

# Cheng Ran

Cheng Ran: Selected Films

Exhibition in Lucerne: 17.2.–9.4.2017

*Beer & Popcorn*

Movie night at Galerie Urs Meile

featuring Cheng Ran's *In Course of the Miraculous* (2015)

Friday, 17. February 2017

5 - 8.30 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of *Cheng Ran: Selected Films*, the third solo exhibition of Chinese artist Cheng Ran (\*1981), at our gallery in Lucerne. The exhibition will focus on his video works among which the central piece is the epic *In Course of the Miraculous* (2015, wide-screen HD film, 5.1 surround sound, 468', edition of 3 + 1 AP), a film that is almost impossible to watch in its entirety. To ensure the best screening effect, we will transfer the gallery space into a tentative cinema where people could sit and enjoy the film with drinks and snacks. *Beer & Popcorn* - a special opening event will be held on February 17, 5–8:30 pm. The film tells three real-life stories about people getting lost mysteriously: the English mountain climber George Mallory, who went missing in his first attempt to top the Mount Everest in 1924; the Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader, who vanished during his 1975 journey across the Atlantic; and the crew on the China Lu Rong Yu no. 2682 fishing trawler that was left only one third alive after six months on the ocean. The artist's endeavor is, to uncover the human nature in the protagonists' fatalistic pursuit of the miraculous and in their confrontation with the ultimate proposition of death.

Cheng Ran works in media that are products of complex, globalized conditions, while simultaneously traversing a global art system. In his video works, we see full of references on which he manages to create deeply moving reflections, and he always credits his predecessors. Watching Cheng Ran's videos is like watching a magician tricking out with his entire toolbox. He offers amusements that are magically realized by his signature practice of intersecting image with sound, oftentimes appropriating visual and aural components from classics to create an entirely new video. This approach enables him to push the past spirit over for what seems like a strategy of disengagement, and to de-familiarize familiar scenes to the point at which they become strange and dreamy. He is always leashing out in full force the electric images and loads of sounds channeled through music, voice, and random noise. In the exhibition, we will display a selection of his representative video works which span a time period from 2010 to 2016 and perfectly underline his art-making methodology.

In his 2012 work *Angels for the Millennium (number 6)* (2012, single channel video with sound, 7'44", edition of 6 + 1 AP), Cheng Ran responds to Bill Viola's 2001 *Five Angels for the Millennium*, in which angels rise up out of water towards heaven. He reverses the process as his angel is submerged in water, where the question comes up as whether our happy ending should be spiritual or should return to reality. *The anonymity, or Imitation and Imagining of Man Ray's "Tears (1930-1932)"* (2010, single channel video with sound, 11'33", edition of 6 + 1 AP), begins with a long shot through alternating classical music observing a scantily clad boy standing statue-like on a rock, then winds up with a close-up of the boy's face dotted with fake tears, reminiscent of the melancholy teardrops in Man Ray's widely known photograph of 1930, *Tears. Secret Notes to Nan Goldin* (2013, single channel HD video, color/sound, 16:9, 14'33", edition of 6 + 1 AP) depicts a story told in eight, secretly hidden notes Cheng Ran left in his friend's place before departing, to engage in a conversation with the next guest of the house, the American photographer, Nan Goldin. In *Chewing Gum Paper* (2011, single channel video, color/sound, 3'48", edition of 6 + 1 AP), we see scattered crumpled silver balls of chewing gum wrapping paper atop a bass drum surface, jumping erratically along with the loud sound waves of the fragmented Martin Luther King's famous speech "I Have A Dream". While the consolidation of the sound and image seemingly reaches no sense, the spiritual presence of the iconic phrase is transferred into substance through the vibrating chewing gum wrappers. *Everything Has Its Time* (2011, single channel HD video, color/sound, 16:9, 6'52", edition of 6 + 1 AP) is of the artist's reminiscence of a memory in a gloomy Metro compartment in Paris when he took a fragmented sound clip on mobile phone containing a recording of a piece of music played by a busker, mixed together with the noise in the carriage. *The Eclipse* (2011, single channel HD video, color/sound, 16:9, 3'48", edition of 6 + 1 AP) showcases the hypnotizing light effects caused by the vibrating cymbals during a three-minute drum play.

Cheng Ran purposefully spends a significant part of his time abroad each year. Life abroad for him is an adventure which deprives of all his previous experiences and comforts, meanwhile gives him fresh insights and inspirations to his later practices. In 2016, Cheng Ran participated in a residency program at the New Museum in New York, follow by an exhibition, which is the artist's first solo museum show in the United States. We will see an essential video *The Homing Pigeon* (2016, single channel HD video, color/sound, 16:9, 5'53", edition of 6 + 1 AP) from the New Museum show at our exhibition, displayed in the video selection. The work attempts to capture the spirit of the New York City in sight of a first time visitor, choosing a strange angle of the homing pigeons resting and moving with the backdrop of the Time Square's iconic billboards, with the soundtrack of the artist voicing over an excerpt from Allen Ginsberg's famed poem, the "Howl".

Cheng Ran was born in 1981 in Inner Mongolia, China, and currently lives and works in Hangzhou, China. His work has been featured in numerous biennials and group exhibitions, including *The World Precedes the Eye*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, Singapore (2016); *Unlimited*, Art Basel, Basel (2016); *SALTWATER: a Theory of Thought Forms*, the 14th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2015); *When I Give, I Give Myself*, the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (2015); *Inside China – L'Intérieur du Géant*, chi K11 art museum, Shanghai (2015), K11 Art Foundation Pop-Up Space, Hong Kong (2015) and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014); *Cinematheque: Music is On, Band is Gone*, chi K11 art museum, Shanghai (2015); *Degeneration*, Australia China Art Foundation (ACAF), Sydney (2014) and OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT), Shanghai (2013); and *ON/OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2013). Cheng Ran's most recent solo exhibitions include *Diary of a Madman* at the New Museum, New York (2016); *In Course of the Miraculous* at the K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (2016), and Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Beijing (2015). His other solo shows have been presented at: Qiao Space, Shanghai (2016); YUAN Space, Beijing (2015); Armada, Milan (2014). Cheng Ran was nominated for the first edition of the OCAT & Pierre Huber Art Prize in 2014 and the Absolut Art Award in 2013, and was named the "Best Video Artist" by the art magazine Radian in 2011.

The film *In Course of the Miraculous* (2015) was made possible with the generous support of K11 Art Foundation and Erlenmeyer Foundation.