

JIAJIA ZHANG: DOMESTIC NEWS

April 29–July 5, 2026

Swiss Institute (SI) presents *Domestic News*, the first institutional solo exhibition in the US by artist Jiajia Zhang. Centered on a newly commissioned five-channel video installation, the exhibition transforms the gallery into a rounded mirror chamber that stages a prismatic view of contemporary Shanghai. Through moving image, sound, and architectural elements, Zhang traces the circulations of a city tasked with staging the ambitions and contradictions of modern China, examining how spectacle, infrastructure, and everyday life move through the urban systems that sustain the contemporary metropolis.

In the lower-level gallery, a cylindrical space clad in mirrored surfaces features five synchronized videos, presented as a chapter from an ongoing film project, that open onto scenes filmed across Shanghai. Seated on motorcycle saddles, viewers face the screens as if entering a traffic system, a rotating restaurant, a news cycle. Like a panorama or praxinoscope, the installation produces a rotating field of images in which interior and exterior constantly shift back and forth, as the city appears to extend beyond the room while folding back into its surface.

Across the screens, the city reveals itself through fragments of flows and pause. Passing traffic, LED advertising displays, architecture at nighttime, GPS navigation systems, and murals in progress alternate with quieter scenes of people waiting, eating, sweeping, or standing still. Boats drift across waterways while cars trace seemingly arbitrary routes through illuminated streets. Meanwhile, text and signs dominate the environment with ads and digital interfaces. Buildings, machines, and signage guide, motivate, and contain bodies that move through the urban landscape, producing a choreography in which people watch machines that watch them in return.

The footage, filmed by Jiří Makovec, is interwoven with a script by Aurelia Guo. Drawing on memoir, reportage, political theory, and literature, the narration recounts floods, diasporic childhoods, marriage markets, and clandestine revolutionary fantasies. Rather than describing the imagery, the text runs parallel to it. Human figures are continually mediated by the systems around them as voices move through phones and microphones and images circulate through cameras and drones. Automated announcements overlap with human speech in Mandarin and English, live and recorded, broadcasted and intimate. A rendition of the song *Gong Xi Gong Xi (Good Wishes, Good Wishes)* anchors the installation.

Composed in 1945 during the Second Sino-Japanese War to celebrate the end of occupation and the survival of winter, the song has since been recast in mainland China as a cheerful Chinese New Year anthem. Transforming wartime endurance into recurring celebration, historical trauma is absorbed into ritual and civic optimism.

In the stairway leading to the gallery, a prismatic billboard displays floral arrangements that intermittently appear and disappear. Set against the contemporary city's dense semiotic landscape of billboards, LED displays, mall promotions, safety advisories, and patriotic slogans, the framed display draws from an anecdote in Zhang's grandmother's memoir. During the period of Japanese occupation, flowers placed on windowsills signaled covert resistance meetings: their presence meant the house was safe, while their absence warned that it was not.

Presented in New York, *Domestic News* places two imperial cities in dialogue. If Shanghai registers the velocity of ascent, New York offers a premonition of aftermath. The installation's loop concludes where it begins, with an illuminated fountain and the returning refrain of celebration. Winter is over, spring is coming – a mechanism of return that renews itself without resolution. Celebration overwrites catastrophe. Empire appears not as a linear rise or fall, but as a rotating system: seasonal, infrastructural, and self-regarding. Within the mirrored chamber, spectators become part of this circuit, neither fully outside the spectacle nor fully inside it.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Swiss Institute will present a screening and conversation with Zhang and Aurelia Guo on May 1.

Domestic News is made possible through support from Zürcher Filmstiftung, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, UBS Kulturstiftung, Amt für Kultur Kanton St.Gallen (Film), rossogranada, Every Page Foundation, and Ernst and Olga Gubler-Hablützel Foundation.

The exhibition is curated by Alison Coplan, Chief Curator.



Swiss Institute

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Free and open to the public

Works

Domestic News (Chapter 1 from Tables, Doors, Songs), 2026
HD video, color, sound
22:19
Courtesy of the artist

Script: Aurelia Guo
Camera: Jiří Makovec
Sound mixing and mastering: Alban Schelbert
Voiceover: Aurelia Guo, He Shen
Color grading: Jiří Makovec and Björn Allemann

Window (Script: Bouquet), 2026
Photographs on prismatic ad
Courtesy of the artist

About Jiajia Zhang

Jiajia Zhang (b. 1981 Hefei, China) lives and works in Zurich, CH. With video, sculpture, and installation, Zhang creates a language of contemporary images that playfully transverse the permeable boundaries that new media creates, challenging our entrenched definitions and notions of private and public. She studied architecture at ETH, Zürich, photography at the International Center of Photography, New York, and completed her Master of Fine Arts at Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in 2020. Her work has been part of numerous exhibitions, including at CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Damien & The Love Guru, Brussels; Fluentum, Berlin; Swiss Art Awards, Basel; FriArt, Fribourg; Fondation d'entreprise Pernod Ricard, Paris; Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, St. Gallen; and Istituto Svizzero, Milan.

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent nonprofit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental artmaking through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and environmentally conscious in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free of charge, SI seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

SI Programming is made possible in part with public funds from Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council; Canton Basel-Stadt; the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council with the support of council member Carlina Rivera.

Main supporters include LUMA Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Friends of SI; Every Page Foundation; Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso; A4 Arts Foundation; and Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger. Exhibitions are made possible in part by the SI Artist Vision Fund with leadership support provided by the SI Board of Trustees, Becky and David Gochman, and Nicoletta Fiorucci. SI gratefully acknowledges all TimeForArt Partners, Swiss Re as SI ONSITE Partner, Vitra as Design Partner, and Crozier Fine Arts as Preferred Shipping Art Logistics Partner.

Critical operating support was provided to SI in 2024 and 2025 as part of a collective fundraising effort with CANNY (Collaborate Arts Network New York). We thank the following supporters: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Arison Arts Foundation, and The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. SI is integrating sustainability and environmental consciousness into all facets of the institution. Support for this effort comes in part from the Frankenthaler Climate Initiative and Teiger Foundation.

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