

ULLENS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART 尤伦斯当代艺术中心

KAN XUAN: MILLET MOUNDS

September 15, 2012. Beijing China

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Media/UCCA Members

/VIP Preview:

September 15

Exhibition dates:

September 15 –
November 10, 2012

Exhibition Space:

UCCA Nave, Central Gallery, Long
Gallery

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art is pleased to announce the major exhibition *Kan Xuan: Millet Mounds*, opening on September 15, with a press conference at 17:00.

The exhibition consists of 164 stop-motion videos, each of which stages an encounter between the artist and an imperial tomb site, and which together document nearly every known emperor's burial ground in China. Each video is composed of between 400 and 500 photographs, taken on the artist's iPhone and looped into short narratives. Occupying three of UCCA's four exhibition spaces, the exhibition offers a complete, historical cataloguing of imperial China that paradoxically takes the form of a highly individualized survey of the nation's present.

Millet Mounds is the result of two years of research and over one hundred days and 28,000 kilometers of travel. The exhibition title comes from a peasant colloquialism which plays on the tombs' resemblance to piles of the northern Chinese staple crop at harvest time. This formal slippage marks the incorporation of China's persistent past into the realities of its present. Now best recognized by rural villagers, these unmarked, unmaintained tombs are in some cases the only remaining evidence of figures once among China's most revered. Implicitly invoking conceptual precedents like Ed Ruscha's "Every Building on the Sunset Strip" (1966) as well as formal precedents like Monet's haystacks, this sprawling project is Kan Xuan's largest and most significant work to date, and will be shown for the first time at UCCA.



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The videos, which range in length from thirty seconds to two minutes, show the tombs in their current states. Some are crumbling towers of dirt in the middle of fields, or feature nothing more than a small statue in a cluster of flowers, while others stand alone as large, brooding hills. In some, nearby villages or tourist infrastructures have encroached on the sacred sites. The photographs have all been sifted through a lo-fi filter using the camera app Hipstamatic, which imparts a sense of hazy nostalgia for the tombs' disappeared magnificence and yet implies a contemporary perspective on the development of rural China around these ancient symbols of power.

Displayed amidst a series of cinderblock partitions, the videos are arranged in chronological order by imperial reign, throughout a space that resembles an extended pigpen. Also shown are a collection of small stones—one gathered at each site—accompanied by brief stories compiled by the artist which condense historical gossip and personal mythology on each of the emperors. These stories, along with select photographs of each tomb, are collected in an exhibition catalogue which also includes essays by UCCA director Philip Tinari and critic and curator Karen Smith, published by UCCA Books.

Related Programs

【Art Program】Lifeweek and UCCA Cultural Festival Presents Artist Talk:

Imperial Tombs

Time: 17:30-18:30, Saturday, September 15
Venue: UCCA La Suite
Special Guest: Kan Xuan (UCCA exhibiting artist)
Language: Chinese Only

【Children/Youth Program】Artist-Led Exhibition Tour Series:

The Window of Time

Time: 10:00-11:30, Saturday, September 29
Venue: UCCA La Suite
Teachers: Hou Wei (artist)
Stéphane Maggiacomo (artist)
Language: Chinese Only

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About the artist

Kan Xuan (born 1972, Anhui province) is well known both in China and abroad for her particular and deeply personal body of work, consisting mainly of videos that convey a sense of exploration. She is featured in several of her most well-known works, starting with the iconic "Kan Xuan! Ai!" (1999) in which she is seen searching for herself in a subway tunnel. More recent works have looked analytically at the material and semantic makeup of the world around her. Having studied at the Rijksakademie and currently dividing her time between Amsterdam and Beijing, Kan Xuan is a key figure in the generation of artists who emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

About UCCA

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is a comprehensive, not-for-profit art center serving a global Beijing public. Located at the heart of the 798 Art District, it was founded by collectors Guy and Myriam Ullens and opened in November 2007. Through a wide array of exhibitions and programs, UCCA promotes the development of the local artistic environment, fosters international exchange, and showcases the latest in art, design, and other fields. UCCA's cultural and educational programs bring the public into close contact with cutting-edge thought in art and the humanities, advancing the public cultural sensibility and bringing new experiences to its audience.

www.ucca.org.cn