

Uri Aran and Ryan Sullivan CONDO SHANGHAI

07 July – 26 August 2018
West Bund, building 8,
2555 Longteng Avenue,
Xuxui District, Shanghai

For the first edition of CONDO Shanghai, Sadie Coles HQ is delighted to present an exhibition in partnership with ShanghART Gallery. This features works by two artists from each gallery: Uri Aran and Ryan Sullivan, both based in New York, are featured alongside the Shanghai artists Geng Jianyi and Birdhead. Spanning a diverse range of media – including painting, photography and installation – the exhibition showcases four distinct practices, each reflective of a particular voice and context. At the same time, it points towards shared sensibilities – in particular, an impulse towards reconciling disjunctive elements (whether images, colours or gestures) into tentative, ambiguous wholes.



Built up in multiple layers, Ryan Sullivan's large-scale paintings reflect his dynamic and constantly-evolving mode of abstraction, with each painting standing as a physical record of its own creation – both embodying and describing material flows and physical processes. Sullivan's latest body of work, made using silicon-rubber moulds, are produced 'in reverse': Sullivan adds layers of paint to the open-faced mould, allowing its particular shape or contours to affect the pooling and movement of colour. Each painting thereby develops as an image and an object concurrently, becoming increasingly invisible and unforeseeable as Sullivan fills the cavity with paint. Pigment takes on the function of a molten sculptural medium. The evolution of the painted image (formulated out of drips, strokes and other gestures) is simultaneous with – and inseparable from – that of the physical stuff of the artwork.

In a sequence of wall pieces from 2016, Uri Aran (b. 1977) integrates drawing, sculpture, collage, text and printing to create a fluid system of disconnected yet deftly layered signifiers. Each work harbours an intricate arrangement of signs and symbols, handmade marks and mediated elements – producing an intricate language or iconography that resists straightforward decipherment. Incorporating various media and alternating between printed and inscribed marks, Aran creates amalgams of half-familiar symbols, casual annotations and abstract linear flourishes. He describes his works as being founded upon a kind of "flat logic" (belying their seeming arbitrariness). Assembled shapes and textures mass together into a physical 'landscape', while the disparate elements also mirror the chains of signifiers and syntactical 'parcels' that constitute language.

Geng Jianyi (1962-2017) came to prominence within the People's Republic of China as a seminal member of the avant-garde movement known as the '85 New Wave. His work is characterised by its eschewal of any single method of representation or category of meaning. From the mid-1980s, Geng employed a deliberately broad and disparate range of techniques, including various forms of painterly transcription, staining, photographic and filmic transfer, chemical transformation and textual juxtaposition – using incongruous elements to undermine any attempt at a definitive or totalising reading of his work. In a series of works from 2016, the artist projected animated films using domestic torches: the clunky devices sit in jarring contrast with the small projections they cast. Each artwork records the passing of time from a micro-perspective.

The practice of Birdhead (a collaborative duo comprised of Song Tao, b.1979, and Ji Weiyu b.1980) centres dually on the photographic image and the theory of photography. Combining elements of documentary photography, montage, painting and assemblage, the artists imbue photographic imagery with multiple (and often contradictory) moods and meanings—from dispassionate reportage to surrealist erotic fantasies. Much of their work focuses on the architectural and social fabric of Shanghai. The flux and fragmentation of the city are mirrored in the artists' mode of production, whereby multiple images are brought together into teeming, unresolved assortments: individual images are always fragments or indices of a larger world view. Their latest series *Passions Bloom Ambitions* focuses on the test strips and waste prints produced in the darkroom. These form the basis of collages in which photography merges with painting.

Traceable throughout the different works in the exhibition is an interest in the shifting relationship between part and whole, or between fragment and totality. Despite their radically different approaches and styles, the artists are united by an impulse to subsume eclectic parts into a larger system, while at the same time resisting the glibness or finality of a 'complete picture'.

Ryan Sullivan (b. 1983, New York) lives and works in New York. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (RI). In 2015 he staged a major solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami – his first one-person exhibition in a US institution. Other solo exhibitions include his 2013 presentation at Hydra Workshop, Hydra, Greece. In 2013, he was artist in residence at the

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Captiva (FL), and artist-in-residence at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa (TX). Sullivan's work has been featured in group exhibitions including *New Skin*, Aishti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon (2016); *Surface Tension*, The FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2015); *New York Painting*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany (2015); *Empire State*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, Italy (2013); and *Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out*, White Flag Projects, St. Louis (MI) (2013). A book on Sullivan's practice was published by ICA Miami and Dancing Foxes Press in 2017.

Uri Aran (b. 1977, Jerusalem) lives and works in New York. He graduated from Columbia University in 2007, and has since exhibited internationally, with solo presentations including *Uri Aran: Time for an Early Mark*, curated by Moritz Wesseler as part of 'curated by Vienna 2017', Christine König Galerie, Vienna; *Two Things About Suffering*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2016); *Mice*, Koelnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany (2016); *Puddles*, Peep-Hole, Milan (2014); *Five Minutes Before*, South London Gallery (2013); and *here, here and here*, Kunsthalle Zürich (2013). He has been included in group exhibitions including *99 Cents or Less*, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, USA (2017); *Question the Wall Itself*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2016); *Take Me (I'm Yours)*, Jewish Museum, New York (2016); *Walter Benjamin: Exilic Archive*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel (2016); *do it*, various international venues (2013-15); Liverpool Biennial 2014; the 2014 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and *The Encyclopedic Palace*, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice (2013).

Geng Jianyi was born in Zhengzhou, Henan province in 1962, and died in 2017. He graduated from the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou) Oil Painting Department. Geng exhibited widely following his first show in 1989. Major exhibitions include *VIVA ARTE VIVA*, 57th Venice Biennale, Venice (2017); *Stubborn Image*, OCAT Shanghai (2016); *East to the Bridge*, OCAT Shenzhen (2015); *Wu Zhi, Geng Jianyi Works 1985-2008*, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2012); *Geng Jianyi, Excessive Transition*, ShanghART Beijing (2008). Important group exhibitions include GWANGJU Biennale, Korea (2014); *85 New Wave, The Birth of Chinese Contemporary Art*, UCCA, Beijing (2007); The 1st Guangzhou Triennale, Guangdong Museum of Art (2002); *Another Long March, Chinese Conceptual Art in the 1990s*, Breda, The Netherlands (1997); 45th Venice Biennale - Cardinal Points of the Arts, Italy (1993); China Avant-garde, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (1993); China/Avant-Garde Art Exhibition, National Art Museum of China, Beijing (1989).

Birdhead is a photographic collective founded in 2004, consisting of Ji Weiyu (Chinese, born 1980) and Song Tao (Chinese, born 1979). Both artists graduated from the Shanghai Arts and Crafts School in 2000; Ji also studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. Ji and Song live and work in Shanghai. They have been featured in exhibitions including *How to gather? Acting in a city in the heart of the island of Eurasia*, The 6th Moscow Biennale, Moscow, Russia (2015); *New Photography 2012*, MoMA, New York, U.S.A. (2012); *Reactivation*, The 9th Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2012); *Illuminations*, 54th Venice Biennale, Venice (2011); *The World of Other's: A Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai (2008); *China Power Station II*, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway (2007); *Birdhead: New Village*, EX3 Centro per l'arte Contemporanea Firenze, Florence (2011); *Artist File 2011, The NACT Annual Show of Contemporary Art*, National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan (2011). Birdhead's works are held in international collections include those of Tate, London; MoMA, New York; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo.

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