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Symposium on the development of contemporary Chinese art since 2000

September 15 – 16, 2015

Daimler Contemporary

Haus Huth

1st Floor

Alte Potsdamer Strasse 5

10785 Berlin

With Britta Erickson (Palo Alto), Cao Fei (Beijing), Anselm Franke (Berlin), Birgit Hopfener (Berlin), Carol Lu (Beijing), Lu Dadong (Hangzhou), Pu Hong (Beijing), Andreas Schmid (Berlin), Karen Smith (Beijing/Xian) and Su Wei (Beijing)

Concept: Renate Wiehager, Christian Ganzenberg und Andreas Schmid

Organization: Wiebke Hahn

The intention of this symposium is to offer a concentrated, spotlighted view of all the diverse developments in Chinese contemporary art over the past 15 years. The goal of this two-day-event is to deepen historical and theoretical knowledge of contemporary art in China and to expand the existing base for mutual dialogue. High-profile experts from China and Europe will focus on the major media and their significance to Chinese contemporary art. The speakers represent different generations and different theoretical approaches. The symposium will open on the evening of September 15, 2015 with the presentation of an artist book by Cao Fei (Beijing) and a moderated discussion between Carol Yinghua Lu (Beijing) and Anselm Franke (Berlin).

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Schedule

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2015

- 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. **Book Presentation: Cao Fei, *I watch that worlds pass by*, Daimler Art Collection Artist Book #7**
- 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. **In dialogue: Anselm Franke, Berlin and Carol Lu, Beijing**
The conditions of culture in China – between capitalism and censorship

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

- 10:00 a.m. Welcome by Renate Wiehager
- 10:20 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. **Painting engineering: new trends of Chinese painting since 2000**
Speaker: Pu Hong, Beijing
- 11:10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. **Ink splash painting 2000 – 2015**; Film screening: Britta Erickson. The Enduring Passion for Ink
- 12:00 a.m. – 12:40 a.m. **Calligraphy: Between extinction and the new role of script in Chinese contemporary art**
Speaker: Lu Dadong, Hangzhou
- Lunch break
- 2:00 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. **Alternative spaces and recent trends in Chinese contemporary art:
New institutions and the question of the importance of artist groups - "Crimes" without a scene**
Speaker: Carol Lu, Beijing
- 2:50 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. **Conceptual tendencies in China 2000 – 2015. Towards conceptualism? Thoughts on the postponed and the formalist**
Speaker: Su Wei, Beijing
- 4:00 p.m. – 4:40 p.m. **Photography in China 2000 – 2015**
Speaker: Karen Smith, Xian
- 4:50 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. **Video art in China 2000 – 2015**
Speaker: Andreas Schmid, Berlin
- 6:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m. **Installation art in China 2000 – 2015. Historical subjects. Constructing subjective historicities through installation art**
Speaker: Birgit Hopfener, Berlin

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Statements

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Book Presentation:

Cao Fei, *I watch that worlds pass by*, Daimler Art Collection Artist Book #7

For the first time, the Daimler Art Collection has invited a Chinese artist to feature in its artist book series. After Martin Boyce, Natalia Stachon, Philippe Parreno, Nic Hess, Luca Trevisani and Carmelo Tedeschi, Cao Fei has agreed to work on Daimler Art Collection Artist Book #7. This publication brings together three key projects from the artist's varied cinematographic work. Apart from the highly complex virtual *RMB City* project (2007–2012) and its documentation, the book also presents her recent films *Haze and Fog* (2013) and *La Town* (2014), which will be presented alongside the photographic artwork *Whose Utopia* (2006) in the upcoming exhibition *On Curbstone Jewels and Cobblestones* at Daimler Contemporary in Berlin. This publication, poetically entitled *I watch that worlds pass by*, demonstrates commonalities in the three projects' subject matter and creates interfaces between them, with the aim of explaining the artist's most fundamental thinking and working methodologies. Numerous stills from the various different films, photographs of the sets, sketches, storyboards and illustrations for reference have been assembled and given a new arrangement by the artist for this publication.

7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

In dialogue: Anselm Franke, Berlin and Carol Lu, Beijing

The conditions of culture in China – between capitalism and censorship

Moderators: **Christian Ganzenberg, Munich, and Andreas Schmid, Berlin**

The opening event of the symposium will feature a conversation between Carol Lu (*1977, CHN) and Anselm Franke (*1978, D), who have distinguished themselves as curators of various biennials and as directors of renowned institutions. Carol Lu co-curated the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennial and the 9th Gwangju Biennial, both in 2012. Furthermore, she was the artistic director of the OCAT Shenzhen until 2014. Anselm Franke gained his relevant experiences in Asia/China at the Taipei Biennial in 2012, as the curator of the anime exhibition at the OCAT Shenzhen in 2013 and most recently at the Shanghai Biennial 2014. The conversation between the two curators will illuminate various perspectives of the current developments in the Chinese art world and discuss theoretical-critical questions regarding the international reception of Chinese art.

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Wednesday, September 16, 2015

10:00 a.m.

Welcome by Renate Wiehager

10:20 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Painting engineering: new trends of Chinese painting since 2000

Speaker: **Pu Hong, Beijing**

Pu Hong will discuss the change of the role of painting and its development since 2000 as well as the current modes and strategies of engaging with it, such as the question of movement, geographical location and individual study. Pu will outline his thoughts on whether these reference modes are an authentic and effective measuring standard for global arts or whether they rather have to be recoded.

11:10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Ink splash painting 2000 - 2015

Film screening: Britta Erickson. The Enduring Passion for Ink

“Britta Erickson. The Enduring Passion for Ink” is a project by Britta Erickson composed of 10 short films – one each about ten living Chinese ink painters plus, eventually, a book and possibly an exhibition of works created during the filming process. The artists range in age from 37 to 77, and their art runs the gamut from fairly traditional to extremely experimental, with landscapes, abstracts, and huge installations. Rick Widmer (Washington D.C.) is providing the film expertise. On the occasion of this symposium we will show the films on Bingyi Huang (*1975, CHN), Zheng Chongbin (*1961, CHN) and Wang Dongling (*1945, CHN).

12:00 a.m. – 12:40 a.m.

Calligraphy: Between extinction and the new role of script in Chinese contemporary art

Speaker: **Lu Dadong, Hangzhou**

Due to the Cultural Revolution and for other reasons, some of the traditions of Chinese calligraphy in Mainland China had suffered severe reverses in the post-1949 period. Calligraphers born before 1949 had received a traditional education and the chance to form their own styles, but they have now passed away. The subsequent twenty-odd years have been characterized by a kind of artistic chasm, which Lu will address in his talk. Traditional calligraphy seems to be on a course of stable development at present, considering that the *Association of Calligraphy* counts more than 200 thousand members. However, the nature of this practice has changed as calligraphy is no longer a practical skill, but is instead a purely artistic one - and a skilled writer can have an influence on the market and public opinion through the media. Influential contemporary Mainland Chinese artists, such

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as Xu Bing, Gu Wenda, Wu Shanzhuan, Qiu Zhijie and others, use calligraphic or text elements to create contemporary art. In spite of the considerable acclaim garnered by these luminaries, their impact on calligraphers as a whole has been negligible. However, the growth of writing as an art form may provide a foothold for calligraphy in the world of contemporary art.

2:00 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.

Alternative spaces and recent trends in Chinese contemporary art: new institutions and the question of the importance of artist groups - "Crimes" without a scene

Speaker: **Carol Lu, Beijing**

The talk will present the ongoing research Carol Lu has carried out in collaboration with Liu Ding on the conceptual practices in China from 1989 to 2000, introducing a number of individual experiences that have been an undercurrent within the commonly circulated narrative of Chinese art history. Citing the two case studies of New Measurement Group and Qian Weikang, both active in the 1980s, Lu will elaborate on the urgency, challenges and methodology of such research as well as the common position and reflection when it comes to writing and reconsidering art history.

2:50 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Conceptual tendencies in China 2000 – 2015

Towards conceptualism? Thoughts on the postponed and the formalist

Speaker: **Su Wei, Beijing**

'New conceptual tendencies' is a term always used to describe the contemporary art scene after 2000 in China, a term of farewell to the iconography in 1990s. By proposing this vague notion, the dominant art-historical writings tend to continue a progressive narrative that takes into account internationalization and globalization as a profound stage of China's contemporary art history. However, the legitimation for conceptual or conceptual-like practices does not respond to the question: On what basis could we understand conceptualism in China? While extremely ambiguous and formalistic art idioms have been created or are still being created today in China, we have not engaged in adequate observation of its internal logic and questioned its putative break with what is abandoned or filtered in the course of history. In his talk, Su Wei will elaborate on several historical cases of art from the 1930s to the 2000s, none of which will be seen as byproducts of certain social and political circumstances. By contextualizing these cases, the talk will focus on certain undercurrents in the history of art to underline the postponed nature of modernism and conceptualism in China and their connection with the current situation of art in China. Consequently, it will question the formalist tendencies and their deliberate estrangement from history in China's art world today.

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4:00 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.

Photography in China 2000 - 2015

Speaker: **Karen Smith, Xian**

Karen Smith's talk will outline the developments in photography in China since 2000: how photography has become its own medium that is developing a language that looks back to a history of photography of which China was not part, only subject, and is simultaneously very much of the times.

4:50 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Video art in China 2000 - 2015

Speaker: **Andreas Schmid, Berlin**

In the development of Chinese contemporary art, the medium of video was the last to find its way into the work of a wider circle of artists on a large scale. The first national exhibition, at the time still disguised as a continuing education workshop, took place in Hangzhou in 1996. However, by 2001 it was already firmly established as an official subject at a Chinese art college. In less than 10 years, video art has evolved into one of the most important and innovative art forms in the People's Republic of China, an art form to which many Chinese artists and curators have dedicated themselves to. In 2011, a high-profile retrospective art show about this development was held at the Art Museum in Shanghai for the first time. Independent video archives have been in existence in Guangzhou and Beijing since 2012. Andreas Schmid will talk in-depth about the rapid development in recent years and the reasons behind them using the examples of a number of different protagonists.

6:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.

Installation art in China 2000 – 2015. Historical subjects.

Constructing subjective historicities through installation art

Speaker: **Birgit Hopfener, Berlin**

How subjects and art are constructed historically has been a central issue for many contemporary artists in China. Birgit Hopfener will introduce a subjective selection of installation artists, who incorporated historical references in order to self-contextualize themselves in certain often subjectively constructed social or artistic genealogies. Based on examinations of significant artworks, the talk will analyze how and why artists such as Qiu Zhjie, Liu Ding or Zhao Zhao, among others, inscribe themselves into (art) history. Moreover, these creations of new artistic genealogies will be contextualized socio-politically and (art-) historically as critical projects: The installations under discussion not only critique how historical narratives construct certain subjectivities, but also enact agency by creating alternative historicities.

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Short biographies:

Britta Erickson (1959*, AUS) is an independent scholar and curator with a doctorate in art history from Stanford University. Since the late 1980s, she has been recognized as an authority on issues in contemporary Chinese art practice, collecting and criticism. Her current projects include producing a series of ten short films about ink painting, *The Enduring Passion for Ink*, and acting as artistic director of the Ink Studio gallery in Beijing.

Anselm Franke (1978*, D) is the director of the department Visual Arts and Film at the 'Haus der Kulturen der Welt' (The House of World Cultures) in Berlin and earned his doctorate from Goldsmith College in London. He was part of the curator team of the Anthropocene Project and curated the *Animism* exhibition in 2012. He was the head curator of the Taipei Biennial 2012 and the Shanghai Biennial 2014.

Birgit Hopfener (D) is a research assistant at the Art History Institute of the Berlin Free University and an associate member of the DFG research group »Transcultural Negotiation Spaces of Art«. She researches East-Asian contemporary art, transcultural art history as well as questions of image culture and image anthropology. She is also an active curator and art writer. Her articles on contemporary art with a focus on art from China have been published widely in *artnet* magazine, *Yishu*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Leap* and she has curated shows for the ZKM, Goethe-Institute Hong Kong and Beijing, the Edith-Ruß-Haus in Oldenburg and the OCAT art terminal in Shenzhen, among others.

Carol Yinghua Lu (1977*, CHN) lives and works in Beijing. She is a contributing editor for *Frieze*. She was on the jury for the Golden Lion Award at the 2011 Venice Biennial as well as co-curator of the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennial and the 9th Gwangju Biennial in 2012. She was the first visiting fellow of the Asia-Pacific Department at Tate Research Center. Together with Liu Ding, she is currently conducting research on the lasting marks and legacy of socialist realism in the field of art in China.

Lu Dadong (1973*, CHN) lives and works as an independent artist and calligrapher in Hangzhou, where he teaches at the China Academy of Art (CAA), the Institute for Penmanship and Seals Art, while working on his doctorate. He devotes himself to not only traditional penmanship and studies of art history, but also positions himself as a contemporary artist in modern calligraphy and writing performance across different mediums. As the leader and singer of the experimental underground rock band *Yuren* ("With the people"), Lu furthermore deals with socio-political issues.

Pu Hong (1985*, CHN) is an art critic and curator based in Beijing. In 2014, he won First Prize at the First PSA Emerging Curators Program (Shanghai, China). He curated several exhibitions in China, such as *Another Leap* (Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2014) and *About Painting Too* (OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Xi'an, 2015). His essays have been published broadly in *LEAP*, *ARTFORUM*, and the catalogues of Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) etc.

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Andreas Schmid lives and works as an artist and curator in Berlin. For more than 30 years, he has been deeply engaged with contemporary art in China, which he has monitored critically since his studies in Hangzhou in the 1980s. He was one of the first to bring Chinese contemporary art to Europe in several exhibitions and projects: *China Avant-Garde* (HKW Berlin, 1993, with Hans von Dijk and Jochen Noth), *Contemporary Photo Art from the People's Republic of China* and *Video Screenings* (NBK Berlin, 1997), and *The 8 of Paths – Art from Beijing*, (Uferhallen Berlin, 2014, with Thomas Eller and Guo Xiaoyan). As a mediator and art teacher, he advocates a non-Eurocentric worldview. As an artist, Andreas Schmid works with different mediums (drawings, installations, light art), predominantly putting his art works in relationships with spaces and locations. He was/is represented in numerous national and international exhibitions.

Karen Smith (1965*, GB) is a curator and writer focused on China's contemporary art. She has authored numerous monographs including Ai Weiwei, Liu Xiaodong and Jia Aili; books on China's contemporary art scene, including *Nine Lives: The Birth of Avant-Garde Art in New China* (2008) and the series titled *As Seen: Notable Artworks by Chinese Artists* (2012 / 2013 / 2015). Her curatorial work includes *Grain to Pixel: A Story of Photography in China* (Shanghai Center of Photography (SCoP) 2015); (Yuan Space, 2013); *The Real Thing* (Tate Liverpool 2007). In 2012, she was appointed director of OCAT Xi'an, the third contemporary art museum in the OCAT museum group, founded in Shenzhen in 2005. She has lived in Beijing since 1992.

Su Wei (1982*, CHN) is an independent curator and art critic based in Beijing and Hong Kong. He participated in the 2012 *Curatorial Intensive* of ICI (Independent Curators International) in New York and co-curated the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennial *Accidental Message: Art is Not a System, Not a World* (OCAT, Shenzhen, 2012). In 2014, he was awarded first place in the first *International Awards for Art Criticism* (IAAC). Among other shows, he curated *Keep the Modern Going: Immersion, Anticipation and Idealism* (OCAT Shenzhen, 2014) as well as *The Position of Interference. Zhao Liang's Solo Exhibition* (Three Shadows Center Beijing, 2014).