



University of Dundee

CURRENT |: Contemporary Art from Scotland | Phase Four
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Cooper Gallery
Press Release – May 2021



2021.05.22 |
2021.08.22

CURRENT: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SCOTLAND



PHASE FOUR

Curator: Sophia Yadong Hao
策展人: 郝亚冬

科林·斯沃恩
Corin Sworn

纳沙希比/斯凯
Nashashibi/Skaer

地点：深圳市南山区华侨城创意文化园南区F2栋OCA1深圳馆展厅A/B
Venue: OCA1 Shenzhen Hall A/B, OCT Loft, Nanshan, Shenzhen



同时代..
苏格兰当代艺术展

支持 in partnership with



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SCOTLAND



*CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland (Phase Four), a collaborative project between Cooper Gallery DJCAD, University of Dundee in Scotland and OCA1 Shenzhen, in partnership with the British Council and OCT Group.
同时代: 苏格兰当代艺术展"第四期由OCA1深圳馆和苏格兰邓迪大学邓肯齐丹斯通艺术设计学院库珀美术馆联合主办, 展览由华侨城集团有限公司和英国文化教育协会全程支持



CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland | Phase Four
同时代：苏格兰当代艺术展

Nashashibi/Skaer: *Chimera*

Corin Sworn: *Variations of Assembly*

Exhibition: 22 May — 22 August 2021

Venue: OCAT Shenzhen, China

Organised by

Cooper Gallery, DJCAD, University of Dundee

OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) Shenzhen

In partnership with the British Council

Following three successful phases collaborating with leading art organisations in China since 2015, Cooper Gallery's major international project **CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland** moves into its final phase in May 2021 at OCAT Shenzhen Museum. Phase Four features two exhibitions by Turner Prize nominated artists Lucy Skaer and Rosalind Nashashibi (collaborating as Nashashibi/Skaer) and the winner of 2015 Max Mara Art Prize for Women, Corin Sworn.

CURRENT | 不合时宜: Contemporary Art from Scotland is a four-phase contemporary art exhibition programme, showcasing for the first time in China the distinctiveness of contemporary art made in Scotland, its grass-roots spirit and its keen debates with the social and political dimensions of art and culture.

Exhibition Statement

There is no full stop to 'the contemporary'.

With no conclusion, not even grammatical, 'the contemporary' refuses to stop. No pause for breath or rest in which to catch a glimpse, an illumination of what 'now' might be. Instead, revelling in an associative fugue, 'the contemporary' is inexhaustible and all encompassing.

Shuffling and swapping, substituting and mirroring, 'the contemporary' upsets and disrupts what is seen, known and imagined. In this discursive frenzy, metamorphosis and transformation operate as principle and technique, calculated then deployed to efficiently and so industriously extract and unsettle.

Querying and queering historical details, cultural capital and techniques of revolutionised management Phase Four of *CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland* captures a passing likeness of 'the contemporary' in all its immediate and impatient necessity.

Encompassing two exhibitions from Corin Sworn and Nashashibi/Skaer, Phase Four of *CURRENT* dissects the fictions and truths absorbed and transmitted by 'the contemporary'. Juxtaposing chronologies and histories, the exhibitions critically interrupt the *singular* economy of 'the contemporary' bringing tempestuous visions of 'now' into a meditative pose.

In this final fourth phase following previous iterations in Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan, *CURRENT* arrives in a 'city of the future', Shenzhen. Resisting the appeal of that future, *CURRENT* seizes the inherent discursivity of 'the contemporary', composing a concrete reality disciplined by the circumstances and radical insights that constitute this untimely moment.

Composed of artists' films and prints, *Chimera* the exhibition by Nashashibi/Skaer traverses mythology, nature, language and interpretation to elucidate the protean metamorphosis underpinning 'the contemporary'. Examining the act of looking and the transformative potential of film, *Chimera* reprises Paul Nash's evocative 1944 painting *Flight of the Magnolia* in *Our Magnolia* and blurs the distinctions between the wild and the farmed in *Lamb* and its sequel *Bear*, a newly produced film which features a soundtrack created in collaboration with Cantonese Opera singer Zhuo Peili. *Bear* also provides the starting point for a new woodblock print developed in collaboration with Chinese artist Xu Zhiwei.

Corin Sworn's solo exhibition *Variations of Assembly* encompasses architecture, sound, video, dance and poetry to explicate the undercurrents of monitoring, movement, sincerity and drive that score 'the contemporary'. With a new multi-media installation *Habits of Assembly II* and an artist's publication *Folding Vesuvius* created specifically for this exhibition, Sworn appropriates 20th Century time-motion-studies to unpick the false claims to virtuousness and efficiency declared by industrial discipline. Presented in Chinese (translated by Chinese writer Chen Dongbiao) and English, the poems and images in *Folding Vesuvius* explore the tacit modes of assessment folded within the managerial systems of industrialised labour, offering a sensory reaching towards the world.

Artists' Biographies

Corin Sworn

Corin Sworn's work uses storytelling, material encounters and interactive technologies to explore logistics and connection. She is interested in the history of the gallery as a site for opening technologies while being a communicative apparatus itself. Recent installations have employed architectural augmentation, live feed cameras and surround sound to produce temporary spaces of encounter for collaborative acts. Previous work has depicted: chemical interactions as colour fields; histories of the camera as a means to disconnect knowledge from the body for distribution in industrial logistics; and employed to do lists and artificial sweeteners to explore how assessment techniques built for the assembly line have moved into the subject through notions of self-management and self-improvement.

Recent solo exhibitions include Edinburgh Art Festival (2019); Gallery Arsenal, Poland (2016); Toronto Film Festival (2016); Collezione Maramotti, Italy (2015); Whitechapel Gallery, UK (2015); Langen Foundation, Germany (2015); Sydney Biennial, Australia (2014). 55th Venice Biennale (2013); Tate's Art Now (2011)

Sworn was awarded the Max Mara Art Prize for Women in 2014 and a Leverhulme Prize in 2016 she is Professor of Contemporary Art at Northumbria University.



Corin Sworn, *Habits of Assembly*, 2019 (Video still)

Artists' Biographies

Nashashibi/Skaer

Rosalind Nashashibi and Lucy Skaer are artists with international solo careers, but they also collaborate as Nashashibi/Skaer. Nashashibi/Skaer met in Glasgow and began working together in 2005. Their films have shown internationally to critical acclaim at venues such as the Berlin Biennial 5, Tate Britain, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Carnegie Museum of Art and the ICA London and they are represented in public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Pompidou, FRAC Marseille, and Arts Council Collection, UK. Recent works have taken existing artworks as their starting point, such as *Why Are You Angry?* which utilises Gauguin's vision of the South Seas. This film, premiered at Documenta 14, and formed part of a retrospective exhibition for Tate St Ives 2018. In 2019, Nashashibi/Skaer had a major show *Future Sun* at SMAK in Ghent. This brought together their solo practises and collaboration for the first time and was a site of fruitful cross pollination for both. A recent film *Lamb* resulted – their first collaboration with composers and musicians. The sequel, *Bear*, produced in collaboration with Cantonese Opera singers and musicians will debut at OCAT Shenzhen for *CURRENT Phase Four*.

Rosalind Nashashibi won the Beck's Futures prize in 2003, represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2017.

Lucy Skaer represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2009.



Nashashibi/Skaer, *Bear*, 2021 (film still)

Quotes for release

Nashashibi/Skaer

The Current project has taken many twists and turns over the years and we have always been interested in the influence of place on our work. Possibilities of travel fell away, but we were able to work closely with some very inspiring Chinese artists, and an animator in Scotland. Our new film 'Bear' is very much a production of the pandemic year, shot during the first lockdown and then animated in part with hand drawn images frame by frame at home directly on to the film surface, and in part with digital animation made in collaboration with Regina Ohak. It's a film about change and transformation, enriched by the soundtrack composed and sung for us by opera singer Zhuo Peili. By incorporating the Chinese words and traditional style in the song we hope the film will resonate with the audience as well as being a wider reflection on language and the naming of animals. A present day 'Bestiary' of sorts. We have also had the privilege to work with the Print maker Xu Zhiwei on a new poster to accompany the film, printed using traditional Chinese woodcut.

Corin Sworn

Of late while not travelling, I have become aware of the studio as a strange semi virtual architecture, where things are made to appear elsewhere. My work at OCAT is presently being assembled, built through sent plans, collected writings and conversations over email running between Cooper Gallery and OCAT. We are all in different cities and that together we can make something solid appear miles from where it was first tremblingly imagined, amazes me.

Amanda Catto, Head of Visual Arts, Creative Scotland

We are delighted to support this collaboration between the Cooper Gallery in Dundee and OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) Shenzhen, in partnership with the British Council. CURRENT provides a significant platform for the very best contemporary art from Scotland to be presented in China and will foster new opportunities for creative and cultural exchange. It's terrific to see three world class artists with such strong associations with Scotland - Rosalind Nashashibi, Lucy Skaer and Corin Sworn - exhibiting new work in this phase of the programme.

Martin McDermott, Head of the Scottish Government Office in China

The CURRENT programme extends the highly regarded international reputation of Cooper Gallery—the public facing art school gallery—at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, University of Dundee, as a key arts and education institution supporting, promoting and presenting the best of Scotland's cultural talent on a global stage.

Simon Groom, Director of Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

Cooper Gallery DJCAD's exhibition programme is never conceived of as something static, but as a dynamic and often provocative crossroad of conflicting currents, that lead to many unexpected areas of thought, which is reflected in the range of associated events and networking that happens around the gallery's projects, and which are integral to them.

The symposium, residencies by artists and writers, as well as the programme of exhibitions over four presentations are testament to this dynamic, restless and unsettled evolution. It also encourages inclusion, and opportunities for other voices as well as stakeholders to participate, allowing the project to gain momentum, and become larger than the sum of its parts, a model that has proved supremely appropriate in its resilience and adaption to these testing times.

The project has helped raise the profile of contemporary art from Scotland, and Cooper Gallery DJCAD in a very interesting, culturally relevant and distinctive way, and opened the possibilities for real dialogue, meaningful engagement and further cultural exchange.

Anita Taylor, Dean of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design is exceptionally proud that CURRENT Phase Four is to be presented at OCAT Shenzhen. Curated by Cooper Gallery, CURRENT is the largest national programme of contemporary art from Scotland to be shown in China to date. Originated and led by Sophia Hao, CURRENT is a phenomenally rich and engaging international curatorial project that demonstrates the reach, engagement and impact of Cooper Gallery, the only Plus Tate organisation in a Scottish University.

Sophia Hao, Principal Curator Cooper Gallery, DJCAD, University of Dundee

Borne from the recognition of Cooper Gallery's reputation as a distinctive platform in Scotland for its radical curatorial research, collaborative ethos and focus on critical discourse in arts and culture, we were invited by leading art organisations and curators in China to develop CURRENT programme to showcase for the first time the great strengths of contemporary art made in Scotland on an ambitious level.

Since its inauguration in 2015 the project has grown into a sustained and meaningful dialogue in contemporary art between two countries that has offered important opportunities to boost knowledge and awareness of Scottish culture in a key international arena while enabling future exchange and collaboration between China and Scotland.

Showcasing artworks by artists of different generations, CURRENT provides a distinctive take on the recent histories, current conditions and importantly the experimental and grassroots ethos that underpins contemporary art practices in Scotland. The artists brought together in CURRENT emphasise the complexity of artistic practices that are thriving in Scotland. Defined by originality and risk-taking, this complexity resists, subverts and transforms how art and culture are seen, valued and understood on the international stage.

Notes to Editors

1. *CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland* (Phase Four) is a collaborative project between Cooper Gallery DJCAD, University of Dundee in Scotland and OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) Shenzhen in partnership with the British Council.

2. Phase Four of *CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland* is an exhibition programme at OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) Shenzhen, People's Republic of China.

3. *CURRENT* Phase Four presents two concurrent solo exhibitions:

Nashashibi/Skaer: *Chimera*

Corin Sworn: *Variations of Assembly*

4. *CURRENT* Phase Four exhibitions are open from May 22 – August 22, 2021.

5. For further information about the *CURRENT: Contemporary Art from Scotland* project please visit www.dundee.ac.uk/cooper-gallery/internationalprojects/ or www.ocat.org.cn

6. Artists and Sophia Yadong Hao, curator of *CURRENT*, may be available for interview during or in advance of the exhibition period. For more information on specific availability please contact Curatorial Assistant Peter Amoore at Cooper Gallery on exhibitions@dundee.ac.uk

7. OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) Shenzhen opening hours are Tuesday – Sunday, 10am to 5.30pm (GMT + 7).

8. Cooper Gallery is a public gallery associated with one of the most respected art colleges in the UK, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design at University of Dundee, established in 1892.

Cooper Gallery is internationally recognised as a distinctive platform in Scotland for its radical curatorial research, international approach and focus on critical discourse in contemporary art and culture. Cooper Gallery's experimental and transdisciplinary approach to programming utilises exhibition-making as a collaborative process of knowledge exchange and production. At the heart of this dialogue is a sustained critical engagement, between multiple contexts, practices and discourses, which navigates the efficacy and necessity of equality, diversity and inclusion. This is exemplified in the gallery's highly regarded public programme of 12 Hour symposia; [12 Hour Jamming Symposium](#) (2014), [12 Hour Action Group](#) (2016) and [12 Hour Non-State Parade](#) (2019).

Inherently transdisciplinary Cooper Gallery operates an integrated programme that transforms exhibitions into models of creative and critical enquiry supportive of artistic production and audience engagement. Encompassing new commissions, exhibitions, off-site projects, public engagement events, artists' and writers' residencies and publishing, Cooper Gallery's curatorial approach grounded in discursive, experimental and participatory strategies, sustains an environment for significant and emerging artists to conceive and produce risk-taking ambitious projects including Bow Gamelan Ensemble (2018), Jasmina Cibic (2019), Phil Collins (2019), Cullinan Richards (2010 & 2016), Liam Gillick & Anton Vidokle (2016), He Changyao (2017), Ingela Ihrman (2018), Naiza Khan (2014), Linder (2016), Bruce McLean (2011, 2013 & 2017), Jade Montserrat (2017), Laura Mulvey & Peter Wollen (2017 & 2020), Paul Noble (2011 & 2018), Kathrin Sonntag (2014), Georgina Starr (2013 & 2020) and Ulay (2017). Cooper Gallery is a member of Plus Tate, a network of leading visual art organisations across the UK facilitated by Tate.

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/cooper-gallery/>

9. As an art institution sponsored by Chinese enterprise OCT Group and established in 2005, OCAT officially became a registered, independent non-profit organization in April 2012, laying the foundation for its contemporary art museum group across China. Headquartered in Shenzhen, the museum group comprises OCAT Shenzhen, OCT Art & Design Gallery (Shenzhen), OCAT Shanghai, OCAT Xi'an, and OCAT Institute (Beijing), as well as satellite exhibition sites for project-based collaborations. With independence, professionalism, and public service as core values, OCAT aims to promote cross-platform exchanges between domestic and global contemporary art communities through exhibitions, research projects, academic exchanges, public education, publications, and international art residencies. It strives to establish a contemporary art operation system based on the domestic situation and develop into a non-governmental art institution with international standards and impact. OCAT takes research and display of contemporary visual art as its primary focus, and extends its activities to other fields such as experimental theatre, music, film, design, and architecture. It not only emphasizes historical research related to Chinese modern and contemporary art, and academic exchanges on art history, theory, and criticism between China and abroad, but also propel the establishment of both the theory and system of Chinese contemporary art through continuous extensive communication with various global contemporary art communities. OCAT aspires to be an important representative of Chinese independent art.

<https://www.ocat.org.cn>

10. *CURRENT* is organized in partnership with the British Council. The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. The British Council create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. Using the UK's cultural resources, they make a positive contribution to the countries they work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. British Council work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. "Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. The majority of our income is raised delivering a range of projects and contracts in English teaching and examinations, education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. Eighteen per cent of our funding is received from the UK government.

We operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy in Beijing and Cultural and Education Section of the British Consulate-General in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing and Wuhan. Our Exams work across China operates as a Wholly Foreign Owned Enterprise."

11. Cooper Gallery is at the heart of the University of Dundee's Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design. The University of Dundee is one of the UK's top 30 Universities according to the Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019 and the Guardian University Guide 2019. It is number one in Scotland for Art & Design (Complete University Guide 2021) and was named Scottish University of the Year by the Times newspaper's Good University Guide in 2016 and 2017. DJCAD is number one for Art & Design in Scotland (Complete University Guide 2021). The University of Dundee has a core mission to transform lives locally and globally by shaping the future through innovative design, promoting the sustainable use of global resources, and improving social, cultural and physical well-being.

Based in the UK's only UNESCO City of Design, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design (DJCAD) has a world-renowned reputation for quality teaching and research. The School works closely with V&A Dundee, Scotland's Museum of Design. Alumni include global innovators employed by the world's leading creative businesses and award-winning artists and designers including Turner Prize winner Susan Philipsz and nominees Luke Fowler, Louise Wilson and David Mach. Students are taught by

practicing artists and designers and enjoy a specialised facilities and a hands-on approach to studio-based learning at one of the UK's leading universities for art and design. DJCAD offer a range of undergraduate courses across 11 art and design disciplines.

www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad

12. This project is kindly supported by The National Lottery through Creative Scotland. Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. They enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. They distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit: www.creativescotland.com. Follow @creativescots and www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

13. *CURRENT* launched in summer 2015 with Phase One at Shanghai Himalayas Art Museum which featured the exhibitions *Wheat, Mud, Machine*, produced in situ by the Glasgow-based artists collective Poster Club (Anne-Marie Copestake, Charlie Hammond, Tom O'Sullivan, Nicolas Party, Ciara Phillips and Michael Stumpf) and *Surplus Cameo Decor: Sindanao 2*. By Edgar Schmitz. The programme included an Artists and Writers residence and the international touring forum *Hubs and Fictions Shanghai Series No. 1, Settings – Nearness as A Utopian Proposition* with speakers Simon Groom, Terry Smith, Wang Nanming and What, How & for Whom/WHW.

Scotland's First Minister **Nicola Sturgeon** visited the exhibitions of Phase One in Shanghai in 2015 and praised the project as "exemplary in fostering new connections and future opportunities for innovative cultural exchange between Scotland and China."

More information about Phase One can be found here:

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/exhibitions/internationalprojects/current-contemporary-art-from-scotland-shanghai/>

14. Phase Two included two survey exhibitions, *REWIND: British Art in the 70s and 80s* and *>>FFWD: Artists' Moving Image from Scotland*, at Shanghai Minsheng Museum. This programme also included the international touring forum *Hubs and Fictions Shanghai Series No. 2* with speakers Tobias Berger, JJ Charlesworth and Carol Yinghua Lu. Two Screening and In-conversation events toured to Beijing Red Brick Art Museum and K11 Art Foundation Wuhan.

More information about Phase Two can be found here:

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/exhibitions/internationalprojects/current-phase-two-overview/>

15. Phase Three continued in 2017 with two solo exhibitions at Shanghai Himalayas Museum: Bruce McLean, *I Want My Crown* and Ross Sinclair, *Real Life Is Dead/Long Live Real Life*. During Phase Three artist Ross Sinclair was on residency at Shanghai Himalayas Museum where we collaborated with musicians to produce *The Chinese-Scottish Real Life Orchestra* - a musical dialogue between Chinese audiences and Sinclair's *Real Life* project. More information on Phase Three can be found here:

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/cooper-gallery/internationalprojects/currentphasethree/>

16. Cooper Gallery would like to thank British Council for their kind support of *CURRENT*.

17. Cooper Gallery would like to thank Scottish Government for their kind support of this project.

18. Cooper Gallery would like to thank the artists Rosalind Nashashibi, Lucy Skaer and Corin Sworn for artwork loans.

* * *

Cooper Gallery

OCAT Shenzhen 深圳



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