

# METRO PICTURES

## *A New Ballardian Vision*

Curated by Leo Xu

June 29 - August 4, 2017

As a part of CONDO Complex New York, a gallery swap between New York galleries and national and international partners, Metro Pictures hosts Leo Xu's two-part exhibition *A New Ballardian Vision*. The show brings together a selection of works that reflect recent social, technological and environmental developments through the lens of author J.G. Ballard's (1930–2009) writings. Xu conceived the exhibition as two distinct chapters; the first features Metro Pictures artists Nina Beier, Camille Henrot, Martin Kippenberger, Oliver Laric, Robert Longo, Trevor Paglen, Jim Shaw and Cindy Sherman. The second chapter focuses on a younger generation of Chinese artists represented by Leo Xu Projects, including aaajiao, Chen Wei, Cheng Ran, Cui Jie, Li Qing, Liu Shiyuan and Pixy Liao.



Jim Shaw, *Untitled*, 2016. Acrylic on muslin, 64 x 48 inches (162.6 x 121.9 cm).

In Chapter One, a recent untitled painting by Jim Shaw references imagery from H.G. Wells's dystopian science fiction classic *War of the Worlds*. The painting features a figure based on Gilded Age industrialist William Henry Vanderbilt, depicted as a bloated gas bag scouring an ominous post-industrial cityscape with vacuum tentacles sucking up denizens in his path. Alongside Shaw's work is a selection of photographs from Cindy Sherman's *Disasters* series, which was first shown at Metro Pictures in 1987. The often grotesque tableaux are suggestive of macabre narratives and taboo psychosexual fantasies. Dark psychological currents are also evident in the works of Trevor Paglen, which directly address the omnipresence of the US surveillance state using the tropes of traditional landscape photography and painting.

Chapter Two includes works from seven Chinese artists represented by Leo Xu Projects. Both Chen Wei's cinematically-staged photographs and Cui Jie's multi-layered paintings reimagine China's already strange urban landscapes after reform and opening-up. Li Qing paints post-apocalyptic scenes inspired by Hollywood films on windows made during Shanghai's colonial period. Liu Shiyuan's photo-collages and fictional diary tell the story of an anonymous female artist's trek around the world and her subsequent encounters with political turmoil and war. aaajiao's video installation draws on society's obsession with social media and the culture of constant approval, conditions anticipated in Ballard's writing.

Leo Xu is a Shanghai-based curator, writer and gallerist.

English novelist J.G. Ballard (1930–2009) was born and raised in the Shanghai International Settlement and was later imprisoned in an internment camp for European and American residents during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai during World War II. These experiences influenced the various dystopian themes found in his works.