



尤伦斯当代艺术中心
Center for Contemporary Art

Editorial Contacts:

UCCA

Danyu Xu

Deputy Director of Communications

+86 10 5780 0258

+86 138 1082 9590

danyu.xu@ucca.org.cn

Laura Bingyan Xue

Media Relations Manager

+86 150 1085 8162

bingyan.xue@ucca.org.cn

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UCCA Foyer, Stey-798

Press material available at

ucca.org.cn/en/press

“Mirage: Contemporary Art in Augmented Reality”

Released November 25, 2020

From November 28, 2020, to February 10, 2021, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Mirage: Contemporary Art in Augmented Reality,” a special exhibition for augmented reality (AR) art undertaken in collaboration with Acute Art, the world’s most extensive platform dedicated to the medium. Artworks will be viewable through Acute Art’s app in locations around UCCA Center for Contemporary Art and at hotel and apartment community Stey-798, located just outside 798 Art District’s western entrance. Participating artists include Nina Chanel Abney (b. 1982, Chicago), Darren Bader (b. 1978, Bridgeport, Connecticut), Cao Fei (b. 1978, Guangzhou), Olafur Eliasson (b. 1967, Copenhagen), KAWS (b. 1974, Jersey City, USA), and Alicja Kwade (b. 1979, Katowice, Poland). UCCA is excited to engage with a new way of presenting art, one that has the promise to open up global access to art on an unprecedented scale. The artists’ diverse works, ranging from digital sculptures to cartoon-like characters and animated scenes suffused with narrative drama, bring additional artistic context to the museum and its surroundings on an almost ethereal level, being at once present and invisible to the naked eye. The exhibition is curated by Acute Art Artistic Director Daniel Birnbaum. “Mirage” is presented in collaboration with Acute Art, and with support from exhibition sponsor Stey.

With works arranged within UCCA’s public areas and around Stey-798, visitors may view “Mirage” without the purchase of a ticket. Acute Art recommends the use of an iPhone X or above, or Samsung Galaxy S8 or equivalent, equipped with an up-to-date operating system, to access its app. UCCA is pleased to provide advanced smartphones from the iPhone 12 product range for use within the museum, so that all visitors have the opportunity to experience the artworks.

“Mirage” stands as the first major institutional project of its kind. As a medium, AR challenges preconceived notions of art and how it may be seen, erasing old hierarchies and offering new opportunities for the democratization of viewership. The artworks in the exhibition have travelled to Beijing without being physically shipped, nor with artists and their teams coming to assist with installation. While these valued features of exhibition-making cannot be directly replaced, it is nevertheless worth considering different modes of displaying art that might bypass the need for them—not merely to maneuver past the world’s currently closed borders, but also

+86 10 5780 0200

www.ucca.org.cn

北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路4号798艺术区

邮编 100015

798 Art District, No. 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu

Chaoyang District, Beijing, China 100015



with regards to the longer term possibilities posed for audiences living beyond the edges of infrastructure networks or far from cultural hubs. The exhibition sees UCCA exploring different ways of arranging artworks in space and sharing art with viewers—experiments that the museum hopes may have wider implications beyond this individual exhibition and its immediate context.

Staging “Mirage” at this moment is also significant for how its artworks compliment the current exhibition in UCCA’s Great Hall, “Immaterial/Re-material: A Brief History of Computing Art,” which tracks how artists have actively engaged with digital technology as a medium from the 1960s to present day. As Acute Art Artistic Director Daniel Birnbaum comments, “It should not come as much of a surprise that UCCA, known for its experimental approach to new possibilities in art, becomes the first major institution to stage an exhibition exclusively devoted to projects utilizing augmented reality. In collaboration with Acute Art, the exhibition represents a new chapter in the conversation between art and technology.”

The included artworks are poised between presence and absence, reflecting the exhibition title as they take the form of ephemeral objects, and figures that alternately suggest friendship and connection, or the lack thereof. Through their direct forms and immersive potential they also possess a brisk immediacy, reaching out to different realms of contemporary culture, from street art to online memes. KAWS’ *COMPANION (EXPANDED) (2020)* hovers just inside the museum’s entrance and is reprised at Stey-798, its instantly recognizable comic-inspired form drawing out childhood nostalgia. Yet the figure’s hands cover its eyes, hinting at more complicated emotions, perhaps of loneliness or shame. Levitating by a pillar opposite the museum’s front desk, Nina Chanel Abney’s *Imaginary Friend (2020)* utilizes the vibrant color palette of her paintings to present a sage for our contemporary era. The character, which the artist has explained was inspired by cartoon fairy godmothers, sits in a meditative pose offering words of guidance, implying a source of spiritual strength from beyond the physical realm. Darren Bader’s *LOVE (2019)*, from the series “Mendes Mundi,” can be found close to the entrance to UCCA Store, depicting woman carrying a large cross and accompanied by a boisterous miniature dog. The work also appears to reference spiritually, but as evidenced by Bader’s other featured piece *CHARGE (DEV) (2019)*, a dancing prankster-like figure whose face is dotted with electronic charging ports, the artist is perhaps most interested in re-appropriating everyday symbols to revel in the tension between the banal and the absurd.



Meanwhile, Alicja Kwade and Olafur Eliasson's artworks use inanimate objects to push the mundane into the realm of the uncanny. In two pieces from Kwade's "AR-BEIT" series, a melon that unexpectedly resembles the planet Mars endlessly rotates, defying the laws of physics, and viewers have the chance to move spinning black shapes representing hypothetical, possibly parallel, universes. Eliasson's *Uncertain Cloud* (2020), from his "Wunderkammer" set of works, rains down on another of KAWS' pieces, a chrome-suited astronaut. Around the corner, the glowing sun of Eliasson's *Solar Friend* (2020) floats above the terraced seating just inside UCCA's entrance. Its title and celestial theme connect with Cao Fei's *The Eternal Wave AR: Li Nova* (2020), an extension of her larger science fiction film project *Nova*. A boy sits alone at a table, surrounded by retro-futuristic paraphernalia of an alternate Beijing, asking if anyone has seen his missing father. Besides returning viewers to the museum's surroundings, the piece also provides a preview of Cao Fei's upcoming solo exhibition at UCCA Beijing, opening in spring 2021.

Asking viewers to look beyond the surface of humdrum reality, and underlining the value of friendship and companionship, the works in "Mirage" are perfectly placed for the contemporary state of the world. In light of the difficulties faced by the art community worldwide, UCCA is invigorated by the opportunity to work together with Acute Art, crafting an exhibition at unprecedented speed and re-imagining the ways in which artworks may be presented to viewers, thinking on a global scale while remaining grounded in Beijing and its community.

About Acute Art

Acute Art is unique in the way it fosters close working relationships with the world's leading artists, such as KAWS, Marina Abramović, Olafur Eliasson, Cao Fei, and Jeff Koons, in addition some of the most exciting emerging practitioners, by providing access to cutting-edge technologies. Acute Art's highly skilled production team allows artists to translate their creative vision into digital mediums, including virtual, augmented, and mixed realities. The Acute Art app enables users to access and own digital artworks created in AR, letting people see, interact and collect art in an entirely new way. It is the latest development in the art, technology, and commerce space. The Acute Art app is available to download for free [here](#). Please visit <http://www.acuteart.com>.



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About Stey

Stey is a new solution to urban living, offering modern urban professionals a smarter, more connected and exciting way of living. Stey delivers efficiency, flexibility, and freshness via modern technology. Combining traditional hospitality with the smartest digital solutions, we have created an innovative balance of home, co-living space and hotel. Our designers have created an integrated “re-renting” system that enables tenants to share their homes and save on rent—providing the ultimate in freedom and mobility. In a distinctly Nordic way, Stey expresses a philosophy of environmental protection, energy efficiency, and sustainability through a keen eye for design features, and meticulous selection of materials and furniture—which carries over into straightforward, reliable operations management. Founded and headquartered in Beijing, and currently with three open properties in Wangfujing, Sanlitun, and 798, we are on our way to establish Stey communities across the world. The Stey app is available to download for free [here](#). Please visit us at <http://www.stey.com/> to learn more.

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.

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