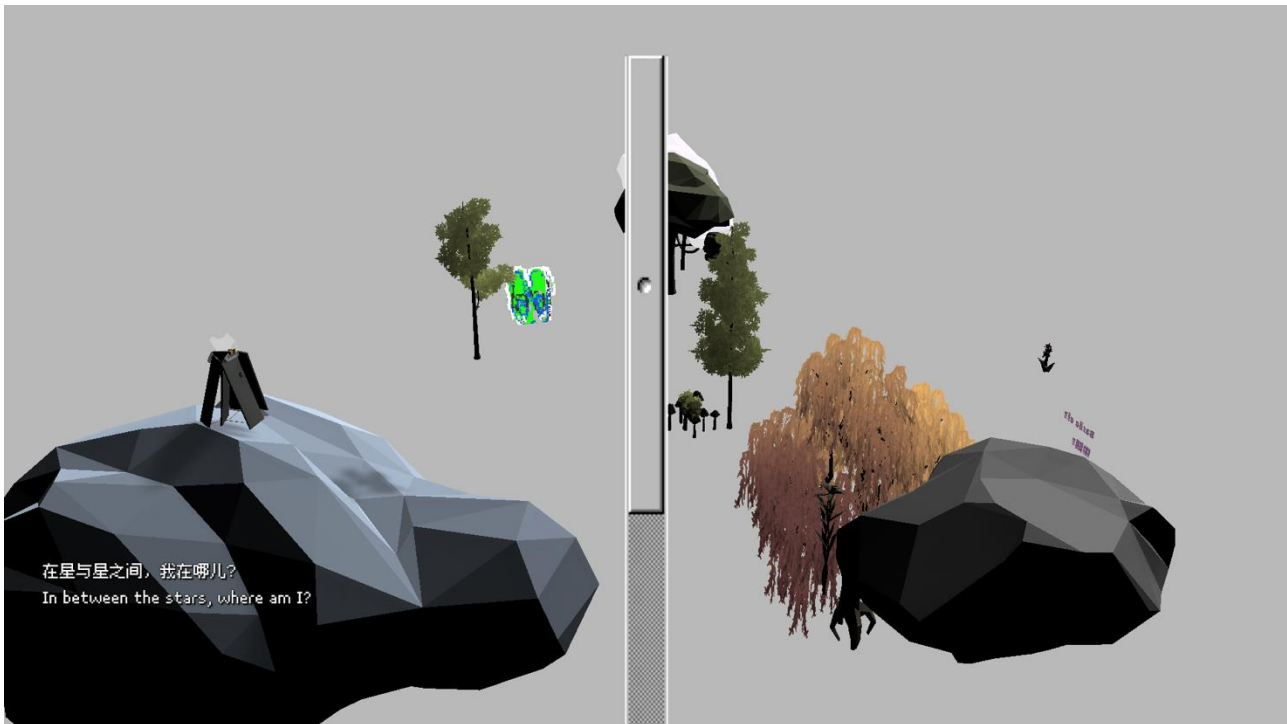


## PRESS RELEASE



*Deep Simulator, Game, 2020*  
Courtesy the artist and House of Egorn, Berlin

*aaajiao*

**DEEP SIMULATOR**

**illy Present Future Prize 2019 Exhibition**

**Curated by Marianna Vecellio**

**November 5, 2020 – March 30, 2021**

On the occasion of the annual illy Prize and in conjunction with Artissima, the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea presents the exhibition of the Chinese artist aaajiao (Xi'an, Shaanxi, 1984) *Deep Simulator, 2020*, a new multimedia installation designed specifically for the Manica Lunga project room of the Castello di Rivoli. The exhibition is curated by **Marianna Vecellio**.

The artist and activist aaajiao – the online handle of Xu Wenkai (Xi'an, Shaanxi, 1984) – draws on a broad range of languages, including sculpture, painting, drawing, multimedia installations, video, sound and design. Enriched by modern thought developed around the Internet sphere, his practice explores the evolution of the identity of the human being assimilated by the digital world, with special attention to the concepts of representation and simulation. His works narrate the experiences of the new generation, accustomed to inhabiting the parallel worlds and saturated realities of the net. At the same time, the artist also looks at the countless possibilities offered by the digital and the numerous questions raised by this hyper-technologization.

Specially conceived for the project room of Castello di Rivoli, *Deep Simulator*, 2020, is the Chinese artist's first exhibition at an Italian institution. The project presents a space at once both real and virtual: a new multimedia installation composed of an environment – a room set up with a gaming station and surreal elements on the wall evocative of tree branches designed by a digital algorithm – and a *metagame*.

The main character of the installation is the “Deep Wanderer”, a figure that incorporates the physical person, the viewer of the exhibition, the player sitting at the gaming station and, lastly, the wanderer who takes shape in the net and starts off a metaphorical journey into the depths of its space.

Based on the solo exhibition *Cave Simulator* held earlier this year in Shanghai, *Deep Simulator*, symbolically referencing the space of the cave - the earliest human habitation, shelter from the wind and rain - explores how individuals, upon seeing the player, understand the truth of their existence. The spectator's ability to see the player playing while awaiting his or her own turn, observing an “other” him- or herself, underlines the controversial notion of *real* in the world of new technologies, the Internet and the circulation of digital data.

The installation is set up as a space of action where a metagame opens borders between reality and digital space. The artist focuses his attention on the player, a figure with numerous possibilities whose role each individual could claim as a result of the advent of the Internet, virtual dimensions and data technology. The player is the effect of a transformation process carried out by the artist over the years passing through the figure of the user presented on the occasion of the artist's second solo exhibition at the Leo Xu Projects gallery in Shanghai in May 2017, and that of bot a software for crawler, presented at the House of Egorn gallery in Berlin in September 2018.

If the user is the main identity of the “Screen Generation” that lives exclusively in the network, and explores the implications on the individual of the use of websites, social media, applications and the economies of their related algorithms, the bot becomes a way to observe yourself from the outside, also focusing on the condition of the external body to the network and at the same time to the user. According to the artist, the co-presence of the user and the bot highlights the dilemma of truth. *Deep Simulator* investigates the so-called “fractures” caused by the passages of scenario and action modes of the player: if in the past the player has confronted with a limited view of space, in recent years with the simulator, a subjectively constructed space has been built. For the artist, these fractures are the basis of the birth of the “Manifesto of the new net identity”.

<https://deep-simulator.com/>

## Biography

Active online as a media artist, blogger, activist and programmer, aaajiao is the virtual persona of Shanghai and Berlin based artist Xu Wenkai (Xi'an, Shaanxi, 1984). Born in 1984 – the title of George Orwell's classic allegorical novel – and in one of China's oldest cities, Xi'an, aaajiao's art and works are marked by a strong dystopian awareness, literati spirits and sophistication. Many of aaajiao's works speak to new thinkings, controversies and phenomenon around the Internet, with specific projects focusing on the processing of data, the blogosphere and China's Great Firewall. aaajiao's recent projects extend his practice to various disciplines (among them, architecture, topography, and design) to capture the pulse of the young generation consuming cyber technology and living in social media. aaajiao's work has been featured in numerous exhibitions around the world, upcoming and recent shows include *Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today*, ICA - The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston (2018); *unREAL. The Algorithmic Present*, HeK - Haus der elektronischen Künste, Basel (2017); *Seeds of Time. Shanghai Project Part II*, Shanghai Himalayas Museum, Shanghai (2017); *Temporal Turn: Art & Speculation in Contemporary Asia*, Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas (2016); *Take Me (I'm Yours)*, The Jewish Museum, New York (2016); *Overpop*, Yuz Museum Shanghai (2016); *Hack Space*, K11 Art Foundation Pop-up Space, Hong Kong and chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai (2016); *Globale: Global Control and Censorship*, ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe (2015); *Thingworld - International Triennial of New Media Art*, NAMOC - The National Art Museum of China, Beijing (2014); and *Transmediale.10. Futurity Now!*, HKW | Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2010). His solo exhibitions include: *a'a'ajiao: an ID*, HOW Art Museum, Shanghai (2019), *bot,,* House of Egorn, Berlin (2018); *Remnants of an Electronic Past*, CFCCA - Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester (2016) and OCAT Xi'an - Contemporary Art Terminal, Xi'an (2016), among others. He was awarded the Art Sanya Awards 2014 Jury Prize and was nominated for the first edition of OCAT - Pierre Huber Art Prize in 2014. aaajiao lives and works in Shanghai and Berlin.

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