



Almost Unmeant
09.03-10.17 2020 | **GUO CHENG**

MAGICIAN SPACE 魔金石空间

The exhibition *Almost Unmeant* comprises of artist Guo Zheng's most representative works from recent years and the latest. Among his sculptures and installations, the technology always plays the role of basic principle. More precisely, it's a deduction of the program or rules. In this process, the logic behind the technology has been mostly simplified. The overlap between human intervention and the material life manifests in an austere way. This makes science no longer an abstract principle, but a perceptible reality. By exposing the nature of the technical tenets, materiality, and natural relationships' essence to the viewer, Guo Cheng highlights the skepticism on technological determinism and its values.

Artificiality and nature are often opposed to each other, which is an anthropocentric way of viewing the subject. In Guo Cheng's practice, nature manifests in materialized, metaphorical, and falsified manners. It is impossible to clearly define what is human and what is not, and what it offers is an attempt to look beyond the Anthropocene. The series of concrete-encased industrial parts, which Guo Cheng entitled, *Amber*, is not the natural creations of amber or fossils, but clearly, made by the artist. The two ways in which new things come into being are semantically and methodologically intertwined with the word 'amber', which points to how we should consider fortuity. Regardless of whether the concrete is emitting heat from within or waiting for time to disintegrate and erode, the human agency has long been inseparable from the creation of the natural world from a holistic point of view. In *The (temporary) Gadget* series and *Abstract Oracle Generator*, radiating particles' impact causes the actions of apparatus. These particles floating in the atmosphere envelop the planet at all times, imperceptible and unpredictable, at the same time, whose existence is often ignored. What it conveys is a paradox between fortuity and necessity.

In his practice, Guo Cheng transforms the randomness of things into an actual material spontaneity. Through fundamental laws and technical setups, he connects the human will to objects' properties, ceding agency to the material itself and the viewer in the process. He either preserves artificial traces in the form of natural objects or falsifies nature by technical means. What is implicit here is the question of what governs truth and falsehood, and how do we define the artificial and the natural. It is a subjective interrogation of how we perceive the material life. Only when human manipulation, the nature of things, and nature's laws are no longer distinct can we achieve a transversal, de-anthropocentric view.

About the Artist

Guo Cheng was born in Beijing in 1988, currently lives and works in Shanghai. He was graduated from MA Design Products at Royal College of Art (London, UK) and obtained his BE in Industrial Design at Tongji University (Shanghai, China). His practice mainly focuses on exploring the interrelation between mainstream/emerging technologies and individuals under the context of culture and social life. His recent exhibitions include: *Almost Unmeant*, Magician Space, Beijing, China (2020), *Down to Eearth*, Canton Gallery, Guangzhou, China (solo show, 2019); *How Do We Begin?*, X Museum, Beijing, China (2020); *The Eternal Network* (exhibition of Transmediale 2020), HKW, Berlin, Germany (2020); *The Process of Art: TOOLS AT WORK*, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China (2019); *Notes from Pallet Town*, UCCA Dune, Qinhuangdao, China (2019); *Deja vu*, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2019); *Open Codes. Connected Bots*, Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, China (2019); *Free Panorama*, Pingshan Culture Center, Shenzhen, China (2019); *Tracing the Mushroom at the End of the World*, Taikang Space, Beijing, China (2019); *Bath of Caracalla*, Canton Gallery, Guangzhou, China (2019); *Shanghai Beat*, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan (2018); *Machines Are Not Alone: A Mechanic Trilogy*, Chronus Art Center, Shanghai (2018); *Life Time*, Mu Art Space, Eindhoven (2017); *The Ecstasy of Time*, He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen (2017) etc..

He obtained the Prix Arts Electronica (2020), Digital Earth fellowship (2018-2019), the Special Jury Prize of Huayu Youth Award (Sanya, 2018) and the BADaward (The Hague, 2017). Guo's works are collected by M+ (Hong Kong), Sigg Collection (Switzerland) and International Art & Science Research Institute (China).





***Amber* Series**

The *Amber* Series continues Guo Cheng's focus on artifacts/technical objects in his projects *A Felicitous Neo-past* (2017) and *The (temporary) Gadget* (2018-2019). They can be seen as a permanent relic that transcends the existence of human species in a temporal dimension, a 'ghost' of human beings. This project targets artifacts/technical objects which solidified in artificial stone (concrete) with or without intention, initiating a ghost hunting.

Amber No.1

2019

concrete, custom circuit, rock, wood board

190 x 60 x 70cm





Amber No.1 (detail)
2019





Amber No.9
2020
concrete, heat sink
10 x 10 x 35cm





Amber No.7
2019
concrete, ceramics
7 x 10 x 9cm

Amber No.6
2019
concrete, plastic folk
5 x 20 x 15cm

Amber No.5
2019
concrete, ceramics
4 x 7 x 5cm

Amber No.8

2020

**concrete, reinforcing steel bar,
custom circuit, thermal camera,
Raspberry Pi, LCD screen**

20 x 20 x 180cm

31 x 31 x 170cm





The (temporary) Gadget consists of various materials and ready-made circuit boards as well as other modular. The Geiger Muller tube at the end of the pole detects the radiation level in the atmosphere. It will keep shaking while receiving the radiation ions until the background radiation intensity decay to the level before the Anthropocene, only if that could ever happen.

The 'temporary' in the title shows that the decay time can be calculated theoretically. Although nuclear experiments on the ground have been banned, other human activities continue to produce radioactive particles. This 'temporary' can be regarded as a 'forever' for the existence of human species. 'Gadget' is also the name of the first nuclear bomb to explode in the Trinity test.

In *The (temporary) Gadget No. 5* and *No. 6*, the artist juxtaposed the radiation detector and the *S.trifasciata*/Cactus together - these plants are often thought as natural radiation absorbers, to contrast between real environmental conditions and psychological self-comfort of human being.

The (temporary) Gadget No.6

2019

Arduino, custom circuit, Geiger

Muller tube, carbon fiber rod

S.trifasciata, Cactus

120 x 110 x 40cm





The (temporary) Gadget No.5

2019

**Arduino, custom circuit,
Geiger Muller tube,
carbon fiber rod, felt bag,
Scindapsus
250 x 40 x 40cm**



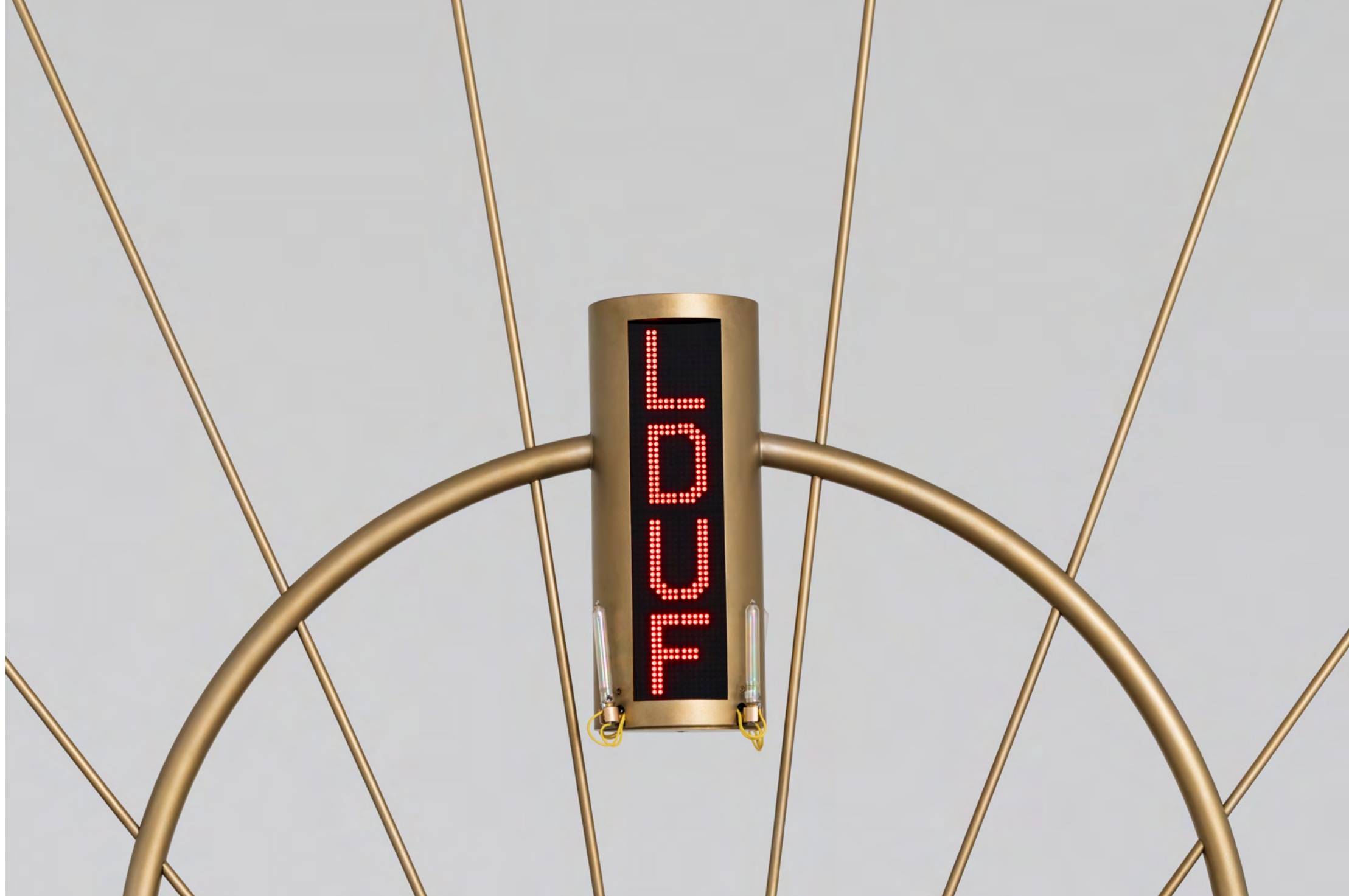


Abstract Oracle Generator

The form of abbreviation on the internet is consists of the initials of words, phrase or sentence. Despite what kind of language the abbreviation is based on, it produces a free and flexible interpretation beyond its own meaning. For instance, GG – Ge Ge (brother in Chinese)/Good Game (in English); ZZ – Zhuan Zai/Zheng Zhi/Zhi Zhang (reprint/politics/ dumb, in Chinese); NMSL – Ni Ma Si Le (your mother is dead, in Chinese)/ Never Mind the Scandal and Liber (in English). As a kind argot on the internet, abbreviation also to be used to replace some sensitive words in specific situations.

Abstract Oracle Generator is a device based on physical random number generator to produce different English acronym combinations, which like prophecies to response to questions raised by participates. In fact, when the device is triggered by participants striking the bronze bowl bell to activate the Geiger-Mueller tube system, the ionizing radiating particle in the environment is monitored and transferred on the LED screen with the randomly English acronyms. Maybe a way to put it, the 'oracle' produced by the ionizing radiation in the spatial environment, which monitored by Geiger-Mueller tube system, is purely and objectively than the human divination or the results generated by computer with the pseudo-random algorithm. Meanwhile, the abstraction of abbreviations expands the participants' imagination.





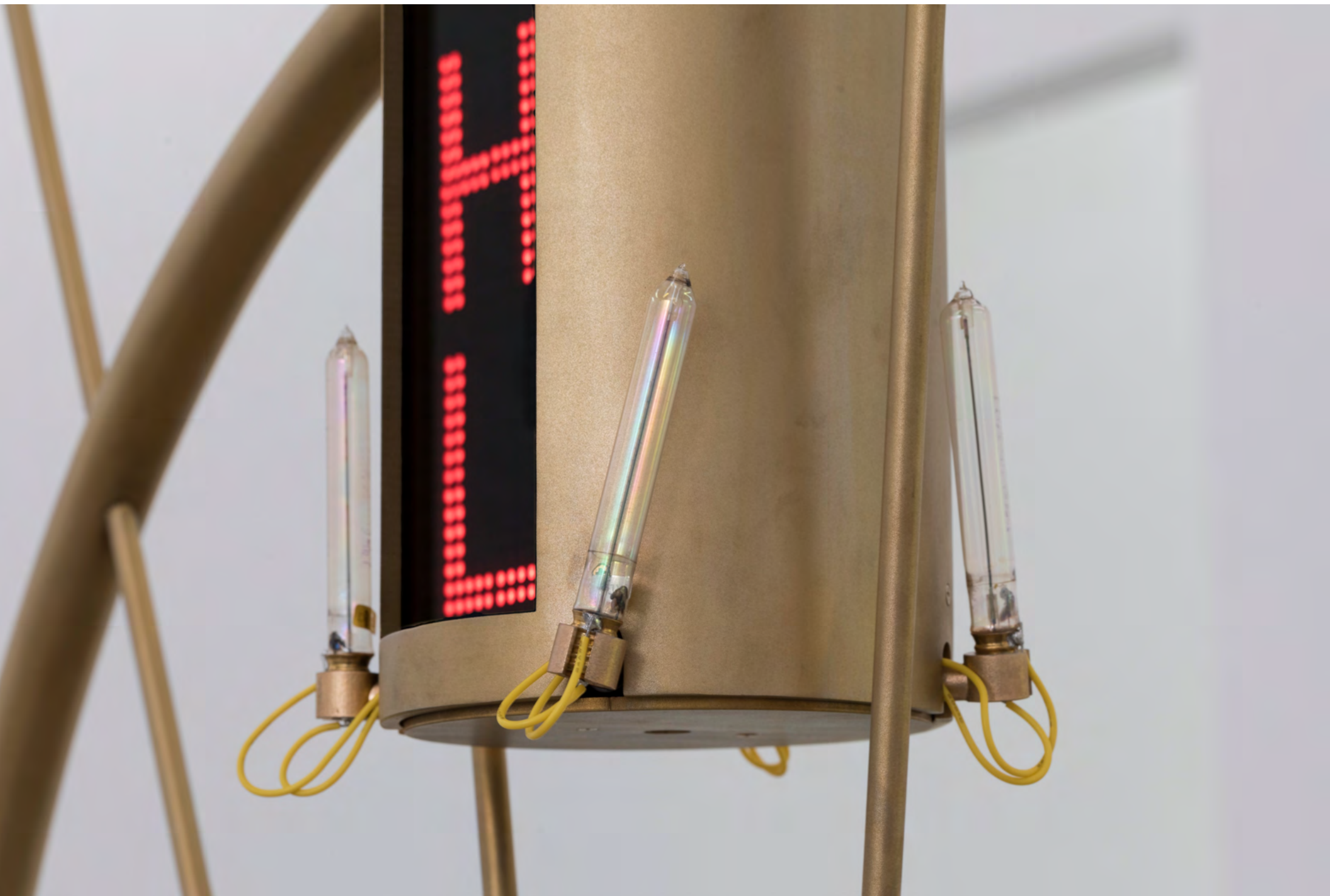
Abstract Oracle Generator

2020

**stainless steel plated with titanium, inverted bell, wood, custom
circuit, LED screen, Geiger Muller tube**

210 x 210 x 14cm

Abstract Oracle Generator (detail)
2020



GUO CHENG CV

GUO CHENG

1988 Born in Beijing, currently lives and works in Shanghai, China
2010 Graduated from Industrial Design at Tongji University, Shanghai, China
2012 Graduated from MA Design Products at Royal College of Art London, UK

Solo Exhibition

2020 Almost Unmeant, Magician Space, Beijing, CN
2019 Down to Earth, Canton Gallery, Guangzhou, CN

Group Exhibition

2020 *How Do We Begin?*, X Museum, Beijing, CN
The Eternal Network, HKW, Berlin, GER
2019 The Process of Art: TOOLS AT WORK, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, CN
Notes from Pallet Town, UCCA Dune, Qinhuangdao, CN
Deja vu, Today Art Museum, Beijing, CN
Open Codes: Connected Bots, Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, CN
Tracing the Mushroom at the End of the World, Taikang Space, Beijing, CN
Baths of Cara Calla, Canton Gallery, Guangzhou, CN
Free Panorama, Shenzhen Pingshan cultural center, Shenzhen, CN
2018 Shanghai Beat, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, JP
Condition, Huayu Art Center, Sanya, CN
Machines Are Not Alone: A Machinic Trilogy, Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, CN
2017 Life Time, MU Art Space, Eindhoven, NL
The Ecstasy of Time, HE Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen, CN
Atypical Human, YIRI Art space, Taipei, Taiwan
Apparatus Serendipity, Minority space, Beijing, CN
All the Single Ladies, J, Gallery, Shanghai, CN
2016 Shenzhen Media Art Festival, Shenzhen, CN
Reflexivity, YU Art Space, Shanghai, CN
2015 The Ballad of Generation Y, OCAT Shanghai, CN
Imaginary Body Boundary, Digital Art Center, Taipei, CN
Migrating Frontiers, Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, CN

2014 Free Art Fair, Huashan 1914 Creative Park, Taipei, CN
Tomorrow's Party, UCCA, Beijing, CN
Nail's Hub: Exhibitionists, Ying Space, Beijing, CN
2013 East at West, Design Museum, Helsinki, FIDCC International Media Art Exhibition, OCT loft B10, Shenzhen, CN
STRP Biennial, Klokgebouw, Eindhoven, NL
2012 Get it Louder, the Orange, Sanlitun Village, Beijing, CN
RCA Degree Show, Battersea, Royal College of Art, London, UK
Paradise, Milan Salone del Mobile, Milan, IT
WIP Show, Henry Moore Gallery, Royal college of art, London, UK
2010 WIP Show, Henry Moore Gallery, Royal college of art, London, UKHe

Award

2020 The Prix Arts Electronica
2019 The Digital Earth fellowship
2018 The Special Jury Prize of Huayu Youth Award
2017 The BADaward

Collection

M+ (Hong Kong), Sigg Collection (Switzerland) and International Art & Science Research Institute (China)

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