



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

New Directions: Yang Luzi

Released June 9, 2018

UCCA is proud to present “New Directions: Yang Luzi,” running from June 9 to August 12 in the New Gallery. The exhibition includes two bodies of work: “A Great Empire Needs Great Colors,” a series of black-and-white films comprising *The Oracle is the Mouthpiece*, *Le Yeti*, and *Spirit Away Temple*, all produced in 2016; and the color film *What Miracles Took Place When You Were Born*, shot in 2018. These works deal with perennial themes—the vicissitudes of time, the cycles of history, and the rise of civilizations—yet seek out new possibilities therein, creating a space charged with tension, balanced between past and future.

Editorial Contacts:

Basha Liu

+86 10 5780 0259

+86 188 1047 3833

yuting.liu@ucca.org.cn

Carmen Yuan

+86 135 7098 6743

jiamin.yuan@ucca.org.cn

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

Yang Luzi studied philosophy and comparative poetics; her linguistic and formal concerns endow her films with a rich prosody. Using the language of prayer, she transforms her private experiences into visual and linguistic cues. Words, scattered among the images, are given a life of their own. They do not merely supplement these images, but run parallel to them, sometimes even challenging their veracity. Numbers seem to suggest important historical dates, yet it is never clear whether they are keys to understanding the films, or merely bait, luring us deeper into a labyrinth of history. Here, facticity and imagination, memory and futurity, blur together.

Yang Luzi’s filmic practice often blends scenes of personal significance into larger historical contexts, creating a landscape in which the psychological is overlaid with the geographical. In *The Prophet is the Mouthpiece*, a fragment of a face appears on a small mirror above a lake, its lips silently uttering a string of bizarre words: “red yellow green blue, iron copper bronze zinc, a great empire needs great colors.” This prophet’s eyes are never seen—they are cut off by a mountain range, rising from the water, as if the speaker’s sight merges into the land itself. The image evokes that of the blind prophet, one who could see divine will beyond the fog of appearances—giving up physical sight, and gaining supernatural vision. In *Le Yeti*, a traveler retraces the storied steps of early twentieth century Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, surveying the area supposedly inhabited by the mythical Yeti. Desert



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and debris are juxtaposed with the sound of running water, suggesting the artist's home in southern China, and forming an imagined landscape at once familiar and foreign. In *Spirit Away Temple*, Hangzhou's Fei Lai Feng (literally "The Peak that Flew Hither") is recalled as the artist has always known it in her memory, as "The Peak that Flew Away." In one shot, two deities within the thirteenth century Moya Cliff Reliefs seem as if they have just descended and, simultaneously, as if they are about to take flight. Another scene cuts between a pair of sculptures kneeling in a shrine and two human bodies crouched in darkness, like figures punished for some age-old crime. In Yang's films, the borders of ancient empires are coextensive with the ruins found in modern civilization; past adventurers share itineraries with today's travelers, using scraps of Morse code; people carved into cliffs exchange looks with twenty-first century viewers; and motifs, dense with history and culture, lead us into a kingdom of images. These images do not themselves point to any specific historical event, but to the hardships—then and now, real and imagined—faced by individuals and nations.

What Miracles Took Place When You Were Born, shot in 2018, represents Yang's search for vitality in new continent. The mass of this land is constantly increasing due to volcanic activity, a kind of geographic autopoiesis which affords her the rare chance to unburden herself from history. She picks bright, lively images, like potatoes grown on native soil, or newly introduced species, and searches for the "miracles of birth" that connect them. Both serious and irreverent, the film uses the structure of Psalms to retell or "annotate" several stories of miracles. After repeated iterations, the "miracles" begin to sound like jokes. Their supernatural aspect is diluted, and the structures at their core, cemented over thousands of years, are destabilized, becoming fluid and free. A newly discovered, individual consciousness reveals itself, a pre-religious understanding of the world and nature. Delving past layers of abstraction and returning to the moment of birth, it finds the miraculous.

Through their citations of history, geography, and poetry, Yang Luzi's films explore the limits and secrets of perceptible language. Her work hovers in a space between sensory experience and the indescribable. From the discovery of



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a *jouissance* unspoiled by ideology, to the communion between the human world and the world of nature, this exhibition completes a protracted journey, a movement of dialectical self-consciousness, and a political investigation subtly connected to reality.

About the Exhibition

Exclusive audio equipment support comes from Genelec. BenQ provides film equipment support.

About the Artist

Yang Luzi (b. 1987, Hangzhou, lives and works in Beijing and Los Angeles) graduated from Harvard with a degree in comparative literature and a specialization in philosophy in 2011. In that year, she was awarded a DAAD scholarship to study comparative poetics in Bonn and Berlin for two years. In 2016, she obtained her M.F.A. in film from the California Institute of the Arts. Her work was included in the group exhibition “Toward the Emergence of Resistance” (Taikang Space, Beijing, 2016-2017).

About “New Directions”

Initiated in 2015, the “New Directions” series offers some of China’s most promising young 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 “The New Normal” (2017), “ON|OFF” (2013), “Breaking Forecast” (2009), and the “Curated By...” series (2010-2012), New Directions aims to present, through a constellation of singular positions, an overall sense of the richness and complexity of new art in China today.

About UCCA

UCCA is China’s leading independent institution of contemporary art. Founded in 2007 out of a commitment to bring Chinese contemporary art into global dialogue, it has since become a cultural landmark for Beijing, a conduit for international exchange, and an incubator for new talent. Located at the heart of the 798 Art



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District, it welcomes more than one million visitors a year. Originally known as the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, UCCA underwent a major restructuring in 2017 and now operates as the UCCA Group, comprising two distinct entities: UCCA Foundation, a registered non-profit that organizes exhibitions and research, stages public programs, and undertakes community outreach; and UCCA Enterprises, a family of art-driven retail and educational ventures. UCCA's work grows from its core belief that new art can change lives, broaden perspectives, and enrich the conversation between China and the world.

www.ucca.org.cn/en

798 Art District
No. 4 Jiuxiangqiao Lu
Chaoyang District
Beijing, P.R. China 100015
T +86 10 5780 0200
F +86 10 5780 0220
www.ucca.org.cn

北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路4号
798艺术区
邮编100015