronika Rudorfer, explaining the structure and themes of the exhibition. Another text by the latter

two describes the history and evolution of the Museum Berggruen. Finally, art historian and curator Olivier Berggruen recalls his father Heinz Berggruen's legacy as an art collector. Each artwork image is accompanied by an in-depth interpretive text, providing comprehensive background and analysis for all the works in the show. The catalogue *Modern Time* is designed by 26 Studio and published by Zhejiang Photographic Press.

Public Programs

UCCA's Public Practice team has curated a series of public programs structured around the theme of "Modern Promenade," inspired by the show's Chinese title, each event exploring historical, cultural, and social issues covered by the exhibition. These activities include guided tours led by inspiring special guests, discussions, workshops, and screenings, and will be presented on weekends during the exhibition period. Highlights of the opening week include a special exhibition tour led by José Lebrero Stals, artistic director of Museo Picasso Málaga, and a conversation between exhibition curators Gabriel Montua and Veronika Rudorfer, moderated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari, both happening on June 22. Events will take place over six weekends at UCCA Edge in Shanghai, and continue over five weekends in Beijing as the exhibition travels north. For the most detailed and up-to-date information on events, please refer to announcements on UCCA's official website and UCCA Edge's official WeChat account and other social media platforms.

UCCA × Berggruen Research Center, Peking University Lecture Series

From "Matisse by Matisse" to "Modern Time: Masterpieces from the Museum Berggruen / Nationalgalerie Berlin," UCCA's two major exhibitions of 2023 look back at the art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, examining the current in visual culture known as Modernism. In the period that these exhibitions examine, there occurred an irreconcilable split between modernity as a historical epoch and Modernism as an aesthetic concept. Whereas the former embraced rationality and espoused a teleological view of history, the latter, as expressed through avant-garde art, was rooted in an anti-bourgeois attitude and a distrust of the beautiful picture that "modern civilization" presented of itself. Inspired by the fascinating implications of this inner contradiction, in the second half of 2023, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art will present a series of academic lectures in collaboration with the Berggruen Research Center at Peking University, entitled "Rupture and Reconstruction: Multiple Perspectives on Modernity." Centered on

the concept of modernity, the lecture series will touch upon on fields including intellectual history, philosophy, religion, and art. Leading scholars from China and abroad will share insights from their research and elucidate the many complex meanings of modernity.

Exhibition Merchandise

“Modern Time” is accompanied by exclusive exhibition merchandise created by UCCA Store. Inspired by masterpieces by Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, and Paul Cézanne, these t-shirts, canvas tote bags, phone grips, and more allow visitors to bring a little bit of the spirit of Modernism home with them. For every tote bag purchased from this collection, UCCA Store will donate RMB 1 to UCCA Foundation’s initiative “Opening the Door to Art,” raising awareness for philanthropic programs that are helping make the next generation’s artistic dreams come true. Merchandise may be purchased at UCCA Store during the exhibition, or online at our official Tmall store.

About Museum Berggruen / Nationalgalerie Berlin

As a member of Nationalgalerie and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums), Museum Berggruen is one of the most important museums of modern art in Europe, world-renowned for its numerous outstanding exhibitions and its impressive collection of notable works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee, and Alberto Giacometti.

Museum Berggruen owes its name and origin to the art dealer and collector Heinz Berggruen (1914-2007). Heinz Berggruen began collecting art and opened his first art gallery in Paris in 1948, gradually building a world-leading private collection. In 1996, he was invited to present his collection in his hometown of Berlin, housed in the western Stülerbau opposite Charlottenburg Palace, known at that time as the Berggruen Collection. In the year 2000, the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage) managed to purchase the collection for the Nationalgalerie with funding from the German government and the state of Berlin. In 2004 it was renamed as the Museum Berggruen. After the death of Heinz Berggruen in 2007, his family agreed to make works available to the Nationalgalerie as permanent loans and to continue supporting the museum. Museum Berggruen is currently undergoing a three-year extensive renovation to improve visitor experience, with plans to reopen in 2025.



About UCCA Edge

Opened in May 2021, UCCA Edge occupies 5,500 square meters over three levels of the new EDGE tower in Shanghai's Jing'an District. Designed by New York-based architects SO – IL, the museum includes 1700 square meters of gallery space as well as a wraparound outdoor terrace and public spaces including a lobby and auditorium. As an integral part of the UCCA constellation, UCCA Edge mounts exhibitions of leading Chinese and international artists, some developed exclusively for the Shanghai audience, some touring from other UCCA locations. Situated just north of People's Square and Suzhou Creek, and directly above the Qufu Lu station of the Shanghai Metro in a bustling revitalized neighborhood, UCCA Edge has already become an essential destination and an integral part of Shanghai's vibrant cultural fabric.

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