



Chen Ke: Bauhaus Unknown

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UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Chen Ke: Bauhaus Unknown” between May 17, 2025, and September 7, 2025. Exploring the obscured histories of the women of the Bauhaus, and particularly its weaving and textiles workshop, this exhibition includes over 60 paintings, works on paper, and a site-specific felt mural that reinterpret images, lives, and narratives through Chen Ke’s distinctive, emotionally expressive artistic approach.

Exhibition Period:

2025.5.17 – 2025.9.7

Location:

UCCA Beijing Central Gallery

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BEIJING, China—From May 17, 2025, to September 7, 2025, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Chen Ke: Bauhaus Unknown,” a solo exhibition featuring the latest body of work from the artist’s “Bauhaus Gal” series (2020-ongoing). Since emerging into the art scene in the early 2000s, Chen Ke (b. 1978, Sichuan province) has gained renown for her evocative visual language exploring the emotional complexities of the individual within broader social and historical contexts. This exhibition focuses on the lives and often-overlooked contributions of the women associated with the Bauhaus, focusing in particular on their role in the school’s weaving workshop and their lasting impact on textile art. The poignancy of Chen’s works is heightened by the exhibition’s setting within UCCA’s flagship location in Beijing’s 798 Art District—a post-industrial compound originally designed in the 1950s by architects from the state design institute in Dessau, the East German city that was home to the Bauhaus from 1925 to 1932. Chen Ke reflects upon the histories of the Bauhaus from a position of expanded perspective, conveyed by tender, yet emotionally charged imagery that layers Bauhaus colors and motifs within nuanced visual storytelling. “Chen Ke: Bauhaus Unknown” is a reconsideration and reconstruction of the Bauhaus as a site of innovation while offering a deeply personal tribute that brings to light the often-minimized contributions of the women who shaped its legacy. This exhibition is curated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari.

Press material available at

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“Bauhaus Unknown” was conceived to engage in dialogue with the architecture of UCCA in the 798 Art District, a former industrial compound originally designed by East German architects in the 1950s—a reflection of the artist’s exploration into space and memory. In *Factory No. 3* and *Factory No. 4* (both 2024),



Chen depicts dreamlike scenes of factory structures. Whether imagined or based on actual buildings, these factories composed of abstracted layers of color, form, and fragmented detail—as if to trace the location's transformation from an industrial center to a cultural landmark of contemporary art in China and echo the Bauhaus ideal of uniting art, industry, and craft.

One notable figure overlooked during the Bauhaus in its heyday was Anni Albers (1899-1994), portrayed in this exhibition in key works *Anni Albers Against Woven Backdrop* (2024) and *Anni in Dreamland* (2024). Albers joined the Bauhaus hoping to study painting, but was instead delegated to the weaving workshop. There, she would redefine textiles into a powerful and expressive art form. Today, Albers is widely recognized as a major figure in the history of textile art, having revolutionized the medium into fine art instead of crafts. Taking inspiration from modern weaving and abstract painting, Chen Ke filters archival photographs of Albers through her painterly language, in which color and line are treated as woven elements—overlapping geometric blocks create both the figure and the canvas's compositional texture.

Expanding her exploration of the history of the Bauhaus and its formal innovations, *Unknown* (2025) is a new site-specific mural composed of industrial colored felt. Created specifically for this exhibition, *Unknown* is a monumental piece that reflects Chen Ke's ongoing experimentation with a painterly language inspired, but not constricted to, Bauhaus ideals. The mural is based on two historical photographs: one depicting thirteen Bauhaus masters, and the other, a classroom of women from the weaving workshop. Drawing on the bold geometries and textured palettes of Bauhaus textiles, she adopts a collage-like approach—layering the felt to reinterpret archival images in a composition that invokes Josef and Anni Albers' color theories.

The exhibition also features series on paper such as such as “Colorful Dream Against a Black Background” (2022), among others. Executed in watercolor, soft and oil pastels, pencil, and collage, these works are subtle yet expressive explorations of mediums beyond painting, the medium Chen is best known for. However, the rigid geometries of Bauhaus design are softened in her compositions, which evokes an emotional intimacy that contrasts the school's structural visual elements.

“Chen Ke: Bauhaus Unknown” is a hauntingly resonant reconsideration of a movement too often told through the stories of its male protagonists, instead turning attention to what might be called the other face of the Bauhaus—its women. Even if many of their names and stories



may be lost to time, Chen pays tribute to the contributions of the school's female artists, particularly those in the weaving workshop, whose experimental practices and conceptual rigor remain inspiring a century later. In dialogue with the Bauhaus-inspired architecture of UCCA's own site, the exhibition reimagines this alternate lineage, inviting viewers to contemplate how this inspiring yet imperfect cultural legacy may be revised.

About the Artist

Chen Ke (b. 1978, Sichuan; lives and works in Beijing) obtained her BA from the Oil Painting Department of Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts in 2002 and an MFA in 2005 from the same faculty. Her previous solo exhibitions include "Bauhaus Gal—Theatre" (Perrotin Gallery, Paris, 2023); "Bauhaus Gal—Room" (Perrotin Gallery, Shanghai, 2021); "The Unknown Woman Artist" (C5CNM, Beijing, 2020); "The Real Deal Is Talking with Dad" (Yuz Museum, Shanghai, 2018-2019); "Dream · Dew" (Perrotin Gallery, Hong Kong, 2016); and "Cover: Recent Works by Chen Ke" (Star Gallery, Beijing, 2015).

Select group exhibitions include "One and All: New Artistic Styles of Contemporary Painting" (National Art Museum of China, Beijing, 2024); "Portraits — The Tenth Anniversary of the Long Museum" (Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, 2023); "Chinese Contemporary Art from the Yuz Foundation" (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 2021); "Reading the Raindrops—The Western China Artists Documenta" (MoCA Yinchuan, Yinchuan, 2017); and "Chinese Whispers: Recent Art from the Sigg & M+ Sigg Collections" (Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland, 2016). Her works are in many collections including Museum Voorlinden, Netherlands; The Sigg Collection, Switzerland; The Franks-Suss Collection, United Kingdom; BSI Art Foundation, Switzerland; Yuz Museum, Shanghai; and Long Museum, Shanghai.

Public Programs

UCCA has curated a series of public programs throughout the duration of the exhibition. At the public opening, Philip Tinari, UCCA Director and curator of the exhibition, will join artist Chen Ke in guiding visitors through the exhibition, offering insights into the curatorial vision and the meanings embedded in the works on view. At a later stage of this exhibition, Dr. Li Ding, an emerging scholar in cultural studies, will deliver a lecture focusing on the women of the Bauhaus. Approaching the topic through the lens of art history, Dr. Li Ding will examine the artistic practices and breakthroughs of female artists in the Bauhaus weaving workshops, reconstructing their collective image. Following the lecture, artist Chen Ke and Dr. Li Ding will engage in a conversation exploring the unique contributions of women artists within Bauhaus



history and how their legacy continues to inspire contemporary artistic practices. This dialogue will extend into a hands-on workshop that moves from intellectual sharing to embodied experience, inviting participants to discover the joys of textile-making. UCCA will invite architect Jenny Chou to lead the workshop as a guest instructor, introducing fundamentals of the loom and the basic principles and logic of textile art. Under her guidance, participants will explore the boundless creativity that arises from the interplay of warp and weft and experience the distinctive allure of this medium.

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About UCCA

UCCA Center for Contemporary Art is China's premier museum of modern and contemporary art. Committed to the belief that art can deepen lives and transcend boundaries, UCCA presents a wide range of exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives across four architecturally and programmatically distinct locations. Owned by a group of committed patrons, it is funded by donations, sponsorship, ticketing, and proceeds from the commercial activities of UCCA Lab. UCCA has presented more than 200 exhibitions and welcomed more than ten million visitors since its founding in Beijing in 2007 as the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art.

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