



New Directions: Yu Honglei

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For the latest installment of the “New Directions” series of solo shows by emerging artists from throughout greater China, UCCA presents a new series of sculptures and film by Yu Honglei (b. 1984, Inner Mongolia, lives and works in Beijing). These artworks are born in an era where the internet and movie, television, and computer screens offer us constant distraction; they both imitate, and respond to, these phenomena. By giving viewers a stream of homogenous, emotionless, and face-paced images, Yu simulates human temporality, caught in a vortex of information, giving a sense of how lived realities can alter the very nature of the visual.

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Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

In *15'36"*, the film at the center of the exhibition, Yu creates a rich narrative. The film's title refers to its fifteen-and-a-half-minute duration. It begins with a throbbing sound paired with footage of a horse submerged in water. Next is the sound of muffled breathing alongside the image of a swimmer, eyes closed. Throughout the film, these couplings become more and more frenzied: a high-pitched whining, punctuated by explosions, runs in tandem with a clip of a man sinking a strange device into marshland; a Max Richter song plays as motorboats and ATVs take off across wetland and snow. Halfway through the film, several different sonic tracks fold together. Coughing, cymbals, and drumrolls are accompanied by clips of drones in the sky and beasts of burden; an oceanic din by images of a beekeeper and his bees; the twang of stringed instruments by footage of a car crash. The finale of the film doubles as its summation: a snatch of psychedelic trance music plays alongside a series of silent, American GIs, faces smeared with camouflage paint, who gaze out at the viewer. Their hypnotic stares transition suddenly to a close-up of a bird, beak open, pecking at the camera. It then cuts to black to the sound of a pile of objects collapsing. These repetitive, pulsating special effects cut time into distinct units, adding a tense rhythm to the artwork, and dissolving the original referents of the images and sounds.

15'36" forms an intertextual relationship with the metal sculptures in the exhibition. Some sculptures are miniature busts of heads, eyes open or closed to various degrees: some bulge widely, while others stare calmly out, shut tightly, or grimace in pain, reminiscent of people who have been blinded by intense light. The artworks *I#5*, *I#6*, as well as *I#3* and *I#4*, on the other hand, are shaped like floor lamps,



evoking the image of legs in motion, as if making linear the limitless space of consciousness.

About the Artist

Yu Honglei (b. 1984, Inner Mongolia, lives and works in Beijing) has had several major solo exhibitions, including “Yu Honglei” (Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin, 2018); “Yu Honglei: Swallow Century” (Antenna Space, Shanghai, 2016); “Yu Honglei Solo Exhibition: Fat Mouse” (Antenna Space, Shanghai, 2014); “Yu Honglei: Everything Is Extremely Important: There Is Nothing that Will Not Come Back Again” (Magician Space, Beijing, 2013); “Before I Come Close to You: Yu Honglei Solo Exhibition” (C-Space+Local, Beijing, 2011). He has participated in group exhibitions including “The System of Objects” (Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, 2015); and “The 8 of Paths: Art in Beijing” (Uferhallen, Berlin, 2014).

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 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.

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