

# Extended Ground

Exhibition in Lucerne:

November 23, 2017 – February 9, 2018

Opening:

Thursday, November 23, 2017; 5:30 – 7:30 pm

We are happy to announce the group exhibition *Extended Ground* in our Lucerne Gallery. The exhibition shows nine different artistic positions: besides the Chinese artists Cao Yu, Cheng Ran, Ju Ting, Li Gang, Alice Wang and Xie Qi, Swiss artists Mirko Baselgia, Rebekka Steiger and the Lucerne artist duo Wittmer & Koenig present their new works. *Extended Ground* reflects on the perspective of a younger generation of artists who either lived and worked in China for some time, are looking forward to their first encounter with China, or are Chinese themselves. Everyone in their own medium, be it video, installation, sculpture, object or painting, discusses socio-political and environmental issues as well as everyday topics. Introspective works of art, exploring into psychological and existential conditions complement the exhibition.

**Mirko Baselgia** (\*1982, lives and works in Lain) was artist-in-residence in Beijing, China, at invitation of Galerie Urs Meile in spring 2017. Both of his relief like bronze objects *Landscape of growing I & II* (2017, bronze, 77 x 55 x 3.3 cm) are dealing with the process of growing. Can growing – also in a figurative sense – be made visible in an object? Baselgia works on this question within these bronze castings he made from the bark of a sort of fast growing trees he found in Beijing. These objects direct the attention to the manifestations and survival strategies of nature in the hostile environment of a mega city. Baselgia cast their shapes in solidified bronze, that traditional material the first Chinese artefacts like Shang dynasty ritual bronzes were made of.

The artist **Cao Yu** (\*1988, lives and works in Beijing) in her video “*I Have...*” (2017, single channel HD video (colour, sound), 4'22”, edition of 6 + 2 AP) enumerates in front of the camera her possessions or what she intends to achieve in the near future – from a diamond ring to a car with the number plate of the capital Beijing, to bodily advantages like her hourglass waist. The young Chinese woman in the video is in possession of every status symbol one can think of, also meeting up to our expectations of a successful young and attractive female artist – she seemingly lacks nothing. Yet in the course of viewing, an abyss opens up, a subtle void, no prestigious object or ephemeral advantage is capable of filling.

The title of the work by **Cheng Ran** (*Diary of a Madman - New York*, 2016, single channel HD video, color, 16:9, approx. 73'), consisting of 15 videos, is a reference to the short story *Diary of a Madman* by Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881–1936). In a departure from Lu Xun's story, Cheng is less interested in an explicit political message. By using complex cinematography expressed through his idiosyncratic ideas on memories, living space and language, his story conveys a mysteriously poetic sensation – one which lingers between the streets of Manhattan and the remnants of their shadows inside a disturbed mind that hums along to a strange tune... A profound sense of loss, alienation and madness run in the first person throughout the course of the New York segment, shown in his first institutional exhibition in the USA (New Museum, New York, October 2016 – January 2017).

**Ju Ting** (\*1983 in Shandong Province, lives and works in Beijing) draws from her experience in graphic printing. She layers a number of overlapping foils of acrylic paint, accepting the injuries of the surface occurring during the production and leaving them as part of the appeal of the work. In applying precise cuts into the surfaces Ju Ting creates a second series of works (+*103017*, 2017, acrylic paint on wooden board, 104 x 123 x 7 cm). The excised thin stripes of paint are unfolded and fixated onto the opposite side revealing reliefs of vertical cuts that open the view into deeper layers of colour. The resulting compositions appear heavy, yet fragile, synthetic and at the same time bodily.

For his *Skin Colour* series (*Skin Colour*, 2017, marble plate, bank note, 60 x 40 x 3 cm), **Li Gang** (\*1986, lives and works in Beijing) rubbed colour pigments of paper money directly from the bank notes in a rectangular shape onto marble plates. Beneath the translucent shades of pigment he chisels the title *Skin Colour*, as a reference to the trust required among the people to make the modern banking system, based on mutual credit by using the relatively worthless paper money as an equivalent, work worldwide.

*The End* (*The End* - 末 2014.07, 2014, waste materials from the exhaust pipes of the cars and water, 4.6 x 12 x 7 cm (ink), 11 x 28.5 x 25.5 cm (box)) is the artist's statement on the dramatic increase of motorisation in his hometown Dali in Yunnan province, southern China. He scratched the smut out of exhaust pipes of cars and created a sculptural work of traditional elegance resembling an ink stone used for traditional Chinese painting or calligraphy, yet highly toxic.

Rebekka Steiger (\*1993, lives in Zurich, works in Lucerne) expresses herself freely and in a virtuoso manner in the medium of painting. In her work, which is characterized by the process of putting layer upon layer of paint onto the canvas and inviting serendipity, she confronts the unknown and the unexpected. Steiger creates images of a tremendous ambivalence and intensity, due to their intense colours and deriving from the artist's deep interest in emotionality and the atmospheric *O.T.* (2017, oil and tempera on canvas, 240 x 200 cm).

Overseas Chinese artist Alice Wang (\*1983 in Xi'an, lives and works in Los Angeles) grew up in Canada and the United States. Her first videos were reflections on her autobiography, yet for *untitled* (2014, single channel video, colour/sound, 2') she intentionally worked with performers. In the setting of a professional dance studio with mirrored walls, a group of female actors carry out inverse yoga positions. The video irritates the viewer's sense of equilibrium, because the film material was put upside down in the final touch. The bodily strain is clearly visible in the faces of the performers, while jumping tennis balls remind the viewer of gravity and brings back to mind the terrestrial order of what belongs up, and what down.

Attila Wittmer and Florian Koenig (both \*1990, live and work in Lucerne) form the artist duo **Wittmer & Koenig**. With their *Monument* (2017, construction profiles, dimension variable) they create a three dimensional drawing using conventional Swiss building marker structures. Their installation is inspired by Social Realist sculptures still seen in Chinese public squares. During a study trip to China first formal experiments regarding the characteristics of those monumental sculptures were undertaken with chopsticks. Back in Switzerland the artist duo realised their project with building marker structures – solely known in Switzerland – which are used to mark any construction projects, to be made visible for neighbours and giving them opportunity for objection. This material manifestation of the population's participation is deeply rooted in Swiss democratic values and implements a political interpretation, especially in combination with the Socialist Realist design.

The two works by Xie Qi included in the group exhibition are representative of the series of portraits of people and objects she is engaged in. Preceding the process of painting, she always confronts herself with the person she is going to portrait. Her compositions are situated in ambiguous spaces, capturing the aura of the depicted in an almost mystical way, yet clinging to the physical characteristics of that person. Apart from the faces, she also portraits the bodies (*Timid & Strained 1*, 2017, oil on canvas, 88.5 x 69 cm). When she paints their faces, she feels as if penetrating them, while when painting the bodies, she has the feeling, they returned her look and entered into a communication with her.