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

UCCA Presents Zhu Changquan: The History of an Action, 2019 at MGM COTAI in collaboration with MGM Resorts Art & Culture

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UCCA Center for Contemporary Art is pleased to announce its collaboration with **MGM Resorts Art & Culture** to present "The History of an Action, 2019" by the Chinese artist **Zhu Changquan** (b. 1989 Shandong province, lives and works in Hangzhou and Shanghai.) A massive multi-channel video, Zhu's 18-minute work disassembles events, symbols, and visual expressions into various discrete actions, interrogating their underlying logic. It is presented on **The Spectacle at MGM COTAI**—an innovative, multi-dimensional sensory experience comprised of 25 various sized LED screens, making up the world's largest array of permanent indoor LED screens. This uniquely immersive environment explores the possibilities of public art as a shared digital experience. The exhibition is curated by UCCA curator **Yang Zi**. The work will be shown **three times daily, at 10:00, 14:30, and 17:00**, through **September 7, 2019**.

UCCA Director **Philip Tinari** notes, "UCCA is excited to be working with MGM Resorts Art & Culture to present this new and ambitious work by Zhu Changquan at the Spectacle at MGM COTAI. Zhu first became connected to UCCA when he participated in the exhibition 'The New Normal: Art, China, and 2017' just two years ago. The idea of handing over the world's largest array of indoor permanent LED screens, situated in a sprawling commercial complex, to an experimental artist resonates with UCCA's longstanding mission to create pathways to contemporary art among new and diverse audiences. We look forward to the huge viewership that this work will find during the nearly six months it is on view, and to further collaborations with MGM Resorts Art & Culture."

In Zhu Changquan's work, virtual and reproductive technologies combine to form quasi-scientific "optical substitutes"; in an artificially controlled virtual space, the artist brings restraint, silence, patience, and rigor to bear on his "test subjects," waiting to discover their hidden principles. This experiment comprises five sections: "Jump from the Past," "Head Without Brain," "Boundary Post," "Aisle" and "Dead Island." The first three explore the ontological structure of a virtual space designed by the artist, and the manner in which it extends into the real world. "Jump from the Past" proceeds from certain historically significant dates, to scenes of flies, mosquitoes, moths and

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fish, as well as the ubiquitous sights of Hangzhou's suburbs in autumn. The juxtaposition of these images and numbers seems to call into question all attempts at easy historical periodization. In "Head Without Brain," the artist produces photographs of the Hangzhou suburbs in which he used to live, compressing reality in a set of images that, while flat, nevertheless flow, circulate, and fold. The two artworks mentioned above are paired with voice-overs and subtitles that abruptly shift in register and logic; a realist rubric, however, anchors them. In addition, a user interface frequently appears within the artwork—the round, cut up images in "Jump from the Past," or the background of "Head Without Brain," remind us that human vision is merely a kind of "video" in its own right, controlled and edited by a higher-dimensional being. This Platonic vision is further explored in "Boundary Post," which offers a model of direct perceptual intuition, proving fragments that are delineated by image, principle, and space-time, corresponding to Zhu's investigations of physics, mathematics, and Chinese philosophy.

Within this model, the artist has created two specific scenes. "The Aisle" is divided into three parts: the reproduction of a trip ("Aisle A"), as well as two interpretations of the myriad codes that appear in the course of this trip ("Aisle B" and "Aisle C"). "Aisle A" is an animation, executed in a casual, "first-person" style that resembles realism. Zhu's "protagonist," who never reveals his or her face, starts the film by observing statue of Jesus, then slowly backs into a living room with plants, a rug, and furniture (a toppled chair lies on the ground), before ascending steps to the second floor, entering a recreation room, where a game table, a jukebox, and a dartboard flicker in the faint light. Afterwards, walking through a long corridor, the "protagonist" enters a bedroom, glancing at the fruits arrayed on a table, a bed covered with a plump, motionless woman, and the cartoon that is playing on the television screen, where a raging pink sea god roils the seas. The final stop of the video is the bathroom; inside the bathtub, a yellow condom floats. This tour of the vast mansion is suffused with dread, reminding viewers of a classic horror film, filmed in a claustrophobic hotel. However, "Aisle B" and "Aisle C" aim to foreground the artifice behind such an atmosphere: "Aisle B" depicts a puppet, motionlessly narrating the story of its life as music and background alternate, whereas "Aisle C" only presents the silhouette of two legs walking.

"Dead Island" is based on the similarly titled "Isle of the Dead" by 19th century Swiss painter Arnold Bocklin. A tourist, dressed in white, stands on a boat that sails towards white, craggy mountains, shaped vaguely like a woman's pelvis. Dotting the mountain,

lush pine trees seem to solemnly greet the tourist. Zhu Yongquan's film has also been divided into parts A, B, and C, "Dead Island A" serving as the main work, while "Dead Island B" and "Dead Island C" retell "Dead Island A" from different perspectives. The story starts from the rippling user interface of a mapmaking program. The camera starts underwater, pointing towards the surface, where a sheep's head can be seen. It breaks the surface of the water, accompanied by whistling and whale song, and tracks a group of mountain goats that jump from the rocks into the ocean. The goats swim towards the mysterious island in Bocklin's painting, unexpectedly encountering the condom from "Aisle A." The moving images in the artwork frequently turn into incomplete mathematical models, defamiliarizing the audience, distancing it from the scene's immersion and romance. This "flickering" increases in frequency, and more models from "Aisle A" appear in "Dead Island A." Looking back, now, at the many paintings that decorate the mansion in "Aisle A," the viewer realizes that they now contain images from "Dead Island A"—these two parallel worlds thus obtrude into one another.

In the present era, only after we perceive the mediated information that constantly washes over us, do we begin to concern ourselves with the reality behind it. "The History of an Action" attempts to awaken this paradoxical experience in viewers, thereby showing them how surrogates and substitutes have permeated day-to-day life. In Zhu Changquan's expansive artwork, technical mediums are like shadows of the material world, creating a dyad of real and virtual, which the artist adapts to other binary relations between the physical and nonmaterial worlds. His experiment reminds us: these dyads—whose causal relationships might have in the past seemed commonsensical—today reverse, yielding strange results.

About the Artist

Zhu Changquan (b. 1989, Shandong, lives and works in Hangzhou and Shanghai) has held solo exhibitions such as "History of an Action" (OCAT Shanghai Pavilion, 2018) and "Head Without Brain" (Vanguard Gallery, Shanghai, 2016). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including "The New Normal: China, Art, and 2017" (UCCA Beijing, 2017); "Plane Tremor" (Long March Space, Beijing, 2016); and "The Liver" (CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, 2016); Oberhausen International Short Film Festival (Germany, 2015); and "Memorandum to the Earth" (Power Station of Art, 2014).

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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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About MGM Resorts Art & Culture

MGM Resorts Art & Culture focuses on commissioning, collecting, supporting and presenting contemporary art in and around MGM Resorts' destinations globally. Currently the MGM Resorts Art Collection includes more than 800 pieces by over 200 artists.

MGM Resorts Art & Culture was established in 2016 to encompass all of MGM Resorts' collections and varied art-related initiatives and partnerships to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted arts program. Reflecting the company's core values of inclusivity and diversity, MGM Resorts Art & Culture aims to create special, accessible experiences for all audiences. Each project thoughtfully considers the artist, the environment, and the overall experience, recognizing the power of art to evoke emotion, engage the senses, and spark conversation. Art is prevalent throughout MGM Resorts distinctive world-class brands including Bellagio, ARIA, Vdara, MGM Grand, and Delano Las Vegas; as well as MGM National Harbor outside of D.C., MGM Springfield in Massachusetts, and internationally at MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI.

Examples include works by Alice Aycock (National Harbor, Maryland), Jenny Holzer (ARIA, Las Vegas), Antony Gormley (ARIA, Las Vegas), Maya Lin (ARIA, Las Vegas),

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Robert Rauschenberg (Bellagio, Las Vegas), Nancy Rubins (Vdara, Las Vegas), James Turrell (ARIA, Las Vegas), among many others.

The MGM COTAI Art Collection
MGM endeavors to bring magnificently expansive art and culture programs while supporting and reinforcing Macau as a cultural and entertainment destination, an international city where globally influential artwork is created, appreciated, and treasured.

The MGM COTAI Art Collection features over 300 captivating and thought-provoking works seamlessly integrated with MGM COTAI's public spaces. Discover antique carpets dating from the Qing Dynasty, modern and contemporary Asian paintings and sculptures by renowned artists, freshly-commissioned works by local and regional rising talents, and large scale interactive installations. The collection is part of MGM's goal to bring world cultures together through innovative artworks that are each spectacular in their own right.

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