

## Radical Joy:2000AD

Producer: Sui Qun

Curator: Lu Mingjun

Artists: Cao Fei, Ou Ning, Shi Yong, Shi Qing, Song Tao, Wang Qingsong, Wang Youshen, Yan Lei, Yang Fudong, Yang Zhenzhong, Yu Ji, Zheng Guogu, Zhang Peili, Zhao Bandi

Opening: Saturday, November 18, at 4 pm

Duration of Exhibition: November 18, 2023 - March 4, 2024

Location: Surplus Space, The Bund Prosperity, No. 25 Poyang Road, Jiangan District, Wuhan

Special Screening: Alex Prager «La Grande Sortie»

At the turn of the century, a group of conceptual photography and video works emerged in China, expressing artists' beautiful longings and utopian visions for globalization and the potential changes it could bring. Around the same time, due to the popularity of computers and the Internet, artists gradually began to use new photography and video technologies, especially Photoshop software, which greatly expanded their understanding and practice of photography, video, and images. These exhibits are part of it. They are not only a portrayal of the collective emotions of this special historical moment, but also an important witness to the revolution of technological media.

Twenty years later, photography and imaging technology have undergone multiple iterations and replacements, and globalization has entered a historical stage. Looking back at these conceptual works with "rough" technology yet strong characteristics of the times, we are certainly impressed by the profound impact of technological media on contemporary art. However, the long-lost "optimistic" mood and "comedic" feeling seem to be more worthy of our contemplation and reflection.

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Location: Surplus Space, The Bund Prosperity, No. 25 Poyang Street, Jiangan District, Wuhan



## **Cao Fei**

Cao Fei, born in Guangzhou in 1978, currently works and lives in Beijing. Cao Fei is a popular Chinese artist on the international stage. Her works not only combine social commentary and pop aesthetics, but also draw inspiration from surrealism and documentary filming techniques, to reflect the rapid changes in contemporary Chinese society. She also has participated in numerous international biennials and triennials, as well as exhibitions in major art museums worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Tate Modern in London, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

## **Ou Ning**

Graduated from Shenzhen University in 1993. Currently lives and works in Beijing as artist, curator, designer, and poet.

## **Shi Yong**

Shi Yong (born 1963) is a representative figure of contemporary Chinese artists who first started working with installation and video media. Since 1993, his works have been widely exhibited both in China and abroad. His artworks cover a wide range of mediums including performance, video, and installation. Shi Yong's earliest artistic practices focused on revealing the subtlety of our reality and the inherent tension of the "system". At the end of the 1990s, Shi began focusing on the idea of Shanghai's transformations under the Chinese economic reform, which contributed to a discussion of globalization and consumerism. Since 2006, with the piece "Sorry, There will be no Documenta in 2007", he turned his attention to the art world that he's been involved in, pondering how to provide a more rational perspective through his creative works. Shi Yong's 2015 solo exhibition "Let All Potential Be Internally Resolved Using Beautiful Form" continues his art practice, disclosing his intention to expand the reflection and practice of "control" under the seemingly "abstract" future.

## **Shi Qing**

Born in 1969, currently lives and works in Shanghai. Shi Qing's creation spans various forms, from installations, video art, live performances, on-site practices to recent research projects; from early ritual behavior of humanities, appropriation of characters in myths, the geography of nomadic event and cultural clash under the context of globalization, to daily life under collectivism, to criticism of artistic institutions and the interference of space production. Shi Qing has also participated in numerous art self-organizing activities such as "Post-sense Sensibility," "United Scene," and "TOP Events." In 2014, he co-founded "Radical Space" and initiated and organized projects like "Collective Architecture," "Local Work," "Hinterland

Project," and "Shanghai Redux," shifting his focus towards method-oriented practices of subjective scenario and contextualized production. In 2018, he co-founded local organizations such as "Chongqing Work Institute".

## **Song Tao**

Song Tao was born in Shanghai in 1979. He graduated from Shanghai Arts & Crafts College and currently works and lives in Shanghai. He started art creation in 2000 and has been a member of the artist group "Birdhead" since 2004.

## **Wang Qingsong**

Graduated from Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, he has been living and working in Beijing since 1993, and started video creation in 1996. He has held over 40 solo exhibitions in various art museums and galleries worldwide, and participated in many international biennials such as Gwangju biennial, Taipei biennial, Biennale of Sydney, Shanghai biennial, La Biennale di Venezia, Istanbul biennial, and Kiev biennial. In 2019, he had solo exhibitions at Wuhan United Art Museum and Museum of Photography of Seoul. He received the Outreach Award in Rencontres de le Photographie in 2006. He has been actively involved in organizing and curating exhibitions, including the Changjiang International Image Biennial and the Chengdu Golden Panda Photography Awards. He currently serves as the artistic director of the Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum.

## **Wang Youshen**

Wang Youshen (b.1964, Beijing), currently works and lives in Beijing. Wang graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1988. He worked for Beijing Youth Daily from 1988 to 2018.

Wang Yousheng has participated in domestically and internationally influential biennials and institutional exhibitions, as well as exhibitions that held important positions in the history of Chinese contemporary art, such as "China / Avant Garde Exhibition", "New Generation Art Exhibition", La Biennale di Venezia, Bienal de São Paulo, Taipei Biennial, Guangzhou Triennial, Shanghai Biennial, etc. He is one of the important participants and witnesses of Chinese contemporary art. At the same time, Wang Youshen has worked in Beijing Youth Daily for 30 years from 1988 to 2018 and served as art editor, art director and other positions. All along, Wang Youshen has dual identities, working between the art world and the media world. He committed to investigating and loosening the rigid boundaries between art/life, art practice/daily life.

## **Yan Lei**

Born in Hebei, China in 1965, graduated from Hebei Art & Design Academy in 1982

and Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou (now China Academy of Art) in 1992. He currently works and lives in Beijing.

Yan Lei is considered an "alternative" artist in the contemporary art circle. He pioneered a painting method that involves spraying selected patterns onto canvas, breaking down each painting with color blocks and numbering them. From the images chosen by Yan Lei, including the way he reinterpreted the works of other artists through his painting methods, we can see his attitude, which signifies political overtones, humanistic stance and independent scrutiny.

## **Yang Fudong**

Born in Beijing in 1971. Graduated from the Oil Painting Department of China Academy of Art, he is hailed as one of the most successful and influential Chinese artists today. He was one of finalists for the Hugo Boss Prize in 2004 and won this honor as the third Chinese artist after Cai Guoqiang and Huang Yongping. He now works and lives in Shanghai.

## **Yang Zhenzhong**

YANG Zhenzhong (b. 1968) is an artist from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, currently based in Shanghai. YANG's artistic practice mainly focuses on conceptual art, involving video, photography, installation, painting, sculpture, and other art forms. He has been active in the global contemporary art scene for a long time and participated twice in the Venice Biennale (2003 and 2007). Furthermore, as a curator, he has planned and initiated more than a dozen crucial contemporary art exhibitions and projects with artists in Shanghai since the late 1990s, including "Art For Sale" "Express Art Exhibition" "Hipic" and so on. On the one hand, YANG's creations center around life and death with his cynical attitude to reinforce the numerous contradictions and disorders existing in society; on the other hand, he transforms and recovers daily life and political space within which people, objects, and landscapes reside.

## **Yu Ji**

Graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1992. He has engaged in free creation in contemporary art with various media and uncertain experimental methods since the 1990s. His works encompass performance, installations, photography, video, painting, as well as design and writing. Starting from the objectivity of the body and the falsity of identity, he explores the authenticity of multiple connections between individuals in real situations and cultural perspectives. His works attempt to delve into the complex and tumultuous mentality of contemporary Chinese intellectuals when they encounter globalization and future cultural form through the perception of Chinese and foreign traditions, and reveal the historical melancholy of customs and habits constituted by a new human relationship, which is presented as a general

visual form of pure individual experience from his own perspective.

## **Zheng Guogu**

Born in 1970 in Yangjiang, Guangdong province, where he currently lives and works, Zheng Guogu graduated from the printmaking department at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 1992.

Zheng Guogu's artistic practices utilize a wide range of media in order to express the extensive diversity of the ideas he develops in connection with the processes of life. In 2000, Zheng Guogu initiated *The Age Of Empire* ( from 2012 onward, he changed the name from *The Age of Empire* to *Liao Garden* ), a constantly evolving utopian domain that provides a setting for his experimentations rooted in Chinese philosophy but anarchistically constructed outside of legal parameters. The project integrates complicated spatial modalities and social relations, which comprise the entire process of dwelling in a physical space, from the conceptual ideal, to the practical implementation, to day-to-day living. In his recent works based on the research on life's energy, Zheng Guogu tries to reveal the energy flow lurking in the process of perception, the vibration of color frequencies is closely related to the workings of human arteries and veins, as well as the operation of the universe. Furthermore, the vibration is the tempering of an existential insight. Zheng Guogu is also one of the founding members of Yangjiang Group, an artist collective focusing on experimental Chinese calligraphy, founded in 2002 in Yangjiang.

## **Zhang Peili**

Born in Hangzhou in November 1957. He graduated from the Oil Painting Department of Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art) in 1984 and now lives and works in Hangzhou. He has been engaged in artistic education for over thirty years. In 2003, he established the New Media Department at China Academy of Art, initiating the earliest new media art education among Chinese art institutions. Currently, he is a professor at China Academy of Art and the executive director of OCAT Shanghai.

## **Zhao Bandi**

Born in Beijing in 1966, Zhao Bandi currently works and lives in Beijing. As a pioneering figure in China's avant-garde movement, his creations involve performance, image, fashion, film, and social intervention. From 2010 to 2013, Zhao Bandi initiated the art charity project "Trading Creativity for a Nursing Home" attracted over two million Chinese youth to submit their artworks, through which the income was used to establish a nursing home in Kaifeng county, Henan province, which currently houses 46 elderly adults. From 2013 to 2014, *Let Panda Fly*, a film Zhao directed based on the above project, was selected by the 29th Warsaw International Film Festival and many children's film festivals, and enjoyed a wide theatrical release in China.

#1

Ou Ning, Cao Fei

*San Yuan Li*

40'02"

2003

San Yuan Li is an experimental documentary created by Ou Ning and Cao Fei for the 50th La Biennale di Venezia. Produced under the name U-theque (Yuan Ying Hui), it adopts a production method that combines personal creation and group collaboration to shoot and study the urbanization process of Guangzhou and the typical urban village of San Yuan Li, and finally formed a black-and-white visual poem. San Yuan Li has been screened and exhibited around the world and has been collected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Guangdong Museum of Art.

#2

Shi Yong

*Yearning production*

Computer composed digital photography

60x42cm (Framed size 73x 65cm)

2000

This is a set of comic photos of new image figures based on current Chinese city background of "standing in mainland, trending to the world, connecting with the abroad and attracting the foreign investments" (the background is the typical architecture landscaping in Shanghai which is the window communicating with the outside). These photos correlate with the background just like the green leaves foil to the red flowers—new city needs new image, new image needs new idea. All in all, each one plays a role in one place.

It is presented in a view of modern Chinese urban family. All the dialogues in the work are exaggerated in a soap opera format. Confronting the new era, people's subtle mental activity was exposed in the reality, as well as the planned performance. All the images wear blond hair, it is a logic reflection of today's reality.

*You can fly higher*

Installation

2002

I convey the desire to 'pursue' by imitating animals' behavior. Under the fantastic atmosphere created by neon lights, music, and image, the audience reaches the state of "flying". Imagination and expectation always make people excited. The state of "flying" is indulging in fantasy during the pursuing process, rather than after the

pursuit. Since the end of 2001, I have become more and more interested in the fantastic power that constantly expands in our reality. You can see that the fantastic passion of romanticism constantly expanding in all aspects of our reality is influencing our mind and behavior and makes us excited and full of desire. They are one of the most distinctive features of China's real environments in the context of globalization. You can fly higher is a result of thinking from such an angle.

**#3**

**Wang Qingsong**

*Preschool*

120x160cm

2002

At the beginning of the new century, after nearly two decades of material civilization construction, people's living needs could be basically met, and large supermarkets and shopping malls have appeared in cities. With the acceleration and penetration of the globalization process, some problems have emerged in our education. Preschool reflects the impact of globalization on children. We often hear parents and grandparents saying to their children, "Study hard! We'll go to McDonald's if you get a perfect score." McDonald's has become some kind of "prize" and motivation for children to study. Formally, this photo resembles scenes from past movies and novels where children listen to their grandparents telling stories. Children hold various kinds of food and reading materials in their hands, waiting for the elders to read stories. In the work, 'me' seems like an old man from the fairyland, educating children about a "better tomorrow."

**#4**

**Song Tao**

*From Last Century*

2004~ 2006

34'8"

The repetitive structure is reinforced quantitatively, even impresses the viewer with power shifting from quantitative change to qualitative change. However, in Song Tao's works, repetition and monotony are nothing more than the repetition of life, neither better nor worse than variation and climax.

### *3 Days Ago*

single-channel video

8'

Song Tao's video work "Three Days Ago" (2005) embarks on a poetic adventure through the nighttime zones of Shanghai. In the video, viewers encounter recurring themes such as children playing hopscotch, brightly lit highway tunnels, and houses that often surface in memory. An electronic score threads through the video, giving it a fluid rhythm. This circular structure directs the audience's focus more on the atmosphere than the overall narrative, creating a sense of suspense that intensifies as it approaches the conclusion. Dramatic scenes unfold, emphasizing that the nocturnal journey through the city could happen anywhere, anytime. Serving as dynamic snapshots of urban space and fragments of memory, Song Tao presents a slice of reality. His visual language captures an ambiance of recording and creating – he is not concerned with crafting a glamorous truth.

### **#5**

**Yang Zhenzhong**

*Extras*

100x100cm

2010

This set of 25 photographs titled *Extras* created by Yang Zhenzhong, seems aim to create a scene where reality and falsehood coexist. Through exquisite photography techniques, we can even see the texture of skin, wrinkles, shining eyes, and the gloss of lips of the photographed. These sensory feelings tell us how real these smiles are; and we seem to see the joy permeating through their skin pores. However, all of this is just performance done at the artist's request.

### **#6**

**Wang Youshen**

*Y2K*

40x60cm

2000

Wang Youshen uses a kind of direct and sensitive way to discuss public issues. He selects news photo and private photo in albums with his personal views, hemakes the image and develops with two different chemical ways, thus it will show two different image impact. Washing has become a unique theory for Wang Youshen to make image. His works has involved many major but different events, from the impact of peoples' sense of family on social statues to the pressure of social media on human's manner and attitude; from inquire on war to cleaning on expenses of culture. In



Wang Youshen's work Y2K, the potential harms of Info and Media era on public life has been the theme. Its unique color and process has made his work having a sense of old acquaintances and sentimental.

**#7**

**Yan Lei**

***THIS WAY TO KASSEL***

Installation

1998

1998 was the year of the first anniversary since the reunification between Hong Kong and China. The work was made by the artist responding to the relocation of Hong Kong International Airport. Yan Lei wrote both in English and languages of South Asia the phrase, "This way to Kassel". The slogan was placed next to characters dressed in attire typical to South East Asia, which visitors could place their heads behind to pose for a photograph.

**#8**

**Yang Fudong**

***I love my motherland***

1999

The characters in the film repeatedly recite "I love my country," filled with expectations and yearning for China in the era of globalization. Simultaneously, the artist explores the possibilities of experimental film with short clips and multiple exposures.

**#9**

**Zheng guogu**

***Tokyo Sky Story***

Inkjet Print on Paper

100×61 cm

1998

Today, we are already used to photographs around us. Since 1994, I've been playing games with photographs, which have become my favorite after my Honeymoon work. To me, it holds a special charm -- games are a kind of practice, and thinking does not waste film. I know it is a matter of time for me to think in this way.

This time I was building a "theater in the air" over Tokyo. The hero and heroine are a couple of "newlyweds" who have to take their honeymoon in Tokyo. Between the game and non-game, the record in the photographs separates the transient "performance element" from reality, thus achieving a precise, fairytalelike existence.

Except the one of collision of two passenger plane models in the sky over Tokyo, which looks like a news photo (although people think only news photos are free of lies), all the photos show obvious “charm of fantasy” with the “performance element.” They bring an important basis for imagination to my artistic expression in Tokyo.

The process of implementing the plan and the result on the printing paper neither disclose nor create any truth. Unlike before, doing the work in Tokyo gave me a mixed feeling of excitement and loss. It was fun.

## #10

**Zhao Bandi**

*Am I dreaming?*

1999

«Am I dreaming?» comes from a photo series Zhao Bandi created for the 1999 Venice Biennale, breaking through his previous style and representing a new stage of his creation involving public participation. Zhao Bandi plays a boatman in the work, carrying a woman, who tenderly looks at a toy panda in her arms, as if breastfeeding. The boat sways in a lush lotus pond, with the words “這不会是夢吧? Am I dreaming?” printed on the image. It's probably a question that both the people in the image and the viewers want to ask.

## #11

**Shi Qing**

*1999*

100x100cm

1999

Wave goodbye to the 20th century and welcome the arrival of the new century.

## #12

**Zhang Peili**

*Happiness*

video, monitor

6'39"

2006

The work uses scenes of laughter and applause from 20th century films as material, and edits them into a new film of montage.

#13

Yu ji

*Sensory · Sensitive 2001*

Digital photograph

30cmX22.5cm

2001

Vagueness is the basic form which appears largely in my work, and is also an essential skill I chose in my using of digital techniques. It produces a kind of absurd relation between the vagueness presented by the whole work and the clarity in the details. People contact with the bodies of others every day, and the utilization ratio of our sense organs become higher than ever before. Therefore, the sense organs get too sensitive and exhausted, even flicking and fleeing the body. Therefore, when I walk in the crowd, or sit in the noisy consuming place, what I felt is the stampede and restlessness of the crowd, so that it is fuzziness either when I look at others or when others look at me. This is only remaining sense organ by which I can perceive and recognize. All of these realities are just the basic founding bases of my work. Because of such strong feeling that human is not human, I chose the vague form to present, in order to try my best to revert the truth in the reality: a mirror image of the semblance. There are too many people and we cannot distinguish the individual among humans. Only the sensitive sense organs are reminding people: we are alive, we still can perceive.

## Special Screening: Alex Prager «La Grande Sortie»

### Alex Prager

Alex Prager (b. 1979, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) is a photographer and filmmaker who creates elaborately staged scenes that draw inspiration from a wide range of influences and references, including Hollywood cinema, experimental films, popular culture, and street photography. She deliberately casts and stages all of her works, merging past and contemporary sources to create a sense of ambiguity. Her familiar yet uncanny images depict worlds that synthesize fiction and reality and evoke a sense of nostalgia. Prager cultivates the surreal in her photographs and films, creating emotional moments that feel like a fabricated memory or dream. Each photograph captures a moment frozen in time, inviting the viewer to “complete the story” and speculate about its narrative context. Prager’s work often makes the viewer aware of the voyeuristic nature of photography and film, establishing the uneasy feeling of intruding upon a potentially private moment. The highly choreographed nature of her photographs and films exposes the way images are constructed and consumed in our media-saturated society.

Her images, a moment frozen in time, hint toward a larger narrative that allows the viewer to speculate about what happened before and after that moment. This also evokes a voyeuristic quality to the work as the viewer becomes acutely aware they are a witness to a potentially private moment or event.

There is an ominous feeling that pervades her work that conveys anxiety, fear, and a sense of unease that lies just beneath the surface of perfection. This alludes to Prager’s overarching concern about and investigation of the human condition and the ways in which we have historically glamorized or attempted to assuage the negative aspects of humanity through film and media.

### #1

#### *La Grande Sortie*

6 archival pigment prints, single-channel video with color and sound on blue-ray disc and thumbdrive

27.9 x 53.3 cm(image)

43.2 x 55.9 cm(print)

10’

2015

Commissioned in 2015 by the Paris Opera Ballet—one of the city’s most important cultural institutions—this film stars real-life prima ballerina Èmilie Cozette. Filmed on the iconic stage of Opera Bastille, *La Grande Sortie* first debuted in September 2015 on the Paris Opera Ballet’s new digital platform, *The 3rd Stage*. The film was exhibited for the first time during Prager’s solo exhibition at Galerie des Galeries, Paris, in October 2015.

Loosely inspired by the pressure and anxiety she herself feels as an artist, a woman, and a professional, Prager’s *La Grande Sortie* tells the story of a prima ballerina struggling against stage fright. The video depicts the ballerina’s first performance after an unexplained hiatus. Minor sounds and annoyances drift from the audience causing her to stumble and give way to her insecurities. The ballerina’s fears manifest in a series of awkward/frightening dances, each accompanied by a member of the ill-mannered audience who are played by retired Paris Opera Ballet dancers. After these unsettling encounters, she’s left alone to complete her routine. As she regains control of the performance, an audience member, (also played by Cozette) rudely stands up and begins to leave. As she opens the door the two versions of Cozette—the insecure performer and the negative judgemental audience member — exchange fatal stares causing the ballerina to vanish into dust, leaving only her dress and slippers on the stage.

Prager uses the experience of the dancer as a metaphor for the vulnerability one feels when putting themselves out there personally or professionally. Her choice to depict a ballerina is significant because it is one of the most physically and emotionally grueling and intense careers one can choose to commit their life to. Her use of this extreme depiction of anxiety and fear allows for multiple readings and understanding about the pressures placed on humans today.

*La Grande Sortie*’s depiction of the underlying tension between a performer and audience continues Prager’s psychological examination of the human condition and the complex dynamics that exist between the individual and the crowd. By juxtaposing shots of the dancer and those watching her, Prager reveals the difference in experience for the two opposing viewpoints. The narrative shifts seamlessly between realism and fantasy as we watch the overly dramatic unraveling of a star ballerina.

Initial inspiration for this film came from *The Red Shoes*, 1948, a motion picture about an aspiring ballerina torn between her dedication to dance and her desire for love. Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, Prager first referenced *The Red Shoes* in her short film *Despair*, 2010. This initial foray into cinema resulted in a prestigious premiere at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in *New Photography*, 2010, curated by Roxana Marcoci.

**#2**

*Applause*

single-channel video, color, looped

0'10"

2016

In *Applause*, Prager presents a theatre audience engaged in a continuous round of applause. By deliberately eliminating any hint of the stage or performer, the artist has removed the audience from their narrative context. Like the photographs, this video reverses the role of viewer and artwork, making “us” the object of their observation and criticism.

