



Berlin, 23 May 2017

EXHIBITION PREVIEW

Museum für Fotografie

Jebensstr. 2, 10623 Berlin

Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat + Sun 11 am – 7 pm, Thu 11 am – 8 pm

Working on History.

Contemporary Chinese Photography and the Cultural Revolution

18 August 2017 – 7 January 2018

An exhibition by the Kunstbibliothek – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Chinesischen Kulturellen Austausch e.V. (GeKA), supported by the Hauptstadtkulturfonds

Press conference: Thursday, 17 August 2017, 11 am

Opening: Thursday, 17 August 2017, 7 pm

Featuring historical works and pictures by contemporary artists, the exhibition *Working on History. Contemporary Chinese Photography and the Cultural Revolution* lifts the veil on one of the most fascinating and yet simultaneously little-explored chapters in the history of photography: the impact of the Cultural Revolution on current art and photography in China.

Virtually no other event has had such a profound influence on the visual arts of the last half-century in China as the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). It led to a radical departure from both traditional Chinese and Western cultural values, brought about through mass propaganda on an enormous scale. Posters and wall newspapers (big character posters) were instrumental in reaching the political goals, but equally instrumental were film and photography – and their aesthetics continue to characterize our understanding of the Cultural Revolution to this day.

Most impregnated in the memory and often quoted are not so much the secretly taken images of extreme acts of violence and book burnings, but rather the official images of the government propaganda, the countless photographs of Chairman Mao, and the mass rallies of the period. These images form the basis for the work of contemporary photographers and artists, who use various methods to transform and translate them into a contemporary visual language.

The exhibition, which has been jointly curated by Wang Huangsheng (Director of the Art Museum at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing), Guo Xiaoyan (Assistant Director of the Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing), and Ludger Derenthal (Head of the Photography Collection of the Kunstbibliothek – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), juxtaposes the historical iconography of the Cultural Revolution with contemporary works in photography and video that are often large in scale and presented in series.

Artists like Cai Dongdong, Cao Kai, Mo Yi, Wang Qingsong, Wang Youshen, and Zhang Dali explore forms of censorship and montage in their works and question the visual tools of political heroization and hero-worship, while Mu Chen, Qu Yan, Shao Yinong, and Zhang Kechun doc-

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ument the assembly halls and party headquarters that still exist today or photograph the ritual re-enactment of symbolic acts from the period. Meanwhile artists like Feng Mengbo, Hai Bo, He Chongyue, Maleonn, Song Yongping, Wang Ningde and Zhuang Hui take a different tack and use the power of photography to delve into individual biographies.

A comprehensive publication by Kerber Verlag accompanies the exhibition.

As part of the German-Chinese Cultural Programme marking this year's 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the People's Republic of China, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin are presenting six exhibitions on the overarching theme *China and Europe* in 2017. The spectrum of objects on display is broad, ranging from the early high cultures of China, via portrait painting from the Ming and Qing dynasties, through to the shifting relationships between China and Europe, variously illustrated in the examples of the Summer Palace in Beijing, photography from the period of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and contemporary Chinese graphic design. More details on the entire programme are available on the website: www.smb.museum/deutsch-chinesisches-kulturprogramm-2017.

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