

## A Call to Attention: Supplementary Materials

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### Exhibition Period:

September 20, 2020 – January 10, 2021

### Location:

UCCA Dune

Press material available at

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### Exhibited Works

The exhibition opens with a darkened room that houses an installation work by the artist Feng Chen (b. 1986, Wuhan). In recent years, Feng has made a series of disorienting assemblages as part of his series “The Darker Side of Light,” combining video, sculpture, and spatial installation to explore how individuals process visual and audio stimuli, especially as they are mediated through technology. This work, a new variant of his *The Darker Side of Light – Moment* (2019) adapted to the site of UCCA Dune, employs a technical apparatus built by the artist to create a mesmerizing illusion: as the viewer enters the space, they are presented with a chair, a light, a camera, and a screen that seems to be playing a live stream of the room they occupy. Yet there is an uncanny disconnect—the light on the screen flickers on-and-off, while the bulb in the room is constantly illuminated. The stark, eerie environment and furniture evoking home only heighten the contradiction between reality and its image. By situating the viewer within this disorienting mise-en-scène, the artist invites viewers to consider the relationship between reality and perception, ultimately reaffirming the primacy of experience over the things that aim to mediate or distort.

Moving into the central chambers of the exhibition, a suite of works by Zhu Tian (b. 1982, Zhejiang province) explores ideas of radical discretion, selfhood, and the boundaries of openness. The central wall installation *Money* (2015) grows from a simple premise: the artist releases her bank statement every month via email. It is a lifetime performance, in which anyone can pay GBP 100 to subscribe to her newsletter. Subscribers are invited to send emails regarding fiscal matters to this email address as well. In its installation form, viewers can see the figures rising and falling over the course of the past five years. The artist embraces a radical candidness about a taboo topic, or one that is typically discussed with some trepidation or embarrassment. Along the surrounding walls is a pair of connected works: *Selling the Worthless* (2014) and *Scan* (2014). The former is a video reconstruction of a performance the artist conducted over WeChat. In it, Zhu puts her body up for auction online: participants are invited to bid on any part of her body, scanned in A4 size and sent to them as a unique print. Over the course of a half hour, the bidders barter and joke over this gesture of self-exposure, while the auctioneer coolly notes their bids.

*Scan*, reproduced in a new version for this exhibition, serves as a companion piece to *Selling the Worthless*. In it, the artist prints images of herself scanning parts of her body onto glass planes that ring the two central galleries of UCCA Dune, denying the viewer the scanned images, but centering the artist and her bold gesture itself.

Shi Wanwan (b. 1982, Jiangsu province) has previously described his work as “action art and public art without the aim of producing images,” often staging interventions within different communities to engage issues of discursive power, socioeconomic relations, and cultural memory. For “A Call to Attention,” Shi Wanwan presents his new work *The Moonlight* (2020) for the first time. For this piece, Shi sought out the families of thirty so-called “left-behind children,” children whose parents have sought work in other cities, often leaving behind their children behind to be raised by their grandparents or other relatives. He then invited them to contribute two components to the artwork: he asked the child to draw a picture of the moon, and the parents to record an audio message describing the moon and responding to the project. The two elements are then presented together in an ordered array of thirty self-contained aesthetic displays. A left-behind child himself, Shi has noted that the artwork has a very personal resonance for him. By foregrounding the creative contributions of others whose personal agency is constrained by economic circumstance, as well as the generational ripples this creates, Shi asks the viewer to consider questions of subjectivity within situations that are paradoxically both voluntary and implicitly coerced.

Two of the artists in the exhibition, Lee Mingwei and Nastja Säde Rönkkö, can be situated more directly in the tradition of relational aesthetics, a movement that emerged in the 1990s in which the viewer’s participation ultimately creates the artwork itself. Lee Mingwei’s work often takes the form of participatory installations that invite the viewer into moments of tenderness and self-reflection. *Letter to Oneself* (2020) is the sister work to the artist’s *The Letter Writing Project* (1998 – present), now responding to recent world events. For this edition, Lee builds a writing chamber within one of the smaller galleries of UCCA Dune, in which three letter-holding shelves frame a writing table and desk looking out onto the ocean. The artist invites viewers to write a letter answering two key questions: In this moment, what makes you worry? What gives you hope? Viewers can choose to seal their letter or leave it unsealed, after which it is placed on the shelf for others to read. Like many of his works, *Letter to Oneself* is an open call to the viewer—offering them the time and space to

reflect upon ourselves, our emotional realities, and our place in the world.

Nastja Säde Rönkkö also presents works that engage the viewer in moments of immediate intimacy, but through staged interactions with performers on site. During the course of the exhibition, the artist will enact two of her works, twice each: *in here it is yesterday* and *Mother. in here it is yesterday* places performers throughout the museum, each equipped with two pairs of headphones. Visitors to the site can approach them and ask to experience the work, after which the performer will ask them to select a song that reminds them of either falling in love or breaking up. The performer will then choose a song with the opposite connotation, and, sharing the headphones, the two will listen to both songs simultaneously. The durational performance, lasting six hours each iteration, quite literally brings the viewer closer to another through the physical connection of shared cords, and more abstractly through the cultural and emotional bonds of music. *Mother*, on the other hand, is a dramatic embodiment of familial relations in which visitors are invited to enact the performance themselves. Through an open call, the artist invites mother/daughter pairs to perform scenes from movies that feature mother/daughter relationships simultaneously in different spaces around the museum. The performers are non-professionals, and they are asked to not rehearse in advance. They reenact these scenes within the space, repeating them until both performers are satisfied, at which point the artwork is complete.

Other artists in the show look to film and its immersive capabilities—to draw us into moments of discomfort, or overwhelm us with fabricated narratives. Pilvi Takala (b. 1981, Helsinki) stages humorous interventions in public spaces and distinctive social and cultural sites to disrupt the behavioral norms that govern these spaces. For *Easy Rider* (2006), the artist uses a hidden camera to film an interaction on a public bus in Amsterdam, in which a man presumptuously makes a series of increasingly intrusive requests of a stranger. His boldness ultimately draws the participation of other passengers, who begin to debate the joint situation and ultimately come together in a moment of altruism. *Real Snow White* (2009), by contrast, serves as a satire of corporatized culture and the individual's relationship to these industries. The artist, dressed as the titular Disney character, attempts to enter Disneyland Paris. At first she is mobbed by families for photographs and autographs, but she is quickly stopped by security and barred from entering the park. In her recent work *The Stroker* (2018), the artist was asked by the British co-working company Second Home to create a

work inspired by their space. She then staged a performance in the office for two weeks, posing as a work efficiency specialist introducing an experimental, touch-based wellness program. The video reconstruction juxtaposes the artist greeting and touching her officemates with their discussion of how uncomfortable she has made them. The risible ease with which a business institution can be undone by a harmless gesture of intimacy ultimately betrays the fragility of these social and work cultures. Together, these films are not so much spectacles or documentary, but invitations into moments of social disjunct, a shared revelation of how delicate our unconscious behavioral expectations are.

The exhibition includes one other purely filmic artwork, which overloads the viewer's attention with multiple channels of audiovisual information and fabricated narratives. Yu Cheng-Ta's six-channel video *It's So Reality!* (2015) depicts three groups of normal people—seemingly families and groups of friends—simultaneously watching and commenting on the same reality television show. The raucous, overlapping audio channels allow the viewer to drop in and out of the different discussions. What remains unclear, however, is the nature of the spectators on screen: Are they actors? Are their remarks scripted, or are their reactions genuine? These, of course, are the same questions often asked of reality television itself. The viewer of the artwork thus is a third layer of ambiguous spectatorship, creating a nesting doll of fabricated narrative that raises questions of sincerity and performativity, truth and fiction.