

FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE

The Knife's Edge: video
recently seen in Beijing

Sat 26 March – Sun 15 May

opening night: Friday 25 March, 6:30pm

Artists: Jin Shan, Kan Xuan, Li Ming, Li Yongbin, Morgan Wong, Wing-Fat, Wang Qingsong, Zhao Yao.

Curated by Erin Coates

Curator's Floortalk

Thursday 5 May, 6:30pm

Opening in March at Fremantle Arts Centre *The Knife's Edge: video recently seen in Beijing* presents video work by seven of Beijing's most exciting contemporary artists. From the hypnotic flashes of the city silhouetted against a never-setting sun, to the slow passing of time as it is measured against the artist's own body, the works in this exhibition provide a unique reflection upon the nature of time and the processes of transformation.

Perth-based artist and curator Erin Coates developed this exhibition during six months spent in Beijing in 2010. Drawn to practices outside or at the fringes of China's burgeoning art market, Coates' research took her to artists' studios concealed in the labyrinthine hutongs on the outskirts of Beijing's ever-expanding boroughs. The resulting exhibition includes work by a range of artists, from those having never shown outside of China, to internationally recognised artists.

The Knife's Edge eschews any attempt to present a survey of Chinese video practice. Rather, this exhibition focuses on a shared sensibility that Coates perceives in the practices of seven artists, living or exhibiting in Beijing. While the works are underscored by tensions born of China's current period of rapid transformation, the central concerns in these videos focus on individual, subjective experience. Retreating from the public sphere, using their own bodies as a site of creative production and displacing simple acts from their typical, quotidian context, these works generate new spaces that are at once remarkable and disquieting.

Physical transformation – at times violently enacted – is a recurring motif in this collection of videos, as is the manipulation of temporal qualities. Our perception of particular acts in these videos is shaped by the way time is altered, as it is bent backwards, rapidly accumulated, or drawn out into a slowly evolving tableau. Throughout this collection of video works there is an intensity in the way the artists seek to articulate their experiences of the world. As viewers we are drawn into these precarious moments, which seem to balance on a knife's edge. ■



Morgan Wong Wing-fat *Plus-Minus-Zero* 2010, video with audio, 3 minutes.
Courtesy the artist and Beijing Commune.



Kan Xuan *Looking, looking, looking for...* 2001, video with audio, 2:42 minutes.
Courtesy the artist



Wang Qingsong *123456 chops* 2008, video with sound, 4 minutes.
Courtesy the artist and Pêkin Fine Arts.



Jin Shan *One Man's Island* 2009, video with audio, 40 seconds.
Courtesy the artist and Platform China.