



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

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**Exhibition Dates:**  
19 August 2016 – 23 October 2016

**Exhibition Venue:**  
Long Gallery

Press material also available for  
download from the UCCA website

**New Directions: Nadim Abbas**

Released on 18 August 2016

**Nadim Abbas's *The Last Vehicle* furthers his metaphysical interrogation of constructed environments and the psychological neuroses inscribed therein.**

From 19 August to 23 October 2016, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) presents “New Directions: Nadim Abbas”, the artist’s first solo show in mainland China. Abbas transforms the Long Gallery into a single work, *The Last Vehicle*, dividing the space into two separate but interrelated segments: part alien landscape, part domestic living quarters. The “vehicle” in question refers to a remote-controlled rover, fitted with a prosthetic eye and wireless transmitter, which relays live footage of the foreign terrain and its solitary inhabitant back to the sedentary view of an armchair explorer. Here, the death of experience is re-enacted through the afterlife of images; multiple hallucinatory frames of reference played out in a perpetual cycle of ruin and regeneration.

Using Paul Virilio’s critique of accelerated culture as a springboard, *The Last Vehicle* furthers Abbas’s metaphysical interrogation of constructed environments and the psychological neuroses inscribed therein, staging a laboratory of experience governed by the paradoxical principle that image always already precedes object. Central to the work is the figure of the “explorer”, whose sedentary-ness speaks immediately to the realities of *zhainan* [urban male shut-ins] or otaku culture—see also his work *I Would Prefer Not To* (2009). Tasked with patrolling an alien terrain via proxy, the narrative of the explorer parodies a scientific community reliant on visualizations of physical phenomenon produced from data sets collected by remotely operated instruments, a concern he has developed across several bodies of writing as well as *Afternoon in Utopia* (2012).

Regarding this philosophical dilemma, Abbas writes, “[...]t is as if the image is all that has ever been, and that the object has always already been displaced, ungraspable; not a distant object, but that object as distancing—in short, alien.”<sup>1</sup> A rich subject in itself, the alien body, while given presence enough by the strange sandbox-like terrain akin to *Apocalypse Postponed* (2014), is allegorically enacted by a performer resembling a pastiche of anime characters and appearing sporadically much to the mystery of viewers. Oddly humorous, the figure illustrates Abbas’s interest in re-contextualizing kitsch to form instances of melancholic identification.

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<sup>1</sup> Nadim Abbas, “A Limit Next to the Indefinite”, Dec 2011, p. 4.



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Other references to previous works include a sink endlessly recycling water, a quotation from *Cataract* (2010), his first major exhibition at Hong Kong's Experimenta. "New Directions: Nadim Abbas" rewards viewers with a seemingly condensed survey of his works, while introducing the previously unforeseen element of performance. A conceptual artist known to combine disparate cultural references, Abbas's exhibition cascades meaning through diverse literary references and other linguistic play, akin to spending hours clicking through hyperlinks on Wikipedia.

#### **About the Artist**

Nadim Abbas is a visual artist from Hong Kong. His work explores technologies of perception, culminating in the construction of complex set pieces where objects exist in an ambiguous relationship with their own image, and bodies succumb to the seduction of space. Abbas was awarded with the Asian Cultural Council Altius Fellowship and the HK Arts Development Award (Young Artist / Visual Arts) in 2014. Recent exhibitions include: 2015 Triennial: "Surround Audience" (New Museum, New York); "Unseen Existence" (HK Arts Centre, 2014), "Tetraphilia" (Third Floor Hermés, Singapore, 2013).

#### **About New Directions**

Initiated in 2015, *New Directions* offers some of China's most promising artists a platform to realize their first institutional solo exhibition and monographic publication. Deepening UCCA's ongoing commitment to emerging practices pioneered by shows including "ON | OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice" (2013), "Breaking Forecast" (2009), and the Curated By... series (2010-2012), this series of solo exhibitions aims to present, through a constellation of singular positions, an overall sense of the richness and complexity of new art in China today.

#### **About the Exhibition**

**New Directions: Nadim Abbas**, the fifth installment of the New Directions series, is curated by UCCA assistant curator Guo Xi. *New Directions* is initiated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari. The exhibition is accompanied by a monograph of the same title and is available at UCCASTORE.



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#### **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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