

# Carsten Höller

## Two



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

# Carsten Höller: Two

2026.7.14 – 2027.1.31

Doubles. Couples. Pairs. Duos. Binaries. Doppelgänger.

The figure of the twin—that identical yet distinct other—holds a fascination both logical and scientific. It offers a neat illusion, but also a pointed interrogation: What might have been? What might otherwise be? What is similarity? And what, ultimately, is difference?

A trained phytopathologist, Carsten Höller (b. 1961, Brussels) has been interested in doubling for a long time. In 2003, in Stockholm, he held an exhibition with two posters, invitations, websites, and openings. The following year, in Marseille, he mounted a museum survey with paired rooms of identical artworks. In 2008, in a London warehouse, he staged *The Double Club*—a bar, restaurant, and dance club bisected into Western and Congolese zones.

Like conceptual artists before and after him, Höller establishes sets of rules and follows them through to their logical, sometimes absurd, conclusions. Here, he presents an exhibition in two matching, contrasting halves. Each work on one side finds its twin on the other. The obvious chromatic difference—one half exists in black and white, the other in color—is complicated, amplified, and belied by many more: clocks that move according to different systems, carousels that rotate in opposite directions, dots on a die that echo spots on a mushroom.

The exhibition builds and plays on the rigid symmetry of UCCA's Great Hall, itself the product of a midcentury architectural conversation between Germany and China. The building's halves, subtly split by a doubled gantry rib, are separated by the artist not with a clear axis, but by a zone of ambiguity where twins—here the subjects of an eponymous video work—encounter each other in an uncanny, enclosed room. This room, in turn, can only be entered by the viewer through elaborate passageways.

Exploring these spaces and grasping these rules, the viewer turns from a passive recipient into an active participant, toggling with ease and wonder between diametrically opposed, yet oddly similar, worlds. Perhaps this experience offers us a vision of how to exist, even survive, at a moment when structures may collapse, surfaces can deceive, and oppositions will persist.

"Carsten Höller: Two" is curated by Philip Tinari with UCCA Assistant Curator Jiashu Zou. UCCA thanks SHANGHAI TANG, Hoegaarden, and Lufthansa Airlines for their exhibition support. Gratitude to InterContinental Beijing Sanlitun and BOE Technology Group Co., Ltd. for their special support. Exclusive wall solutions support is provided by Dulux, and Genelec contributed exclusive audio equipment and technical support. UCCA also thanks the members of UCCA Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Lead Partners Aranya, Dior, and The Donum Estate, Presenting Partner Bloomberg, and Supporting Partners AIA, Barco, Dulux, Genelec, SKP Beijing, Stey, and Wanbo Media Group.

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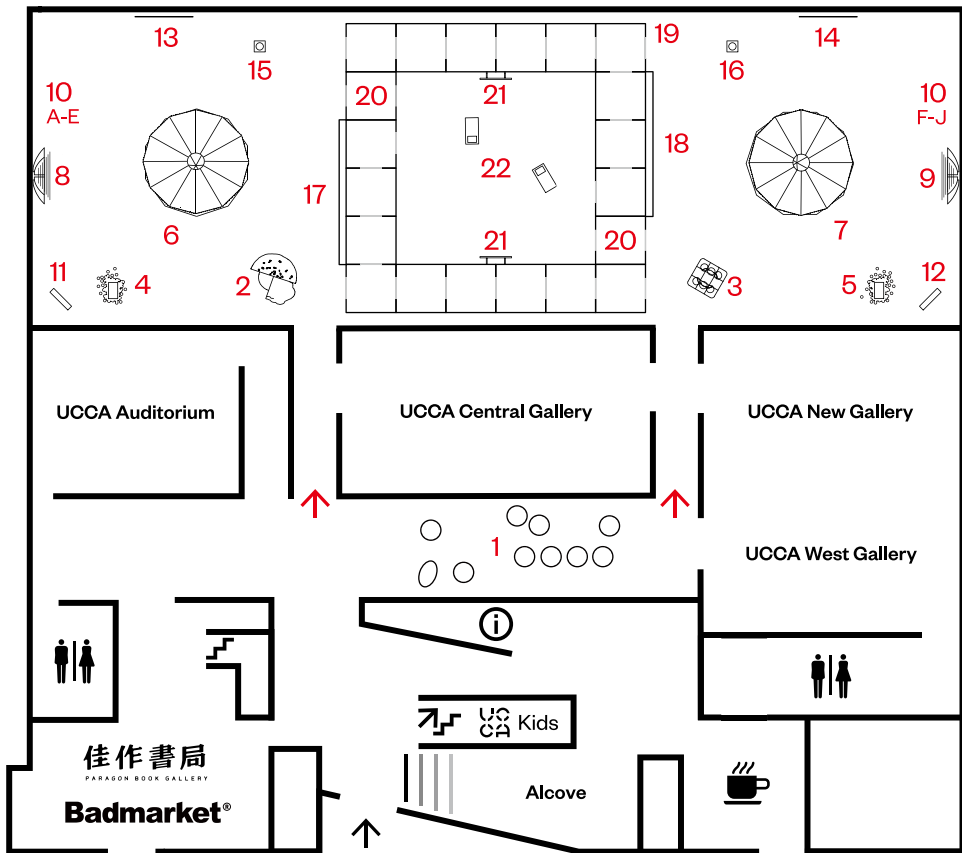
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**GENELEC**

## About the Artist

Carsten Höller (b. 1961, Belgium) lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden; in Biriwa, Ghana; and in Tuscany, Italy. Born in Brussels to German parents, he has a background as a researcher in phytopathology/chemical ecology and received his doctorate in 1988 at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany, with a thesis on insect scent communication. He habilitated at the same university in 1993. Directly afterwards, he became an artist, making his first international appearance at the 1993 Venice Biennial.

Carsten Höller's works have been shown internationally over the past three decades, with major installations and solo exhibitions including "Synchro System" (Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2000); "One Day, One Day" (Färgfabriken, Stockholm, 2003); "Test Site" (Tate Modern, London, 2006); "Amusement Park" (2006) at MASS MoCA North Adams; *The Double Club* (London, 2008/2009); "Decision" (Hayward Gallery, London, 2015); "Doubt" (Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, Milan, 2016); "Y" (Centro Botín, Santander, 2017); "The Florence Experiment" (Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 2018); "SUNDAY" (Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, 2019); "DAY" (MAAT, Lisbon, 2021); a second and third version of *The Double Club* (Miami, 2017 and Los Angeles, 2024); *Stockholm Slides* (Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2025); *Pink Mirror Carousel* (Kulm Hotel, St Moritz, 2025). Höller's *Book of Games/Spielebuch* was published in 2024 by Taschen. In 2022, he opened Brutalisten—a restaurant with brutalist cuisine where each dish consists of only one ingredient—in Stockholm.



1

### **Beijing Dots**

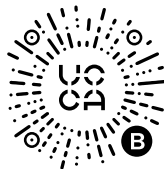
2026

Projectors, lasers, software

Courtesy the artist, produced with support from  
UCCA Center for Contemporary Art



Scan for the  
complete audio guide



2

### **Giant Triple Mushroom**

2024

Fly agaric - Fliegenpilz - *Amanita muscaria* /  
Long Net Stinkhorn - Brautschleier Pilz - *Phallus*  
*indusiatus* / Dove-coloured Tricholoma - Seidiger  
Ritterling - *Tricholoma columbetta*  
Aluminum, steel, automotive paint  
Courtesy the artist and Gagosian

4

### **Pill Clock (Red and Yellow Pills)**

2026

Gelatin capsules filled with undescribed  
substance, mechanical drop mechanism,  
control unit, water dispenser  
Courtesy the artist, produced with support  
from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

6

### **Tilted Carousel (Five Colours)**

2026

Steel structure, motor, electronic components,  
light bulbs, painted steel  
Courtesy the artist, produced with support from  
UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

3

### **Dice (Chinese Marble)**

2026

Marble

Courtesy the artist, produced with support  
from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

5

### **Pill Clock (Black and White Pills)**

2026

Gelatin capsules filled with undescribed  
substance, mechanical drop mechanism,  
control unit, water dispenser  
Courtesy the artist, produced with support  
from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

7

### **Tilted Carousel (Two Whites)**

2026

Steel structure, motor, electronic  
components, light bulbs, painted steel  
Courtesy the artist, produced with support  
from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

8

**Decimal Clock (Salmon Rose and Novial Gold)**

2021

Neon tubes, metal structure, control unit  
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua

9

**Sexagesimal Clock**

2026

Neon tubes, electric wiring, metal structure,  
control unit  
Courtesy the artist and Glocal Art Project

10A

**Divisions Circle (Vermilion Red Surface)**

2018

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint  
Courtesy the artist

10 F

**Dot Painting (Viennese Waltz)**

2018

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint  
Courtesy the artist

10 B

**Divisions Square (Cobalt Green Surface)**

2025

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint  
Courtesy the artist

10 G

**Dot Painting (Waltz)**

2018

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint  
Courtesy the artist

10 C

**Divisions Square (Japanese Orange Surface)**

2025

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint  
Courtesy the artist

10 H

**Divisions Square (Black Lines on White Background)**

2018

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint  
Courtesy the artist

## 10 D

### **Divisions Square (Oriental Red Surface)**

2026

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint

Courtesy the artist

## 10 I

### **Divisions Square (Neutral Grey Surface)**

2026

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint

Courtesy the artist

## 10 E

### **Divisions Square (White Lines on Light Rose Background)**

2025

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint

Courtesy the artist

## 10 J

### **Divisions Square (Stone Grey and White Dots on Stone Grey Background)**

2018

Caravaggio linen canvas, Flashe vinyl paint

Courtesy the artist

## 11

### **Smell of My Mother**

2017

Solution with reconstructed smell in diffuser  
under exhibition bench

Courtesy the artist

## 12

### **Smell of My Father**

2017

Solution with reconstructed smell in diffuser  
under exhibition bench

Courtesy the artist

## 13

### **Fly on Amanita (Coloured)**

2025

Single-channel 4K video, color, sound

4'42"

Courtesy the artist

## 14

### **Fly on Amanita (Black and White)**

2026

Single-channel 4K video, black and white,

sound

4'42"

Courtesy the artist



15

**Spinning Amanita (Coloured)**

2025

Fly agaric replica, paint, motor, steel, battery, control units, solar panels

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Micheline Szwajcer

17

**Light Wall (Red and Blue)**

2026

Light bulbs, control unit, dimmer pack, sound, wooden structural elements

Courtesy the artist, produced with support from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

19

**Sliding Doors Square**

2026

22 pieces

Mirrored glass, sliding door mechanisms, motion sensors and electronics, painted dry wall

Courtesy the artist, produced with support from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

21

**Twins (Tokyo, New York, Paris, Santiago, Vienna, Belgium, London, Milan, Santander, Beijing)**

2005-2018

Two-channel video loop, black and white, color, sound

Duration 20 min

Courtesy the artist and ShugoArts, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, and Galleria Continua

16

**Spinning Amanita (Black and White)**

2026

Fly agaric replica, paint, motor, steel, battery, control units, solar panels

Courtesy the artist

18

**Light Wall**

2000/2026

Edition of 5 + 2 Artist Proofs (#5/5)

Light bulbs, control unit, dimmer pack, sound, wooden structural elements

Courtesy the artist

20

Valia Fetisov and Carsten Höller

**Sluice**

2026

Glass sliding door mechanisms, motion sensors and electronics, custom software

Courtesy the artists, produced with support from UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

22

**Two Roaming Beds (Grey)**

2015

Steel, electric motors, nylon, rubber tires, cables, electronic components, lamps, acrylic glass, phone chargers, mattresses, linen, pens

Courtesy the artist, presented in part with special support from InterContinental Beijing Sanlitun

# Laboratory of Doubt

As critics often note, Carsten Höller holds a PhD in agricultural science. However, his artistic practice is for the most part unscientific. What he does retain from his educational background is an interest in the experimental form. His experiential artworks, often presented without detailed explanations, transform viewers into subjects of an artistic experiment. Confronted with perplexing scenes, they are challenged to work through their confusion and reassess how they view art—and the world at large. The exhibition space thus becomes a “Laboratory of Doubt,” a term that originates from a 1999 artwork in which Höller labelled a Mercedes-Benz with the phrase and equipped it with loudspeakers, intending to spread doubt through the streets of Antwerp (before he could do so, the vehicle’s tires were stolen).

Upon arrival, visitors to the exhibition are provided with a color-coded sticker pointing to one of two entrances to UCCA’s Great Hall. They must then choose whether or not to comply with this suggestion, a decision that may immediately cause them to doubt whether they’ve chosen the “right” path. The artworks themselves raise a number of confounding questions: Are additional compartments hidden within *Sliding Doors Square* (2026), and how might they be accessed? What is in the pills that fall out of the two versions of *Pill Clock* (2026)? Do the toothpastes offered to visitors who book an overnight stay on *Two Roaming Beds (Grey)* (2015) alter dreams as advertised? Within this arena, what is a random occurrence, and what is an intentional artistic choice? Höller declines to provide clear-cut answers, instead encouraging viewers to face their doubts, reach their own conclusions—or not—and reflect on how this experience may lead to another way of experiencing what surrounds us.

# Repetition

In “Two,” artworks double up, whether by existing in two versions, or repeating elements within a single piece. By placing these works within a unique binary exhibition structure, Carsten Höller constructs an engagingly perplexing, uncanny artistic experience.

Reprising an approach utilized in his 2015 London exhibition “Decision,” the artist presents visitors with two entrances to the main exhibition space. Each path leads to more or less the same set of artworks, displayed in color on one side of the space, and black and white on the other. In this “Laboratory of Doubt,” viewers are left to wonder which version of a given work is “definitive”—or if this distinction even matters. Encountering many pieces twice, one has the opportunity to more closely study them, investigating what distinguishes their different iterations. As forms repeat, the artist’s choice of color has the power to alter a work’s tone from minimalist and austere to playful and welcoming.

Sometimes, repetition is internalized within artworks, like the geometric patterns featured in the “Divisions” series of paintings, or the mirrored glass that makes up *Sliding Doors Square* (2026). In *Twins* (2015-2018), a two-channel video work, sets of twins from around the world make contradictory statements in their respective languages, creating an unsolvable logical conundrum. In these works, Höller positions repetition as both comforting and disturbing—it can foster familiarity, or bring forth inexplicable scenarios, evoking the unsettling experience of encountering one’s own double.

# Collective Viewing

Carsten Höller's "Two" is conceived of as a communal experience. This is most apparent in interactive works involving multiple participants but applies equally to other pieces. Viewers are not left alone when it comes to interpreting the exhibition—faced with doubts regarding the art in front of them, they may strike up a conversation with a fellow visitor, or simply observe how others move through the space. Höller generates a new social context within the museum, a strategy that spans his practice and has led to him being associated with "relational aesthetics," a concept proposed by curator Nicolas Bourriaud in the late 1990s.

The collective comes to the fore before viewers even enter the exhibition proper. Located in UCCA's Open Gallery, *Beijing Dots* (2026) is a "reward and punishment" game in which visitors may overlap motion-sensitive spotlights to change their colors. Approach it as a single player, without competition or camaraderie, and the game will not function properly. Similarly, inside the Great Hall, it is possible to walk through the halls of *Sliding Doors Square* (2026) alone, but that means that the mirrored walls will not suddenly reveal a stranger's body coming from the other side—or that one might get temporarily stuck in *Sluice* (2026), a collaboration between Höller and Valia Fetisov. Two versions of *Light Wall* (2026 and 2000/2026), meanwhile, use flickering lights and hypnotic clicking sounds to recreate the communal experience of altered states of the mind, as in collective euphoria. *Two Roaming Beds (Grey)* (2015), on the other hand, offer an intriguing counterpoint. Visitors may book an overnight stay for one or two guests, separating themselves from others and getting the museum to themselves. This reveals another duality within the exhibition: it may be experienced in two ways, either alone/as a pair or together with others.

# Play

Throughout Carsten Höller's practice, one encounters works that evoke amusement rides and playground equipment—from the 27-meter-high *Test Site* slides installed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in 2006, to pieces featured in this exhibition, including *Tilted Carousel (Five Colours)* (2026), *Tilted Carousel (Two Whites)* (2026), and *Dice (Chinese Marble)* (2026). With their familiar, sometimes humorous forms, these works invite engagement even as they destabilize everyday experiences and subvert expectations. For example, slowed down to a snail's pace, the two swing carousels might seem closer to monotonous traps than exciting amusement rides. By altering scale, speed, direction, or units of measurement, Höller disrupts habitual comprehension and challenges how we navigate reality.

In *Homo Ludens*, Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga described play as a fundamental condition of culture. For Huizinga, play is a free activity that operates outside the routines of everyday life. It takes place within its own spatial and temporal boundaries and follows its own rules. Höller's works create a similar condition. They invite participants into experiences that combine pleasure, uncertainty, and disorientation, offering a temporary departure from the logics of pragmatism, utility, and efficiency.

By bringing elements of the amusement park into the exhibition, Höller transforms the museum from a manifestation of cultural authority and site of contemplation into a space for experimentation, doubt, and the exploration of alternative ways of sensing and inhabiting the world. In the artist's words, "the real material I'm working with is peoples' experience." And, as he has also stated, "doubt is beautiful."

# Reimagining Time

“Two” features several unconventional clocks. By representing time in an atypical manner, Höller invites viewers to experience the exhibition as a space removed from the regimented, productivity-oriented rhythms of daily life. If time can be recorded differently, what else might we reimagine in art and life? And what is time anyhow?

On the black-and-white side of the Great Hall, *Sexagesimal Clock* (2026) takes the standard base-60 system for measuring time and defamiliarizes it by depicting time through neon rings, rather than digits or hour and minute hands. On the opposite side of the space, *Decimal Clock (Salmon Rose and Novial Gold)* (2021) is similar in appearance, though its neon lights pulse in color—and its timekeeping will probably be incomprehensible to most viewers. Here, time is being measured in increments of ten, a system that was briefly implemented during the French Revolution. This political lineage offers a reminder that the frameworks we use to classify reality are not carved in stone; they may be altered, generating new perspectives and social forms along the way.

Elsewhere, two versions of *Pill Clock* (both 2026) mark time by dropping pills onto the museum floor every three seconds, a duration that approximates “the feeling of presence.” In the context of *Smell of My Father* (2017) and *Smell of My Mother* (2017), which diffuse synthetic recreations of the scent of the artist’s parents across the exhibition, the pills that pile up on the floor become accumulated presence-time, a heap of time units now gone. Höller makes us feel the impossibility of understanding time.

# Mushrooms

Mushrooms are of interest to Carsten Höller on multiple levels—he calls them “monuments of incomprehensibility.” Once thought to be plants, mushrooms (the fruiting body of fungi) are actually biologically closer to animals. Scientists have shown that they are able to communicate through mycelium, the root-like underground networks that support them. Mushrooms’ myriad culinary uses also fascinate the artist, who previously ran Brutalisten, a Stockholm restaurant focused on single ingredient dishes. However, the fly agaric mushroom, which reappears across Höller’s practice, is not edible: it is poisonous and hallucinogenic. Researchers have suggested, to some controversy, that these mushrooms from the genus *Amanita* shaped Western Christmas traditions and ancient Vedic religious practices in Eurasia, theories which Höller explored in his 2010 exhibition “Soma.”

Here, the monumental sculpture *Giant Triple Mushroom* (2024) combines the fly agaric’s distinctive red and white cap with elements of two distinctly different mushrooms: the long net stinkhorn, a popular ingredient in Chinese soups, and the dove-coloured *Tricholoma*, which is also edible. At around three meters tall, the piece brings a sense of majesty to these mushrooms, emphasizing that fungi remain mysterious. Two versions of *Spinning Amanita* (2025 and 2026) place life-size fly agaric models on top of solar-powered motors, generating hypnotic patterns and paying tribute to the mushroom’s cultural significance. Color and black and white editions of the video *Fly on Amanita* (2025 and 2026) reference how these mushrooms are thought to have been traditionally used as insecticide, showing a housefly apparently becoming intoxicated after feeding on a mixture of fly agaric, milk, and sugar. Fittingly for Höller, this work poses a number of questions: What effect, exactly, does fly agaric have on the insect? Do mushrooms possess traits and abilities that go beyond the current limits of human understanding?

# UCCA Kids

## Art Workshop Series

Inspired by the current exhibition, UCCA Kids presents a series of art workshops that invite young participants to explore Carsten Höller's "Laboratory of Doubt." Approaching art with a scientist's curiosity, Höller's works do not provide answers—they extend invitations: to feel with the body, to question with curiosity, and to rediscover the world through surprise and the unfamiliar. Colored dots drift silently across the floor, a spinning carousel alters one's sense of direction, and monumental mushroom sculptures overturn the scale of everyday reality. Each experience at once a game, an experiment, and a genuine adventure in perception. Structured around a four-part journey of Observe, Question, Experiment, and Create, these workshops are designed to encourage children to remain open and curious at every stage. Participants will engage all of their senses to explore art through play develop visual thinking, and create an original artwork that brings together personal perception and artistic imagination. Here, there are no right answers—every bold experiment marks the beginning of a new discovery.

For more information, please visit the UCCA Kids official WeChat account.



@UCCAKids



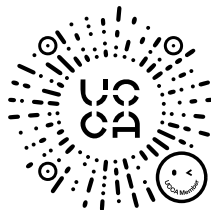
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please contact [members@ucca.org.cn](mailto:members@ucca.org.cn).



# Public Programs

Over seven-month run of “Carsten Höller: Two,” UCCA will present a series of public programs organized around three thematic strands: *Against Fun*, *Not Human*, and *7.8 Hz*. These three units correspond to A. play, rules, and physical participation; B. non-human life and ecological relations; and C. sound, frequency, light, and embodied perception. UCCA will invite philosophers, cognitive science researchers, artists, musicians, dancers, science fiction writers, and practitioners from diverse social backgrounds to participate in Conversations, Workshops, Special Guided Tours, Performing Arts, Listening Sessions, and Cinema Arts screenings, offering audiences a platform to explore how games, nature, and perception shape and expand our understanding of lived experience.

For the most up-to-date information on events, please refer to announcements on UCCA's official website, UCCA's official WeChat, and other social media platforms.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2026.7.4 Sat 12:00-13:00<br>UCCA Exhibition Hall<br><b>Opening Guided Tour</b> |                                       | 2026.7.4 Sat 14:30-16:00<br>UCCA Auditorium<br><b>Opening Conversation</b> |                                   |
| 2026.8 – 2026.9<br><b>Against Fun</b>                                          | 2026.10 – 2026.11<br><b>Not Human</b> |                                                                            | 2026.12 – 2027.1<br><b>7.8 Hz</b> |