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# A Pile Of Ghosts

A film by **Ella Raidel**

[apileofghosts.com](http://apileofghosts.com)

Directed and Produced **Ella Raidel** Cast **Yakira Cang** 仓亚琦, **Charles Yang** 杨柯  
Editor **Daniel Hui** Cinematography **Ella Raidel**, **Djordje Arambasic**, **Karel Picha**,  
**Vincent Zheng** 鄭無邊 Sound Design & Mix **Sander Saarmets** Sound Recording  
**Tong Zhang**, **Cheng Huawei** 成華偉 Colorist **Junbin Chen** Executive Producer  
**Ursula Wolschlager** Associate Producer **Hongjohn Lin** Graphic Design **Ralph K.C. Wu**


**FWF**

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

Federal Chancellery  
Republic of Austria





A man wearing a bright orange jumpsuit and a yellow hard hat is walking away from the camera down a very dark, narrow alleyway. The alleyway is flanked by stone walls and has a concrete floor. A single light source from above creates a long, bright shadow of the man on the ground. In the distance, other figures can be faintly seen. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and somber.

*Distributed by  
Sixpackfilm  
Vienna*

<https://sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/2656>

*Watch  
A Pile of Ghosts  
TRAILER*

<https://vimeo.com/557137196>

# A Pile of Ghosts

*Hybrid Art Film, 70 Min., 2021*  
*A Film by Ella Raidel*

The real estate broker cruises around the rambling speculation landscape on a golfcart and adds names, numbers, and products: Ocean Boulevard, Central Beach Road, Lakeside Club, 250,000 square meters, freshly planted shrubs, nonslip tiles, theme clubs, and fishing spots, a playground, three swimming pools, a clinic, a hotel, a beauty salon for pets. The marketing tour is somewhat like a performance whose words circulate through various bodies and objects. “Innovation is the soul, technology makes the city” can be read on a huge poster surface, and a concrete mixer promises: “Building with a Heart.” Here in Ella Raidel’s cinematic exploration of a Chinese ghost city, it’s only logical when also an actress advertises herself like the latest goods: “My name is Box. I am 1.63 meters tall and weigh 46 kilograms ... An actress should be like a box ... we have to give the director what she wants.”

Raidel’s film, which forms the preliminary conclusion to her comprehensive research project, **Of Haunted Spaces**, takes the stage-like qualities of the settings as the starting point for a puzzling game. **A Pile of Ghosts** shows construction workers and real estate brokers at work—in authentic and also staged settings, in casting scenes and in changing roles. The so-called reality, at the same time, turns out to be increasingly porous, also hard lines of rupture become increasingly apparent in the retort-like surroundings. At a construction site, instructions can be found to not “shit” behind the building. And in the tumbledown “Swallow Hotel” in the hills of Chongqing, amidst persistent noises the dandyesque hotel owner Charles defies the turbo-capitalist urbanization process.

Dead new buildings and ruins, brokers and actors, documentation and fiction, simulation and lived experience, the sounds of a jackhammer and the romantic melody of an old Hollywood film:

**A Pile of Ghosts** layers the seemingly disparate building blocks to form the title’s “pile.” In the end, one ghost story absorbs the other. (Esther Buss)





**A Pile of Ghosts** reveals the process of filmmaking while researching China's new ghost cities. The film is a visually poetic tableau of urban scapes and an experiment of narration through the self-reflexivity of filmmaking. Scenarios are staged to tell of the reality, and reality in reverse turns out to be scripted by the media society.

The spectre is not only found in places haunted by capitalism, but also by its representation in images.





Charles owns a hotel in the hills of Chongqing. The picturesque area is under drastic demolition. He refuses to move and creates a world of his own. He is obsessed with watching the Waterloo Bridge, one of the first Hollywood classics ever released in China and a symbol of the capitalistic West. Charles imagines himself as the star in it and conducts imaginary monologues with a female visitor. A romance of speculative urbanization.

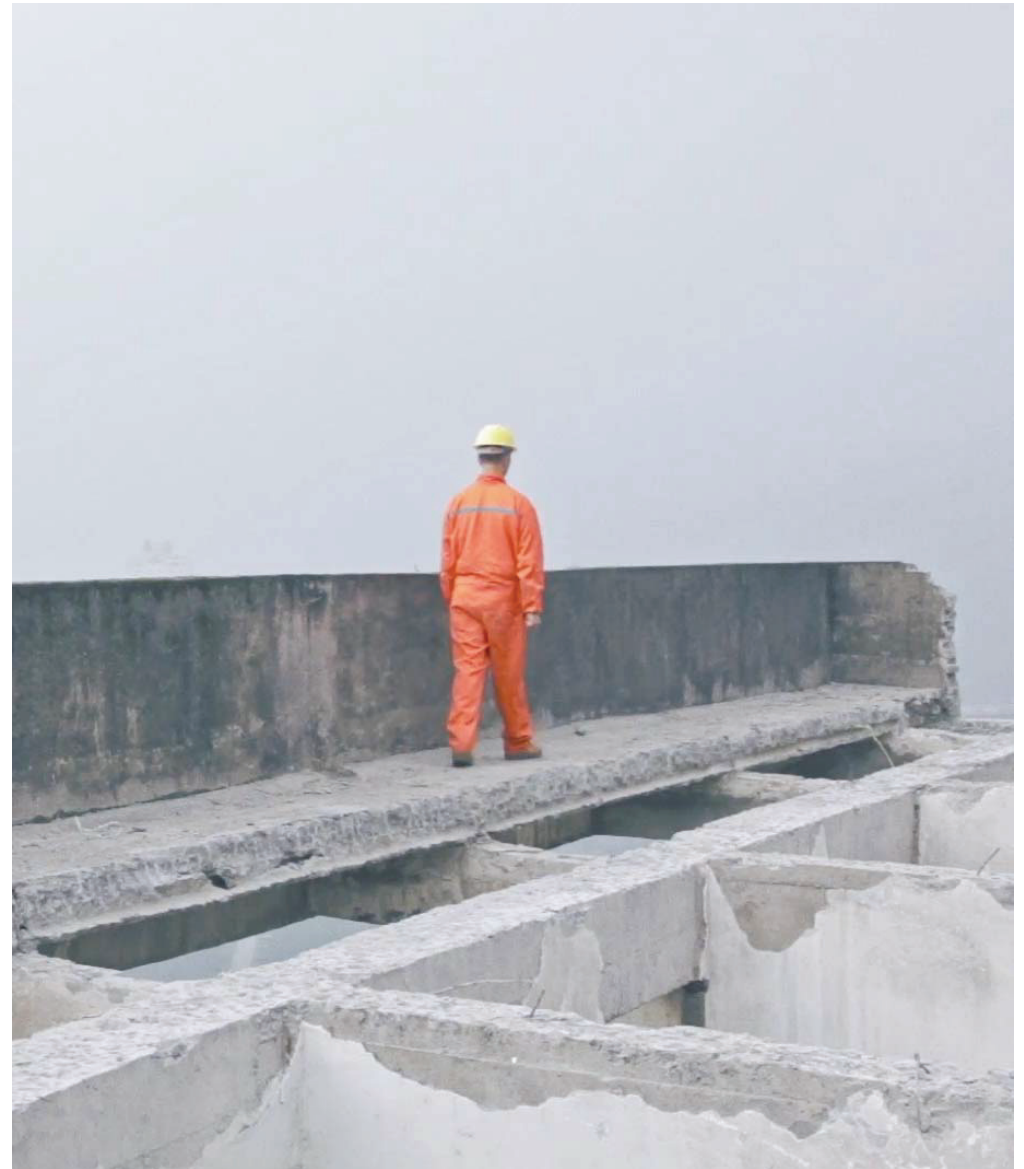




A play between documentary and fiction takes place, to tell the story of China's urbanization, where cities are built for pure speculation and not for being lived in.



A ghost story of urbanisation. The last hotel, which has been condemned for demolition like the rest of the town, is still standing. The owner Charles imagines himself with a female visitor in the scenes of a Hollywood classic. The vexing interplay of documentary and fiction, in which construction workers, investors and real estate agents appear, takes place in contemporary China, where cities are built entirely on speculation, dictated by the fictions of capitalism.



Credits:

Director/Producer  
**Ella Raidel**

Editing  
**Daniel Hui**

Sound Design  
**Sander Saarmets**

Color grading  
**Junbin Chen**

Associate Producer  
**Hongjohn Lin**

Cast  
**Charles Yang, Yakira Cang**

Cinematography  
**Djordje Arambasic, Karel Picha, Vincent Zheng**

Sound  
**Tong Zhang, Huawei Cheng**

Visual Effects  
**Ben Seide**

Production Advisor  
**Ursula Wolschlager**



**Contact:**

A Pile of Ghosts is distributed by Sixpackfilm Vienna

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**Ella Raidel** is a filmmaker, artist, and researcher from Austria. She is Assistant Professor at NTU Singapore. In her interdisciplinary works – films, videos, and discourses – she focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of globalization, urbanization, and the representation of images. Her practice is to create a discursive space for filmmaking, art, and research. Raidel's work is always a reflexive interplay between the real and the fictional.

Ella Raidel has created numerous experimental short films, documentary films, and film installations. **A Pile of Ghosts** (2021) is the third film in which she investigated the political-economic situation of Chinese investments in infrastructure projects, using performative acts as a poetic device. Her first film **SUBVERSES China in Mozambique** (2010) displays workers inside and outside the global context, referring to the colonial inheritance, which reaches a new climax in the economic involvement of China.

Her feature-length film **Double Happiness** (75 Min., 2014) is on the economy of cultural simulation in the global context. The film is about the copy of an Austrian village to explore China's fast urbanization on the intersection of the real and the fake created through visual imagery and commentary, interviews, and songs.

**Double Happiness** has been shown worldwide in Biennials, exhibitions, and conferences related to art, film and urbanism, and in over 60 international film festivals, among those CPH:DOX (2014), DOK Leipzig (2014), Crossing Europe Filmfestival, Linz (2014), BAFICI Buenos Aires International Film Festival (2015), Hotdocs Canada (2015), Planete+Doc Film Festival, Warschau (2015), Margaret Mead Film Festival, New York (2015), and Chicago International Film Festival (2015).

Ella Raidel was a post-doc researcher at Academia Sinica Taipei and has written on Chinese language cinema. As a senior post-doc researcher (Elise Richter PEEK), she was working on her research for an essay film on Chinese ghost cities under the title **Of Haunted Spaces** (2016-2019). **A Pile of Ghosts** (2021) was developed through this research.



[www.ellaraidel.com](http://www.ellaraidel.com)

[www.doublehappiness.at](http://www.doublehappiness.at)

[www.hauntedspaces.net](http://www.hauntedspaces.net)

[www.apileofghosts.com](http://www.apileofghosts.com)



## *Filmography / Videography*

Ella Raidel's films are distributed by Sixpackfilm Vienna, office@sixpackfilm.com  
<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/filmmaker/3583>

### **A Pile of Ghosts**, 70 Min., 2021

Experimental, Artist Film, Hybrid

Distributed by Sixpackfilm

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/2656>

[www.apileofghosts.com](http://www.apileofghosts.com)

### **Double Happiness**, 75 Min., 2014

Documentary, Docu-Musical

Distributed by Sixpackfilm

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/2170>

[www.doublehappiness.at](http://www.doublehappiness.at)

Festivals: Opening Film of Crossing Europe Film festival Linz/ Austria 2014, DOK Leipzig, CPH:DOX/Copenhagen, BAFICI/Buenos Aires, HOT DOCS/Canada, DIAGONALE (see website)

### **SUBVERSEES, China in Mozambique**, 45 Min., 2011

Experimental Documentary

Distributed by Sixpackfilm

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/1896>

<http://ellaraidel.com/?p=1123>

Festivals: IFFR Rotterdam, Duisburger Filmwoche, Crossing Europe/ Local Artists Award, etc.

## SHORTS:

### **We Will Always Have Paris**, 4 Min., 2020

Experimental short

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/2621>

Festivals: Crossing Europe Linz, DIAGONALE

### **Cinema Isn't I see, It's I Fly**, 1 Minute

Experimental Short

Crossing Europe Festival Trailer 2013, Big Nomad Prize Urban Nomad

Film festival Taipei 2014, Chicago International Film festival Trailer

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/2232>

Chicago International Film Festival Trailer, 2016

Play Life Fight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URsrE7S2koc>

Crossing Europe Film Festival Trailer, 2013,

Cinema Isn't I see, It's I Fly

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGvJMaRvp\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGvJMaRvp_8)

### **Play Life Series**, 11 Min., 2012

Experimental Short

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/1974>

Festivals: Diagonale, Kasseler Dokumentar- und Videofest,

Les Recontres Internationales Paris/Berlin, etc.

### **SLAM VIDEO MAPUTO**, 27 Min., 2010

Experimental Short

<http://ellaraidel.com/?p=1086>

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/1866>

Festivals: IFFR Rotterdam, VIS, CPH:DOX,

Crossing Europe/Local Artists Award, FID Marseille, etc.

### **Family Affairs**, 2 Min., 2010

<https://vimeo.com/18025104>

Ursula Blickle Videoarchiv

### **Somewhere, late afternoon**, 11 Min, 2011

with Hongjohn Lin

Experimental Short

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/2016>

Family Trophies, 3 min., 1998

<https://vimeo.com/30389847>

<https://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/1287>

Festivals: Monitoring- Kasseler Dokumentar- und Videofest,

Diagonale, etc.



# OF HAUNTED SPACES




Ella Raidel has been working on her research on Chinese ghost cities under the title “Of Haunted Spaces,” 2016-19, an arts-based research project funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF.

[www.hauntedspaces.net](http://www.hauntedspaces.net)

*Map created by Chen Shiau-Peng*

**FWF** Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

Project Number: V 492-G24

 Federal Chancellery  
Republic of Austria

