



当代艺术中心
Center for Contemporary Art

Civilization: The Way We Live Now

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From March 9 to May 19, 2019, the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Civilization: The Way We Live Now,” a monumental photography exhibition featuring over 250 artworks by more than 120 photographers from Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The exhibition focuses on the development of human life on a global scale in the 21st century, and the patterns of behavior—collaboration and conflict, production and consumption—that now connect people to an unprecedented degree. While acknowledging the efforts of individuals to shape the world around them, and the differences between and among cultures, the exhibition focuses specifically on the collective achievements—and tensions—that narratives of individualism and heterogeneity tend to obscure. The show foregrounds the development of the medium of photography and the unique ability of photographers to create a multifaceted portrait of the present era. “Civilization: The Way We Live Now” is curated by William A. Ewing and Holly Roussell. The exhibition is co-produced by the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, Minneapolis/New York/Paris/Lausanne, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Korea, Seoul.

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Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

“Civilization” offers viewers a journey through key aspects of large-scale, organized life in the 21st century. It is divided into eight thematic sections. “Hive” explores the intricate urban networks that have formed in today’s world, through works like Pablo López Luz’s panorama of Mexico City and Phillippe Chancel’s snapshot of Dubai’s skyline. “Alonetogether” looks at the maintenance of social relationships, with works like Lauren Greenfield’s intimate portraits of high school students and Hong Hao’s solitary inventories of products. “Flow” takes as its subject the movement of peoples, goods, and ideas, such as the carpoolers in Alejandro Cartanega’s overhead photographs, or the massed shipping containers in those of Alex Maclean. “Persuasion” investigates the strategies we use to convince others and ourselves; works like Natan Dvir’s *Desigual* and Sato Shintaro’s *Dotonbori, Chuo Ward, Osaka/Omori-Kita, Ota Ward, Tokyo* testify to the ways in which the language of persuasion has permeated everyday life. “Control” examines humanity’s ability to create order, resolve disputes, and organize political and social structures, featuring such images as Lynne Cohen’s police school classroom and Mitch Epstein’s massive industrial buildings. “Rupture” focuses on the breakdown of this order and the conflicts between individuals and collectives; photos from Michael Wolf’s “Tokyo Compression” series, for example, show subway passengers flattened

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claustrophobically against the train windows, while Xing Danwen's *disCONNEXION* demonstrates the massive changes that human development has caused to the environment. "Escape" follows the ascent of recreational culture; Reiner Riedler's tropical getaways and Massimo Vitali's crowded beaches give a sense of the ways that we seek freedom from the given. The last section, "Next," looks at the new world taking shape in the 21st century, ranging from the genetically modified plants in Robert Zhao Renhui's work, to the models, reminiscent of digital avatars, found in Valérie Belin's "Models II" series.

Not since Edward Steichen's "The Family of Man" more than 60 years ago has a photographic exhibition tackled such a broad spectrum of human activity. As viewers travel through these different sections, they will have the chance to pause and contemplate the most urgent issues that condition human life today: routine and crisis, work and leisure, movement and habitation, thinking and creating. They will be invited to consider the cutting-edge discoveries and inventions that have appeared in the 21st century, as well as those absorbed from previous civilizations, and to bear witness to new technologies—affective and material—that can either extend human life, alleviate poverty, and allow us to coexist with other terrestrial beings; or cause war and conflict, exacerbate inequality, and speed up the extinction of our species and others. Viewers will have the chance to meditate on the human capacity both for destruction and for survival, such as our efforts to explore deep space for new possibilities and new homes beyond earth.

"Civilization" conceives of the history of photography as a collective endeavor in its own right. Across the world, photographers create timely, complex portraits of the era, observing, recording, interpreting, and fixing for posterity the ways in which we work and play, move our goods and our ideas, collaborate and compete, enter into alliances and conflicts. Photography partakes of the very culture that it records: it gives us a sense of the way we live now.

About the Exhibition

"Civilization: The Way We Live Now" is curated by William A. Ewing and Holly Roussell. The exhibition is co-produced by the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, Minneapolis/New York/Paris/Lausanne, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Korea, Seoul, in collaboration with UCCA, Beijing. YLYK is UCCA's exclusive English learning platform. Special support comes from Meitu and Tuchóng. Hongri Lighting provides exclusive lighting equipment support,



and Genelec provides exclusive audio equipment support. Max Office designed the exhibition space. A Chinese edition of the exhibition catalogue, first published by Thames & Hudson, is published in China by Zhejiang Photographic Press. UCCA thanks its strategic partner Aranya for supporting “Civilization: The Way We Live Now.”

About the “Civilization” Reading Room

In the center of the Great Hall, halfway through the exhibition, is a multimedia reading room that serves as a supplement to the themes of the show. In this space, dozens of publications—from artists’ photobooks to UN global reports and theoretical tracts that inspired the curators’ research—examine the state of the world from a variety of sociological, philosophical, and economic perspectives. UCCA has also invited audiences to donate items they believe reflect civilization today, which are on view here as part of a special object-based presentation. Livestreams from five cities around the world and one celestial livestream reflect the theme of the planetary civilization and its potential extraterrestrial future. The telescope stream is generously provided by the online space exploration platform Slooh, which can be found at Slooh.cn.

About UCCA

UCCA Center for Contemporary Art is China’s leading contemporary art institution. Committed to the belief that art can deepen lives and transcend boundaries, UCCA presents a wide range of exhibitions, public programs, and research initiatives to a public of more than one million visitors each year. UCCA Beijing sits at the heart of the 798 Art District, occupying 10,000 square meters of factory chambers built in 1957 and regenerated in 2019 by OMA. UCCA Dune, designed by Open Architecture, lies beneath the sand in the seaside enclave of Aranya in Beidaihe. Formally accredited as a museum by the Beijing Cultural Bureau in 2018, UCCA also operates non-profit foundations, licensed by the Beijing Bureau of Civil Affairs and the Hong Kong government. UCCA’s commercial ventures include the retail platform UCCA Store, the children’s education initiative UCCA Kids, and collaborations and projects under the rubric UCCA Lab. Opened in 2007 and revived by a committed group of Chinese and international patrons in 2017, UCCA works to bring China into global dialogue through contemporary art.

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