

For Immediate Release

The Last Night

28 September - 13 November, 2021

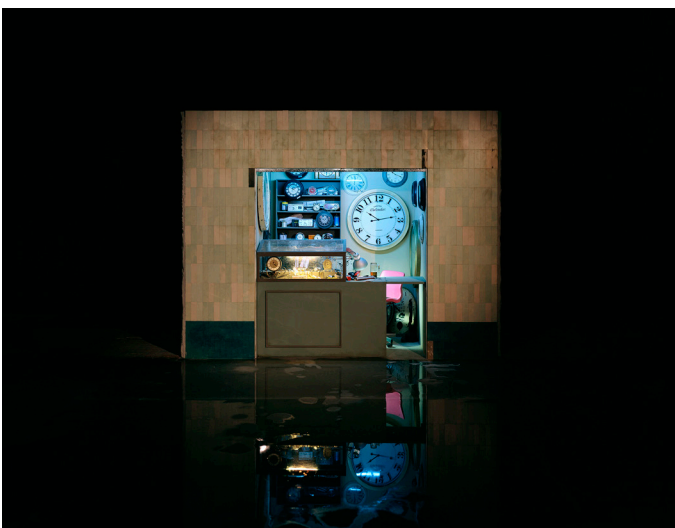
Opening Reception: 25 September 2021, Saturday, 4:00-6:30pm

Venue: Blindspot Gallery (15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong)

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30 am to 6:30 pm (Sunday and Monday by appointment only); closed on public holidays

Blindspot Gallery is pleased to present *The Last Night*, Chen Wei's first solo exhibition at the gallery. Spanning large-scale photographs and multi-media light installations, *The Last Night* presents scenes encountered in a city. More intimate than landscapes and grander than still lives, the artist situates these settings between fiction and reality, artifacts and fragments. This is an experience that all city dwellers share as a collective, infused with dreamscape, glitches, afterimages, and memory traces. They form a *New City* that refuses to be abstracted, resolutely holding on to the object and the experience itself. Articulating a nostalgia that hesitates to find a place in the present, *The Last Night* bids farewell to a sentimental vision of the past and foresees the building of a new city.

The show title captures Chen Wei's creative pivot from *Noon Club* to *New City*, his new body of work shown in the gallery. *The Last Night* takes its title from the song sung by Tsai Chin, performed at the end of the 1984 film adapted from the short story *The Last Night of Taipan Chin* (1971) by Taiwanese author Pai Hsien-yung. The story follows the retirement of Madame Chin, a veteran nightclub hostess who emblemizes the glamour and grace of old-Shanghai. The invocation of the "Old" prefaces the imagination of what is to come and lies at the core of Chen Wei's *New City* project. In China, where cities develop at breath-taking speeds, there is often a sense of being rushed, of not having enough time to experience, or space to reflect on such drastic changes. There is no name for this complex feeling of emptiness and recognition, but perhaps melancholia comes close to capturing the mood of *The Last Night*.



Chen Wei, *Time Shop*, 2019, Archival inkjet print, acrylic face mount on aluminium, 150 x 187.5 cm
(Image courtesy of artist and Blindspot Gallery.)

Upon entering, viewers come face to face with a tiled wall. Against the industrial setting of the gallery, the ornate craft of the wall accentuates its fabricated nature, alluding to the constant construction and reconstruction of the city. Taking on an animating luster, the celadon tiles shimmer under the moving lights of a suspended LED display light commonly used for advertisement in Chinese cities. Titled *Trouble 21082* (2021), the LED has its face oriented towards the wall, its advertised content unviewable, the moving image in the panel is full of glitches, error and jolts. Messages and errors are abstracted into one blurry reflection, as the jarring artificial light of publicity infiltrates our interior domesticity, absorbed into the quotidian perception of city dwellers and night walkers alike. There is no escape from the hazy lights of the sleepless *New City*.

The glitchy urbanism pervades into interior games in *Billiard Ball* (2020), where colourful billiard balls spill over from a capsized snooker table. The players have left, and there is no way to determine the winner of the game. Unable to keep up with the *New City*, neglection inevitably declines things into disorder and randomness. Entropy becomes the new guiding principle of *New City*. These quiet remnants of a gathering carries on into *Goblets After Dancing* (2009), an image of broken glass lying on a tablecloth stained red by wine from a

raucous farewell party. Across the gallery is *Time Shop* (2019), a watch repair shop that stores faulty analog clocks with hands pointing in all direction, indicating divergent time zones and temporalities. Ambiguity arises of whether these wayward scenes are the artefacts of an old time or the beginning blocks of the new city. Are we too late or too early? The arrival time for *New City* is to be determined.

The will for order dances in the carefully choreographed chaos of urban life. *Brilliantly Lit Lights / H.K.* (2021) is a sculpture of a life-size malfunctioning streetlamp emanating irregular flashing lights in random rhythms and amplitude. With its sensuous curves following distinct state-sanctioned aesthetics, these lights are modelled after common streetlamps, called zhong hua (Chinese) lamps. These lights line the boulevards of Chinese mega-metropolises, designed to bring an aura of prosperity and flamboyant décor, and to represent an aspirational image of progress. The bright lights project a collective yearning for betterment shared by Hong Kong and mainland cities alike, places experiencing growth and aspiration at different phases of its evolution. *Brilliantly Lit Lights / H.K.* speak to a flickering state of organic incompleteness in which cities constantly strive towards perfection and identity. Coexisting with banal absurdities, we always live in the gap between lofty expectation and faulty reality.

In a quiet corridor, *Bitter Abstract* (2019) captures an abandoned frame containing a mysteriously disposed wastewater. The concealed artwork is transformed and coerced into an organic being emitting alluring hallucinogenic spectra. *Tree* (2016) is strung together by discarded satellite dishes found in construction sites, no longer needed in the digital age of cellular data-driven entertainment. Its obsolescence gives these dishes a clandestine second life. A curious post-urban ecology emerges as non-human subjects become metonyms for the flux and transition experienced by city dwellers.

Passing through two layers of curtains reminiscent of hygienic or disinfectant usage, a sole LED lightstand and a charging iPhone sit within a dark room. *Trouble Malevich* (2021) is a triangular-shaped standing LED panel that displays glitchy abstract images that almost resemble Malevich's non-objective geometry whilst *On the Way #0907...* (2021) features an iPhone screen showing a gif of a night cityscape, the lagging image indicated by the all too familiar spinning wheel, a no doubt dissatisfying experience for those accustomed to high speed internet and instant gratification. Similarly in any city, behind the façade of sleek industry, imperfections permeate, forcing us to tolerate necessary frustrations in order to appreciate the beauty in the process of becoming.

The exhibition ends with *Goodbye* (2019), a photo showing a half-closed gate with a doormat bidding farewell to visitors. As Chen Wei said in an artist interview, "We all live in mutual misunderstandings and biases. Differences breed culture and propose coexistence. These give birth to unreachable goals, unspeakable subjects, and a *New City* that is always under construction." Chen's *The Last Night* is a bid to preserve the pluralism of positions, the entanglement of material memories, and the conflicting ideas of what makes a city anew.



Chen Wei, *Goodbye*, 2019, Archival inkjet print, acrylic face mount on aluminium, 120 x 150 cm
(Image courtesy of artist and Blindspot Gallery.)

About Chen Wei

Chen Wei constructs personal narratives using found objects, fabricated props and staged scenes, all of which are meticulously constructed and assembled inside his studio. Evoking recurring motifs, memories and dreams, every image is a fiction and a story in itself. In the fictional scenes of objects, interiors and nocturnal cityscapes, Chen exposes the psychological and socio-political characters of contemporary China: collective yearning for betterment, disillusionment of consumerist desires, and a nostalgia for a haphazardly erased past. Chen's recent solo exhibitions include "Good Night" (HOW Art Museum, Shanghai, China, 2021); "Where Are You Going Tonight" (chi K11 art space, Guangzhou, China, 2018) and "Chen Wei: The Club" (Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, Australia, 2017).

Chen currently works in Beijing, China.

About Blindspot Gallery

Set up in 2010, Blindspot Gallery is a Hong Kong-based contemporary art gallery. The gallery began with a primary focus on contemporary photography and image-based art, and has evolved to include diverse media in contemporary art. The gallery represents both emerging and established artists, mainly from Hong Kong and the region but also beyond.

For enquiries and media interviews, please contact Ms. Holly Wong at 2517 6238 or by email info@blindspotgallery.com