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# Cao Fei explores past, present and future at Rome's Maxxi museum

**Acclaimed Chinese artist's video and installation pieces come to Italy for the first time**

[Lisa Movius](#) - 13 December 2021



A still from Cao Fei's retro-futurist film *Nova* (2019), which explores a nonlinear experience of time - Courtesy of Cao Fei and Vitamin Creative Space

Cao Fei's exhibition at London's Serpentine Gallery in 2020 won her the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize and acclaim as "one of the most innovative and exciting young Chinese artists to have emerged on the international scene".

Now her contemplative interpretations of our convoluted era come to Italy for the first time, with a solo exhibition at Rome's Maxxi. Organised by curator Monia Trombetta and Maxxi artistic director Hou Hanru, the exhibition presents nine of the video, installation and documentation works Cao has made since 2007, with an emphasis on her most recent projects.

The uncertainty of 2020 is captured in a work based on Cao's two-month lockdown. The repetitious, uncertain limbo of early 2020 is presented in *Isle of Instability*, Cao's fantastical rendition of her two months of "circuit-breaker" lockdown with her family while living as an immigrant in Singapore. The documentary *Hongxia* (2020) and accompanying publication *HX* (2020) delve into the industrial heritage of Cao's home base in Beijing's Jiuxianqiao area, centring around the now demolished titular theatre, which she recreated for her solo exhibition at UCCA Beijing this spring. Jiuxianqiao's Soviet-backed technology industry of the 1950s inspired her retro-futurist feature film *Nova* (2019), exploring a nonlinear experience of time and development.

The recreation of imaginary spaces continues with *The Eternal Wave* (2020), a facsimile of Hongxia Theatre's kitchen, 2007's *RMB City: A Second Life City Planning* and the decimated diorama world of 2014's *La Town*.

Hou is a longtime collaborator of Cao's and worked with her remotely on this show due to Covid-19. He says he is "looking forward to provoking different reactions in those who have lived through this challenging moment, struggling in different ways", be it in China, Singapore or Italy.

• [Cao Fei: Supernova](#), Maxxi, Rome, 12 December-8 May 2022