

**QUARTER LIFE CRISIS  
Art in a World on the Brink**

*Philip Tinari, director of the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art in China, presents the curatorial direction for the 2025 Verbier Art Summit.*

We find ourselves, already, a quarter of the way through the twenty-first century. In these two and a half decades, art, along with the larger world in which it functions, has undergone wave upon wave of fundamental, irreversible change. Taking its title from the pop-psychology name for the anxiety of young adulthood coined in the early 2000s, this edition of the Verbier Art Summit brings together artists and thinkers from across geographies and generations to ask questions about the geopolitical, digital, human, and institutional dimensions of the art world to which there are no easy answers.

We have witnessed the long slide from a unipolar to a multipolar world, where latent tensions, harboured resentments, and ongoing occupations have erupted into deadly conflicts. Simultaneously, systemic alternatives to democracy have upended liberal teleologies, challenging established narratives of governance. In this evolving geopolitical panorama, social justice movements have risen as powerful catalysts for change, demanding equity and accountability on a global scale. Even if globalisation is no longer taken as axiomatic, the realm of 'global contemporary art' has emerged as an aesthetic corollary to multipolarity. It has brought about a single picture plane: Art from all over can now speak to each other and to wider audiences. This process of 'opening' is also informed by a more nuanced understanding of 'the contemporary,' one of the key debates of the century's early years.

Meanwhile, we have watched, posted, and streamed, as digital acceleration has wrought iterative transformation. Successive technologies gave rise to micro-generations, each with its unique affect and subjectivity. Transmissibility has become its own universal currency, as actual value continues to accrue in ever more distorted and concentrated ways, with growth feeding the disparity. The global community becomes both interconnected and fragmented, while visible, articulated identities expand and intersect, reshaping spaces and discourses, but also atomising us ever further. Some institutions have evolved to meet the demands of this increasingly interconnected world, others collapsed, or teeter on the brink. Bars have been lowered, Overton windows moved, lockdowns enforced, tragedies endured.

*After an extended pandemic hiatus, the Verbier Art Summit returns to ask, **Who will counsel us through this collective quarter life crisis? And what awaits us beyond our globalised anxiety?***