



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

New Directions: Chang Yun-han

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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 cycle of artworks and supplementary materials by Taiwanese artist Chang Yun-han, running from March 24 to May 27. Included here are works produced during two sojourns undertaken by Chang: in New York, 2017, for the completion of a project with Residency Unlimited; and in Svalbard, Norway, 2014, while undertaking the Farm Foundation’s Arctic Circle Residency. By inviting others—a graphic designer, a folklorist, and a magician—to join in her in creating her artworks, Chang creates a space of collaboration and openness.

During her stay in New York, Chang created a series of marker drawings based on stills from the 1986 animated feature film *An American Tail*. Set in 1885, the movie follows a group of Russian-Jewish mice through their tumultuous journey to America, a place where they imagine there are “no cats.” The film, produced by Stephen Spielberg and animated by Don Bluth, was a childhood staple for Chang’s generation, growing up in Taiwan, a filmic distillation of America into a hyperreal blend of imagination, history, and popular culture. Each of Chang’s drawings is named after the snatch of dialogue contained within the still it recreates: *This is America, we have free speech*; *America*; *Another fairy tale*; *What a place*; and *What does it stand for*. Yet a closer look at the medium on which she executes her drawings—foreign-language newspapers discovered while roaming the streets of Manhattan—suggests a tension between an idealized story of assimilation and the stark realities of being an immigrant. Beneath the cheerful marker surface of *This is America, we have free speech*, for example, is the Chinese heading “Chinese [American] youth train-jumping suicide tragedy causes societal stir...” The newspaper, which Benedict Anderson called a tool for “imagining the nation into being,” has always recorded a similar tension: between the commitment to quick, reliable, and democratic information, and the ethno-nationalist belief that only white Europeans could properly live by these principles; between a tendency to think humanity as an abstract, universal category, and to suspend, indefinitely,

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Exhibition Dates:

March 24 – May 27

Exhibition Venue:

New Gallery

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website



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inclusion in this category for countries in the global South and East. What is the fate of this American tale, the artworks seem to ask, once it is translated for a Taiwanese audience?

The next set of artworks centers on Svalbard, Norway, located near the North Pole. A series of drawings, done in acrylic and colored pencils and titled “You Are Not What You Think You Are,” riffs on whimsical Scandinavian motifs: a caped figure standing on a lone ice cap, ringed by walruses; a woman rising from the open jaws of a whale; a gargantuan viewer peering down at a settlement shrunken into a diorama. Alongside these drawings is a light-box installation, *Unreachable Place*. A photograph of an iceberg circumscribed by black, as if seen through binoculars, this installation foregrounds the question that occurred to Chang during her journey: “Why does the North Pole gradually become the symbol for the global disaster today?” One of the signature ironies of the era, inaugurated by the industrial revolution and dubbed the Anthropocene, is that the iceberg, a Romantic symbol of the sublime and inhuman, is now being destroyed by human emissions. As Chang says in her travel notes, presented alongside the drawings, “There is nothing here, but the sights never cease to awe you...The world doesn’t need us at all...There is no boundary between human and nature, only a shapeless boundary of respect for each other. You know that once you cross, you might never return, and choose, humbly, to let yourself return to that earliest of instincts—survival—not daring to disturb the world...We aren’t anything at all, you say.”

Though New York and the North Pole are worlds apart, both function as “distant places,” compensations for the pressures of capitalism which are, in the final analysis, a part of capitalism’s very driving force. Instead of using “place” to distance herself, Chang sees it as a way to delve into present-day issues: the “regional variants” of the tale, American, that has proliferated in the wake of globalization; and the imbrication of humans with non-humans, a mesh of animals, plastic, radioactive waste, carbon emissions, and rising seas. Her artworks never evince a sense of moralizing or defeatism, however. Produced in tandem with her friends, their light shades and soft contours draw viewers in, foregoing



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monumentality. Similarly, the handwritten notes hung on the wall function not as a manifesto, but an invitation for the viewer to journey, and think, alongside their author.

About the Artist

Chang Yun-han (b. 1985, Changhua, Taiwan, China, lives and works in Taipei) graduated with an M.F.A. in sculpture from the National Taiwan University of Arts. Her solo exhibition “You Are Not What You Think You Are” was held at the Taipei Contemporary Art Center in 2015. Major group exhibitions include: “Live Ammo” (Taipei Contemporary Art Center, 2011); the 2010 Taipei Biennial (Taipei Fine Arts Museum); and the finalists exhibition for the 2009 Taipei Arts Award (Taipei Fine Arts Museum).

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 the Exhibition

“New Directions: Chang Yun-han” is the first exhibition to take place in the 225-square-meter New Gallery, constructed as the first phase of the architectural transformation taking place at UCCA this year. The New Gallery, which will house three further exhibitions in the “New Directions” series throughout 2018, deepens UCCA’s commitment to giving promising young artists a platform to realize their first institutional solo show, and to giving its audience an overall sense of the richness and complexity of new art in China today. Annual support for “New Directions” comes from Dior.

About UCCA

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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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