



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

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Long Gallery

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

New Directions: He Xiangyu

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Expanding on UCCA's longstanding interest in emerging practices, "New Directions: He Xiangyu" begins a new series of exhibitions focused on young Chinese artists.

From June 11 to August 9, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) begins the "New Directions" initiative with the solo exhibition of He Xiangyu, a presentation of 365 paintings from the artist's ongoing *Palate Project*. Part of UCCA's mission to present the diverse practices of emerging artistic talents from Greater China to wider audiences, "New Directions: He Xiangyu" is staged in the Long Gallery and will be followed by two subsequent shows featuring young Chinese artists later in the year, with further editions throughout 2016 and beyond.

Best known for sculptural works combining comedy and high concept, He Xiangyu here takes a solipsistic turn, revealing an inner topography depicted in a highly sensitive painterly language. During a brief stint in the U.S. where language barriers proved difficult to navigate, He Xiangyu began translating into images the ridges, bumps, and grooves of his palate through perceptions felt with his tongue. The act of translation, always aimed at demystifying the subject, here only seems to further complicate it. The phenomenological processes responsible for constructing a sense of interior space intrinsic to vocalization, the curl of the tongue that produces "rat" as opposed to "that", become a function of He Xiangyu's body mapping, supplanting the oral, and aural, by reaffirming the centrality of visual representation.

Executed over the course of four years, this presentation of *Palate Project* is composed of six groups of drawings and moves in a perennial display of watercolor, ink, and mixed media on paper. Identifiable anatomical structures dissolve and re-emerge, eventually evolving into color fields of yellow with only the slightest hints of form. Based on a seemingly obvious premise, *Palate Project* revels in a Cartesian split of mind and body, illustrating that, in spite of proximity to subject, art remains the annotation to a lost referent.

He Xiangyu (b. 1986) first garnered attention for *Coca Cola Project*, completed merely a year after his graduation from Shenyang Normal University. The piece, which has since been widely exhibited, required a long preparation period of hired workers boiling down 127 tons of Coca Cola. The application of intense heat resulted in two byproducts: an inky liquid and an earthy, dark precipitant. Fertile in its associative capacity, the virtual *merde* has been used for installations of varying of scale, at times filling entire rooms.

A tangential outgrowth, *Tank Project* was first featured in UCCA's exhibition "ON | OFF: China's



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Young Artists in Concept and Practice" (2013). Painstakingly sewn by an army of hands trained by the artist, the flaccid military machine is a life-size replica of a Soviet-style tank stitched from over 400 pieces of fine Italian leather. The material and temporal demands placed on the production of both *Tank Project* and *Coca Cola Project*, as well as the East-West dialectic conjured by He Xiangyu's premeditated choice of cultural symbols, are indicative of a larger trend among artists of his generation to interrogate, at times to comedic effect, the contradictory trends of institutionalization and commercialization of contemporary art.

He Xiangyu's solo exhibition, the first installment of the "New Directions" series, is accompanied by a monograph supported by Post Wave Publishing Consulting. "New Directions" is initiated by UCCA Director Philip Tinari. "New Directions: He Xiangyu" is curated by Guo Xi.

About the Artist

He Xiangyu (b. 1986, Liaoning province) graduated from the Oil Painting Department of Shenyang Normal University and is currently based in Beijing and Berlin. Having first garnered attention for large-scale works like *Coca Cola Project* and *Tank Project*, He Xiangyu continues to defy commonplace notions carried toward young Chinese artists through a diverse body of works encompassing sculpture, painting, and performance. His major exhibitions include "Fire and Forget" (KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2015); "Dotted Line" (White Space Beijing, Beijing, 2014); "He Xiangyu" (White Cube, London, 2014); "2014 Future Generation Art Prize - Finalists Exhibition" (Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev, 2014); "28 Chinese" (Rubell Family Collection, Miami, 2013); "Crossed Beliefs" (SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo, 2013); and "ON | OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice" (UCCA, Beijing, 2013). He Xiangyu has also been invited to participate in the 15th Lyon Biennale (2015); "Social Factory" 10th Shanghai Biennale (2014); and Busan Biennale 2014.

About "New Directions"

"New Directions" is an ongoing series of project-based exhibitions by young artists from Greater China. Planned for an initial run of ten periodic installments, the series offers a platform for artists to realize a first institutional solo exhibition and bilingual monograph. Building on UCCA's longstanding commitment to emerging practices, pioneered by shows including "ON | OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice" (2013), "Breaking Forecast" (2009), and the "Curated By..." series (2010-2012), "New Directions" aims both to broaden the institutional exhibition system for new art in China today, and to highlight its richness and complexity for audiences in Beijing and beyond.



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About the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is an independent, not-for-profit art center serving a global Beijing public. Located at the heart of Beijing's 798 Art District, it was founded by the Belgian collectors Guy and Myriam Ullens and opened in November 2007. Through a diverse array of exhibitions with artists Chinese and international, established and emerging, as well as a wide range of public programs, UCCA aims to promote the continued development of the Chinese art scene, foster international exchange, and showcase the latest in art and culture to hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

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