



“Voluntary Garden”

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December 12, 2019 – March 1, 2020

Press material available at

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From December 12, 2019, to March 3, 2020, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Voluntary Garden,” a multimedia art project by artist Colin Siyuan Chinnery (b. 1971, Edinburgh). The exhibition is curated by Zhang Xiaozhou, Director of Modern Sky’s BADHEAD Records imprint, and You Yang, Deputy Director of UCCA Center for Contemporary Art. Focused on music and sound, “Voluntary Garden” comprises two parts, performance and exhibition, of which the latter will be presented at UCCA.

The performance phase of “Voluntary Garden” took place from October 17 to 24, 2019. The artist and curators invited 39 musicians to the Fusion Art Center, housed in a traditional Suzhou-style courtyard near the Forbidden City in Beijing. In this space, the musicians performed and were recorded over the course of eight days, taking inspiration from their surroundings for their predominantly improvised performances. The participating musicians came from a wide range of genres and disciplines, presenting an expansive snapshot of the current state of Chinese music.

For the project’s conceptual shape, Chinnery was informed by the opera stages that are traditionally part of Suzhou gardens, transposing this idea to the Fusion Art Center. At the center of the garden is a pond, in which Chinnery built a floating stage for the musicians to perform upon. However, what followed was not a regular concert: performers played their music one by one, responding to the recordings made by the other musicians who had played before them. The entire process was filmed and recorded. From Chinese folk and classical music, to jazz, rock, metal, electronic, experimental, noise, and avant-garde music, the musical content documented in “Voluntary Garden” crosses the gamut of musical creativity in China today.

Using these audio and visual recordings from the first part of the project, Chinnery then created a 4-channel video installation, weaving the disparate musical elements together to form a kind of music that could not have been intended by any of the musicians involved—a kind of music that doesn’t obey the rules of style or content, that constantly changes from one moment to the next. Before showing at UCCA, the video installation was also exhibited at Fusion Art Center from November 10 to December 9, 2019.



At UCCA, the 4-channel video installation will be displayed alongside eight additional screens showing further documentation of the performances of the 39 musicians, granting special insight into how Chinnery edited and arranged their improvisations into a unified, fluidly evolving piece of music. On the day of the exhibition opening, five musicians featured in “Voluntary Garden”—Guan Fei, Wen Zhiyong, Wang Chenhuai, Wu Na, and Yang Haisong—will present a special improvised performance at UCCA. A series of further performances will also be staged at the museum throughout the duration of the exhibition. Musicians who have not collaborated before, or may have never even met, will come together to improvise on stage, despite only having the shared context of “playing” together in the musical piece edited by Chinnery. Exploring the same ideas of improvisation and collage central to the artist’s video installation, these performances shall expand and re-define the artistic concepts at the core of “Voluntary Garden.”

About the Exhibition

“Colin Siyuan Chinnery: Voluntary Garden” is a collaboration between UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Fusion Art Center, Modern Sky’s BADHEAD Records, and COART. 39 musicians participated in the recording process on the invitation of curators Zhang Xiaozhou and You Yang. Support for this exhibition is provided by SNOWPLUS, Sennheiser, New Century Art Foundation, Skyworth, and Bernier/Eliades Gallery. UCCA thanks BOE for equipment support.

Participating Musicians (in alphabetical order)

Cao Yang, Deng Boyu, Feng Jiangzhou, Feng Hao, Fun lok, Feng Mengbo, Nathaniel Gao, Guan Fei, Huang Jin, Lao Dan, Li Hongsen, Li Jianhong, Li Xing, Li Yi, Liu Xiaosong, Liu Yucao, Lu Yan, Lyu Zhi-Qiang, Mamer, Meng Qi, Nalinhu, Pei, Akino, Shao Yanpeng, Wang Chenhuai, Wang Xiaofang, Wen Zhiyong, Wei Wei, Wu Na, Xia Yuyan, Yan Jun + Ake, Yang Haisong, You Yang, Yu Weimin, Zhou Fengling, Zhang Meng, Zhang Shouwang, Zhang Mo.

About the Artist

Colin Siyuan Chinnery (b. 1971, Edinburgh) is an artist and curator based in Beijing. Chinnery graduated in Chinese Language and Civilisation at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 1997. From 1998 to 2002, he worked for the British Library’s International Dunhuang Project. This project facilitated international research of the voluminous collection of ancient manuscripts



discovered in Dunhuang, for which Chinnery set up the Beijing office at the National Library of China. Earlier, from 1992 to 1994, Chinnery was lead singer of Xue Wei, one of China's first alternative rock groups. In 2002, Chinnery moved back to China and began exhibiting widely as an artist there, as well as in Europe and the US. Between 2003 and 2006, as arts manager for the British Council in Beijing, he initiated major projects in experimental theater, live art, sound art, and visual arts, bringing a wider public into contact with experimental practice. From 2006 to 2008 Chinnery was deputy director and chief curator of UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, playing a central role in setting up China's first major contemporary art institution, and he was director of ShContemporary Art Fair in Shanghai in 2009 and 2010. Presently, he is responsible for curation at Beijing non-profit institution The Bunker. Chinnery writes regularly about contemporary art and is a contributing editor for *Frieze* magazine. He is currently developing a major new multi-faceted artwork titled *Sound Museum* that includes a history of social sounds, sound art, online social engagement, and collaborative projects.

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. 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.

www.ucca.org.cn/en

About Fusion Art Center

Fusion Art Center is an art institution emphasizing engagement with space. It advocates that space can improve art, and serve as a medium for in-depth



communication between people and art. The center reproduces a Suzhou-style courtyard representing the spirit of ancient Chinese scholar-officials, located next to the Forbidden City, as a carrier for its exploration of space and art.

About BADHEAD

BADHEAD Records was established by Shen Lihui, founder of Modern Sky. It is Modern Sky's subsidiary record label for alternative music, and began releasing records in 1999. During this era, albums by NO, Tongue, The Fly, Hu Mage, Chen Dili, Muma, Lure, Xiao He, and Wan Xiaoli had a profound impact and wide influence on the music scene of the time. In 2008, the label went on hiatus.

In 2014, BADHEAD restarted under leadership of Zhang Xiaozhou. To date, the label has released 61 albums. BADHEAD is dedicated to forward-looking and artistically inclined music, and is increasingly involved in the contemporary art community and associated practices.

About COART

The COART Art Institute is an independent art and cultural institution founded by Li Yapeng under the umbrella of China Investment Holdings. COART's core values are that art transcends forms to break their boundaries, with different mediums inspiring each other; to strive for "symbiosis with art"; to let art leave the academy and return to life; that everyone is an artist; that art can demonstrate strength and action. COART holds that the positive energy of culture and art can influence and shape positive values in young people.

Additional Credits

Recording Engineer: An Jiguo

Videographer: Ren Jie

Photographer: Song Xiaohui