**Guan Xiao** (b. 1983, Chongqing, China; lives and works in Beijing) has exhibited internationally at the OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, Seoul; and the Shanghai Art Museum. Selected exhibitions include: *Individuality has completely vanished, only traces become memories that linger in the recesses of consciousness*, Kunsthalle Winterthur, Switzerland, 2018; *Viva Arte Viva*, 57th Venice Biennale, 2017; *Elastic Sleep*, ICA London, 2016; *Weather Forecast*, Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2016; *the shortlisted exhibition of Hugo Boss Asia Art Award*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, 2015; *13th Biennale de Lyon: La vie modern*, Lyon, 2015; *2015 Triennial: Surround Audience*, New Museum, New York; *Rare Earth*, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, 2015; *Degeneration*, ACAF, Sydney, 2014; *Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, 2014; *Agnes B Cinema*, Hong Kong, 2014; *Die 8 Wege*, Uferhallen, Berlin, 2013; *Difference Engine, Magician Space*, Beijing, 2013; and *Floating - New Generation of Art in China*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, 2007.

*Guan Xiao: Fiction Archive Project* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Chief Curator, with Misa Jeffereis, Assistant Curator.

Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art
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CAM

# Guan Xiao
# Fiction Archive Project



Guan Xiao, *Weather Forecast*, installation view, K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai, in association with Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2016. Courtesy the artist; Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin; and Antenna Space, Shanghai. Photo: K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai.

Guan Xiao paved her own path, studying film in school and graduating with a major in directing from the Communication University of China, rather than pursuing a more traditional MFA track for an artist. Through this practical experience Guan gained a broader and multidisciplinary education not offered in Fine Art programs in China at the time. Film studies enabled her to creatively combine media rather than to compartmentalize by discipline. Guan considers herself a self-taught artist, gaining knowledge of art and culture through her research online. The artist works in video and sculpture, exploring current ways of seeing and how the brain attempts to deal with the mass-circulation of digital images. Guan's work calls for more complexity in our cognitive abilities, conveying meaning not through dichotomies or oppositional concepts, but rather eschewing boundaries and embracing the notion that things are in a constant state of flux, subject to endless possibilities of transformation.

Guan makes a connection between the internet and our raw awareness: "The fact that our awareness has never been fixed, since it is always encountering something else. That's very much like the experience of browsing online." For Guan, technology transports us

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into other times and places, collapsing geography and temporality—meaning we do not operate in a singular moment. Her works convey a non-linear sense of time in which ancient objects and contemporary technology overlap, offering us endless possibilities for connections and ways to understand the world.

**Guan Xiao: Fiction Archive Project**

*Fiction Archive Project* consists of three video installations in which transformation is a central, unifying concept. In each of these works, weather serves as a metaphor for the idea of perpetual transformation. "Rapid change in the weather is similar to a rapid change in identity," says Guan, "and I weave the narrative of transformation through both." The Beijing-based artist is known for her study of the ways in which human habits are shifting in relation to the internet, and how the immediate delivery of infinite volumes of information changes our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

*Weather Forecast* (2016), made up of a montage of found footage, illustrates how unrelated subject matter—a car part, a bust of Nefertiti, a view of the Matterhorn, for example—complements one another to such an extent that one *becomes* the other. These metamorphoses occur through the artist's use of juxtaposition, instinctual combinations, and sympathetic connections.

*2015, Winter in Aberfoyle* (2018) and *7th February, 2002, JAVA STORM* (2018) are two new video diaries premiering at CAM. Again using found footage, Guan has given the works titles and dates unrelated to the actual places depicted in the videos, continuing the theme of "fiction archive." These works are constructed to elicit personal memories that are generated from simulated experience. The immersive nature of these installations—a space you enter that is constructed of light, color, carpet, furniture, and moving images—provide a multitude of channels through which transformation may occur.

**Weather Forecast**

Guan Xiao is fascinated by the notion that the weather is constantly evolving and humans respond to those changes. The weather is influential in everyday life, and it affects our daily schedule—it shapes our mood, what we wear, what we eat. The multi-channel video installation *Weather Forecast* explores various processes of transformation, and the notion that all phenomena, including our behaviors and identity, are unfixed and constantly changing. For this piece Guan began with the idea that we gain experience and are changed by traveling to other places, yet questions the need for physical movement for this shift in identity to occur. The artist believes that transformation happens foremost through the perception of new impressions, which she proposes could unfold while



Guan Xiao, *7th February, 2002, JAVA STORM*, 2018. Single-channel video (color, sound), 3 hours. Edition 1/5 + 1 AP. Courtesy the artist; Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin; and Antenna Space, Shanghai.

browsing the internet at home—an idea the artist repeatedly addresses in the video's narration, "Why can't we view Europe from a chair?"

In *Weather Forecast* Guan presents seemingly unrelated images as a way to show that a concept, object, or human being can change freely into something else through our subjective cognitive processes. She also proposes that each sequence in the video attempts to "carry out a way of correlating one kind of subject matter to the other, that is, of equating them and showing how one subject matter becomes the another." The work celebrates the human mind's ability to create connections between apparently disparate material, showing its potential to both undo and reconfigure perception. Yet by using imagery that generally evokes a positive feeling, the artist attempts to make audiences sense first, rather than try to uncover logic and meaning. Instead of leading us to an answer, she highlights the search.

**2015, Winter in Aberfoyle**
**7th February, 2002, JAVA STORM**

For her new single-channel videos, Guan Xiao sourced existing footage online of a snowy winterscape and a tropical storm. Each video shows an unchanging scene and the camera angle remains static. The effect is reminiscent of the satellite TV channel Yule Log, which presents an endlessly looping video of a crackling

fireplace. Guan's durational videos are without narrative or sense of time passing. She explains her attempt at nonlinearity: "In a traditional single-screen video, it's very hard to get rid of narrative. The narrative does not specifically mean storyline, but as long as the linear time exists, there will necessarily be some kind of narrative and I tend to try and break away from linear time."

Her work seems to pose the question, How can we slow down perception and reclaim the pleasure of aesthetic and perceptual experience? A break from her high-speed, image-saturated *Weather Forecast*, *2015, Winter in Aberfoyle* instead is a pause in the mass-influx of image overload we are confronted with every day. In fact, by creating an environment for viewing this winterscape video—replete with snow-white carpet, low-hanging monitor, and shoes not permitted—Guan has provided us a quiet space to become more aware of our own cognitive processes. Likewise, *7th February, 2002, JAVA STORM*, with its specified date that relates to no known event, offers a scene of slowly evolving change within an installation space designed for durational viewing—where the mind, rather than being bombarded by visual information, may gain a sense of equilibrium while losing a sense of time.



Guan Xiao, *2015, Winter in Aberfoyle*, 2018. Single-channel video (color, sound), 8 hours, 5 minutes. Edition 1/5 + 1 AP. Courtesy the artist; Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin; and Antenna Space, Shanghai.