

Press Release [FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

Thucydides Fever Dream

Curated by Xin Wang

239 10th Avenue, New York, NY, 10011

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The Hill Art Foundation is pleased to announce its exhibition for the fall of 2026, "Thucydides Fever Dream." Curated by the writer and art historian Xin Wang, the show situates the rich landscape of contemporary Chinese art in textured relationships to art history, geopolitics, and technology.

The exhibition positions emerging names from China's avant garde alongside major works from the Hill Collection and from private collections and institutions around the world. Among the thirty artists and contributors in the show are Bernd and Hilla Becher, Chen Ronghui, Chen Xiangyun, Charles Clough, Thomas Crow / Yue Minjun, Cloris (Han) Dong, Duan Jianyu, Hao Liang, Li Songsong, Liu Chuang, Liu Wei, Liu Xiaodong, Lu Yang, Agnes Martin, Pan Caoyuan, Qiu Xiaofei, Ed Ruscha, Charles Simonds, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Sun Xun, Anthony van Dyck, Wang Guangle, Wang Ye, Andy Warhol, Christopher Wool, Wu Ziyang, Huidi Xiang, Yu Hong, Zhang Xiaogang, and Zhao Yao.

"We are very excited to have this exhibition of Chinese contemporary art and Xin Wang's philosophical and art historical expertise at the Hill Art Foundation. In line with our mission, Xin's curation brings together unexpected but art historically grounded juxtapositions," says J. Tomilson Hill, President of the Hill Art Foundation. "This exhibition comes at a critical time, where Chinese-American relations grow increasingly more tenuous and complicated, while also providing historical context on the development of Chinese cultural and artistic production through the 70s to the present."

The show takes its name from a concept invoked in a speech by President Xi Jinping, during President Donald Trump's visit to China in May 2026. Coined by Harvard political scientist Graham Allison, the "Thucydides Trap" refers to the war between Athens and Sparta as described by the Greek historian, a conflict neither side wanted but came to feel necessary due to overweening influence.

"Whether one knows what the Thucydides Trap means is less important than delighting in the ways that history and cultural production can unfold like fan fiction, full of callbacks, digressions, goofy impulses, and wild liberties in re-interpretation — where things tend to be the most alive, problematic, transcendent," Wang writes in the catalogue.

One of the most intriguing pairings can be found near the end of the show, where a religious triptych from Hao Liang is juxtaposed against an exemplary Van Dyck from the Hill Collection's Baroque holdings, but such ideas can be felt upon entry. In the first room Warhol's portrait of Lenin hangs across from Li Songsong's *Ciao Ciao* (2022), a work of thick oil paint so layered that it appears to be abstract, or perhaps

the frosting on a luscious cake. It is in fact inspired by a photograph of Stalin's funeral, one that could be detected by those raised in the context of Communism.

The monochrome paintings of Zhao Yao made a splash with critics at this year's 59th Carnegie International, with Alex Greenberger of *ARTnews* writing, "Unlike spare paintings of the postwar era created by artists like Agnes Martin, who famously worked solo, Zhao's require assistance from supply chains and shipping companies to become complete." The exhibition at Hill pairs Zhao with Martin directly, in a work that draws attention to her own calculations. The work of the Bechers will be as familiar to New York's gallerygoers as that of Martin's, but its pairing with the work of Chen Ronghui's *Hangzhou, Petrochemical China* (2013) similarly recontextualizes the older work, highlighting the accidental beauty of industry found in the European industry captured by the Bechers. Chen's work positions the oil processor far in the distance, past a painterly field of flowers, and its design on the horizon feels pleasantly sci-fi, almost like a theme park.

The Charles Simonds work best known to New Yorkers is likely *Dwellings* (1981), a tiny village installed in the staircase at the Marcel Breuer building that formerly served as the home of the Whitney Museum of American Art. *Thucydides Fever Dream* exhibits never before seen documentation of a project that had Simonds working in the streets of Shanghai and Guilin. In both cases the sculptures existed for just a few hours. "In retrospect, it is hard to decide if the dwellings vanished so fast because there is little waste or surplus in China and the clay was put to more utilitarian purposes, or whether they were appropriated as private property, or perhaps as souvenirs," Simonds wrote of the experience for *Artforum* in 1980.

The exhibition will feature artworks that have never been exhibited in the New York Metropolitan Area, including those by Lu Yang, Zhao Yao, Liu Chuang, Liu Xiaodong, and Yu Hong. The exhibition will serve as an institutional debut for Wu Ziyang in New York, and include an out-of-circulation illustration of an early Chinese translation of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* from 1989 by Zhang Xiaogang. *Thucydides Fever Dream* is accompanied by a booklet, designed by Studio Pianpian He and Max Harvey, including a curatorial text by Xin Wang and an introduction by J. Tomilson Hill.

Public programming events include a conversation with artist Trevor Paglen on Thursday September 24th on AI and cultural production in comparative cultural frameworks, and a talk by Thomas Crow about his recent publication *Murder in the Rue Marat* and working with art history as live material on Monday, October 5th. The Foundation will also host several artist-led tours throughout the run of the exhibition. Please see the Hill Art Foundation's website for details on timing and location and sign up for the Foundation's newsletter to stay updated on other upcoming events.

About Xin Wang

Xin Wang is a New York-based art historian and curator. She held curatorial and educational positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Whitney Museum of American Art, and wrote her PhD dissertation on Soviet Hauntology at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She served as the chief curator of the 4th art and technology themed biennial program—titled “To Your Eternity”—at Beijing’s Today Art Museum in fall 2023, and is Curatorial Director at Pace Gallery. A Warhol Foundation’s Arts Writers Grant recipient, she has published widely; essays such as “Asian Futurism and the Non-Other” have been widely circulated, translated, and taught. Recent publications include “Machine Envy” in the book *Machine Decision is Not Final: China and the History and Future of Artificial Intelligence* (Urbanomic and NYU Shanghai), and “Dance as Socialist World-Building” in *Afterall Journal* (issue 57).

About the Hill Art Foundation

The Hill Art Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded with the goals of amplifying the artist’s voice, deepening the relationship between art and the viewer, and connecting the dots between artistic movements through meaningful juxtapositions. The Foundation is committed to prioritizing education through programs for NYC teens, and commissioning original scholarship for Foundation publications. Visitors to the Foundation can expect rotating exhibitions from a world-class collection that are always free and open to the public.

Hillartfoundation.org

Info@hillartfoundation.org