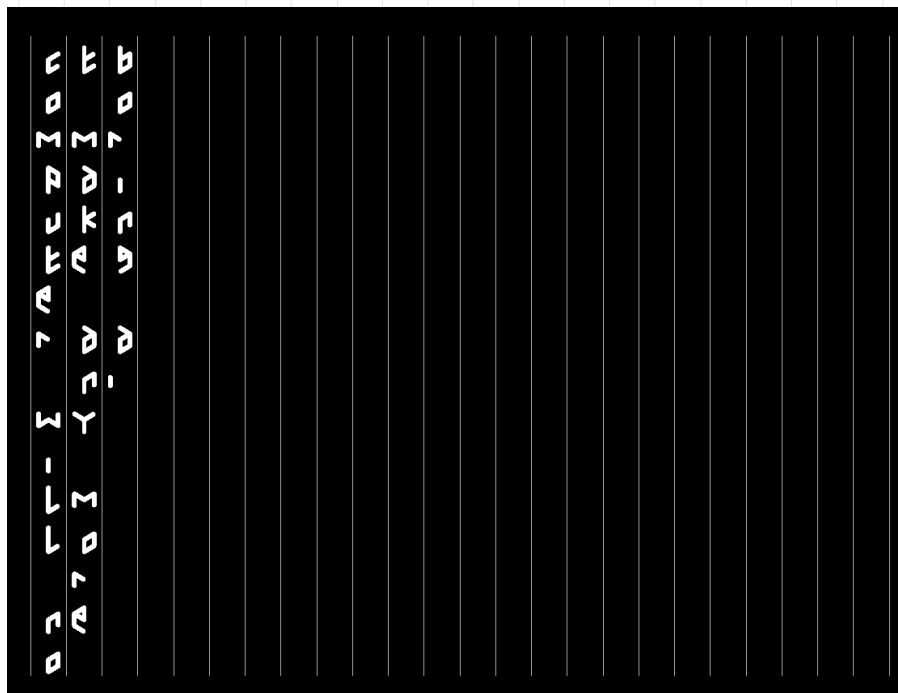**Squeaky Wheel** FILM & MEDIA ART CENTER
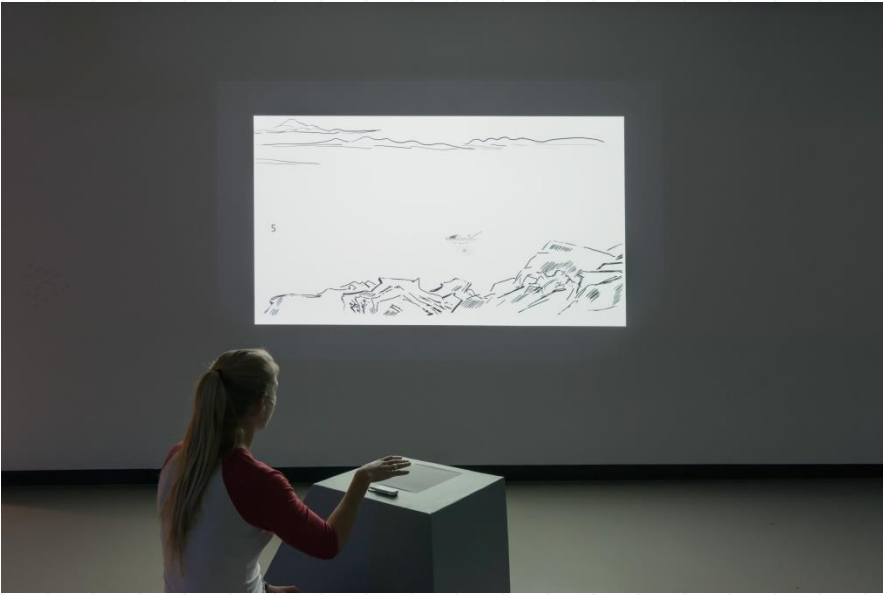
A Year from Monday
Recent Work by Wenhua Shi
June 17th – September 3rd, 2016

Computer will not make any more boring Art (detail) (2016). Real-time computer generated animation.

"Not knowing exactly what day a year from Monday—the day eight of us had arranged to meet in Mexico—would be, I decided it was early June 1967."
John Cage

Fishing, Those Who Are Willing to Hook (2015). Interactive computer game.

Taking its title from a collection of writings by John Cage, Squeaky Wheel presents a mini-survey of recent work by Wenhua Shi. Cage's quote refers to a travel meet-up set by him and friends–unstable but with poetic determination–that never came to fruition. As the date approaches, and friends drop out, Cage's resolve loosens and finds nuance: "We don't have to make plans to be together… Circumstances do it for us."

Shi's work–utilizing newer technologies like video mapping, video games, and real time computer generation–tread a balance of determination and chance, creating circumstances within which his audience can explore their relationship to the

works. Influenced by Chinese culture and avant-garde art and film, Shi's work evokes egalitarian relationships between viewer and art, creating spaces for pleasure and meditation. *Singing to the Sky* (2015) is an interactive installation where visitors can vocalize into a microphone, which is then interpreted live as Chinese symbols in video projection. *Fishing, Those Who Are Willing to Hook* (2015) takes a Chinese proverb and transports it into a meditative video-game. The exhibit will also see the unveiling of two new pieces, the video mapped work *Wave Line* (2016), along with the real-time computer generated *Computer will not make any more boring art* (2016). – Ekrem Serdar

Singing to the Sky (2015). Interactive installation.

Remember being a child. Remember playing make-believe—a game with hastily constructed, situationally changing, temporary rules. When the game ends, and you cease to be a dinosaur or astronaut, the rules evaporate too, only to be transformed and reconstituted at another time, on another playground. One needs to keep rules while pretending. It's the only way to translate the sheer volume of a youthful creativity into something that can be enjoyed with others. If there is no structure to one's imagination it can't be shared, becoming isolating to the pretender. Rules may limit the individual, but they free the group, allowing for others to visit in our creativity.

Wenhua Shi produces playful artwork. This is not to say that his work is fun, but rather to suggest that it uses play, and the rules inherent in all games, to highlight the imaginative wonder of discovery. It is one thing to present findings to your audience, it is a far greater gesture to offer them the opportunity to discover something wonderful on their own. This is the real game at work in Shi's artistic projects—to create spaces where the discovery of the game, its rules, intentions, and goals, becomes the game itself.

In *Singing to the Sky* (2015), Wenhua Shi puts audiences into an unfamiliar linguistic space. The program's "poem without words," invites sonic

input—you shout, whisper, sing, and roar, creating text on the screen, but not direct translations. Instead, Chinese characters and punctuation break the stark stillness of the projection's default state. Reacting best to speech disfluency, *Singing to the Sky* reminds the audience of the power inherent in non-speech. Errs, umms, ahhs—the nothings we say which say so much, beyond the discreet reach of the Dictionary.

Ludwig Wittgenstein proposes, as have many others, that language is a game and as such, contains rules which perpetuate not only the game itself, but the union of its participants. Singing... reinforces the group dynamic, bringing together singular members of the audience into a chorus— all howling and shouting to keep the game of language, its rules and its unifying outcomes, going a little longer.

This physically unifying act of play is also at the core of Shi's *Fishing, Those Who Are Willing to Hook* (2016). *Fishing...* utilizes touchless, gesture technology, and is played much like a theremin. Upon first glance, this new media interpretation of a three-thousand year old Chinese story seems inscrutable, but the discovery of the game's input system, the discovery of its rules and quirks, and the intentionally slow realization of its message becomes a game itself. In this

work, the player moves slowly, fishes slowly, and lives slowly. The embrace of that tempo sets a rewarding pace.

Acts of play uncover rules which govern. For Wenhua Shi, the discovery and joy of a system's rules are a unifying and catalyzing process. His imaginative work in *Computer Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* is generous and uplifting simply because it never tells us the rules explicitly, but creates an openness through obfuscation— allowing each player to find their own relationship to the rules, the play, the art, and the artist. - Evan Meaney
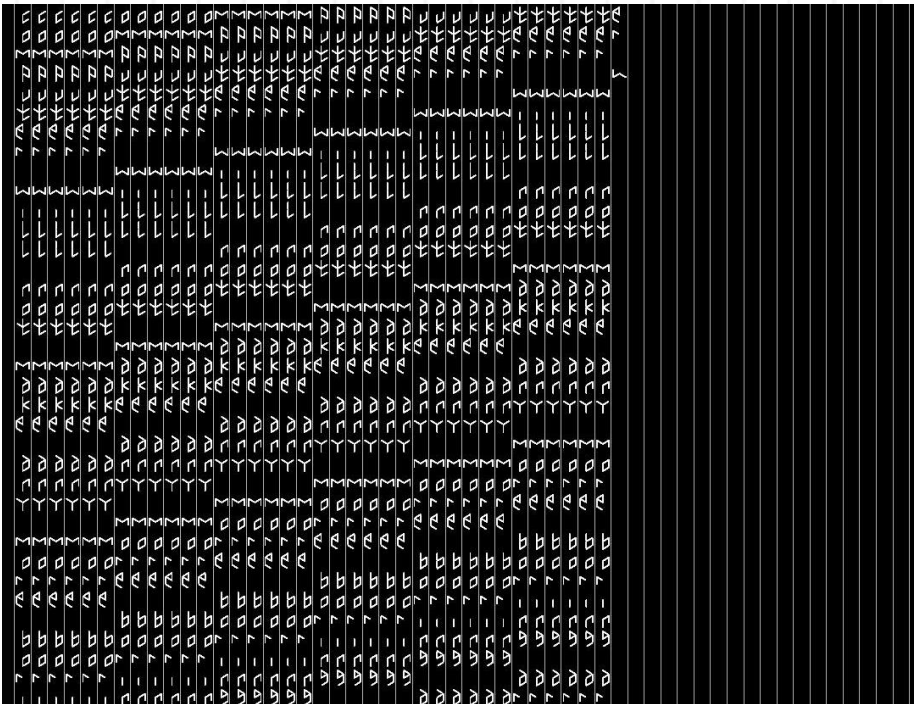
Computer will not make any more boring Art (detail) (2016). Real-time computer generated animation.

Screening: A Year from Monday

June 18th, 2016
A conversation between Wenhua Shi and Ekrem Serdar will follow the screening.

Walking Cycle

8min, digital, sound, 2016
Walking Cycle is an abstract audiovisual piece that celebrates the line, its quality and its movements.
This piece is a tribute to early abstract animation masters Len Lye and Hans Richter.

Descending a Staircase (2014)

6min, digital, sound, 2014
This work is a homage to Marcel Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase. Created 100 years after the original piece, it is a meditation on the mechanical nature of cinema/ Moving Images, through its dynamic movement and fragmentation. The footage was captured at an apartment building in Beijing, China.
Steadicam by Patrick Selvage. Girl by Jiang Shu.

Palimpsest

Part I: 6min, digital, sound, 1972
Part II: 6min, digital, sound, 2012
Part III: 12min, digital, sound 2014
Palimpsest is a series of video work as a tribute to Vertov's Man with a Movie Camera. The footage is gathered from Berlin, Beijing and New York and re-examine the three different forms of Modernity and its Utopia.
Super 8 by H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and Dwight Chapin during Nixon's China trip.
Piano by Jiang Shu. Many Thanks to Penny Lane.

Originally trained as a doctor in China, Wenhua Shi departed from the medical field and began working in radio and TV in his hometown of Wuhan. In 2000, he came to the US and began studying with the experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage and Phil Solomon at the University of Colorado, Boulder. There he began making and exploring film/ Sound as and earned his BA & BFA. In 2009 he graduated with MFA from Art Practice at the University of California, at Berkeley. Since then his new works integrate new media, sounds, and installations. His work have been screened or exhibited at Pacific Film Archive, European Media Art Festival, Black Maria Film Festival, Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television (UK) ,Experiments in Cinema, Albuquerque, Denver Contemporary Museum of Art, Beijing Film Academy, Berlin International Directors Lounge, The Jack Kerouac School of Naropa University, and dozens of international film festivals, including Ann Arbor, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Bradford, and Mexico City. West Bund 2013: a Biennale of Architecture and Contemporary art, Shanghai, Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism, International Arte Laguna Prize, Finalists Exhibition, The Arsenale of Venice, Venice, Italy.

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