

**Press Release: 26 June 2015**

**CCVA & CAC present**

## ***Shoulders of Giants*, a project initiated by Shen Xin**

Senate Room, First Floor, Senate House, Malet Street, WC1E 7HU London

Wednesday, 29 July 2015 16.00 – 18.00



Changfu-bird (鸛鵲), design - SHEN Xin, edit - HE Jiayin, model - WANG Ruoxuan (detail) 2015

*Shoulders of Giants* appropriates and extends the model of a symposium through animation, performance and projection. The invited speakers will animate creatures derived from *Shan Hai Jing* (Also known as *The Classics of Mountains and Seas*, C4<sup>th</sup> BC) as they speak, discuss and conduct Q&A.

The event seeks to investigate the strategies that artists, theorists and critics employ to deal with mechanisms of power - such as oppression and censorship, surveillance and punishment, unemployment and estranged labour - that are inherent in daily politics; to highlight the many desires that are afloat where power multiplies, unfolds, fluctuates, and diminishes; to render visible the physical and psychological affects that they have.

It will position theoretical and artistic practices as practice of action, and therefore looks at how the dispositions of each practitioner are appropriated in various modes in order to produce subjectivity, to communicate change and to form solidarity.

The event will consider the implications of such positioning and its potential to redirect and reorganise power relations through what happens and as it happens – to speculate upon how such strategies transcend perceived limitations. Invited speakers include Esther Leslie, Hannah Black, Mark Fisher, and Simon O'Sullivan.

*Shoulders of Giants* is supported by Centre for Chinese Visual Arts (CCVA), Birmingham City University, and Faceshift; funded by Chronus Art Centre. The event will be live streamed in Shanghai, organised by British Council in Shanghai, and will be adapted into a film by Shen Xin.

## About Shan Hai Jing

**Shan Hai Jing** is the earliest cultural and geographical record in China. Versions of the text have existed since the 4th century BC. The exact author(s) of the book and the time it was written are still undetermined. The book is not a narrative, and the descriptions are usually of medicines, animals, and geological features. It was referred to as a bestiary, but also has been regarded as an accurate record used widely for research. It is not known why it was written or how it came to be viewed as an accurate geography book.

## Biographies

**Esther LESLIE** is Professor of Political Aesthetics at Birkbeck, University of London, UK. Her first book was *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* (Pluto, 2000). She has also written a biography of Benjamin (Reaktion, 2007). In 2002 she published *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory, and the Avant Garde* (Verso). *Synthetic Worlds: Nature, Art, and the Chemical Industry* (Reaktion) appeared in 2005. *Derelicts: Thought Worms from the Wreckage* was published by Unkant in 2014. She runs a website together with Ben Watson: [www.militantesthetix.co.uk](http://www.militantesthetix.co.uk)

**Hannah BLACK** is an artist and writer. Her work has recently been shown at 155 Freeman/Triple Canopy (NYC), MoMAW (Warsaw), W139 (Amsterdam) and Sala Luis Miro Quesada Garland (Lima), among other places. She was a studio participant on the Whitney ISP 2013-14 and graduated from the MFA in Art Writing at Goldsmiths in 2013. She is an editor at New York-based magazine The New Inquiry and currently lives in Berlin.

**Mark FISHER** is the author of *Capitalist Realism* (Zero 2009) and *Ghosts of My Life* (Zero 2014). He has written for many publications, including *New Humanist*, *The Guardian Film Quarterly*, *The Wire*, *Sight and Sound* and *Frieze*. He lectures in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London.

**Simon O'SULLIVAN** is Reader in Art Theory and Practice in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He has published two monographs with Palgrave, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (2005) and *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation* (2012), and is the editor, with Stephen Zepke, of both *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* (Continuum, 2008) and *Deleuze and Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010). He also makes art, with David Burrows, under the name *Plastique Fantastique* ([www.plastiquefantastique.org](http://www.plastiquefantastique.org)) and is currently working on a collection of essays on *Myth-Science* also with Burrows.

**SHEN Xin** is an artist based in London. Having completed her MFA in Slade School of Fine Arts in 2014, SHEN was selected for the touring exhibitions of Bloomberg New Contemporaries at World Museum in Liverpool, ICA in London, and Newlyn Art Gallery in Cornwall. SHEN has recently received the CAC (Chronus Art Centre in Shanghai) Fellowship for Chinese Artist at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design and Centre for Chinese Visual Arts in Birmingham (2015). SHEN's practice concerns the social position of the artist, and is foregrounded by moving image work.

## Notes to editors

**Centre for Chinese Visual Arts (CCVA)** is hosted by the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media at Birmingham City University, UK. It aims to foster new understandings and perspectives of Chinese contemporary arts, design, media and culture through transdisciplinary creative practices and theoretical studies. With extensive regional and international partnerships, CCVA brings together artists, designers, curators and researchers who are working with, or are interested in, contemporary contexts of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to share expertise, understand, critique, innovate and create. Using its unique position in the UK, CCVA continues its on-going transcultural dialogue by questioning existing histories of Chinese contemporary arts, design media and culture whilst fostering new ways of thinking and modes of knowledge in relation to today's global-Chinese situation.

**Chronus Art Center (CAC)**, established in 2013, is China's first nonprofit art organization dedicated to the presentation, research / creation and scholarship of media art. CAC with its exhibitions, residency-oriented fellowships, lectures and workshop programs and through its archiving and publishing initiatives creates a multifaceted and vibrant platform for the discourse, production and dissemination of media art in a global context. CAC is positioned to advance artistic innovation and cultural awareness by critically engaging with media technologies that are transforming and reshaping contemporary experiences.

**Faceshift** is a markerless motion capture software. It captures facial animations that are realistic and emotional, with a system that is affordable and easy to use.

## Visitor Information

Event Time: Wednesday, 29 July 2015 16.00 – 18.00

Senate Room, First Floor, Senate House, Malet Street, WC1E 7HU London

To book a place: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/shen-xin-shoulders-of-giants-tickets-17495667011>

Website: <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/-centres-of-excellence/centre-for-chinese-visual-arts>

Twitter: ccvanetwork

*Shoulders of Giants* will also be presented as an exhibition within the MA Fine Art show of Birmingham City University 4 - 10 September 2015, and at the 8th Annual CCVA Conference: Transdisciplinary China: Research in Practice at BCU on 22nd October 2015.

**For further information of the event, please contact:** [CCVA@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:CCVA@bcu.ac.uk)

**For further information of the work, please contact:** [mail@shenxin.info](mailto:mail@shenxin.info)

