Stitching industriously in a garment factory, a young woman streams herself on a smartphone. *I only do this when the boss is away*, she says. *This is reality.* A pig farmer puts down her selfie-stick. *Streaming anchor earns billions by going to the toilet*, she jokes, *but you'd better not watch it, just stay outside.* These women are working two jobs, bridging two economies; live-streaming is a big industry in China. 'Anchors' perform strange stunts or record everyday life like the protagonists in the factory and farm. Viewers post on-screen comments and virtual gifts that can be redeemed for money. In 2017, the number of live-stream users in China reached 422 million. Shengze Zhu's third film, *Present.Perfect.* creates a collective portrait of contemporary China composed entirely of footage from live-streaming sites.

Zhu followed a dozen streams over the course of a year; their seemingly mundane content intrigued her for what it revealed. Condensed from eight-hundred hours of footage to two, *Present. Perfect.* exposes the extent to which live-streaming offers an alternative form of sociability for those whose identity, disability or socioeconomic status might make some interpersonal interactions difficult. As much as it portrays present-day China, the film is also a study of emergent virtual communities and the support and visibility they provide their users.

Recalling the documentary form's historical claims to truth, the film title's grammatical tense plays with the function of cinema to record the past and the function of live-streaming to broadcast the present. It suggests that what we *have seen* affects the present, and what *has been* might not be this way forever. An anchor walks us through the demolition rubble that will soon engulf his home. Xi Jinping's dream of gentrification unravels as a shakily-framed ruin in reverse. As China's built landscapes change, so do its virtual ones. Censorship has curtailed live-streaming with regulations and fines. Since its making, several streams featured in *Present. Perfect.* have been taken offline, with all points of contact to their anchors lost.

The long take is a feature of live-streaming, but also character-ises Zhu's observational approach, which affords people time to express themselves. We can deduce the content of viewers' typed

comments – even if they are out of frame – from the way anchors respond, telling and re-telling their life stories for minutes on end. Anchors hold their cameras differently, walk with particular gaits, and speak with various accents – we might say *Present.Perfect.* is the work of a dozen directors. Zhu's decisive cuts and the conversion of all footage to black and white reinserts her editorial presence and reflects her background in photography and journalism. The division of the film into chapters recalls the chronological and titled vignettes of Zhu's previous works, filmed in her hometown of Wuhan in central China. In those films, like this one, reality meets its constructed representation, and real-time becomes a time capsule.

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