

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

O Zhang: *I Am Your Mirror*

Date: Saturday, September 15th, 2012 – Saturday, November 10th, 2012

Location: 167 East 73rd Street, New York, NY 10021

Time: Wednesday – Saturday, Noon – 6pm, or by appointment

Admission: Free

Reception: Friday, September 14th, 2012, 6pm – 9pm; RSVP required

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An artist reveals the beauty in an ominous beacon

O Zhang premieres new photography installation at the Vilcek Foundation Gallery

New York, June 19, 2012 — Premiering at the Vilcek Foundation Gallery this fall, Chinese-born artist O Zhang's new solo exhibition, *I Am Your Mirror*, is not your typical photography installation. Using original photographs of blank billboards she took during her voyages across the American landscape, Ms. Zhang will present to visitors a new world of her own creation.

Ms. Zhang's billboards, while devoid of content, are anything but silent: they speak loudly of decline, bankruptcy, and decay—of an altogether uncertain future. Yet, in her unique artistic voice Ms. Zhang calls forth the beauty of these forms, spotlighting the magnificence of their thoughtfully designed architectural structures and striking color palettes, contained within a history of worn-away layers.

In her first exhibition solely inspired by a U.S. subject, Ms. Zhang will use these images to recount her eye-opening travels throughout the recession-rattled countryside to illustrate the visually arresting elements of these time-worn structures. Within the space she creates for *I Am Your Mirror*, Ms. Zhang will present these singular works both as traditional prints, to highlight the beauty of the constructions using the natural landscapes that surround them, and as a gel transfer on a wood board as decayed as the neglected structure it depicts.

Ms. Zhang's works will line the walls of the Vilcek Foundation Gallery, centering around an immense, free-standing billboard of her own creation, ushering visitors forward, where they will find themselves among thousands of weather-worn prints strewn across the gallery floor, each depicting a billboard documented by the artist.

Rick Kinsel, Executive Director for the Vilcek Foundation said of the installation, "Road-trippin' has long been immortalized in American culture as a transformational journey. Examples are numerous: Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda's famed film *Easy Rider*; Jack Kerouac's cross-country memoir, *On the Road*; and Bill Bryson's travel chronicle *Lost Continent: Travels in Small-Town America*; among many others. Setting off on her own cross-country billboard hunt, O Zhang's trek continues this tradition."

Kinsel added, "Interestingly, O Zhang's road trip closely echoes the iconic journey of architects Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, recounted in their seminal text, *Learning from Las Vegas*. Chronicling a culture of 'pop-up architecture' in Las Vegas, Denise and Bob found much more than an unbridled excess of commercial structures; they found a vision of this country's

landscape that would irreversibly inform their own artistic voices. In this same vein, O Zhang joins the ranks of artists both challenged and broadened by the trials of the road, similarly transforming her own artistic sensibility, presented anew here in the Vilcek Foundation Gallery.”

O Zhang is a Chinese-born artist working in photography and mixed media. A graduate of the Central Academy of Art in Beijing and the Royal College of Art in London, Ms. Zhang moved to New York in 2004; since then, she has been living and working in New York and Beijing. She was the recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Artist Fellowship (New York) and was nominated/short-listed for numerous awards, including the Chinese Contemporary Art Awards (Beijing) and Beck’s Future Award (London).

Ms. Zhang has given lectures at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Shanghai), the Denver Museum of Art, Oxford University, New York University, the University of California, and elsewhere. Her work has been featured in more than a hundred exhibitions throughout the world, among them the Deutsche Guggenheim Museum (Berlin), the Miro Museum (Barcelona), and the Vancouver Gallery (Vancouver). Her work can be found in American collections coast to coast—the Guggenheim Museum (New York) and the Santa Barbara Museum (California), to name two. In 2009, Ms. Zhang became one of the first Chinese female contemporary artists to have a solo museum exhibition in New York City, at the Queens Museum of Art. That same year, her autobiography, *An Empire Where the Moon Light Never Fades*, was on the best-seller list in China. She is considered one of the most important young Chinese artists working in the international art scene today.

THE VILCEK FOUNDATION

The Vilcek Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the Foundation, to honor the contributions of foreign-born scholars and artists living in the United States, was inspired by the couple’s careers in biomedical science and art history, respectively, as well as their personal experiences and appreciation for the opportunities they received as newcomers to this country. The Foundation hosts events to promote the work of immigrants, and awards annual prizes to prominent immigrant biomedical scientists and artists who make outstanding contributions to American society. To learn more about the Vilcek Foundation, visit www.vilcek.org.