

Press Release  
3 April 2020

## **SERPENTINE LAUNCHES ONLINE EXHIBITION *OUT OF BLUEPRINTS* WITH NOWNESS & K11**

MOVING IMAGE PROGRAMME BRINGS TOGETHER EAST ASIA  
BASED ARTISTS, WITH A NEW FILM ADDED EACH WEEK

VISIT [NOWNESS.COM](https://nowness.com) TO VIEW



Cao Fei, *Nova*, 2019, Video, 109'. Courtesy the artist, Vitamin Creative Space and Sprüth Mager

*Out of Blueprints* is a new online exhibition realised in collaboration with NOWNESS and K11 Art Foundation, taking place while Cao Fei's major solo exhibition at the Serpentine, [Blueprints](#), is temporarily closed.

**Serpentine Gallery**  
Kensington Gardens  
London W2 3XA

**Serpentine Sackler Gallery**  
West Carriage Drive  
Kensington Gardens  
London W2 2AR

T +44 (0)20 7402 6075  
W [serpentinegalleries.org](https://serpentinegalleries.org)

As exhibitions across the world close in response to the spread of COVID-19, *Out of Blueprints* opens a new space for artists and audiences at this challenging time, with works that can be freely accessed digitally around the world.

Focusing on one artist and artwork each week, this special moving image programme brings together a group of East Asia-based practitioners, featuring additional online content from the artists, curators and project advisors.

The first work is from artist **Cao Fei**, *Same Old, Brand New* (2015), made in collaboration with artist **Dickson Dee**. This short film captures Cao Fei's large-scale light exhibition shown across the entire façade of Hong Kong's iconic International Commerce Centre during Art Basel 2015. The video highlights the striking skyline of Hong Kong during an uncertain time for this dynamic city.

New films will be added to the platform every Friday, with artists including **Zheng Yuan, Kim Heecheon** and **Hsu Che-Yu**.

*Out of Blueprints* is curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Joseph Constable, with advisors Cao Fei, Venus Lau and Yang Beichen.

*Out of Blueprints* is hosted by NOWNESS at <https://www.nowness.com/series/out-of-blueprints-serpentine-galleries>

**Serpentine press information, contact:**

Nadja Coyne / [nadjac@serpentinegalleries.org](mailto:nadjac@serpentinegalleries.org) / 07775 792 894

Rose Dempsey / [rosed@serpentinegalleries.org](mailto:rosed@serpentinegalleries.org) / 07876 593 758

Press images at [serpentinegalleries.org/press](https://serpentinegalleries.org/press)

## Notes to Editors

Cao Fei, *Same Old, Brand New*

2015 / sound and large-scale led screens / 5 mins / size variable

Sound by artist Dickson Dee

Co-commissioned by Art Basel & the International Commerce Centre, Hong Kong

### CURATORIAL STATEMENT

*Out of Blueprints (come new realities)*

While speaking about *Blueprints*, her solo exhibition at the Serpentine Galleries in London, Cao Fei stated that 'now is the new time for the human to discover the universal again. If you're talking about a dead planet, I think maybe it's a signal for people to think about what we are doing'. As a result of the escalating COVID-19 outbreak in the UK, *Blueprints* recently closed to the public, along with countless other exhibitions across the world that are currently in a suspended state of postponement, or worse still, faced with cancellation.

Embedded within the title of Cao Fei's exhibition is an impulse for world-building, hinting to the open-ended process through which her artworks propose alternative plans, models or templates for how we might live our lives, how we navigate our mutable cities, share our data, tell ours and others' stories, and form kinships across

time and space. When watching and experiencing Cao Fei's works, we continue to think about the notion of time travelling, of how she creates a series of spaces where the past, present and future are allowed to coalesce. This is not about a simple delineation between utopia or dystopia, or even imagining worlds that are distant or elsewhere; rather it is about how our realities can be understood as hazy images, fragments that are pieced together over time and held precariously together.

At the centre of the *Blueprints* is a research project that Cao Fei has been working on for the past five years, examining the social history and urban transformation of Beijing's Jiuxianqiao ('Hong Xia') district, where her studio, the Hongxia Theatre, is located. The theatre was built during a period of intense industrial development throughout the 1940s, 50s and 60s, fuelled by the assistance of communist allies in the USSR and DDR, in which Jiuxianqiao changed from a rural area into a conglomerate of factory infrastructures geared towards the development of advanced electronics in China. The first chapter of Cao Fei's Serpentine exhibition was dedicated to this project, encompassing a site-specific installation, her feature-length film, *Nova* (2019), and a virtual reality experience, *The Eternal Wave* (2020).

When *Blueprints* opened in London, it was not considered safe to travel to Beijing, as the city was living in a state of lockdown preventing physical movement. For Cao Fei, this new body of work became a method of time travel for its visitors: 'even if they can't come over to Beijing right now, they can still jump into Beijing, a corner of Beijing'; we may not be able to get there physically, but we can make a temporal and spatial jump – temporarily, virtually and cinematically. Three weeks later, the exhibition is closed to the public and the sense of lockdown, inhibited movement and physical isolation, has become a new reality in cities and towns all over the world.

Out of blueprints come new realities. This is a statement and situation that we are grappling with now that Cao Fei's exhibition has been forced to close, but it is also a starting point to be productive rather than resolute. At a moment when travel restrictions are closing borders internationally, and our sense of physical stasis has never felt more apparent, what does it mean to 'discover the universal' again, to find connections in other spaces, and to travel to other places and times? This online programme begins by responding to the sense of a universal experience created by COVID-19, but more importantly it is concerned with providing a small but hopefully meaningful platform for artists and audiences through a series of works that can be freely accessed digitally around the world, to show support and solidarity with artists affected by the virus.

Hans Ulrich Obrist & Joseph Constable

## **Serpentine Galleries**

Championing the possibilities of new ideas in contemporary art, the Serpentine has presented pioneering exhibitions for half a century from a wide range of emerging practitioners to the most internationally recognised artists of our time.

The Serpentine's 50th anniversary year in 2020 looks to the future with a programme that responds to the urgent issues of today. Key themes include ecology and the climate emergency, equality and education, the impact of digital and new technologies as well as the 20th Serpentine Pavilion, the Galleries' internationally acclaimed annual architecture commission.