

## Resistance of the Sleepers

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### Editorial Contact:

#### UCCA

Danyu Xu

International Media Relations Supervisor

+86 10 5780 0258

+86 138 1082 9590

[danyu.xu@ucca.org.cn](mailto:danyu.xu@ucca.org.cn)

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April 30, 2020 – September 6, 2020

### Location:

UCCA Dune

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**“Resistance of the Sleepers,” a group exhibition at UCCA Dune featuring Chinese and international artists exploring the significance and potential of sleep, marks the first UCCA show of 2020. The exhibition underlines once again UCCA Dune’s dedication to showcasing emerging artistic voices.**

From April 30 to September 6, 2020, UCCA Dune presents the group exhibition “Resistance of the Sleepers.” The exhibition explores contradictions between the mechanisms of contemporary society and the biological necessity of sleep through the work of artists Chang Yuchen (b. 1989, Shanxi province), Fei Yining (b. 1990, Harbin), Li Shuang (b. 1990, Wuyishan, China), Ana Montiel (b. 1981, Logroño, Spain), Katie Paterson (b. 1981, Glasgow), Hiraki Sawa (b. 1977, Ishikawa, Japan), Shen Linghao (b. 1988, Shanghai), Ye Zhaofeng (b. 1996, Jiangsu province), Zhang Kerui (b. 1991, Guangxi province), and Zhang Ruyi (b. 1985, Shanghai). The ten artists use sleep as an entry point to reach into other rich topics of discussion, including consciousness, dreams, memory, death, energy, capital, labor, landscape, and more. A large portion of the artworks featured were created specifically in response to the exhibition theme and the unique setting of UCCA Dune, designed by Li Hu and Huang Wenjing of OPEN Architecture, and nestled in the sand by the Bohai Sea in the Aranya Gold Coast Community, 300 kilometers from Beijing. “Resistance of the Sleepers” is curated by UCCA Curator Ara Qiu. Considering the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the spread of COVID-19, special precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of visitors to the museum.

Today, human beings are embedded within the operating mechanisms of an unceasing 24-hour cycle, one which began with the birth of industrial society and accelerated with the spread of consumer culture, the further development of science and technology, and the Internet’s reordering of the world into a realm of constant information production and circulation. This has destroyed the traditional working rhythm of “early to bed, early to rise,” challenging the limits of human experience and perception. Boundaries between day and night, work and leisure, and public and private have all grown blurry. Under the neoliberal paradigm that technology and globalization have spread around the world, we are perpetually on call: success is defined by constant work, and any inclination towards leisure and rest is looked down upon. The system is not merely coercive but also seductive, offering new information,

images, and goods on demand, giving us the illusion that we have thrown off the restraints of time and space, and granting us with a satisfying sense of control over our surroundings. Pleased with ourselves, we become more dependent upon and immersed within this perpetual, precise, and highly monetized social machine, with no clear way out. To be “active” and constantly working is in fact to be “passive” towards the operation of the system.

Meanwhile, humanity is submerged under a greater level of information overload than ever before. The convergence and synchronicity of media has shattered the individual experience of time, with its specificities and distinct rhythms. Our experience of time has instead become homogenous and mediocre, defined by shared standardized cultural experiences. Our perceptions turn vague, with time itself subordinated to the unstoppable kinetic energy of the 24/7 cycle, which in turn determines our needs and desires. However, sleep steadfastly remains a basic physiological need for human beings, standing as a final barrier that is incompatible with the aforementioned mechanisms. Attacked and denounced, slumber still puts up a stubborn resistance.

The participating artists examine the fundamental and eternal need for sleep in the context of contemporary society. Through media including painting, installation, video, and sound, they explore and explode different registers and metaphors of sleep. In repose, they find new ways to reflect upon contemporary life, the pervasiveness of the neoliberal economic model, and the unexpected consequences of globalization.

“Resistance of the Sleepers” has also gained new, tragic resonance since its planning began: in the quiet spring of 2020, everything—including the 24/7 cycle—suddenly came to a halt, giving people the unanticipated chance to appreciate the pleasures and deeper meanings of sleep. Yet this came at a tragic cost: cities in hibernation, anxiety-induced insomnia, and countless lives that have passed on into eternal sleep. Those asleep and those awake; those who obey and those who resist: distinctions between these categories have dissolved into a dreamscape of complex, entangled problems and questions.

Building on UCCA Dune’s unique meditative atmosphere close to nature, the works on display are arranged to encourage a viewing sequence that echoes the stages of sleep, beginning with a light doze and then reaching the dream state, before extending into the deeper implications of the topic. The artists encourage the audience to form their own interpretations of the works on display, bringing their individual experiences

and sensations into a shared dream world, and stimulating in-depth discussion on sleep and all the topics it evokes.

Each artist takes a distinct approach: Hiraki Sawa weaves together fragments of memories and everyday images to construct a dream-like surreal landscape; Shen Linghao documents his nightmares in scrolling characters, utilizing the special characteristics of light-sensitive material to embody the ephemerality of memory; Ana Montiel, showing her work in China for the first time, was inspired by the temple rituals of sleep and healing for the ancient Greek god of medicine, Asclepius, turning the exhibition hall into a monastic sanctuary; Fei Yining creates an animated parable of clean energy and political strategy for the age of post-truth politics, reflecting on technology's role as a modern deity; on the faces of nine clocks, Katie Paterson depicts "one day" in the time of each of the solar system's planets, reminding viewers that the 24-hour day is a construct that only applies to earth.

Meanwhile, the "transnational romance" featured in Li Shuang's video work coalesces and fades in the context of an Yiwu factory where work continues through the night, reflecting the knock-on effects of globalization; Ye Zhaofeng uses his brush to depict tired, anonymous people falling into unexpected naps amidst the bustle of daily life; Zhang Ruyi reenacts the alchemy of industrialization and urban change in his works, casting the viewer as both spectator and spectacle; on a different scale, Chang Yuchen expresses her belief that "the most private is the most public, the most fragile is the most radical," sharing her personal experience of sleep to cast light on universal themes, commemorating the eternal through the fleeting; and finally, Zhang Kerui carves an ephemeral monument out of our common dreams—here, sleep is both a reminder of mortality and a prelude to awakening and rebirth.

#### **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](http://www.ucca.org.cn/en)

## About the Artists

### Chang Yuchen

Chang Yuchen (b. 1989, Shanxi province) is an artist, among other things. She is currently based in New York, among other places. She works in an interdisciplinary manner—writing as weaving, drawing as translation, clothing as portable theater, commerce as everyday revolution (see her project “Use Value”). By constantly entering and exiting each medium, Chang strolls against categories of things, labor divisions among people. She has been an artist in residence at MASS MoCA (North Adams), Offshore (Sabah, Malaysia), Museum of Art and Design (New York), Textile Art Center (Brooklyn), and more. Chang has shown/performed at Taikwun (Hong Kong), Abrons Art Center (New York), Artists Space (New York), Salt Projects (Beijing), and Assembly Room (New York).

### Fei Yining

Fei Yining (b. 1990, Harbin) graduated from the Fudan University School of Journalism in 2013 and from Parsons School of Design, The New School, with a MFA in Design and Technology, in 2017. She currently lives and works in Shanghai. Her artworks focus on the alienation of people within the large-scale structures of contemporary society, using a toolkit including 3D animation, 3D printing, digital imaging technology, and more. Through abstract narratives and imagined prophecies, she combines the absurd and the real to present the tangled relationship between our profoundly “informationized” world, and the individuals swept along by its currents. The artist believes that despite the promises made by continuous scientific and technological development, humanity cannot avoid facing a new, un-centered “agnostic” era, in which we will lose control of body and spirit. She chooses to undercut misleading grand narratives by fabricating her own stories, and creating monsters to resist other more powerful, invisible beasts. Recent group exhibitions include “Advent: Inventing Landscape, Produce the Earth” (Qianshao Contemporary Art Center, Shanghai, 2019) and “Steadfastly Raise the Standards in Nonproductive Construction” (Don Gallery, Shanghai, 2018).

### Li Shuang

Li Shuang (b. 1990, Wuyishan, China) received a MA in media studies from New York University in 2014. She currently lives and works in Yiwu and Berlin. In her art, she places herself within systems of global circulation, inspired by both a distinct sense of

locality and uneven flows of information, using performance, web design, installation, video, and more to research the makeup of our contemporary electronic media landscape, the world's underlying operating mechanisms and logistics systems, and the divides between people. She devotes special attention to the connections created through media, and how the neoliberal paradigm controls the form of the human body and desire. Through her practice she investigates, in particular, the relationship between media and user, and the interactions between different media. Recent solo exhibitions include "I Want to Sleep More but by Your Side" (Peres Projects, Berlin, 2020); "Intro to Civil War" (Open Forum, Berlin, 2019); and "Only the Cloud Knows" (SLEEPCENTER, New York City, 2018). Recent group exhibitions include "Modes of Encounter: An Inquiry" (Times Museum, Guangzhou, 2020).

#### **Ana Montiel**

Ana Montiel (b.1981, Logroño, Spain) received her BFA from Universidad de Barcelona. She was based in London before settling in Mexico, and now lives and works in Mexico City. Montiel has been focused on "the phenomenology of experience and the nature of consciousness" since the beginning of her career. Through painting and installation, she reflects on the limits of human experience, and questions the solidity of our perceptions. Inspired by ideas drawn from various disciplines, such as neuroscience, psychology, mythology, and philosophy, Montiel embraces in her practice both orthodox and unorthodox methods as equals. With its exquisite textures and ethereal colors, her signature "field paintings" are able to bring the audience into an immersive experience, like diving into a lucid dream. Throughout the years, Montiel has also worked across the disciplines of music, film, and design. Recent solo shows include: "Polyphonies of Perception" (joségarcía ,mx, Mexico City, 2018); "Inner Sun" (joségarcía ,mx, Merida, 2018-2019); and "Fields" (Sala Amós Salvador, Logroño, Spain, 2018).

#### **Katie Paterson**

Katie Paterson (b. 1981, Glasgow) graduated from Edinburgh College of Art with a BA in 2004, and from Slade School of Art with a MFA in 2007. Collaborating with scientists and researchers across the world, Paterson's projects consider our place on Earth in the context of geological time and change. Her artworks make use of sophisticated technologies and specialist expertise to stage intimate, poetic and philosophical engagements between people and their natural environment. Combining a Romantic sensibility with a research-based approach, conceptual rigor and coolly minimalist presentation, her work collapses the distance between the

viewer and the most distant edges of time and the cosmos. Paterson has exhibited internationally, from London to New York, Berlin to Seoul, and her works have been included in major exhibitions at institutions including Hayward Gallery, Tate Britain, Kunsthalle Wien, MCA Sydney, the Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.

#### **Hiraki Sawa**

Hiraki Sawa (b. 1977, Ishikawa, Japan) received his BFA from the University of East London and his MFA from the Slade School of Art at University College, London. He lives and works in London. His videos explore psychological landscapes, unexpected worlds and the interweaving of domestic and imaginary spaces. Populated with animals, inanimate objects and people, in his works characters search for their “place” in the universe as he explores ideas of memory, displacement, and migration. His work has been featured in the 2013 Biennale de Lyon, 2010 Biennale of Sydney, 2008 Busan Biennale, 2005 Yokohama Triennale, and 2003 Biennale de Lyon. Sawa’s work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Wilfrid Israel Museum of Asian Art and Studies, Kibbutz Hazorea, Israel; VINCOM Center for Contemporary Art, Hanoi; Mori Art Gallery, Tokyo; Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo; Chisenhale Gallery, London; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; Hammer Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles; Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, USA; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, USA; Wooster College of Art, Wooster, USA; Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville; Firstsite Contemporary Art Centre, Essex, UK; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima; and the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie et Musée du Temps de Besançon with Le Consortium, Dijon.

#### **Shen Linghao**

Shen Linghao (b. 1988, Shanghai) graduated from the oil painting department of Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts with a BFA and the studio art department of the San Francisco Art Institute with a MFA. He currently lives and works in Shanghai. Through his practice, he examines the relationship between time, memory, and individual experience, working in media including photography, video, installation, text, and more. Shen is adept at using photosensitive materials and their unique qualities to reconstruct the relationship between time and memory, creating his own philosophically-charged artistic language. He has been honored with awards including the Murphy Award and Cadogan Scholarship (2016); Giants Cup Qiu Zhijie Award (2011); Creative M50 Annual Awards Silver Prize (2011); and as a Three Shadows

Photography Award finalist (2011). His art has been shown widely in China and abroad, with notable exhibitions including “The Farm” (K11 Art Museum, Shenyang, 2019); Beijing Photo Biennial (CAFA Art Museum, 2018); Jimei X Arles Photo Festival (Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, Xiamen, 2017); The Annual Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Art Awards Exhibition (SOMArts, San Francisco, 2016); “Regarding Beauty” (The Center for Fine Art Photography, Fort Collins, USA, 2015); Singapore International Photography Festival (2012); “Recurrent Shadows: Selected Works from the Three Shadows Photography Award 2008-2011” (He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen, 2011); and “Myriad Visions: The 2011 Three Shadows Photography Award Exhibition” (Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, Beijing).

#### **Ye Zhaofeng**

Ye Zhaofeng (b. 1996, Jiangsu province), graduated with a BA from the department of oil painting at the China Academy of Art in 2019, and is currently continuing his studies with a MFA in oil painting at the same institution. He currently lives and works in Hangzhou. His practice as a painter is rooted in his formal training within the academy, yet also informed by undercurrents beneath the surface of everyday life. Approaching his artistic investigations from his perspective as a young person, he extends a critical gaze towards both his academic environment and the outside world. Recent exhibitions include: “The 40th Zhejiang Art Exhibition” (Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, 2019) and “Inter-Youth: International Youth Painting Exhibition” (Art Museum of China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, 2018).

#### **Zhang Kerui**

Zhang Kerui (b. 1991, Guangxi Province) graduated from East China Normal University with a BFA in 2014, and from Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia with a MFA in 2017. Through sculpture, performance, installation, animation, and sound, she focuses on objects and phenomena in states of replication and mirroring. The artist believes that replication is a means of recognizing, and recreating, the world. She is curious about the additions, losses, and errors that occur through the process of copying, and through her explorations of the traces left behind by these changes, attempts to provide viewers with a new way of thinking about the world. She has exhibited widely in China and Italy, with recent exhibitions including “Seeing is Not Believing” (Annex Space, Shanghai, 2019); “Jing’an International Sculpture Project” (Jing’an International Sculpture Park, Shanghai, 2018); “Off Shore II” (M Art Center, Shanghai, 2016); and “TO SH” (Saluzzo Palace, Turin, 2013).

### **Zhang Ruyi**

Zhang Ruyi (b. 1985, Shanghai) graduated from the Fine Arts College of Shanghai University with a BA in printmaking in 2007, and a MFA in synthesized materials in 2012. Her artistic practice embeds itself in nothing less than the logic of life. It is centered on the undisclosed relationship between ego consciousness, physical space, and mundane experience. By withholding certain “slices” of time and information about the materials she employs, the artist is able to capture, replicate, compress, condense, or fabricate the materialization of emotions. She is dedicated to the exploration of both positive and negative frictions between individuals and reality, natural and industrial landscapes. Her art’s position is that of a discursive apparatus, transforming the tactile into the visual. Adopting the relational language of aesthetic order, she suggests the reconstruction of a specific space to be “read,” “questioned,” and “memorized.” She employs objects to question objects and spaces to question spaces, thus resisting order itself. Recent solo exhibitions include “Consciousness of Location” (Don Gallery, Shanghai, 2019); “Bonsai” (François Ghebaly, Los Angeles, 2019); and “Building Opposite Building” (Don Gallery, Shanghai, 2016). Her work has been shown at institutions including K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (2018); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2018); UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2017); CASS Sculpture Foundation, Chichester, UK (2016); and Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing (2016).