

# New Model Village

Cui Jie

6 March  
to 12 June 2022



## 'New Model Village' Cui Jie

In Autumn 2019, Focal Point Gallery invited Cui Jie to visit the 1920s modernist workers' village at Silver End and the 1930s Bata Estate in East Tilbury in Essex as initial research for this project. Originally intending to return to England in 2020, COVID-19 travel restrictions meant that Jie continued her research through digital archives and records. During this period her interests expanded to Harlow and Basildon New Towns and to the public sculptures commissioned for them. Jie also connected these Essex developments with the history of the Caoyang New Village in Shanghai, built in the 1950s as the first workers' village in China. This process has inspired 'New Model Village', an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper which explore the social contexts behind these international architectural projects. As we emerge from the present-day pandemic, when the boundaries between our work and personal space have been challenged, these pioneering projects offered seemingly utopian models for working communities.

Four new paintings by Jie focus on the unique architecture of Essex, such as the Art Deco villa depicted in the work *Silver End* (2021) and the East Walk shopping area in *Basildon* (2021) inspired by archival photographs of the period. Two paintings depict night views of Harlow Town Hall and Caoyang New Village respectively which evoke a pre-digital era spent listening to the wireless and broadcast television to obtain information and find entertainment.

A series of three paintings titled *Ground Invading Figure* (2022) explore the intimate human relationships of the people who lived and worked within these architectural environments decades ago. Jie's source for these three paintings was the publicity photographs of Caoyang New Village at the time. She chooses to depict moments of intimacy from these typical scenes of life within the village during the 1950s, acknowledging that their gestures and movements indicate the customs of the time. Jie comments: 'As such, in this exhibition I tend to raise the issues of the transformation of the body and of its relation to the architectural style and the overall design of these communities.'

In her works on paper, Jie playfully juxtaposes elements together from the different schemes in Essex and China as well as between the art and architecture such as *The Caoyang Cinema and Bata Cinema* (2021) which superimposes the Caoyang Cinema, the Bata Cinema and the sculpture in the Lanxi Youth Park in Caoyang New Village. For Jie, the paper works continue her research into 'the symbiosis between architecture and sculpture, as well as the issue of perspectives and distance.'

An acclaimed artist of her generation, Cui Jie is the first Chinese artist to exhibit at Focal Point Gallery, building on our Radical ESSEX programme that celebrates the county's innovative history. Cited as one of the most influential historically driven place-making initiatives for a contemporary audience, we are excited to forge a new international perspective on Radical ESSEX through this exhibition.

Archival films, information and materials which inspired Jie's research are presented in Gallery Two including information about the following projects:

**Caoyang New Village** was built in 1951. It was the first new workers' village built in China. Its first residents were front-line workers, who were carefully vetted so that the housing went to skilled model workers who were selected for various factories, cotton mills, machinery plants, chemical factories and food manufacturers. The overall planning of Caoyang New Village was designed by the famous architect Wang Dingzeng, who innovatively integrated the concept of 'neighbourhood units' into the planning of the new village. The new village was not only a living mode, but also a utopian experiment of socialist transformation of the villagers in work and life. Wang embraced a layout that embodied a community-centric lifestyle, incorporating a cinema, a shopping mall, hospital, primary school and wet market all within walking distance for residents.

**Silver End** in Braintree, Essex was conceived as a model village by Francis Henry Crittall, founder of the Crittall Windows Ltd factory built in 1926. The factory manufactured and supplied components for metal windows. Silver End workers' village was designed and built in the Art Deco style and includes some noteworthy early examples of Modernist architecture with

distinctive white, flat-roofed houses, many designed by architect Thomas S. Tait. As a part of the Model Village, this area was planned by C. Murray Hennell in the manner of the Garden City Movement. With the largest village hall in the UK, it boasted to have a first-class dance floor, cinema, library, snooker room and health clinic.

In 1932, the **Bata Estate** was founded in East Tilbury by Tomáš Bata, a Czech shoe manufacturer who built a model town for his workers when he established his new factory in England. A large housing development of 352 houses in a 'garden village' setting was built for the workers to live around the Bata Shoe factory. Amenities, including a theatre, sports facilities, hotel, restaurant, grocery and butcher shops, post office, and its own newspaper were built and provided for the town. The estate predates many of Britain's modernist gems, featuring 'flat-tops' in a checkerboard pattern. Architects Frantisek Lydie Gahura and Vladimir Karfik allowed space around each property for the comfort of each resident.

In 1946, the New Towns Act was passed by Prime Minister Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government. **Basildon** was one of eight New Towns created in the South East as an attempt to address the post-war housing crisis in London. The design and building was led by the newly incorporated Basildon Development Corporation, with Sir Basil Spence as a consultant. The compulsory purchase orders that followed were met with resistance, as the compensation offered was accused of being ungenerous, and involved breaking up existing plotland settlements. However, building began in 1956, with the town inaugurated in 1962. The new town comprised of ten neighbourhoods; Pitsea, Laindon, Langdon Hills, Vange, Lee Chapel South and North, Fryerns, Ghyllgrove, Barstable and Kingswood.

The original masterplan for **Harlow New Town** was conceived by Sir Frederick Gibberd in 1947. The purpose of these New Towns was to house people and commerce. They were intended to be self-contained, balanced communities, rather than as a commuter town for London. The site was ideal for a New Town, a large undeveloped rural area at the junction of a motorway and with a main line railway. Gibberd was passionate about art and had idealistic notions of the New

Town as a place where people who might not normally have access to art could enjoy great sculptures by great artists on every street corner. Inclusion of sculpture, now managed by Harlow Arts Trust was core to the vision. In 1980, Sir Frederick wrote: 'The Plan was concerned with three arts: architecture, road design and landscape architecture. These three arts are fused to become town scenes or townscapes, the making of which is the art of Town Design.'

'New Model Village' is presented with the support of Antenna Space, Shanghai.

在2019年秋季，为了对本次项目进行初步的研究，崔洁女士应 Focal Point Gallery 之邀参观了位于银尾（Silver End）的1920年代现代主义工人村，和位于埃塞克斯（Essex）郡东提尔伯里（East Tilbury）的1930年代巴塔庄园（Bata Estate）。根据原定计划崔洁将于2020年再次到访英国，但由于疫情对于旅行的限制，崔只能通过数字档案对此进行深入的研究。在此研究期间她将注意力拓展到了哈洛（Harlow），巴西尔登新镇（Basildon New Towns）和当时所建造的公共雕塑。崔洁还将埃塞克斯的这些项目的开发与上海曹杨新村的历史联系起来，该村是建于1950年代的中国的第一个工人新村。本次“新模范村”（'New Model Village'）展览的灵感正是由这些研究中得到启发，这是一个全新创作的绘画作品展览，所展出的作品旨在探索这些国际建筑项目背后的社会背景和历史环境。现如今我们正从疫情中恢复过来，在这个所有人的工作生活和个人空间之间的界限都受到挑战的时刻，这些曾经开创性的项目正为工作社区提供了一个近乎乌托邦式的范本。

崔的四幅新作聚焦于埃塞克斯的独特建筑，例如作品《银尾》（Silver End）中描绘的装饰艺术风格的别墅，以及由当时档案照片启发所创作的《巴西尔登》（Basildon）中的 East Walk 购物区。另外两幅画分别描绘了哈洛市政厅（Harlow Town Hall）和曹杨新村的夜景，它们唤起了人们对通过无线电和广播电视获取信息和寻找娱乐的前数字时代的记忆。

三幅名为《底吞图》的系列作品则探讨了几十年前在这些建筑环境中生活和工作的人们之间的亲密关系。这一系列作品的灵感来源是当年曹杨新村的宣传照。崔选择描绘20世纪50年代村庄里一些典型的生活场景中的亲密时刻，作品中的手势和动作也确实代表了那个时代的习俗。崔洁评论到：“因此，在这次展览中，我倾向于提出身体的改造问题，以及它与建筑风格和这些社区的整体设计之间的关系。”

在她的纸上彩铅作品中，崔玩味地将来自埃塞克斯（Essex）与

中国的不同项目中的元素，特别是艺术与建筑之间的元素并置在一起。如在作品《曹杨电影院和巴塔电影院》中包含了曹杨电影院、巴塔电影院，曹杨村兰溪青年公园的雕塑。对于崔来说，这些纸上作品延续了她对“建筑与雕塑的共生关系，以及视角和距离的问题”的研究。

崔洁是她这一代中备受赞誉的艺术家，也是第一个在焦点画廊展出的中国艺术家；以我们的Radical ESSEX项目为基础，庆祝本郡的创新历史。作为最具现代观众影响力的历史驱动的计划之一，我们很高兴能通过这次展览为 Radical ESSEX 打造一个全新的国际视野。

对崔洁的研究产生启发的档案电影、信息和材料在第二展厅展出，包括以下项目的信息：

曹杨新村始建于1951年，是中国第一个新建的工人村。它的第一批居民是一线工人，他们经过仔细审查，以便将住房分配给由各种工厂，棉纺厂、机械厂、化工厂和食品制造厂中所挑选出来的劳动模范。曹阳新村的总体规划由著名建筑师汪定曾先生设计，他将“邻里单元”的概念创新地融入新村的规划中。新村不仅是一种生活方式，更是一种对居民生产生活方式进行社会主义改造的乌托邦式实验。汪先生的布局设计体现了以社区为中心的生活方式，电影院、购物中心、医院、小学和菜市场，居民步行即可到达。

位于埃塞克斯郡 ( Essex ) 布伦特里 ( Braintree ) 的 Silver End 是由 Francis Henry Crittall 构想的模范村，他是 1926 年建造的 Crittall 窗户有限公司的创始人。该工厂生产和供应金属窗组件。Silver End 工人村是按照装饰艺术风格设计和建造的，包括一些值得注意的现代主义建筑的早期例子，有独特的白色平屋顶房屋，其中许多是由建筑师 Thomas S. Tait 设计的。作为示范村的一部分，该区域由 C. Murray Hennell 按照花园城市运动的方式规划的。它拥有英国最大的乡村礼堂，一流的舞池、电影院、图书馆、斯诺克台球室和健康诊所。

1932 年，巴塔庄园 ( Bata Estate ) 由捷克制鞋商 Tomáš Baťa 在东提尔伯里 ( East Tilbury ) 创立，当他在英格兰建立新工厂时，他也为他的工人建立了一个模范小镇。在巴塔鞋厂附近的一个“花园村庄”建造了 352 套住房的大型住房开发项目以供工人居住。包括剧院、体育设施、酒店、餐厅、杂货店和肉店、邮局和自己的报纸在内的各种便利设施都是为小镇建造和提供的。这座庄园要早于许多英国现代主义瑰宝，以棋盘图案的“平顶”为特色。建筑师 Frantisek Lydie Gahura 和 Vladimir Karfik 为每个住宅周围都留出了足够舒适的空间。

1946 年，Clement Attlee 首相的战后工党政府通过了《新城镇法》。巴西尔登 ( Basildon ) 是东南部八个新城镇之一，旨在解决战后伦敦的住房危机。设计和建筑由新成立的 Basildon Development Corporation 领导，Basil Spence 爵士担任顾问。

随后的强制采购订单遭到了抵制，因为提供的补偿被指责不够慷慨，而且涉及破坏现有的土地协议。然而，1956年开始建造，1962年小镇落成。这个新城镇由十个街区组成，Pitsea, landdon, Langdon Hills, Vange, Lee Chapel South and North, Fryerns, Ghyllgrove, Barstable and Kingswood。

哈洛新城（Harlow New Town）最初的总体规划是由Frederick Gibberd爵士于1947年构思的。这些新城的目的是为居民和商业提供住所。它们旨在成为独立的、平衡的社区，而不是作为伦敦的通勤城镇。该地理位置是新城的理想之选，这是一个位于高速公路和主线铁路交界处的大型未开发农村地区。Gibberd对艺术充满热情，并对新城抱有理想主义的观点，认为新城是一个通常无法接触艺术的人们可以在每个街角欣赏伟大艺术家的伟大雕塑的地方。现在由Harlow艺术信托基金管理的雕塑是这个愿景的核心。1980年，Frederick爵士写道：“该计划涉及三种艺术：建筑、道路设计和景观设计。这三种艺术融合在一起，形成了城镇景观，而城市景观的形成就是城市设计的艺术。”“新模范村”（‘New Model Village’）在上海天线空间的支持下呈现。

## Glossary

**Modernism** describes a global movement in culture and society beginning in the early twentieth century. The movement sought to reflect the experience and values of modern industrial life. Artists began to use new imagery, materials, and techniques to achieve this. Architecture embodied these ideas through a rejection of ornament seen in earlier centuries.

**Art Deco** refers to a style of furniture, decorative arts, and architecture known for its geometric character. The style originated in the 1920s and was led by a group of French artists who named themselves ‘The Society of Decorative Artists’.

**Utopian** is defined as an ideal modelled on or aiming for a state in which everything is perfect. Modernist architecture and societal attitudes of the time were often seen as embodying utopian ideals. This was because Modernism was associated with a belief in progress, through its use of new materials for instance.

**New Towns**, or the New Town Act of 1946, refers to an







*Basildon, 2021, Acrylic on canvas*

ambitious programme which saw the government designate previously unused land for the development of New Towns. This was designed to decongest larger industrialised cities, such as London, following the Second World War.

**Model Villages, or Worker Villages,** refer to a type of self-contained community built to house a business's work force. These villages are typically located close to the workplace and boast of high-quality housing, a range of amenities and attractive scenery.

### **About the Artist**

Cui Jie, born in 1983, currently lives and works in Shanghai. The modernization, the development of city landscape and the unified and tedious style of contemporary architecture has always been one of the topics being discussed in Cui's paintings of cities. Connecting and intertwining visions of the past and the present under her brushstrokes, Cui Jie expresses her nostalgia for the past and a seemingly utopian exploration for the future landscape, and hence evokes the viewer's collective nostalgia. Cui Jie graduated from China Academy of Art. She has been included in Phaidon Press's publication Vitamin P3 and her works has been presented in numerous international exhibitions and collections.

### **List of works: Main large gallery (clockwise)**

Bata Factory and Caoyang Sculpture, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

Ground Invading Figure #51, 2022, Acrylic on canvas

Harlow Town Hall, 2021, Acrylic and spray paint on canvas

Silver End Village, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

Ground Invading Figure #52, 2022, Acrylic on canvas

Basildon, 2021, Acrylic on canvas  
Happy Family, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

Caoyang New Village, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

Silver End Village, 2021, Acrylic on canvas

Silver End Village and Caoyang Sculpture, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

Silver End Village #2, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

### **Window gallery (Left to right)**

*Ground Invading Figure #50* , 2022, Acrylic on canvas

*Caoyang New Village* , 2021, Acrylic and spray paint on canvas

*The Caoyang Cinema and Bata Cinema* , 2021, Colour pencil on paper

*The Bata Cinema and Caoyang Cinema*, 2021, Colour pencil on paper

All works courtesy the Artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

### **Second smaller gallery Film Running Order**

*Building of Homes for Heroes*, 1919  
28 seconds

*Interview with Sonia Anderson*, 1986  
13 minutes 58 seconds

*New Towns in Britain*, 1956  
13 minutes 40 seconds

*Interview with Mrs. Summers*, 1986

10 minutes 55 seconds  
*Yesterday's Homes and Today's*, 1932  
2 minutes 32 seconds

*Interview with Jim White*, 1983  
7 minutes 37 seconds

*Factory: Clocking In Routine* c.1941  
2 minutes 34 seconds

*Interview with Joan Keeble,  
Ron Chittock, and Dorothy Dear*, 2010  
2 minutes 36 seconds

*Coronation Gala Day*, 1953  
9 minutes 23 seconds

*Caught In Time – Listed Buildings*, 1989  
1 minute 59 seconds

### **Forthcoming publication**

A full colour exhibition catalogue will be published in April, with essays by Dr Wenny Teo, Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art and ZHOU Jianjia, the founding partner and principal architect of YeArch Studio(YEAS) and Ph.D. candidate of College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University. Alongside these texts will be an interview between Cui Jie and Katharine Stout, Director of Focal Point Gallery in addition to archival images and contextual information.

The publication is presented with the support of M Art Foundation.

With special thanks to Cui Jie, Mike Ashby, Shaun Badham, Laura Bowen, Jade Chen, Kira Cheng, Kurt Lin, Bata Heritage Centre, BFI National Archive, Essex Record Office, East Anglian

Film Archive, Pathé Films, Royal Institute of British Architects, Silver End Heritage Society, The Francis Frith Collection, Dave Watkins, Simon Wang, Xinyu Zhang.

## **Associated Programme**

To book yourself a ticket or find out more, visit our website [www.fpg.org.uk](http://www.fpg.org.uk)

## **Online Symposium: International Modernism and the Worker Village: from Essex to Shanghai** **Sat 19th March 2022: 10am to 4pm**

'International Modernism and the Worker Village: from Essex to Shanghai' is an online day long symposium assessing the importance of British Modernism in Essex, particularly its former working estates in adoption of the International Modernist style during the 1920s and 30s, in comparison to the worker villages of Shanghai in the 1950s and 60s. Speakers will discuss the aesthetic design, social structure and political contexts of Silver End, Bata East Tilbury, Becontree and Caoyang Yicun in relation to the evolution of factory life over the past 100 years.

Speakers include Gillian Darley, Cui Jie, Verity-Jane Keefe, David Knight, Mike Tarbard, Wenny Teo and Zhou Jianjia, with archival and audio interventions from Joe Namy.

This event is organised in collaboration with Becontree Forever, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and with the support of the Paul Mellon Centre.

## **Creative Open Day – free and open to all ages, backgrounds and abilities!** **Sat 9th April 2022 from 11am to 3pm.**

Join us for a guided walk around town, photographing anything that could be described as quintessentially Southend. You can then create themed postcards, using photographs you've taken of the city, highlighting the quirky, attractive, ugly, hidden, bizarre parts of Southend!

**Sunday Arts Club is a weekly club from 1.30pm to 3.30pm for children ages 8-12 years.**

Led by a local artist, each two-hour workshop provides the chance to develop new skills, explore different materials and further enrich the participants creative and artistic knowledge and practice.

**Radical ESSEX Walks: The Bata Estate and Tilbury Marshes  
with Emma Twine  
Sat 21th May 2022 12pm to 3pm**

Experience the Bata Estate with architect Emma Twine. Starting at East Tilbury Library, visit Bata Heritage Centre and see the archives of this modernist working town, before exploring the flat top housing estate, factory buildings and nearby marshlands.

**Summer Creative Open Day at Focal Point Gallery!  
11am to 3pm on Saturday 4th June**

Join us at Focal Point Gallery to explore your creativity in a fun, interactive workshop looking at architecture and design in a unique way.

## About Focal Point Gallery:

Focal Point Gallery supports the production and presentation of new and recent contemporary art that challenges us to think and feel differently about locality, our sense of self and the importance of communities. Our wide-ranging and pioneering artistic programme is relevant to local and national audiences alike, through exploring current concerns that also resonate internationally. Based in Southend-on-Sea on the Thames Estuary, FPG's activities take place in locations across the region with our reach extended by working collaboratively with like-minded partners.

As a key focus of our output, Focal Point Gallery's learning programme aims to engage people of all ages in current debates around contemporary art, and looks to extend and develop new audiences. We consider the philosophies and working methods of the artists in our exhibitions programme as the starting point for inspiration, aspiration and discussion in the community. On this basis, the gallery seeks to proactively engage with a wide range of local community groups, schools, young people and children.

Focal Point Gallery also curates and commissions an on-going programme of artist moving image, screened daily on Big Screen Southend; a permanent outdoor video facility located adjacent to our main gallery space in Elmer Square.

## Donate

Focal Point Gallery is a not-for-profit organisation, which relies on support from grant-giving bodies, trusts, businesses and individuals for its exhibition, learning and public programmes. All donations directly support these programmes and our ambition to support great art across Essex.

[www.fpg.org.uk](http://www.fpg.org.uk)



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