
BY ART MATTERS
天目里 美术馆

Press Release
For Immediate Release

Inaugurating with "A Show About Nothing,"

BY ART MATTERS Officially Opens to the Public

(December 24, 2021, Hangzhou) After nine years of preparation, BY ART MATTERS will open to the public on December 25, 2021, at the OōEli campus in Hangzhou. The inaugural exhibition "A Show About Nothing" will be on view through May 8, 2022.

The inaugural exhibition of BY ART MATTERS, a contemporary art venue in Hangzhou, "A Show About Nothing" will bring together more than 30 artists, including Francis Alÿs, Maurizio Cattelan, Geng Jianyi, Robert Grosvenor, Hans Haacke, Ghislaine Leung, Li Liao, Liu Guoqiang, Cady Noland, Yoko Ono, Tino Sehgal, Rudolf Stingel, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Tong Wenmin and others. With the presentation of their seminal works and newly commissioned pieces according to the venue's characteristics, the exhibition explores how contemporary Chinese and foreign artists deal with the concept of "nothingness." The exhibition concept was proposed by Francesco Bonami, director of BY ART MATTERS, curated by Stefano Collicelli Cagol, a renowned Italian curator, together with Wu Tian and Sun Man.

The exhibition layout places minimal intervention to the architectural design of BY ART MATTERS. Conceived and executed by the internationally renowned RPBW (Renzo Piano Building Workshop), the space allows for a distinctive experience of the entire museum, from its fair-faced concrete, the wooden floor to the high ceiling with skylights on the first floor. When visitors walk into the gallery for the first time and traverse through the exhibition, their various ways of experiencing the space would lead them to engage with the theme of this exhibition.

"We want to do a show about nothing, and we want to do it inside a beautiful void space. We actually wish people, the guests of the exhibition to be able to understand and enjoy the difference between nothing and the void, experiencing architecture while experiencing at the same time the essential beauty of nothing." said Francesco Bonami, director of BY ART MATTERS. This exhibition also invites visitors to get lost in the seemingly meaningless things that will eventually urge them to generate new beginnings after experiencing the absence of time, matter, and meaning.

Looking for meaning in "apparently useless" everyday objects

Many artworks in this exhibition invite visitors to explore the diverse meanings of nothingness, and even by conjuring various meaningless things that prompt the viewer to question what is meaningful.

As one of the active participants of the "85th New Wave" art movement, Geng Jianyi's (1962-2017) art practice sprung with the sudden freedom that followed the opening up of cultural sectors in China, who became one of the pioneers of Chinese avant-garde art in the late 1980s with several works on canvas. In this exhibition, Geng Jianyi's series of works in the medium of books, which he "made" in a childlike and playful manner, reveals the artist's conscious adoption of the ignorant, inactive, and useless attitude in producing works of art and thus remained fearless in questioning the perceptions that people had taken for granted. From the series of *Till It Turns into Flat* (1998-1999), *The Reason Why Classic Is* and *Immerse* in 1999, *Ten Seconds Immersion* and *How Could a "De" Character be Enough?*, to *The Way of Reading* in 2001, Geng Jianyi has transformed these wordless, useless and knowledge-less books into reminders of how imposing ideologies may impact people.

Taking seemingly everyday objects to convey uselessness is also implicit in Robert Grosvenor's (b. 1937) *Untitled*. Placed in the vast space of the museum, the sculpture of what looks like three recalled vehicles. Upon a closer look, one would notice the piece's uniqueness because although its colors are vivid, many of its essential parts such as the door, wheels, lights are missing, which is not designed for practical use. In the realm of art, they are imbued with compelling significance, creating unexpected connections that require a look through the clash of materials and accessories.

At first sight, Hans Haacke's (b. 1936) *White Sail* consists of a piece of white fabric floating in the air, blown by a fan. Gentling pushing against the fabric, the oscillating stream of air molds the form of the work in ever-changing and unpredictable ways. Four weights and thin threads connect the fabric to the wall. The work reacting according to the number of visitors in the room and their movements. Hence, Hans Haacke makes visible the conditions of display, the museum architecture, and the visitors experiencing them.

Time conveyed through moving images A primary agent for "nothingness"

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By exploring the concept of time, we examine how time becomes a primary agent for nothingness once it erodes and wears away everything and how transformations, disappearance, the meanings and functions of things would translate into new values. These are what several artists' works in this exhibition strive to present.

Liu Guoqiang's (b. 1988) 2021 latest work *Untitled* records the inexorable change of things through digitally abstracting the notion of time. Having experimented with several works related to clocks, he confronts this measure of time again. A complete hand can never be formed within the frame of the moving image. Regardless of how close one looks, the numbers and scales have been obscured; even the second hand itself seems fragmented. Yet, time remains continuous, maintaining its absolute domination over the image frame.

Also working in the realm of moving images, Francis Alÿs (b. 1959)'s *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2004) documents the artist's most pointless endeavor that consumes an infinite amount of effort. After visiting Lima, Peru, he decided to respond in an epic act to the desperate conditions there caused by social unrest. The artist gathered 500 volunteers on the area's outskirts to move a giant sand dune by a few inches with shovels in a single day. The entire process did not involve any production or construction except photographic and visual documentation, and there is no evidence to prove its actuality. This is what interests the artist – Yugong, the protagonist of a Chinese legend, ultimately had to convince the heavens to help him achieve his long-cherished wish; today, it may be possible through images and hearsay.

Inaction with consequences and a moment of "doing nothing" allow the mind to wander freely and create unexpected connections. The two works presented in this show by Li Liao (b. 1982), *Surplus Value 2018-2019* and *Surplus Value 2020-2021*, were both executed by the artist's wife, assigned by the artist, in her fragmented spare time after work. This seemingly "distracted" behavior eventually became a work of art with market values. The latter was commissioned by the museum specifically for this exhibition, thus complicating the "labor" relationship between the artist, the artist's wife, and the museum.

Engaging multiple senses
A collective creation that invites audience participation

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On the site of "A Show About Nothing," visitors will also be able to engage their bodily senses (touch, smell, taste) in addition to the audiovisuals, from the "something" in the artworks. Thus, to open the door of perception to the imperceptible subtleties of the space.

For example, Rudolf Stingel (b. 1956) continues his iconic carpet series by covering an entire 17.25 x 6 meters fair-faced concrete wall with lavender carpets according to the specific location of the space (*Untitled*, 2021). The widespread lavender will bring a therapeutic and relaxed feeling, which invites viewers to participate in a collective painting from the first day of the exhibition through scratching.

The sensory experience of the bread aroma that fills the space comes from Ghislaine Leung's (b. 1980) *Bread*, in which the artist releases a scent that smells like bread in the gallery space through a ventilation system. She fills the space with a work of art that questions the ways in which the visibility is given metric status over the palpable, certain types of labor or body over another.

Tino Sehgal's (b. 1976) 2004 work *This is So Contemporary* consists of a group of interpreters of varying ages selected from people who enjoy singing and dancing, even at an amateur level. Dressed in gallery attendant uniform, the interpreters start moving and dancing while singing and shouting repeated the sentence, "This is so contemporary" when visitors enter the room. They then return to being still after having announced the caption of the work. As a work of art that does leave no photographic/visual record, the "nothing is here" context of *This is So Contemporary* reminds us of the fleeting nature of contemporaneity and that even one minute will become the past.

"The idea is to open up a new art place with an exhibition that focuses not on accumulation but subtraction and erasure. Focus not on more but less. Focus not on physical spectacle, but thinking and imagination is a way to underline how art is effective if imagination and thinking are shared with the viewer." As Francesco Bonami says, "Nothing" is a collective meeting point where everyone will contribute with individual ideas about something else or maybe nothing else. We start with Nothing so that we will have lots of room to build the future. "A Show About Nothing" will stimulate the viewer's senses, rediscover the meaning of existence from what's lost, and do something on seemingly inactive things. These three intermingling paths explore the relationship between art and nothingness while proposing new ways for people to relate to the world.

"A Show About Nothing"

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Date : 2021.12.25 – 2022.05.08

Location : BY ART MATTERS

Address : 398 Tianmushan Road, Hangzhou

Opening Hours : Tuesday - Sunday, 12:00 - 20:00

About BY ART MATTERS

BY ART MATTERS is a contemporary art space located in the OōEli campus, designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop to the world-class museum standard. Opens in December 2021. It organizes exhibitions and promotes publications and opportunities for artists. BY ART MATTERS provides a third space for the public outside of their everyday life routines and working environment: a unique place for creativity.

BY ART MATTERS aims to become one of Hangzhou's hubs of the international and domestic art scene and to be a catalyst for sensitivity, research and artistic practice. We aspire to cultivate the public's independent aesthetics for contemporary art through diverse exhibitions and public education activities, to provide sensual, intellectual and spiritual inspiration.

Official website: <https://www.byartmatters.com/en/>

Official WeChat: BYARTMATTERS OōEli Art Museum (WeChat: byartmatters)

Official Instagram: byartmatters

Media Inquiries:

Zhou ZHOU

Mobile : 13693205566

Email: zhouzhou@contemporaryart.cc

Zhengning ZHANG

Mobile : 15967166719

E-mail: zhangzhengning@byartmatters.com