

LEO XU PROJECTS

CHENG RAN

Portfolio

2014

Cheng Ran

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Cheng Ran (b. 1981, in Inner Mongolia) graduated from China Academy of Art in Hangzhou. Cheng's videos project the innermost of young Chinese and capture the living experience greatly impacted by the globalized cultures and cultural policies. They integrate elements of the performative, the visual from electronica and rock'n'roll music, and in a few cases, the aesthetics of Chinese ink painting into his cinematic language that is informed by the late 20th century art house cinema.

Cheng has exhibited at many galleries and institutions in China and abroad, such as Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; CAFA Art Museum, Beijing; Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai; Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; James Cohan Gallery, Shanghai and New York and Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai etc.. He has also participated in many art and film festivals including the 8th Shenzhen Sculpture biennale, West Bund 2013 A Biennial of architecture and Contemporary Art, The Third Guangzhou Triennial, The 26th European Media Art Festival, The 5th Auckland Triennial, KINO DER KUNST: Current Films from Asia in 2013 and Seoul International Experimental Film Festival, etc.

Cheng was shortlisted for "Absolut Art Award" in 2013, and won the "Best Video Artist" of 2011 by the online Art Magazine Radian

Cheng lives and works between Hangzhou and Amsterdam currently held a residency at the Rijksakademie / De Ateliers.

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CHENG RAN

BIOGRAPHY

1981 Born in Inner Mongolia, China

Lives and works in Hangzhou and Amsterdam

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2014 *Simply Wild*, Leo Xu Projects, Art Basel HK, Hong Kong, China

2013 *Existence Without Air, Food, or Water*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, Switzerland
The Last Generation, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China
CHENG RAN, Video Bureau, Guangzhou, China

2012 *Cheng Ran: What Why How*, Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China
Silent Cinema, Arario Gallery, Seoul, Korea
The Last Generation, Wall/Ladder/Machine in conjunction with 9BC performance, New York, USA

2011 *Hot Blood, Warm Blood, Cold Blood*, Galerie Urs Merle, Beijing, China
Everything Has Its Time, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China
Circadian Rhythm, Qingying Gallery, Hangzhou, China

2009 *Immersion and Distance*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2014 *Standing in the Shadow*, Ota Fine Arts, Singapore
We Have Never Participated, the 8th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, China
Now You See, New Chinese Video Art from the Collection from Dr. Michael I. Jacobs, Whitebox Art Center, New York, U.S.A
Video Art Auction Pixeling, Garage Turenne, Paris, France
The 8 of Paths, Uferhallen, Berlin, Germany
Film Sector, Art Basel, Switzerland
Decorum-Carpets & tapestries by artists, Power station of art, Shanghai, China
The Exchange Program, AVIFF Art Film Festival Cannes, France
Degeneration, The Australia China Art Foundation, T1 Creative Space, Sydney, Australia
The Book Lovers 4.0, Pop-up Bookstore, De Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Urban Tour, N-box, Times Museum Screening Season, Guangdong, China

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- 2013 *Rewriting the Landscape: India and China*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea
Degeneration, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT), Shanghai, China
Reading, Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China
Rijksakademie OPEN 2013, Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, Netherlands
West Bund 2013 A Biennial of Architecture and Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China
Building Bridges – Zeitgenössische Kunst aus China, Wolfsberg, Ermatingen, Switzerland
Standing in the Shadow, Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo, Japan
Video Screening, The Lizard Lounge, Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, Netherlands
The 26th European Media Art Festival, Osnabrueck, Germany
The 5th Auckland Triennial: If you were to live here, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Shanghai Surprise: A Group Show on Contemporary Art in Shanghai, K11 art space, Shanghai, China
ON|OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
Perspectives 180 – Unfinished Country: New Video From China, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston & Asia Society Texas Center, Texas, USA
- 2012 *Sub-phenomena – the first “CAFA·Future” exhibition*, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, China
DAY FOR NIGHT: Between Reality and Illusion: In Collaboration with Art21: Season 6 BMCC (CUNY), New York, U.S.A.
Memento Mori, Arario Gallery Beijing, China
Symptoms – Becoming Peninsula I, Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
Model Home, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China
Boy: A Contemporary Portrait, Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China
FCAC Video Project, Hannover, Germany
- 2011 *The Other Wave: Contemporary Chinese Photography*, BEN BROWN FINE ARTS, London, UK
Video Art in China - MADATAC, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain
"ONE WORLD" Exposition, Hong Kong, China
Video Art Terminal _ Un Viatico per i Viaggiatori. Venice, Italy
Reunion Island Biennale of Today's Art 2011, Reunion Island, France
Moving Image in China: 1988 - 2011, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China
Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This), Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China
Daybreak, Arario Gallery Beijing, China and Arario Cheonan Spaces, Korea
Catch the Moon in the Water: Emerging Chinese Artists, James Cohan Gallery, New York, U.S.A.
Hypnosis, Other Gallery, Beijing, China
Present Continuous Past(s), Taikang Space, Beijing, China
In A Perfect World..., Meulenstein Gallery, New York, U.S.A.
INTERMISSION, James Cohan Gallery, Shanghai
- 2010 *Alex: A Tribute to Alexander McQueen*, James Cohan Gallery, Shanghai, China

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- Cultivating the future: 798 Art Festival*, Beijing, China
Reflection of Minds: MOCA Envisage Biennale, Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, Shanghai, China
Mongolia 360 °: 1st Land Art Biennale Mongolia, National Modern Art Gallery, Ulaanbaatar, China
Get Moving, Li-Space, Beijing, China
3rd i program: compilation of Chinese video art, V2_ Institute for the Unstable Media, Rotterdam, Holland
The Tell-tale Heart Part 2, James Cohan Gallery, New York, U.S.A.
HOME-stay, Osage Gallery, Shanghai, China
Reshaping history, Arario, Beijing, China
Jungle: A Close-Up Focus on Chinese Contemporary Art Trends, Platform China, Beijing, China
The Tell-tale Heart, James Cohan Gallery, Shanghai, China
- 2009 *CREAM-International festival for Arts and Media*, Yokohama, Japan
YiPai-Century Thinking, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China
Blackboard, ShanghART H-Space, Shanghai, China
What has been happening here? Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
New Work from China, Fortune Cookie Projects Singapore, HT Contemporary Space, Singapore
- 2008 *Farewell to Post-colonialism: The Third Guangzhou Triennial*, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
The 3rd China Media Art Festival, Hangzhou, China
There Is No I in Team: Contemporary Chinese Artists' Work, Newcastle Upon Tyne, U.K.
Infantization, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taipei, China
- 2007 *Refresh: Emerging Chinese Artists*, Arario Beijing, Beijing, China
Amateur World, Platform China, Beijing, China
The First Today Documents 2007: Energy: Spirit, Body, Material, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China
Refresh: Emerging Chinese Artists, Zendai MoMa, Shanghai, China
Marking Time, Waiting for the Answer, DoArt-Beijing, Gallery Hyundai, Beijing
IDAP, Australia
Infantization, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China
On view: Selections From China, Paul Morris Gallery, New York, U.S.A.
- 2006 *Elektrische Schatten China Video Festival*, Salzburg Museum of Modern Art, Salzburg, Austria
Image Flux: China: New work in Video Art, Guangzhou, China
- 2005 *GIFTS: Contemporary Art Exhibition*, H.N.U. Art Museum, Hangzhou, China
In the Deep of Reality: A Case of Chinese Contemporary Art, Beyond City, Hangzhou, China
- 2004 *Circle Place: Video installation Exhibition*, Bai Ta Ling Space, Hangzhou, China

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2003 *White Tower Mountain—Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Baitaling, Hangzhou, China

FILM FESTIVALS AND SCREENINGS

2013 *KINO DER KUNST: Current Films from Asia*, München, German

2009 *There Is No I in Team, Contemporary Chinese Artists' Work*, PROGRAM, Berlin, Germany

Seoul International Experimental Film Festival, Seoul, Korea

The 6th China Independent Film Festival, Nanjing, China

2006 *Chinese Independent Films Screenings 05-06*, RCM Art Museum, Nanjing, China

2004 *Wink: 2 Seconds Ultra-Short Video Festival*, DDM Warehouse, Shanghai, China

The Second: Chinese new Media art Festival, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China

Chinese Independent Films Screenings, Nanjing Arts Institute, Nanjing, China

AWARDS AND RESIDENCY

Residency at the Rijksakademie/De Ateliers from 2012 to 2014

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Selected Works

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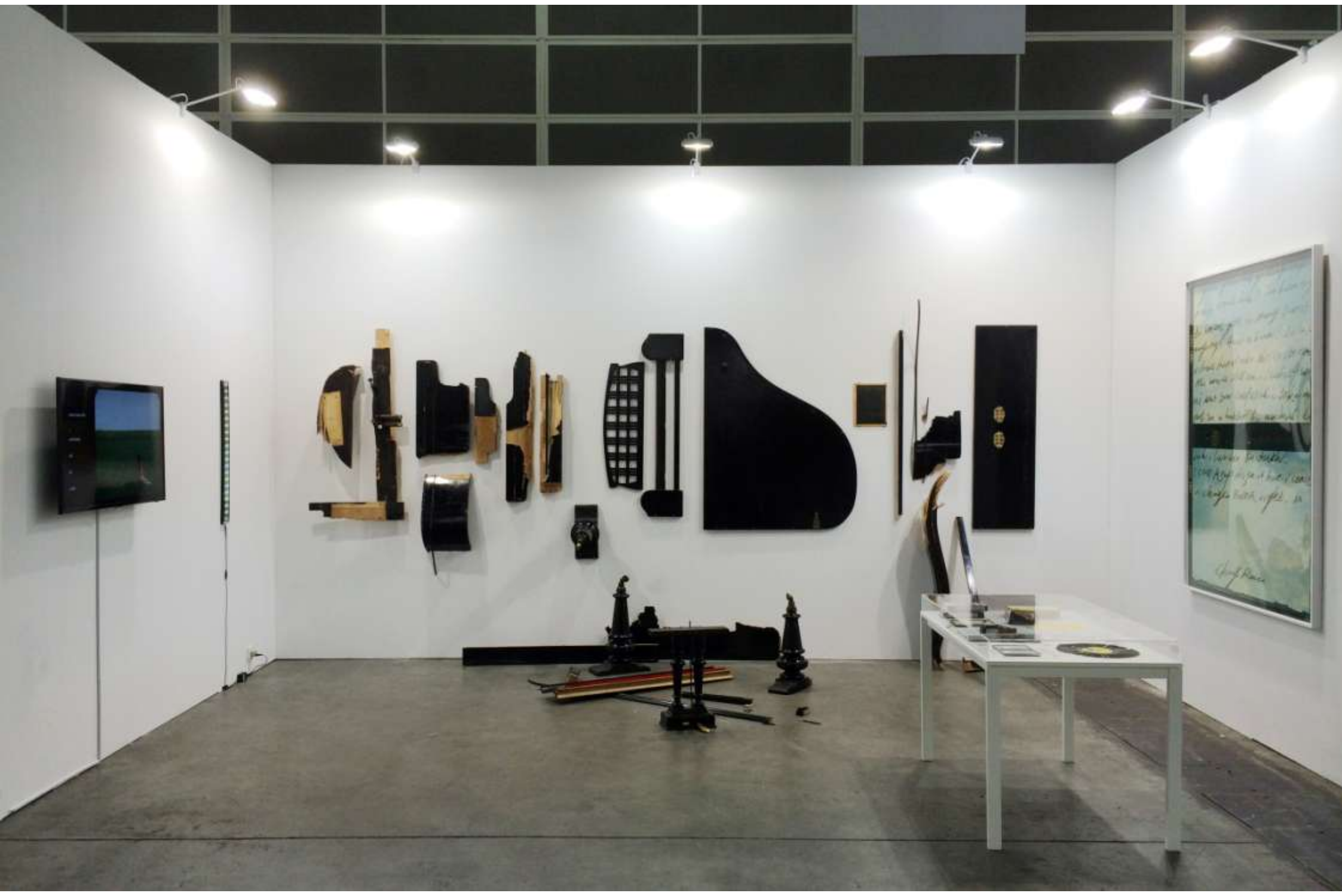
CHENG RAN
Born in the Wild
2013
Mixed media installation
Dimension variable

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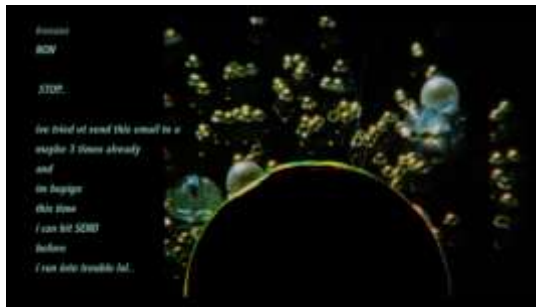


Born in the Wild Details

Born in the Wild uses a piano as material for the installation. The idea was inspired by a CD of an Emil Gilels' performance in 1972 of a Beethoven sonata, with a cover image of a painting by Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), *The Sea of Ice*. From this, Cheng Ran directly transformed the cover and contents of the music cd, its exterior and its core. Throughout, he kept Mikhail Bakunin's famous quote firmly in mind: "The passion for destruction is also a creative passion."



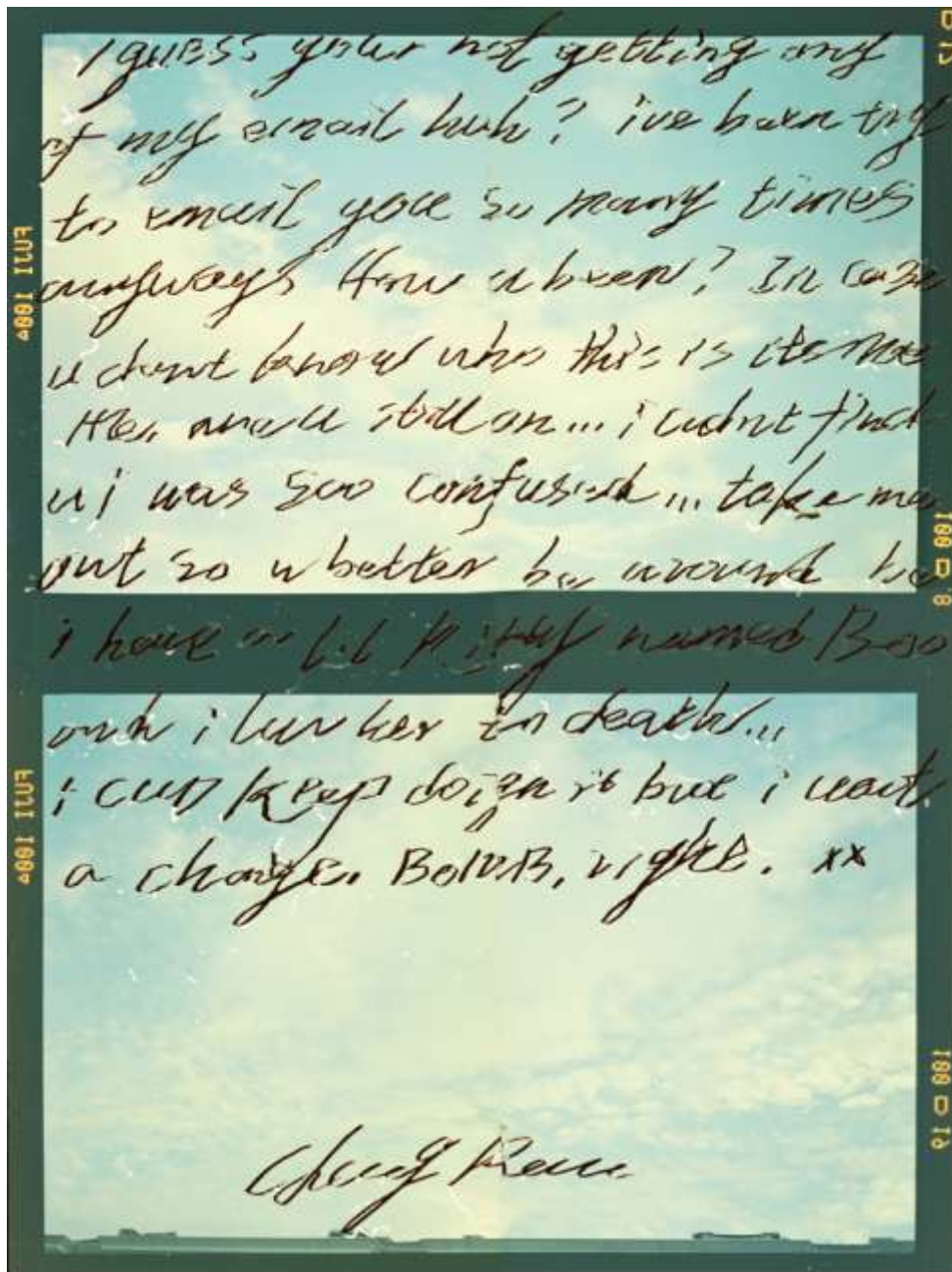
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CHENG RAN *Simply Wild*

Super 8 film transferred to digital video with sound
6 min 53 sec

Simply Wild is developed from a spam e-mail Cheng Ran received last September from an unknown woman, originally shot in Super 8 film in Netherlands and transferred to digital video. Amazed by the evocative writing of pseudo-love letter, Cheng Ran enriches the text part with sensational manipulation of video shots



CHENG RAN
The Third-Class Letter
2014
Inkjet print
135 x 180 cm

The Third-Class Letter is a photograph work transformed from a hand-written letter on film by the artist, who is inspired by the daily spam mails he receives. It emphasizes the ignorance people treat spam mails with. They are not usually opened or read. But this type of writing extensively exists in our time. The title borrows from the famous sci-fi movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

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CHENG RAN
One Second #1

2014

Photograph on light box

90 x 8 cm



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CHENG RAN
One Second #1
Details

One Second #1 is the one-second long film still from the super 8 film *Simply Wild*. The composition borrows from American realist painter Andrew Wyeth's famous painting *Christina's world* in 1948.

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CHENG RAN
Temporary (Taxi) Day (Driver)
2014
Mixed media
Dimension variable

Temporary (Taxi) Day (Driver) includes a theatre script based on Martin Scorsese's Movie "The Taxi Driver" by Cheng Ran, previously published at ArtReview Asia and various found objects collected in Europe, connecting the cut-out text part organically as a storyboard.



Small, illegible text labels are scattered throughout the display, providing context for the objects.



CHENG RAN

Always I Trust

2014

Twenty five channel video installation with sound and light boxes

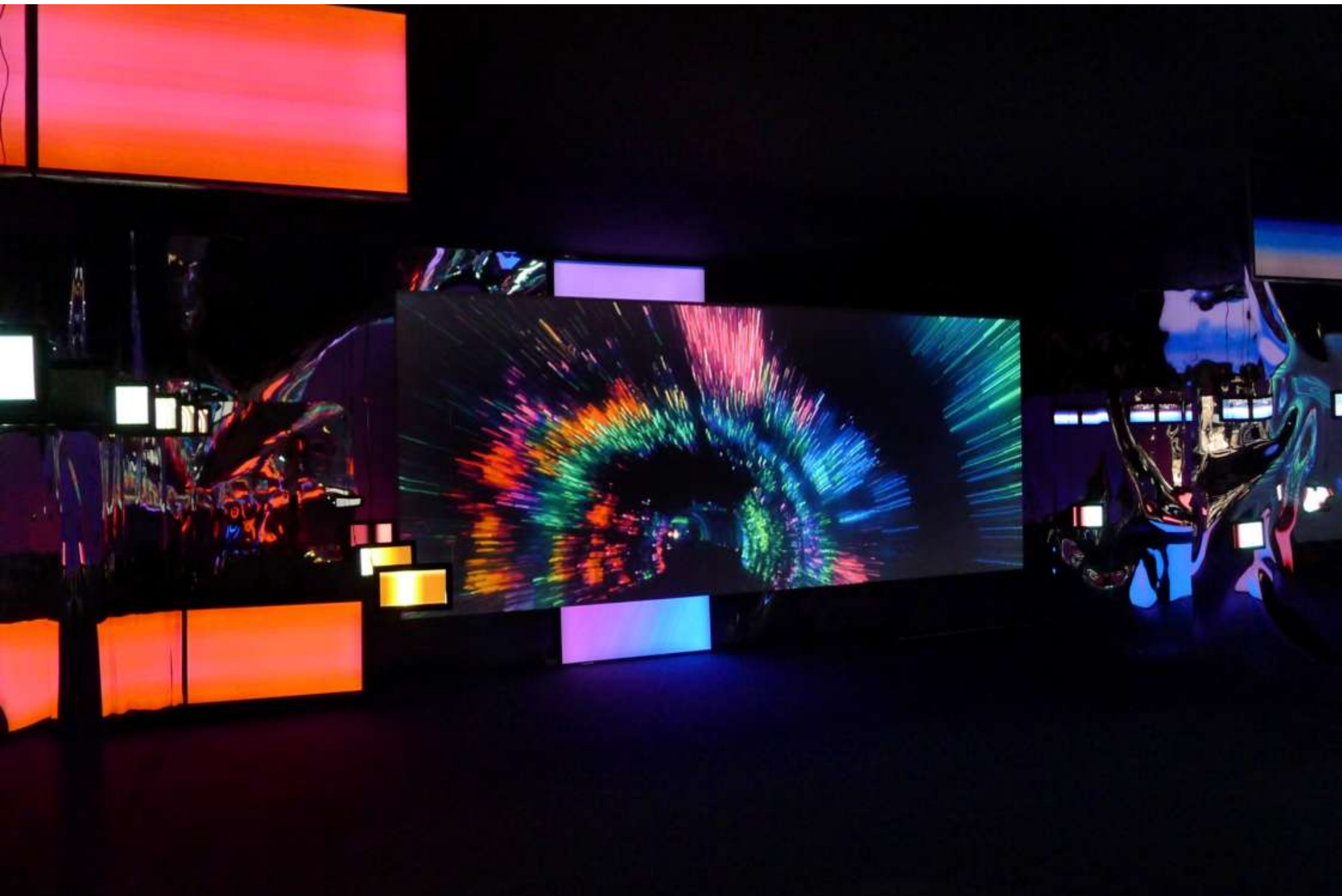
6 min 26 sec

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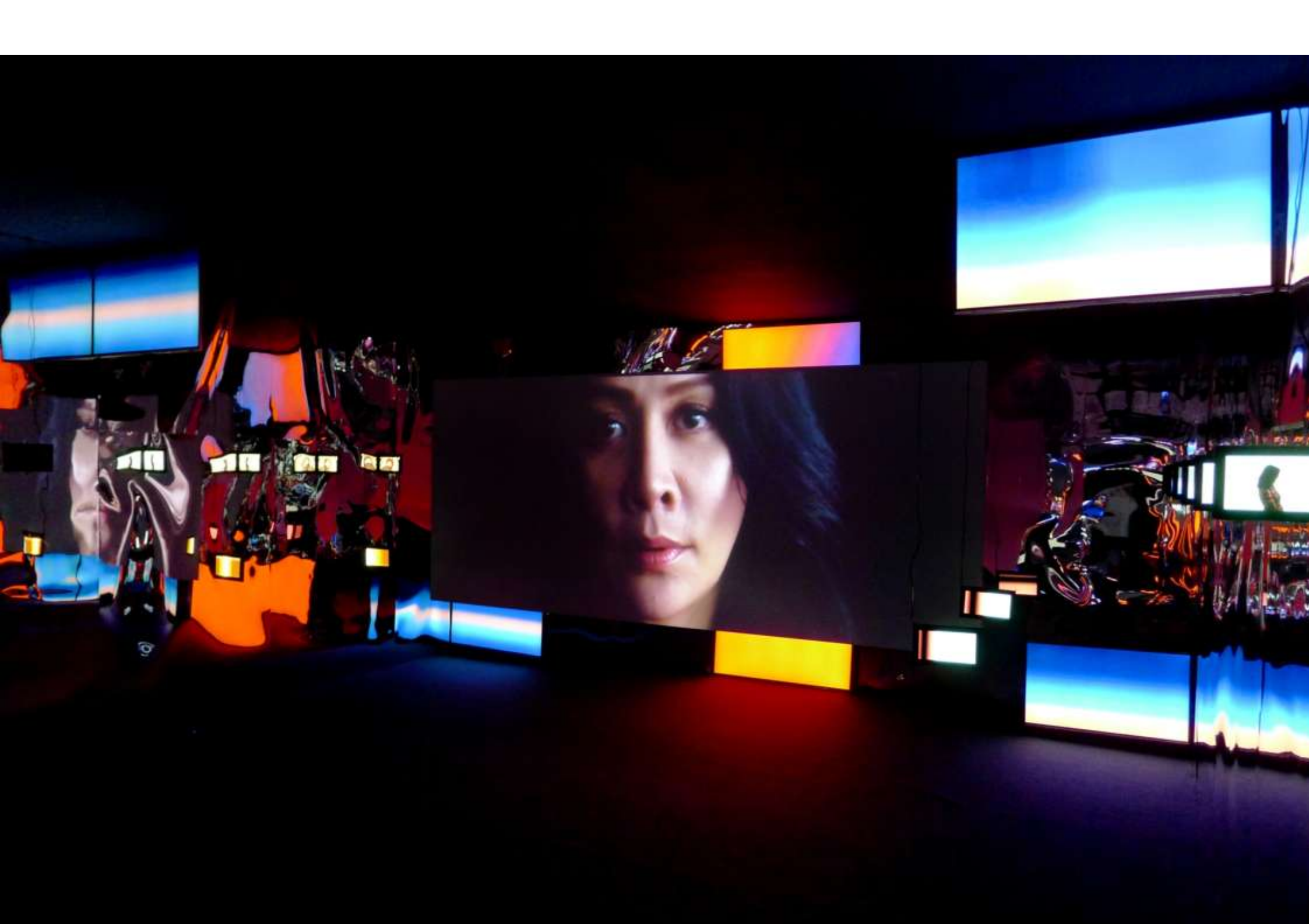
实际上，你不知道我是谁
In case u dont know who this is its ME

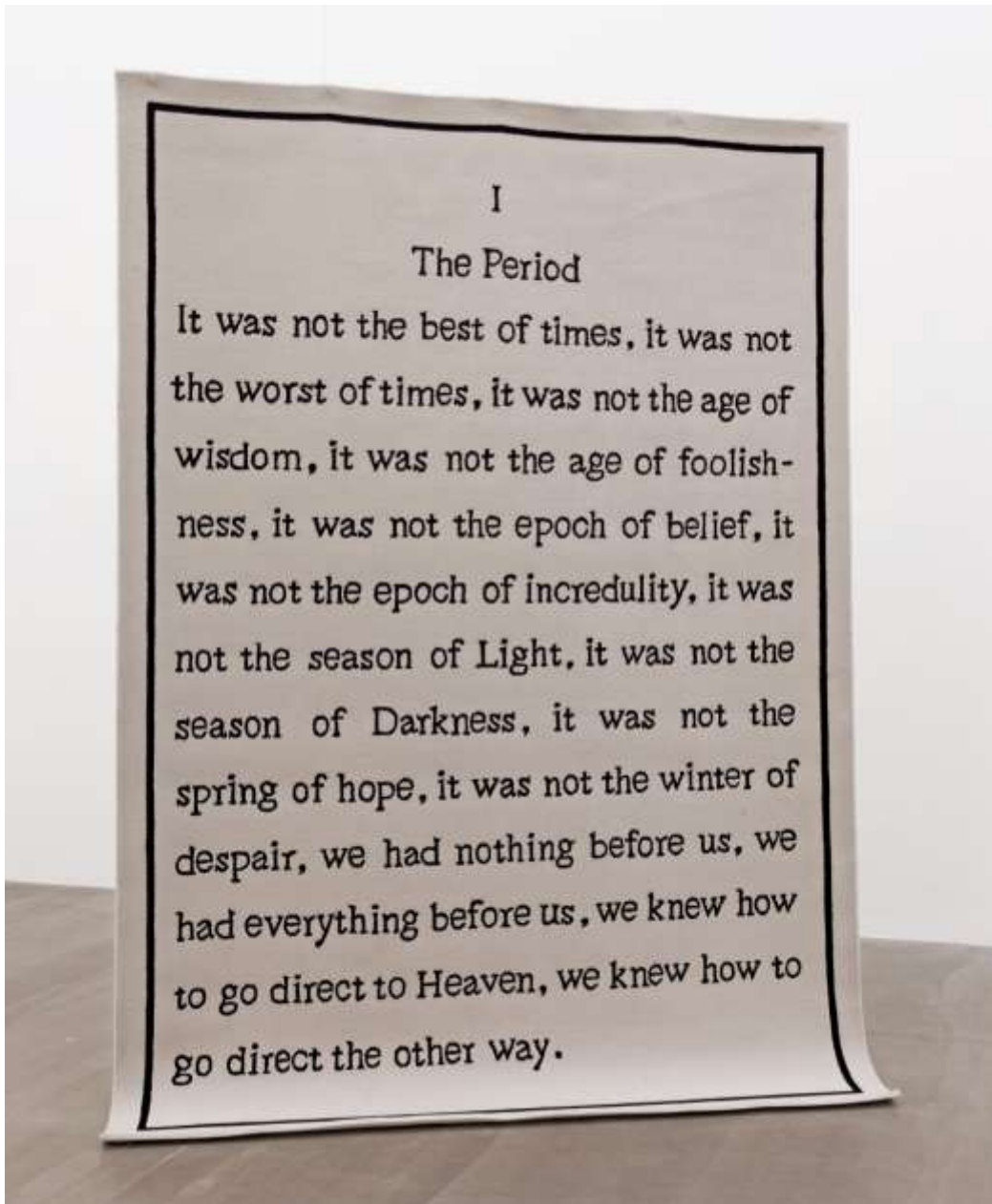
Starred by the famous Chinese actress Carina Lau and shot in Shanghai, *Always I Trust* continues the artistic interpretation of the spam e-mail Cheng Ran received from an anonymous woman, which was first realized in the super 8 film *Simply Wild* in Amsterdam. The massive 25 channel video installation with light boxes delivers a different feel and understanding with futurist twist to the same inspiration. It is debut at The 8th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, 2014.





来和我聊聊，好吗
wanna come chat, right





CHENG RAN

The Last Generation

2013

Pure New Zealand wool, manually embroidered carpet

270 x 192 cm

The Last Generation adapts the opening chapter of Charles Dickens's masterpiece *A Tale of Two Cities*, changing the paragraph of definitive words into negative sentences. It describes a generation of the youngest with no confinement of their minds and unlimited potentials to embrace with. Currently on view at the group exhibition *Decorum-Carpets and tapestries by artists* Power station of Art, Shanghai, 2014.



CHENG RAN

Two Pigeons

2013

Super 16 mm film transferred to single channel HD video with sound,
4 min 11 sec

Installation view at Rijksakademie / De Ateliers

Adapted from Aesop's Tales "Two Pigeons". Two pigeons live together in the closest friendship and cherish for each other. One of them yearns for a change of scene and eventually flies off on what he promises will be only a three-day adventure. During this time he is caught in a storm with little shelter, ensnared, attacked by predators and then injured by a boy with a sling, returning with relief to roam no more. It's a story about freedom and its price, when it's impossible to distinguish between right and wrong.



CHENG RAN

The River and The Pond

2013

Super 16 mm film transferred to single channel HD video with sound
5 min 55 sec

Installation view at Rijksakademie / De Ateliers

Adapted from Ivan Krylov's *The Pond* and *The River*. *The Pond and the River* is played by two people, scenes and characters alternately co-exist. It's an investigation about the significance of stagnation and progress.



CHENG RAN

Existence Without Air, Food, or Water

2011

Single channel video with sound

3 min

It is based on the poetic entries from a found diary, which Cheng Ran transformed into a song. The unknown, lovesick woman is also the author of the phrase that Cheng Ran has chosen for the exhibition title: Existence Without Air, Food, or Water. For the artist, this term refers to spiritual existence, which, in contrast to physical existence, has needs beyond air, food, or water. The title seems fit for Cheng Ran's oeuvre, since his works stand out because of their intangible qualities.

Previously exhibited at:

Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China; LEO XU PROJECTS, Shanghai, China; Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, Switzerland and Beijing, China; Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo, JapaWolfsberg, Ermatingen, Switzerland



CHENG RAN

1971-2000

2012

Single channel video with sound

7 min 47 sec

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“1971-2000” (2012) opens up a box of memories of the cinematic classics that have left enormous impact on Cheng and his peers who would access contemporary cinema through second-hand resources, bootleg products and much recently the internet. Appropriating iconic elements from “A Clockwork Orange” (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) and “The Million Dollar Hotel” (Wim Wenders, 2000), the artist created a new film of a young man throwing himself off the rooftop, which however reconciles the contradicting beliefs and viewpoints in these two classics.



CHENG RAN

Angels For The Millennium (#6)

2012

Single channel video with sound

7 min 45 sec



“**Angels for the Millennium (#6)**” (2012) filmed an unlikely rescue in deep water. When projected upside down, the whole process—the drowning man ascends peacefully and slowly, later attended by lifeguards—only makes for a tranquil and sacred rite. Mimicking Bill Viola’s historic video installation “Five Angels for the Millennium” (2001), the work voices the response of Cheng Ran as a young Chinese artist to the parameter of video art set by Western pioneers, whose works are more read and heard about among the Chinese. The video also references the British thriller “The Prisoner” (Patrick McGoochan, 1967), in which the protagonist a secret agent named “Number Six” makes every effort of escaping the mysteriously isolated dystopian “village” he is held captive in. Confessional and redemptive, Cheng’s Angel Number Six marks the line between belief and indoctrination.

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CHENG RAN

Lostalghia

2012

Single channel video with sound

11 min 45 sec

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“**Lostalgia**” (2012), as the title suggests, plays a word game on Andrei Tarkovsky’s “Nostalgia” (1983). The story develops from the opening act of the latter, with a fabricated scene of fire and Cheng’s reinterpretation of lines.



CHENG RAN

The Eclipse

2011

Single channel video with sound

3 min

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Beginning with a slow close-up shot of the lamp behind the drum's cymbal which looks as if the sunrise from desert, "**The Eclipse**" documents an 3-minute long drum play that centers on the light effects caused by the wobbling cymbal without depicting the drummer and his performance. Visually beautiful and mesmerizing, the video carries a rare sense of humor that extracts the beauty from the normal music practice.



CHENG RAN

Chewing Gum Papers

2011

Single channel video with sound

3 min 10 sec

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“**Chewing Gum Paper**” (2011) was filmed in a rock band’s studio. Cheng captured the moment groups of paper-balls (foil wrap of chewing gum) vibrating on the drum’s surface while the guitarist aside playing loud. The scene looks mysterious and hypnotizing, and in the meanwhile offers open-ended readings: the clash of heavenly bodies in a lonely universe, or an agitated gathering (for the soundtrack sampled from Martin Luther King’s speech)...

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CHENG RAN

Prospect Cottage

2012

Single channel video with sound

8 min 31 sec



Titled after the British filmmaker and artist Derek Jarman's famous garden, "**Prospect Cottage**" is inspired by Jarman's diaries *Modern Nature* in which "prospect cottage" are the first two words to appear. The video depicts a lone man driving a car, crossing the city. The car is donned with flowers like an inverted garden. In the second half, the video slips into a blue screen--a reference to Jarman's film *Blue*--and starts with a voice-over narrating text quoted from Jarman's *Modern Nature*. *Prospect Cottage* shows Cheng's attempt to revisit the universe of the 20th century art-house cinema and also pays homage to the late Derek Jarman.



CHENG RAN

Rock Dove

2009

Single channel video with sound

5 min



“**Rock Dove**” (2009) begins with a flock of doves roosting in the dark inside a factory building. This five-minute work is a subtle and unsettling dance enacted by the flock. The video reaches its dramatic peak with the birds' eruptive and chaotic response to the sudden illumination of the factory's fluorescent lamps.



CHENG RAN

Anonymity, or Imitation and Imagining of Man Ray's Tears

2010

Single channel video with sound

11 min 33 sec

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Through the alternating Vivaldi music and the repetitive sound of gentle waves lapping the shore, the video begins with a long shot observing a scantily clad boy standing statue-like on a rock and winds up with a close-up of the boy's face dotted with fake pearls reminiscent of the melancholy teardrops in Man Ray's widely known photograph of 1930, Tears. This piece is artist's tribute to Alexander McQueen, and was praised by New York Times critic Holland Cotter as "surprisingly suspenseful".



CHENG RAN
The Summanus Butterfly
2010
Single channel video
4 min 31sec



CHENG RAN

Ghost of Tundra

2010

C-print

20 7/8 x 31 1/2 inches;

53 x 80 cm.



CHENG RAN

Ghost of Tundra

2010

C-print

20 7/8 x 31 1/2 inches;

53 x 80 cm.



CHENG RAN

Midnight Art Museum

2009

Mixed media installation

340 x 180 x 280 cm

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Commissioned for “Immersion and Distance” (curated by Yang Fudong) at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing in 2009, “**Midnight Art Museum**” was conceived by the artist as an ideal museum model that is realized in unlikely form of hut combining with artworks, sinning disco balls, spiral staircases, etc. The work revisits the youth cultures – pop and dance music, contemporary cinema, among many others - which have inspired and nourished the artist.



CHENG RAN

Still of an Unknown Film

2008

C-print

105 x 150 cm

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CHENG RAN

Dark Red (The Deepest Red)

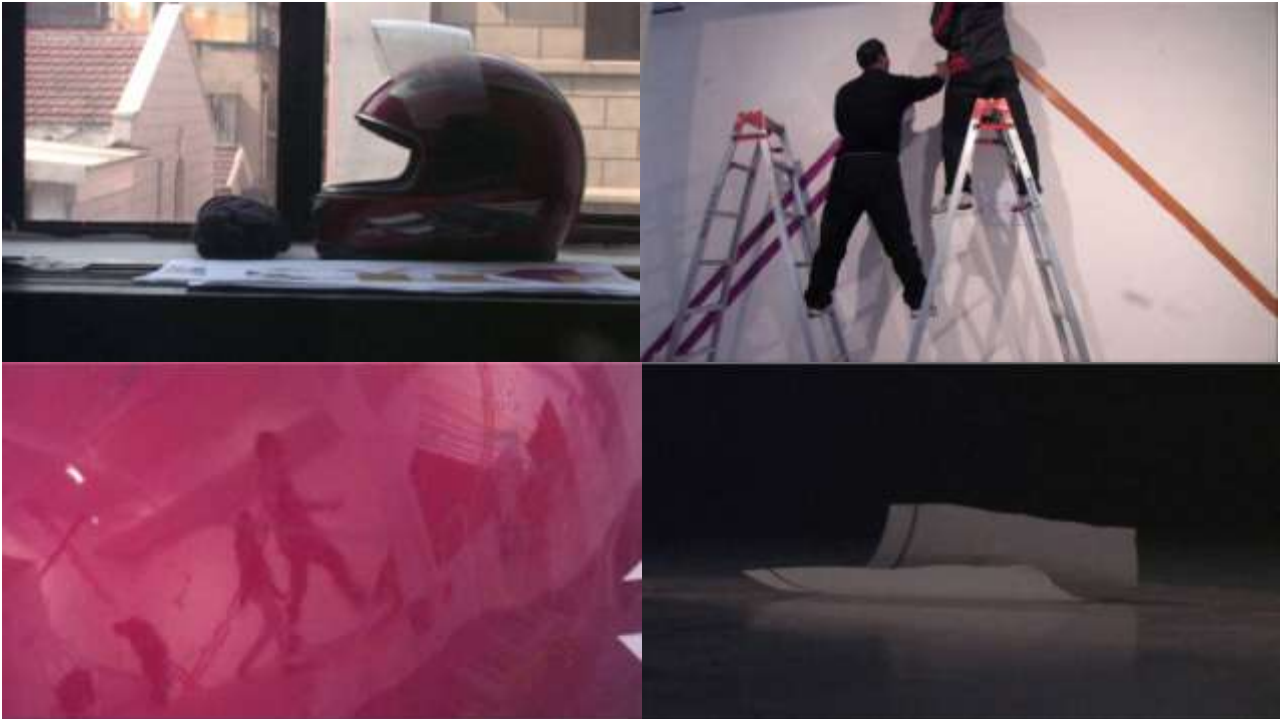
2012

Ten-channel video installation

dimension variable

Exhibited at “*Model Home*”, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China, 2012

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Dark Red (The Deepest Red), 2012, Ten-channel video installation, dimension variable for “*Model Home*”, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China 2012

Cheng Ran is commissioned to produce a body of videos for the show and a sound project curated by Leo Xu to extend the exhibition into a subtle soundscape.

Titled “**Dark Red (The Deepest Red)**”, Cheng Ran’s ambitious ten-channel video installation brings together video documentation of the production of Michael Lin’s “*Model Home*” and footages on the architectural environment and people involved. The ten videos are scattered within six floors of the entire museum space and presented in various forms.

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INSTALLATION VIEW

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Installation view, *CHENG RAN: WHAT WHY HOW*, Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China 2012

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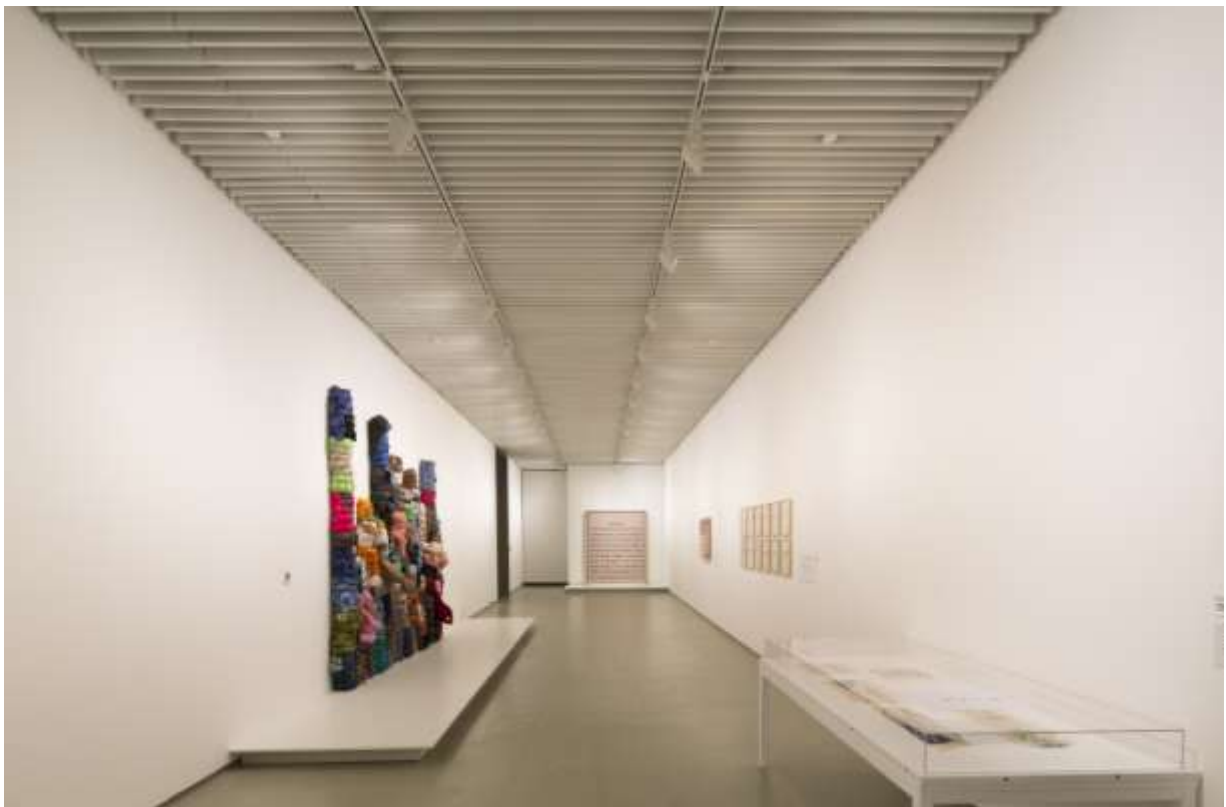
Installation view, *CHENG RAN: WHAT WHY HOW*, Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai, China 2012



CHENG RAN, *Always I trust*, Installation view at the 8th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale

OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, China, 2014

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CHENG RAN, *The Last Generation*, installation view at *Decorum-Carpets and tapestries by artists*

Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China, 2014

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Installation view, *Existence Without Air, Food, Or Water*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, Switzerland

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Installation view, *The Last Generation*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China

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Installation view, *Model Home*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China 2012

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Installation view at group exhibition *Degeneration*, OCAT, Shanghai, China, 2013-2014

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Installation view, *Symptoms – Becoming Peninsula I*, Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China, 2012



Installation view, *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)*, LEO XU PROJECTS, Shanghai, China, 2011

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For further information, please contact the gallery info@leoxuprojects.com, or phone +86-21-34611245.