

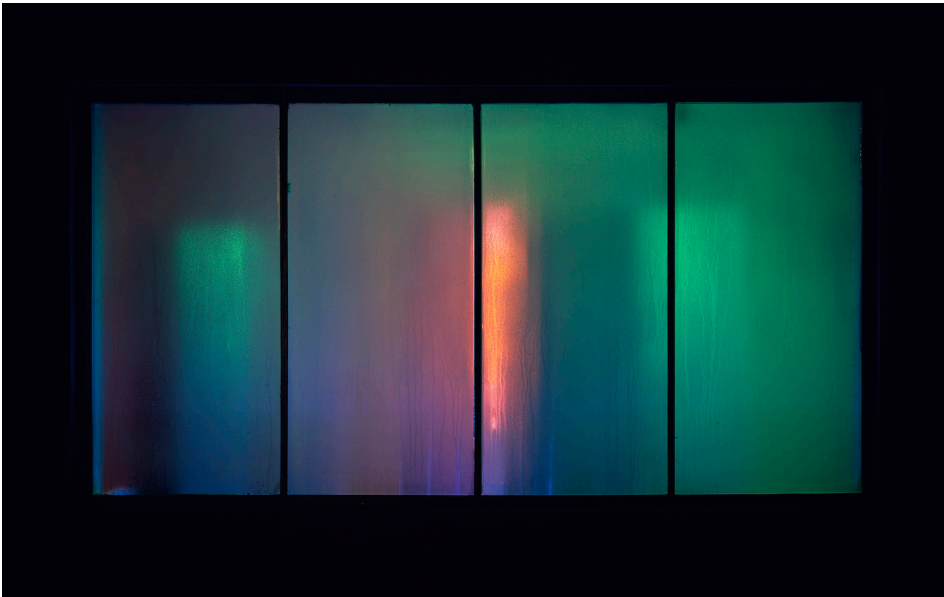
PRESS RELEASE
PILAR CORRIAS PRESENTS

WITNESS

CHEN WEI, CUI JIE, HAO JINGBAN, ZHANG RUYI

7 APRIL – 4 MAY 2018

PV: FRIDAY 6 APRIL 2018 6PM – 8PM



Chen Wei, *New Buildings*, 2016, Archival Inkjet Print, 150 x 240 cm

Pilar Corrias is pleased to present *Witness*, a group exhibition exploring various responses to change in urban environments in China's recent past, present and future. Featuring the work of four artists – Chen Wei, Cui Jie, Hao Jingban and Zhang Ruyi – *Witness* reflects their nuanced insights into the consequences of metropolitan expansion, gentrification and the redefinition of social spaces in present-day China. These developments include the rapid creation of new sites of domesticity, work and recreation, which produce new forms of personal, psychological and social attachments. Feelings of alienation and dislocation form newly coded relationships between the city and its inhabitants. As witnesses of transformation throughout the environments they inhabit, Chen, Cui, Hao and Zhang all present their own distinct interpretations of these historical evolutions.

Cui Jie (b. 1983 Shanghai, China) depicts the collision of incongruous architectural styles present in major cities through her composite, layered studies of urban environments. Having lived in three of China's most fast-paced cities – Shanghai, Hangzhou and Beijing – Cui records a personal response to feelings of disorientation produced by these competing architectural forms and new models for urban design. Cui's paintings interpret the past and present look of the city by incorporating the conflicting styles of Soviet, Japanese, Chinese and Western modernist buildings found in many of China's urban centres. Often juxtaposing the imposing façades of monumental skyscrapers with abstract sculptural forms found in city plazas, the works call into question the intentions of these designs and the values or ideals they aim to project. In paintings such as *Corner Building* and sculptures like *Guangzhou Telecom Building*, the Utopian motif of the dynamic figures in motion becomes complicated by the way they are enmeshed and flattened within the consuming cityscape.

Zhang Ruyi (b. 1985, Shanghai) subtly reconstructs the experience of inhabiting a given space by replicating or inverting its forms. Simultaneously realistic and surreal, Zhang's work interrogates the language of spatial design. Combinations of grids and arcs permeate her two-dimensional works, recalling actual building façades. The memory of walking amongst expansive rows of buildings are reimagined through the artist's intervention with her material. Columns, lines and curves are rendered on their surfaces across numerous visits. Similarly, her sculpture revitalises overlooked facets of living spaces by arranging new compositions from the minutiae of built environments. Tiles, door frames, breezeblocks or electrical plug sockets in the case of *Flow Away*, are worked into new configurations that strike a fine balance between order and disorder. Such expansive sculpture challenges the normalisation of found objects, reframing the way an individual might encounter their surroundings.

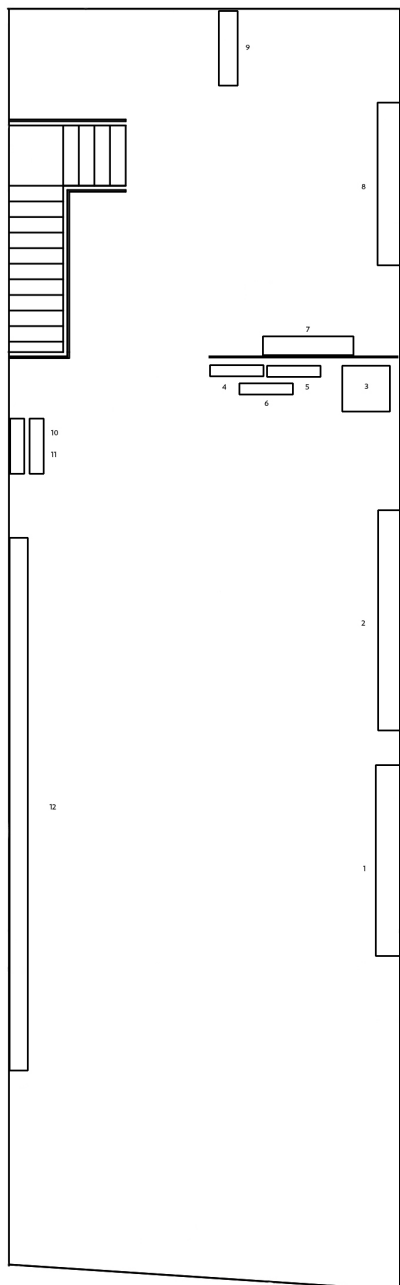
Chen Wei (b.1980, Zhejiang), through carefully constructed photographs and sculptures, explores the way people envision the city in their imagination. His compositions are nostalgic and melancholy, inviting the viewer to project their own memories of a place and time onto them. Images such as *Dark Mosaics #1* and *New Buildings* depict interiors constructed in his studio, which resemble real places. These works are part of Chen's 'New City' project (2013-present), made up of wistful visions of

artificial city centres, devoid of human presence. They are informed by Chen's own experience of the transformation of cities such as Beijing where he lives, but also the way cities are imagined or envisioned in forms of popular culture or in the language of advertising. This is also true of Chen's LED sculpture *Trouble #18021*, akin to those typically used to present a sales slogan in a shopping district. They are often found by the artist broken or with numerous impairments, causing the sign to glitch whilst undermining its enticing phrase. Through the acquisition and resettlement of these objects, usually scattered throughout the city, Chen repurposes their blunt languages and images to bring the feeling of the crowded, bright-lit streets into the exhibition space.

Hao Jingban (b.1985, Shanxi Province) explores social movements and historical currents through documentary film, focussing on stories as they unfold across specific symbolic locations. Since 2012, Hao has explored two key yet seemingly disparate social sites; ballrooms and factories. Both are unified as sites of entertainment, sociality and production and have rich histories and utilities throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Hao Jingban's observational films sensitively capture situations, relationships and forms of behaviour that are emblematic of a time, place and generation. In *take care. Harun*, Hao explores the site of the factory by using two parallel screens at once, whilst comparing three different kinds of images that portray labour. One is from a news documentary on China's Great Leap Forward movement filmed by an American journalist in 1958 and the other from a Chinese propaganda feature film on an iron factory in 1962. Both of these documentaries are interspersed with the footage that Hao filmed herself in a factory in 2016, following on from a workshop with Harun Farocki, a highly influential figure in her practice. For over six years Hao has simultaneously been working on the 'Beijing Ballrooms' project, involving several moving-image works documenting various aspects of ballroom culture. Arriving in China during the Republican Era (1912-1949), ballroom dance enjoyed a brief vogue amount the elite before falling from favour for several decades following the establishment of the People's Republic under Chairman Mao (1949-). Since the late 1970s and early 80s, particularly following the Reform and Opening period in China's history, this form of dance has been resurrected in public plazas, parks and dancehalls. In the film *An Afternoon Ball*, Hao observes a deteriorating ballroom as a site that has witnessed these currents of historical change, creating a pertinent portrait of this pastime.

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1.
Cui Jie
Shanghai Education Television Station #3,
2017
Oil and acrylic on canvas
160 x 110 cm
63 x 43 1/4 in

2.
Cui Jie
Corner Building, 2017
Oil on canvas
150 x 200 cm
59 1/8 x 78 3/4 in

3.
Cui Jie
Guangzhou Telecom Building, 2017
3D Print photopolymer resin
24.4 x 26.5 x 50 cm
9 5/8 x 10 3/8 x 19 3/4 in

4.
Cui Jie
Untitled, 2017
Colour pencil on paper
29.6 x 21 cm
11 5/8 x 8 1/4 in

5.
Cui Jie
Untitled, 2017
Colour pencil on paper
21 x 29.6 cm
8 1/4 x 11 5/8 in

6.
Cui Jie
Untitled, 2017
Colour pencil on paper
29.6 x 21 cm
11 5/8 x 8 1/4 in

7.
Chen Wei
Dark Mosaics #1, 2016
Archival Inkjet Print
50 x 40 cm
19 3/4 x 15 3/4 in

8.
Chen Wei
New Buildings, 2016
Archival Inkjet Print
150 x 240 cm
59 1/8 x 94 1/2 in

9.
Chen Wei
Trouble #18021, 2018
LED Installation
150.4 x 49.2 x 8.2 cm
59 1/4 x 19 3/8 x 3 1/4 in

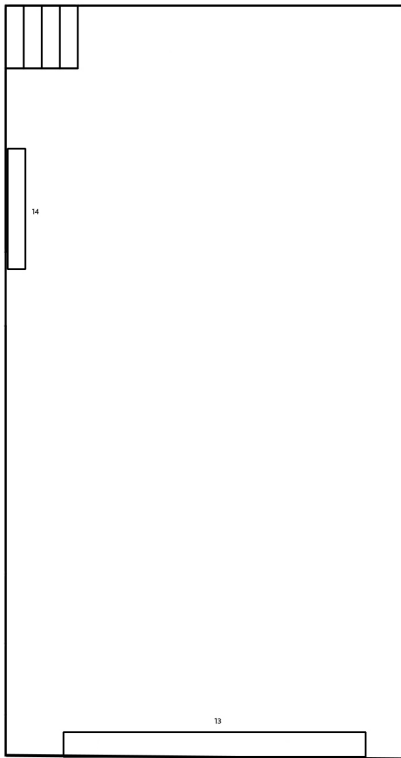
10.
Zhang Ruyi
A Dotted Line - 2, 2015
Mixed media on paper
20 x 30 cm

11.
Zhang Ruyi
A Dotted Line - 1, 2015
Mixed media on paper
20 x 30 cm

12.
Zhang Ruyi
Flow Away, 2016
Cement, plug, electric coil
Dimensions variable

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13.
Hao Jingban
An Afternoon Ball, 2013
HD Video; single channel, colour
with sound
25 mins, 21 seconds

14.
Hao Jingban
take care. Harun, 2016
HD Video; single channel,
independent soundtrack
10 minutes, 36 seconds