



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

Editorial Contacts:

Carmen Yuan
+86 10 5780 0258
+86 135 7098 6743
jiamin.yuan@ucca.org.cn

Basha Liu
+86 10 5780 0259
+86 188 1047 3833
yuting.liu@ucca.org.cn

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

New Directions: Musquiqui Chihying

Released August 25, 2018

From August 25 to October 28, UCCA presents the latest installment of the “New Directions” series, showing Taiwanese artist Musquiqui Chihying. This recent series of artworks, “I’ll Be Back,” comprises *The Cultural Center*, *The Guestbook*, *The Mask*, and *The Sculpture*. These grow from the artist’s sustained engagement with the history of Sino-African encounters, from Ming-era explorer Zheng He’s voyage to what is now Kenya, to Zhou Enlai’s diplomatic visits to ten recently decolonized African states. Through these cases, the artist pushes back against the simplistic, dyadic narrative of European colonialism.

“I’ll Be Back” takes its title from Arnold Schwarzenegger’s famous line from *The Terminator*. Such words—echoing both Freud and Frankenstein—betray a deep anxiety that our hubristic need to make automata in our image will result in monstrous half-human, half-machine hybrids bent on destroying the human species. In Chihying’s films, however, it is not the technological sublime, but the figure of the native—of peripheral Africa, semi-peripheral China—that returns to haunt the European psyche.

The Cultural Center is an installation that begins with group of Ming-era coins uncovered in Kenya by the Chicago Field Museum’s team of archeologists. The coins’ journey, from dynastic China to the Kilwa Sultanate, reveals a network of cultural and economic circulation that predates European contact, and pushes against tired histories that fixate on the subsequent Ming isolationism that “deprived” China of naval dominance. Circumnavigating this discursive terrain, filled with images of Chinese deficiency, Chihying instead foregrounds this earlier moment of African exchange with a non-European power, and connects it to the present moment by creating another set of coins. These, however, are stamped with important African cultural institutions—a theater, two “cultural palaces,” a history museum, and an art museum—built by multinational Chinese firms in the 21st century.



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

The guestbook of the eponymous film bears the messages of German researchers, officials, and explorers in the German colony of Togoland, now the Republic of Togo. The film follows Do Do, a Togolese actor, as he travels to three symbolically important locations in Berlin: the Berlin State Library, whose archive now contains the book in consideration; Treptower Park, where the German Colonial Exhibition was held; and a Chinese massage parlor, formerly the location of “Nanjing,” one of Berlin’s earliest Chinese restaurants and a popular gathering place for Chinese international students and intellectuals in the 1920s. Legend has it that Zhou Enlai, a key figure in improving Sino-African relations, met here to talk strategy with communist military commander Zhu De.

The Mask is a sound installation wherein a sculpture dealer from Côte d’Ivoire picks out five sculptures that originated in his homeland but now belong to the National Museum of China, and fabricates a tale of their possible trajectories. The work’s title evokes the themes of recognition and misunderstanding, disclosure and trickery, crucial to the post-colonial encounter. By privileging the sculptor’s imagination, Chihying seems to challenge the extractive narrative, all too familiar, in which an African art object acquires value only as it is bid on and sold at a Western auction house, asking viewers to consider how art from “the margins” ought to be displayed and gazed at, and who, ultimately, has the power to define its “authenticity.”

This question is further explored in *The Sculpture*, a filmed lecture performance that focuses on Mr. Xie, a collector who has donated some 5,000 African artworks to the National Museum’s collection. Accumulated in the 1990s, they are indelibly touched by elements of both the precolonial and postcolonial, frustrating efforts to view them as the products of timeless, ethnic others. Here, once again, the politics of recognition—and material redistribution—are complicated by the three-sided relationship between China, Africa, and Europe. Alongside the film hangs an image in which the artist, dressed in a black suit, stands amidst a sea of photographic reproductions of art. This is a re-enactment of the iconic photograph of André Malraux standing next to his “Imaginary Museum,” the prototypical art book; yet in



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

Chihying's version, it is the Terminator, rather than a finely sculpted bust, that peers out from one such photo. To be sure, a new, Sinocentric order may have the power to redefine the aesthetic—but what, asks Chihying's work, might such a future look like?

About the Artist

Musquiqui Chihying (b. 1985, Taiwan, China, lives and works in Taipei and Berlin) is a graduate of Berlin University of the Arts. Solo exhibitions include “Modern Life is Dull” (NON Berlin, 2016); and “Resistance is Futile” (Gallery 456, New York, 2017). He has participated in group exhibitions such as “The 68th International Berlin Film Festival Forum Expanded Exhibition” (Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2018); “Through the Looking-Screen” (Gallery 175, Seoul, 2015); “Boys and Their Toys” (Kunstraum Kreuzberg / Bethanien, Berlin, 2015); “Place an Image / Place in Image” (Museum für Fotografie, Berlin, 2014); and “Modifications” (ZK/U Center For Art and Urbanistics, Berlin, 2013). His work has appeared at the 10th Shanghai Biennale (Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2014); and the 2016 Taipei Biennial (Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 2016).

About New Directions

“New Directions” is an ongoing series of solo exhibitions and accompanying publications focused on new voices from Greater China. Deepening a commitment to emerging practices that has been fundamental to UCCA's mission since its founding, this series aims to elaborate, through a constellation of singular positions, 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 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



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

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 Jiuxianqiao 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