



Ullens Center for  
Contemporary Art  
尤伦斯当代艺术中心

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**Exhibition Dates:**

19 August – 23 October 2016

**Exhibition Venue:**

Central Gallery

Press material also available for  
download from the UCCA website

## Accommodating Reform: International Hotels and Architecture in China, 1978 – 1990

Released on 18 August 2016

From 19 August to 23 October, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art presents “Accommodating Reform: International Hotels and Architecture in China, 1978 – 1990”, an exhibition tracing the emergence and development of the international hotel as an architectural and cultural phenomenon in China during the late 1970s and 1980s. Featuring models, plans, photographs, ephemera, and artworks related to seven iconic buildings in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangzhou, the exhibition is curated by architectural historian and Hong Kong University associate professor Cole Roskam. Consolidated and presented together for the first time, these materials recall a vibrant if uncertain era of artistic and intellectual exploration.

Throughout the early years of “Opening and Reform,” the comprehensive program of economic liberalization initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, international hotels lay at the core of China’s efforts to spur economic development while limiting the potential for political destabilization. In theory, these spaces offered new, liberalized environments through which foreign capital, ideas, and expertise could be safely decanted over time. In practice, they heralded a series of dramatic ideological and operational transformations that opened China’s major cities, reshaped its built environment, and set the stage for future growth. As Chinese officials, architects, and planners worked with foreign investors, designers, and developers to define, articulate, and control the contours of the country’s reform agenda, new types of cross-cultural exchange took shape within international hotels around the country.

### Reform-era China Reflected in Seven Projects

Hotels helped to meet the needs of China’s growing tourism industry while providing physical environments within which the practices and technologies of a new economy could take hold. Between 1978 and 1979, the number of international tourist arrivals to China jumped from 1.8 to 4.2 million people. New five-star international hotels built within each of China’s major cities were proposed to support these visitors while spurring economic expansion. Designed and built by China’s most prominent design institutes as well as foreign architecture firms, each anticipated greater diplomatic and cultural engagement between China and other parts of the world. These



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buildings provided an unprecedented degree of comfort to foreign visitors, while showcasing the latest structural and technological advancements in socialist Chinese architecture.

This exhibition focuses on seven projects located up and down China's east coast, including: the east wing of the Beijing Hotel, completed in 1974 by the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design (BIAD) and led by Zhang Bo (1911-99); the Jianguo Hotel in Beijing, designed and developed by Clement Chen & Associates and completed in 1982; the Fragrant Hills Hotel by I.M. Pei (b. 1917) of I. M. Pei & Partners, also completed in 1982; the Great Wall Hotel in Beijing, designed by Becket International and completed in 1983; the White Swan Hotel in Guangzhou, designed and built by the Guangzhou Institute of Architectural Design and completed in 1983; Nanjing's Jinling Hotel, built in 1983 based on plans completed by the Hong Kong-based architectural firm P&T Group; and the Shanghai Centre, designed by John Portman & Associates and completed in 1990.

Culled from recent history, artifacts attesting to the cultural import of these politically and economically groundbreaking sites color the exhibition space. A floral gown by Pierre Cardin tells the story of the first public fashion show in China at the Beijing Hotel in 1981. Photographs of Andy Warhol by Christopher Makos, and others by Warhol himself, taken during his visit to the capital in 1982, offer candid depictions of the era in the artist's signature wry humor. These and other works offer an opportunity to better understand a particularly meaningful moment in China's recent history.

UCCA Director Philip Tinari notes, "We are excited to present an exhibition which so meaningfully reflects on a group of buildings which embody an era of change—the same era out of which contemporary art in China grows. Revisited from the perspective of today, that initial moment of encounter between China and the world to which it was reopening appears more vital and interesting than ever. We are particularly grateful to Professor Roskam for working with us to turn his original research into a show that can be seen and appreciated by many beyond the academic audience."

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### **About the Exhibition**

“Accommodating Reform” is curated by Cole Roskam, associate professor of architectural history and theory at the University of Hong Kong, with UCCA assistant curator Yanlin Pan. The exhibition was designed by Yue Chao and Zhao Gang.

### **About the Curator**

Cole Roskam is associate professor of architectural history in the Department of Architecture at the University of Hong Kong. He holds master’s and doctoral degrees in art and architectural history from Harvard University. His research examines architecture’s role in mediating moments of transnational interaction and exchange between China and other parts of the world. His articles and essays have appeared in *Architectural History*, *Grey Room*, the *Journal of Architectural Education*, and the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, among others. He recently completed a book manuscript titled *An Improvised City: Architecture and Extraterritoriality in Shanghai, 1842-1937*. He is currently at work on a second book-length study that explores architectural culture in China between 1972 and 1990. His research has been supported by the Fulbright-Hays Program, the Mellon Foundation/ACLS, the Society of Architectural Historians, Harvard University, the University of Hong Kong, and the University Grants Committee of the Hong Kong SAR.

### **About the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art**

Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is the international institution at the heart of Beijing’s 798 Art District. Each year it presents a wide range of exhibitions and educational programs, highlighting artists from China and beyond, and encouraging the public to engage with contemporary art and culture. Opened in 2007, UCCA is a non-profit, non-collecting, non-governmental museum sustained by the generosity of numerous patrons, sponsors, members, and visitors, beginning with founders Guy and Myriam Ullens. In everything it does, UCCA aims to elaborate an inclusive, cosmopolitan vision of China in the world.

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