

## UCCA Edge Opens with “City on the Edge: Art and Shanghai at the Turn of the Millennium”

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2021.5.22 –2021.7.11

### Exhibition Location:

UCCA Edge  
2F, No. 88 Xizang Bei Lu  
Jing’an District, Shanghai  
China

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The opening exhibition at UCCA Edge looks back at the moment Chinese contemporary art entered into global dialogue and the transforming urban fabric of Shanghai at the turn of the millennium.

SHANGHAI, China — UCCA Edge opens in Shanghai with the inaugural exhibition “City on the Edge: Art and Shanghai at the Turn of the Millennium,” on view May 22, 2021 to July 11, 2021. This exhibition looks to the city UCCA Edge calls home at the juncture when China’s art world came to envision itself as part of a global contemporary, bringing together new and important works by 26 major Chinese and international artists, many with deep connections to UCCA and the development of contemporary art in China. Participating artists include Matthew Barney, Birdhead, Ding Yi, Fang Fang, Greg Girard, Andreas Gursky, He Yunchang, Hu Jieming, Huang Yong Ping, William Kentridge, Lee Bul, Liang Yue, Ni Jun, Shi Yong, Xu Zhen, Yan Lei, Yang Fudong, Yang Zhenzhong, Yu Youhan, Zhang Enli, Zhang Peili, Yung Ho Chang, Zhao Bandi, Zheng Guogu, Zhou Tiehai, Zhou Xiaohu. “City on the Edge: Art and Shanghai at the Turn of the Millennium” is curated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari.

In and around the year 2000, amidst emerging markets, reforming institutions, and artist-led organizations, a slate of exhibitions occurred that would expand the range of possibilities for experimental art in a city on the verge of a new international centrality. New art took root everywhere, from industrial warehouses to municipal museums, from retail space in unopened shopping malls to the opening ceremony of a major international summit. Two decades later, “City on the Edge” situates itself in the city’s multiplicitous cosmopolitan history, reflecting on the rapidly transforming urban fabric and the generative development in contemporary art by assembling important works that have brought this flourishing formation and provocative scene into being (as chronicled in the TV documentary series *Arts and Artists*, produced by **Fang Fang** (b. 1977, Beijing, lives and works in Beijing)), in dialogue with works that refract the city’s globalizing present. This exhibition follows in a tradition of UCCA opening exhibitions, begun by Fei Dawei’s “85 New Wave: The Birth of Chinese Contemporary Art” (2007), that position a new museum in relation to the art historical context in which it will

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function. Seen today, these artists and their contributions allow us to reflect on how far the city and its cultural ecology have come and to understand the experimental ethos that underlies Shanghai's current position at the forefront of China's global art scene.

The monumental *Bank of Sand, Sand of Bank* (2000) by **Huang Yong Ping** (1954-2019, Xiamen) epitomizes the symbolic social and economic transformation of Shanghai from its semi-colonial past to modern international metropolis. The giant, disintegrating sand sculpture of the 1923 HSBC headquarters on the Bund occupied a central position at the 2000 Shanghai Biennale, held in the Shanghai Art Museum, which at that time occupied the former Shanghai Race Club. The architect **Yung Ho Chang** (b. 1956, Beijing) is represented by an updated version of the work he originally presented in 2000, diagramming at life size the living space of a typical Shanghai lane house. The biennale, the first edition in Shanghai to show foreign artists, marked the debut of **Matthew Barney** (b. 1967, San Francisco, lives and works in Long Island City, New York) in China, who returns to UCCA Edge with one of his recent water cast sculptures *Khepera* (2016/2021), surrounded by a suite of electroformed copper etchings. Likewise, **William Kentridge** (b. 1955, Johannesburg, lives and works in Johannesburg), who showed *Shadow Procession* (1999) at the biennale, is represented here by a new video work *Sibyl* (2020), which continues to explore the themes of memory and movement that have been constant in his work. Each of these artists were later subjects of major exhibitions at UCCA Beijing: Huang in 2008, Chang in 2012, Kentridge in 2015, and Barney in 2019. Other works originally debuted at the biennale include **Lee Bul's** (b. 1964, Yeongju, South Korea, lives and works in Seoul), *Anthem* (2000/2012) and **Andreas Gursky's** (b. 1955, Leipzig, lives and works in Düsseldorf), *Shanghai* (200), a carefully staged image of the atrium of the hotel in the then-new Jin Mao Tower, which suggests a contrarian hollowness in the implied power of global capital in order to create such a golden spectacle.

Revisiting artworks by some of the key artists who had participated in the notorious "Fuck Off" exhibition that ran alongside the biennale the same year poses a new juxtaposition with the dominant events and memories of Chinese contemporary art. As the biennale took place across town, **He Yunchang's** (b. 1967, Lianghe, Yunnan province, lives and works in Beijing) repetitive but futile gesture by the banks of Suzhou Creek, as recorded in *River Document, Shanghai* (2000), suggests an alternative way of assimilating into the times and the fluidity

of his environment. Tracking the daily transformation in the bustling cosmopolis outside his studio by Suzhou Creek—part of the venue for this exhibition—three *Appearances of Crosses* paintings (2000) by **Ding Yi** (b. 1962, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) not only marks an important break in the artist's stylistic development, but also changes in the register of the city as it glowed brighter and brighter under ever-growing highways and billboards.

A new generation of artists emerged in Shanghai around the year 2000, organizing their own exhibitions in the interstices of the city, as in the biennale satellite exhibitions "Useful Life" (2000) and "Twins" (2002). Under the backdrop of a concrete jungle, **Yang Fudong's** (b. 1971, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) *Flutter, Flutter...Jasmine Jasmine* (2002) offers a dreamy vision of two young lovers proclaiming their desire for each other and looking headlong into the future. In contrast, **Liang Yue's** (b. 1979, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) *Blindsweet* (2003) drifts between subjective imagination and hope that appears to be out of reach. Reenacting his 2002 performance piece *March 6* at this exhibition, **Xu Zhen** (b. 1977, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) once again stages a rebellion against the mutely quotidian—as in *Shouting* (1998/2005, edited 2021)—with provocative acts that are self-affirming while probing at the boundaries between self and others. In *Disinfect* (2015) by **Yang Zhenzhong** (b. 1968, Hangzhou, lives and works in Shanghai), urbanites from different walks of life perform their anguish for the camera, only to be muted and contorted by the slowed down playback speed until they become alienated objects under the audience's gaze. This work, while more recent, directly channels the affect first explored in Yang's 2000 piece *I Will Die*.

The concurrent transformations in the urban fabric of Shanghai were captured in the photography of artists including **Birdhead** (Song Tao, b. 1979, Shanghai and Ji Weiyu, b. 1980, Shanghai; both live and work in Shanghai) and **Greg Girard** (b. 1955, Vancouver, lives and works in Vancouver). Birdhead's photographs come from their on-going project documenting urban conditions in a post-industrial neighborhood in Pudong in the early 2000s, presented here in one of their signature assemblages, with the characters for "youth" carved atop. Five images from Girard's "Phantom Shanghai" series (2001-2006) show the last standing houses in old neighborhoods then being demolished to make way for new developments. The new opportunities made available to Chinese artists as emerging wealth brought creativity into contact with commerce are the subject of

**Yan Lei's** (b. 1965, Langfang, Hebei province, lives and works in Beijing) subtle critique in seven paintings that form his conceptual gambit *The Fifth System* (2004), first showed as part of another periodic exhibition organized by Hou Hanru, who had led the 2000 biennale curatorial team.—

The turn of the millennium marked critical periods in the artistic development of Chinese artists working in different mediums and their experimentations with material and scale in order to grapple with the curiosity, fear, anxiety, and anticipation of the new millennium and a new era in economical and technological development. **Zheng Guogu** (b. 1970, Yangjiang, Guangdong province, lives and works in Yangjiang) explores this anxiety with his long-term series *2000 AD, Rusty for Another 2000 Years No. 11* (1999-2008), in which he cast ordinary plastic consumer-product bottles in brass, enabling them to outlive us all. In the calendar-change of a lifetime, **Hu Jieming** (b. 1957, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) constructs *The Fiction Between 1999 & 2000* (2000), an epic collage of image and data that is prescient to our digitally eclipsed totality today, originally shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and recreated for this exhibition in an installation made for the gallery space at UCCA Edge. The Y2K nostalgia evoked stands in juxtaposition with **Lee Bul's** meditations in *Anthem* (2000/2021) on the sinister warnings embedded in technological utopias: what if modern comfort is accompanied by anxiety rather than playfulness?

This period saw **Shi Yong's** (b. 1963, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) interest in deconstructing illusion and reality, as in *The Moon's Hues are Teasing* (2002) and *Gravitation - Shanghai Night Sky* (2003-2004), while the expressionistic **Zhang Enli** (b. 1965, Jilin province, lives and works in Shanghai) turns towards introspection and reflections on the cultural milieu in a new attention paid to the personal and the tableaux of daily life. As a participant in the eye-opening 2000 Shanghai Biennale, **Zhou Xiaohu** (b. 1960, Changzhou, Jiangsu province, lives and works in Shanghai) spent the next decade making stop animation works—*The Crowd of Bystanders* (2003-2005) and the "Word Chains" series (2010)—that depict the normalized absurdity, violence, and other ubiquitous expressions of power by defamiliarizing everyday life. While resisting the "feminist" label at the time, **Ni Jun** (b. 1969, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) confronts the eternal return of female pain with the experimental work *Injury* (2002), refusing to compromise with model answers to the inevitable questions of pain and happiness.

Tensions between the optimism of the past and the embrace for the future continue to animate dialogues with the present. The polyphonic arrangement of “Happy Birthday” by **Zhang Peili** (b. 1957, Hangzhou, lives and works in Hangzhou) in *Just for You* (1999) appears to be a stroke of inspired utopianism both at the time and in retrospect. As the new millennium approached **Yu Youhan** (b. 1943, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai), who first gained recognition in the 1980s for his abstract paintings and featured in the landmark 1989 Beijing exhibition “China/Avant-Garde,” chose to continue to experiment with collage and paintings that echoed his own private works from the 1970s, including *Black Painting* (2000) shown here. Revisiting his career-making body of work with pandas in a new installation, **Zhao Bandi** (b. 1966, Beijing, lives and works in Beijing), stages in a video installation *Panda 20 Years* (2021) a wistful reflection on his relationship with youth. Finally, **Zhou Tiehai**’s (b. 1966, Shanghai, lives and works in Shanghai) iconic *Buying Happiness/You Can’t Grow Healthy and Strong Without the Godfather’s Protection* (1997) hints at the new primacy of consumer subjectivity that might be seen as a subtext to this entire moment of change.

### **Public Programs**

During the exhibition period of “City on the Edge: Art and Shanghai at the Turn of the Millennium,” UCCA Edge will present a series of enriching public programs every weekend, including guided tours every Saturday, led by scholars and art practitioners across a range of cultural and artistic fields who will bring their expertise to an interdisciplinary approach to interpreting the artworks and the exhibition, as well as an irregular slate of talks and panels with artists and scholars. Every Sunday, a special performance work from the exhibition will take place all day inside the exhibition galleries. All events are free to the public, with limited capacity. Please register in advance. Please follow our official website, WeChat account, and other social media platforms for details.

### **Sponsorship and Support**

Housed in the EDGE tower by K. Wah International Holdings Limited (KWIH), UCCA Edge is designed by New York architecture practice SO – IL, in co-development with the Shanghai team of Coldefy & Associates Architects Urban Planners.

This exhibition is made possible with support from DS Automobile. Exclusive sustainable wall solutions is provided by Dulux. Special thanks to Moleskine.

On the occasion of the exhibition “City on the Edge: Art and Shanghai at the Turn of the Millennium,” UCCA and Moleskine have collaborated to release a special edition UCCA & Moleskine notebook to celebrate the unique spatial design of UCCA Edge, with a sketch by lead architect Jing Liu, co-founder of SO – IL.

### **About UCCA Edge**

Opening May 2021, UCCA Edge occupies 5,500 square meters over three levels of the new EDGE tower in Shanghai’s Jing’an District. Designed by New York-based architecture practice SO – IL, the museum includes 1,700 square meters of gallery space as well as a wraparound outdoor terrace and public spaces including a lobby and auditorium. As an integral part of the UCCA constellation, UCCA Edge will mount exhibitions of leading Chinese and international artists, some developed exclusively for the Shanghai audience, some touring from other UCCA locations. In 2021, UCCA Edge will feature an opening show reflecting on the globalization of the Chinese art world through the prism of Shanghai, curated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari, a solo show of new paintings and archival materials by renowned artist Liu Xiaodong, and an Andy Warhol retrospective presented in collaboration with The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. It will also host a bistrot, New Wave by Da Vittorio, developed by the Michelin- starred team of Da Vittorio Shanghai, as well as an outpost of UCCA Store. Situated just north of People’s Square and Suzhou Creek, and directly above the Qufu Lu station of the Shanghai Metro in a bustling revitalized neighborhood, UCCA Edge will quickly become an essential destination and an integral part of Shanghai’s vibrant cultural fabric.

### **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. UCCA Edge, designed by architecture firm SO – IL, opens in Shanghai in spring 2021. 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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