



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

## Cold Nights

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### Exhibition Dates:

15 September 2017–  
17 December 2017

### Exhibition Venue:

Central Gallery

Press material also available  
for download from the UCCA  
website

From 15 September to 17 December, 2017, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) dedicates the Central Gallery to “Cold Nights,” an exhibition of newly commissioned work by artists Chen Zhou, Liu Shiyuan, Nabuqi, and Li Ran, curated by Boliang Shen and Zhanglun Dai. Growing from modern Chinese writer Ba Jin’s eponymous 1947 novel, “Cold Nights” explores the performativity of the creative act as well as the potential of artistic collaboration in times of precarity and disillusionment.

Set in 1940s Chongqing, Ba Jin’s novel recounts the collapse of a family of intellectuals owing to domestic conflict and grapples with their emotional entanglements against a background of national crisis. Each of the four protagonists—Wenxuan, Shusheng, Wenxuan’s mother, and Fengguang—represents a distinct layer of the turbulent Chinese society at the time, and all are deeply enmeshed in and affected by a complex web of kinship, romantic, and economic relationships. College graduates who once envisioned a career dedicated to education and social welfare, Wenxuan winds up as a junior proofreader in a corrupt publishing house, while his estranged wife Shusheng works as a bank clerk. If Wenxuan (artist: Chen Zhou) stands for the idealist intellectual elites facing the immense burden of supporting a family in a time of austerity, incapable of effectively adopting modern methods, Shusheng (artist: Liu Shiyuan) is the archetype of the modern woman who swings between private, material desires and public expectations that she performs a conventional gender role in an economically and culturally polarized society. Wenxuan’s mother (artist: Nabuqi), who lives with her son and takes care of Wenxuan and her grandson, represents the hidebound traditionalists who resents her daughter-in-law, her independence, and anything modern. Fengguang (artist: Li Ran), the manager of the bank where Shusheng works and her lover, stands for the mighty capitalists; with a seductive and exotic



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aura, he seems almost alien to Wenxuan's family, and his commitment to a new social order threatens existing conventions.

This intricate mesh that Ba Jin has woven in order to launch his trenchant critique of Chinese society at his time of writing sets the narrative foundation of the exhibition. It also serves as the conceptual bedrock for the curators' vision of an exhibition where each instance of artistic creation becomes interdependent and simultaneously an act of performance. The curators invited the four artists, after reading the story, to play the roles of its four protagonists through their own artistic creation. Throughout the period of creation, the artists interacted with and responded to each other from their respective roles, forming a sort of creative collective built on the foundation of the novel. This intimacy is evident in the visual dialogue between *Blue Hole* (Chen Zhou, 2017), *The Best is Yet to Come* (Liu Shiyuan, 2017) and *Night of Patmos* (Li Ran, 2017) through shared motifs and narrative cues, and the interaction between *At dusk after the rain... slanted sunlight... light spots of all sizes..... fades, .....washed off... and winding towards..... the end, a sharp honking is heard... disappears* (Nabuqi, 2017) and the three videos throughout the exhibition space. The exhibition is at once the artists' response to their fictional personae and their collective reflection on the current lived reality. The overlapping and mixing of these responses, in turn, structures a new space, a new text.

### About the Exhibition

"Cold Nights" is curated by Boliang Shen and Zhanglun Dai. Exclusive audio support is provided by GENELEC.

"Cold Nights" is accompanied by a suite of public programs, including a joint discussion among the two curators and the four participating artists about the curatorial concept as well as their collaboration; a screening of artist Liu Shiyuan's past and recent work, followed by a conversation between the artist and guest



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moderator Yang Beichen on her creative practice; and a panel discussion among the two curators, guest artists, and writers on the notion of “exhibition as literary form.”

### About the Curators

#### Boliang Shen

Boliang Shen is a writer and curator. Shen worked as senior editor and correspondent for *Artinfo China* from 2010 to 2013. He enrolled in the Gwangju Biennale International Curator Course in 2011 and received his Master's degree in Museum Studies from New York University in 2016. He was the project manager of the Art Writer & Journalist Workshop in the 9th Shanghai Biennale (Shanghai, 2012), and has curated exhibitions and projects at Kunsthalle Gwangju (Gwangju, 2011), OCAT Shenzhen (Shenzhen, 2014), and inCube Arts (New York, 2016). His writings have been published in *Flash Art*, *Leap*, *Artinfo China*, *The Bund Magazine*, *The Art Newspaper China*, among others.

#### Zhanglun Dai

Zhanglun Dai is a curator and writer. She previously worked as curatorial assistant at Guangdong Museum of Art, during which she was involved in the 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, “Farewell to Post-Colonialism” (Guangzhou, 2008). She also worked as an editor for the magazine *Contemporary Art & Investment* in 2009. She was the project manager of the Art Writer & Journalist Workshop in the 9th Shanghai Biennale (Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2012). While living in New York City for the past two years, she curated the exhibition “Son: Signal of Authority” (inCube Arts, New York, 2016). Her writings have been published on [artforum.com.cn](http://artforum.com.cn) and in *Artinfo China*, *Art & Design*, and more.



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## About the Artists

### Chen Zhou

Chen Zhou (b.1987, Zhejiang province) received a bachelor's degree from the Digital Media Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, in 2009, and currently lives and works in Shanghai. His debut feature, *Life Imitation*, received the New: Vision Award at the 2017 CPH:DOX Film Festival, and has been included in the Official Selection of 61th BFI London Film Festival, the 9th DMZ International Documentary Film Festival, and the 10th CNEX Documentary Film Festival. Chen's past solo exhibitions include: "Kaufman" (Aike-Dellarco, Shanghai, 2013), "I'm not not not Chen Zhou" (Magician Space, Beijing, 2013), and "Talk," (Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, 2009). Major group exhibitions include "After Us" (chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai, 2017), "ON | OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice" (Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2013), "Perspectives 180 – Unfinished Country: New Video from China" (Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, 2013), "Festival ASVOFF6" (The Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2013), "Moving Image in China 1998-2011" (Centro Per L'arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, 2012), and "Video Art in China" (Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, 2011). Chen Zhou was one of the finalists of the 2012 "Focus on Talents Project," jointly organized by Martell Art Fund and Today Art Museum, Beijing.

### Liu Shiyuan

Liu Shiyuan (b.1985, Beijing) received her BFA from the Digital Media Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, in 2009, before earning an MFA from the Photography Department of the School of Visual Art, New York, in 2012. Liu currently lives in Beijing and Copenhagen. The scope of Liu Shiyuan's art practice comprises such domains as photography, video, stage performance, and spatial installations, among others. Through her art practice she exposes a visual language that is unaffected by regional boundaries. Her most recent solo exhibition is "As Simple As Clay" (YUZ Museum, Shanghai, 2015). Recent major group exhibitions are "2017.COM.CN" (K11 Art Foundation & MOMA PS1, Hong Kong, 2017), the 1st Yinchuan Biennale "For an Image, Faster than Light" (Museum of Contemporary Art



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Yinchuan, Yinchuan, 2016); “SHE – International Woman Artists Exhibition” (Long museum, Shanghai, 2016); “The Exhibition of Annual of Contemporary Art of China” (Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, 2016); “TUTORIALS – Moving Images and Instructions for Use from China” (Pino Pascali Foundation Museum, Polignano, 2016); “Bentu – Chinese Artists in a Time of Turbulence and Transformation” (Foundation Louis Vitton, Paris, 2016). Liu’s first solo exhibition in the US will open at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery in New York City in February 2018.

### **Nabuqi**

Nabuqi (b.1984, Inner Mongolia), graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2013. She currently lives and works in Beijing. Departing from a focus on objects themselves, Nabuqi’s work extends to the relationship between objects and the human body, as well as the variations of individual perceptions within different spaces and environments. The Object series focuses on the independence of the object, in particular its relationship of mutual influence and contrast with the body. A View Beyond Space juxtaposes two different types of spaces (one real and one imaginary) in order to observe the body’s differing responses to these spaces. In her recent works, Nabuqi combines individual sculptural pieces to render a sense of fragmentation within space. Interested in extending these notions to the broader parameter of public space, Nabuqi aims to thereby address the individual’s relationship with his or her environment. Her recent exhibitions include “Absent Paragraph” (Museum Beelden aan Zee, Scheveningen, 2017), “Any Ball” (CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, 2017), the 11th Shanghai Biennale (Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2016), the 10th Gwangju Biennale (Gwangju, 2016), among others. Nabuqi was nominated for the 2016 Art Sanya Huayu Youth Award.

### **Li Ran**

Li Ran (b.1986, Hubei) received a BFA from the Oil Painting Department of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute and currently lives and works in Beijing. Li’s recent solo exhibitions include “Same Old Crowd” (Aike Dellarco, Shanghai, 2016), “Re-projecting – One or Many Roles” (OCAT Xi’an, Xi’an, 2015), and “One Man One Night” (Kadist Art



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Foundation, San Francisco, 2014), among others. Major group exhibitions include “Soil and Stones, Souls and Songs” (Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok; Para Site, Hong Kong; Pinchuk Art Center, Kiev; 2017), “The Making of an Institution” (NYU Center for Contemporary Art Singapore, Singapore, 2017), “TUTORIALS – Moving Images and Instructions for Use from China” (Pino Pascali Foundation Museum, Polignano, 2016), “Museum no/off – Encounters with Pompidou” (Center Pompidou-ESPACE, Paris, 2016), “Absolute Collection Guideline” (Sifang Museum, Nanjing, 2015), “Essential Matters – Moving Images from China” (Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, 2015), “The Montreal Biennale: Looking Forward” (Montreal, 2014), “Biennale of Moving Images” (Centre d’Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva, 2014), “Sights and Sounds: Global Film and Video” (The Jewish Museum, New York, 2014), “A Time For Dreams – 4th Moscow International Biennale For Young Art (The Museum of Moscow, Moscow, 2014), “Accidental Message: Art is not a System, not a World – The 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale” (OCAT Shenzhen, 2012), and more.

#### **About the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art**

Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is the international institution at the heart of Beijing’s 798 Art District. Each year it presents a wide range of exhibitions and educational programs, highlighting artists from China and beyond, and encouraging the public to engage with contemporary art and culture. Opened in 2007, UCCA is a non-profit, non-collecting, non-governmental museum sustained by the generosity of numerous patrons, sponsors, members, and visitors, beginning with founders Guy and Myriam Ullens. In everything it does, UCCA aims to elaborate an inclusive, cosmopolitan vision of China in the world.

[www.ucca.org.cn/en](http://www.ucca.org.cn/en)

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