

Cheng Ran

A Film in Progress

Exhibition in Lucerne: 18.9. – 24.10.2015
Opening: Friday, September 18, 2015, 6–8 p.m.

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of *A Film in Progress*, the second solo exhibition by Chinese artist Cheng Ran, at our gallery in Lucerne. The exhibition will focus on works that were conceived during Cheng Ran's two-year residency at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam. His main medium is video, but Cheng Ran also works in other media such as installation, photography and sound performance. The exhibition's title, *A Film in Progress*, alludes to the artist's *9-Hour Film*, which will premiere at the Istanbul Biennial in September 2015. Cheng Ran has been working on this film since 2013 and created a number of artworks that are directly linked to the process of filmmaking. *9-Hour Film* is based on three real stories of adventure, exploration, and the pertinacity of enigma. The characters of the three plots are the mountain climber George Mallory, the artist Bas Jan Ader and the crew of the Shandong Lu Rong Yu fishing boat no. 2682. George Mallory disappeared in an attempt to climb Mount Everest for the first time. Bas Jan Ader died during one of his performances. And on Rong Yu fishing boat no. 2682 eleven crewmembers murdered the other twenty-two at sea. Although, in this exhibition, the *9-Hour Film* remains a mystery—as *A Film in Progress*—and is not exhibited, the other works tell us about it.

Storyboard Film (2015, HD video of a series of drawings, Dolby digital 5.1, 21'59", edition of 6 + 1 AP) borrows from the cinematic technique of storyboarding. The twenty-two-minute-long video is an experiment in narration: we see Cheng Ran doodling simple computer graphics and hear him imagining and describing the scenes, dispositions, angles, and lighting. His words and doodles form together an abstract version of the planned film, and the audience can imagine its narrative possibilities. The series *The Useful, The Useless* (2015, c-print, 60 × 21 × 29,7 cm (framed), edition of 6 + 1 AP) was also made while Cheng Ran was working on the film's storyboard. Unlike *Storyboard Film*, which is more concrete and representational, these drawings illustrate the basic settings for the film shooting.

Constituting further fragmentary clues about this mysterious film, large-format photography light boxes and installations are exhibited, as well. *Scenario Hypothesis* (2015, photography lightbox, 66 × 171 × 5 cm, edition of 6 + 1 AP) shows the venues where the scenes from the film were shot. These landscape stills were used to test the light, to see how light effects change, and to figure out what kind of light to use in the final film. Again, Cheng Ran had the idea to translate this process of filmmaking into another artwork, and created light boxes containing collages of the images under different light, to showcase the possibilities and differences that arise when artificially altering light.

The two installations are directly linked to the plotline involving Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader, whose performance *In Search of the Miraculous* (1975) ended in tragedy. Ader's plan was to walk through Los Angeles, then sail the ocean alone in a small boat, and after arriving in the Netherlands, to take a similar walk in Amsterdam. Although Ader was experienced and had sailed from Morocco to Los Angeles before, he disappeared at sea. During his time in Amsterdam, Cheng Ran also bought a small sailing boat. He reused its sails in the work *Modern Nature 2* (2015, mixed media (sail, wood, sailing boat parts), 240 × 455 × 60 cm). Cheng Ran fixed them on an abstract wooden structure resembling a raft and in doing so created a wall work. He cut the hull of his boat in half and it became the basis for *Modern Nature 3* (2015, mixed media (sailing boat parts, acrylic glass), size variable)

The only works in the exhibition that are not related to the *9-Hour Film* project, are the four videos of *Before Falling Asleep* (2013, super 16 mm film transferred to single channel HD video, color/sound, Part 1: 5'55"; Part 2: 4'11"; Part 3: 4'; Part 4: 4'). The four parts were adapted from fables by Aesop and Ivan Krylov. Conversations between a pond and a river, two pigeons, a fire and a tree, as well as a butterfly and a flower, touch on topics of progress versus stagnation, truth or lies, choosing or missing, and going far away to find more happiness or loving what is and staying at home.

Cheng Ran was born in 1981 in Inner Mongolia, China and currently lives and works in Hangzhou. In 2014 he completed the two-year Residency Artists Studio Project program at the Rijksakademie van beeldende

kunsten in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The artist's most recent group shows include: *Inside China*, chi K11 art museum, Shanghai, China (2015); *The Tell-Tale Heart*, chi art space, Hong Kong (2015); *Cinematbeque*, chi K11 art museum, Shanghai, China (2015); *Inside China*, K11 Art Foundation Pop-up Space, Hong Kong (2015); *Inside China*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2014); *Decorum: Carpets and Tapestries by Artists*, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China (2014); *Degeneration*, Australia China Art Foundation (ACAF), Sydney, Australia (2014); *Degeneration*, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT), Shanghai, China (2013); *ON/OFF: China's Young Artists in Concepts and Practice*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), Beijing, China (2013); and *The 1st CAFAM Future*, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, China (2012). This year, Cheng Ran will take part in a number of international exhibitions and art projects including the Istanbul Biennial. Cheng Ran was also shortlisted for the 2014 OCAT - Pierre Huber Prize.

The works related to the *9-Hour Film Project* (2015) were made possible with the generous support of K11 Art Foundation and Erlenmeyer Foundation.