

Press Release

Xu Zhen: Ecosystem as Medium

Curated by Wang Yamin, the exhibition presents the rich artistic career of Xu Zhen, China's most active contemporary artist. Born in 1977, Xu Zhen is one of the representative figures of his generation of Chinese contemporary artists, having gained international recognition for his innovative and provocative art practice. Xu Zhen has been active on the global art scene since the late 1990s, often exploring such themes as cultural identity, globalization, and consumerism. His practice spans a variety of media, including installation, sculpture, painting, photography and performance. In addition to being an artist, he is also a curator, founder of MadelN Company and XU ZHEN®.

The exhibition at MOCAUP will feature over 100 works of art from Xu Zhen's career spanning more than twenty years, highlighting his typically assembled, iterating, and self-consistent cohort of works. They belong to the artist's signature series including "Under Heaven" (2011), "MadelN Curved Vase" (2012), "Alien" (2017), "Tools" (2018), and "Base" (2021), presented alongside a debut of his latest creations. In the artist's paintings and sculptures, especially the most representative ones such as "Eternity" (2013), European Thousand Arms Classical Sculpture (2014), and Hello (2018), ancient cultural relics and symbols of civilization are transformed into works of art. The artist thus raises the issues of originality and innovation, conformity and confrontation, value reevaluation and cultural transformation, etc. within globalization.

The exhibition centers around Xu Zhen's artistic practice and proposes its core as "ecosystem as medium". Epochal changes, ideological iterations, and contemporary art practices together constitute an ecological reality, which Xu Zhen creatively transforms into the medium of his practice. By superimposing and connecting different art systems — those of art making, curation, operation of gallery, art museum, and art media, Xu Zhen pioneers a path of artists' self-ecologicalization, refreshing and redefining their meaning of work and scope of creation. In the global contemporary art scene, he demonstrates the possibility of a universal contemporary art with Chinese characteristics and primal vitality.

As an active promoter, inheritor, and constructor of contemporary art and urban culture, the Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art and Urban Planning has long engaged in the creation of an urban art ecology. In hosting Xu Zhen's solo exhibition "Ecosystem as Medium", the Museum seeks to build a channel for art and cultural exchange and for public engagement. While expanding the breadth and depth of exchanges, it will continue to help Shenzhen function as the core engine of arts and culture in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and promote high-quality development of its cultural industry through the booming of arts and culture.

About the Artist

Xu Zhen

Artist, Curator, MadelN Company Founder

Xu Zhen, born in 1977, lives and works in Shanghai.

In 2004, Xu Zhen won the prize for 'Best Artist' at the China Contemporary Art Award. His practice covers various media such as installations, video, painting, performance, etc.

Xu Zhen has exhibited internationally, at museums and biennales, such as, the Venice Biennale (2001, 2005), The Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2004), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo, 2005), MoMA PS1

(New York, 2006), Tate Liverpool (2007), Hayward Gallery (London, 2012), Lyon Biennial (2013), Armory Show (New York, 2014), Long Museum (Shanghai 2015), Al Riwaq Art Center (Qatar, 2016), Sydney Biennial (2016), Guggenheim Museum (New York, 2017), Sharjah Biennial (2019), Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, 2019), National Gallery of Australia (Canberra, 2020), among others.

Aside from being an artist, Xu Zhen is also a curator and the founder of MadelN Company and MadelN Art Museum. In 1998, he co-founded BizArt Art Center, the first independent non-profit art institution in Shanghai. He co-curated with other artists major exhibitions in Shanghai and was one of the initiators of Art-Ba-Ba (www.art-ba-ba.com), a leading online forum launched in 2006 for discussion and critique of contemporary art. In 2009, Xu Zhen established 'MadelN Company', a contemporary art creation corporate, focusing on the production of creativity, and devoted to the research of contemporary culture's infinite possibilities. In 2013, MadelN Company launched XU ZHEN® which is committed to art creation and cutting-edge culture development. In 2014, MadelN Company established MadelN Gallery. The year 2022 marked the opening of the MadelN Art Museum to the public.

About the Curator

WANG Yamin received his Ph.D. in literature from East China Normal University in 2011. Since then he has based in Nanjing, his birthplace, and works as curator and Academic Director at Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts. Wang sees the current infrastructure for displaying and disseminating art—the contemporary exhibition complex—as an increasingly important artistic medium. His past practice has included the possibilities of new narratives in a museum setting. In working with rising curatorial initiatives, he managed the open call for and presentation of a total of twenty editions of “Zero Program” from 2012 to 2017 and organized a series of programs with local art groups and alternative spaces from 2013 to 2017. In his research-oriented approaches, he is interested in converting the historical medium of art into the contemporary medium of the exhibition complex. He has recently been concerned with centering the urgency of reinventing daily life and the process of transindividuation within realities. He has participated in exhibitions and art projects in China, the UK, Germany, and Morocco, and he has written essays for many art magazines, exhibitions, and other publications. He was chosen for the Visiting Chinese Curator Program by the Alliance Française in 2016 and the International Curatorial Delegation for the Turner Prize and Hull Year of Culture Program by the British Council in 2017.

About MOCAUP

Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art and Urban Planning (“MOCAUP”) is the iconic cultural project led by the Shenzhen Municipality. Sitting at the center of Futian District, Shenzhen, SZ MoCAUP plays an important role in the communication, inheritance, and development of contemporary art and urban culture of Shenzhen. Undertaking the mission of participating in the contemporary cultural and art development with a global vision and enabling art engagement in the city via a diverse, cross-disciplinary approach, SZ MoCAUP adopts the innovative model of “Art +” to create an open, globalized platform for contemporary cultural and art exchanges and to explore infinite possibilities of art together with the public.

While fulfilling the collective vision, the two components of Shenzhen MOCAUP also hold different emphases. The Museum of Contemporary Art, as the bridge for domestic and international contemporary art dialogues, is dedicated to bringing international presentations of contemporary art to China and displaying the evolution of China's contemporary art community to the world. The other half of the complex, the Museum of Urban Planning, serves as the window showcasing and linking the past, the present and the future of Shenzhen's urban development and provides a platform for academic discussion of urban planning and architectural design research.

Information

XU ZHEN: ECOSYSTEM AS MEDIUM

Curator: Wang Yamin

Venue

Exhibition Hall A3, Shenzhen Contemporary Art and Urban Planning

Date

March 30 – May 18, 2024

Open Hours

Tuesday– Sunday 10:00–18:00