

OVERGADEN.

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24 APRIL, 5-8PM

On the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, the exhibition seek to explore China as cultural phenomenon and political world power.

INTRODUCTION

China Shop. State of Emergency

By Kristina Ask & Tomas Lagermand Lundme

China Shop. State of Emergency is a nuanced discussion in the form of a group show. The exhibition is focussed on ideas of the People's Republic of China as a cultural phenomenon and rising political and financial world power. By marking the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, the exhibitors seek to explore the concept of the state of emergency on a concrete as well as an abstract level. In itself the exhibition will be an image of a crisis situation in which a normal condition is suspended and must be renegotiated - creating a new situation.

A state of emergency is a legal situation in which normal laws and rights have been suspended because of circumstances that threat-

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- THE CURATORS

en the structure or existence of a society. A state of emergency is declared by the executive power. [...] A state of emergency is usually declared in consequence of natural disasters, civil unrest, war or the like. You can distinguish between civil and military state of emergency. [...] Some countries have enacted legislation on the circumstances under which a government can declare a state of emergency and on the rights such measures can affect. This is not the case in Denmark. (Wikipedia)

A crisis is a crisis is a crisis?

A crisis is not just a crisis. There are temporal, spatial and semantic dislocations between 'a crisis' and 'a crisis' and 'a crisis'. We can observe and analyse, describe and question, depict and copy, remember and forget what a crisis is, how it arose and what it could have been. A crisis can be understood as a symptom of a situation that has somehow come to a halt - a situation that becomes critical or runs idle. When the crisis sets in, however, it also opens new possibilities. You are forced to

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look at the situation in another perspective, to relativize and question things you either took for granted or did not think important before. A crisis is not only a danger but also, according to a Chinese proverb, "the true nature of the crisis is to wait for possibilities to arise".

Background

Concretely, the exhibition project *China Shop. State of Emergency* takes its cue both from the historical crisis of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and the current financial crisis. 4 July 1989 - the day before we in Denmark celebrated the 140th anniversary of the Constitution and the Danish democracy - the Chinese military opened fire against a crowd of people gathered at the Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Since April, popular demonstrations had slowly grown stronger. Students had turned their backs on the old regime and the prevalent ideology: Youth and individuals demanded influence. The authorities took action against these freedom fighters with tanks, declared a state of emergency and the whole thing culminated in a horrifying massacre. Thousands were hurt and hundreds were killed. It is still unknown precisely how many, because the figures have never been released. In the Western world, people watched everything on TV.

The massacre serves as an image of how a society in crisis is suspended and, in this state of emergency, assaults its own citizens. Thus, this event contains many of the contradictions of the modern world. Surveillance, intervention

"China is a republic that is able - in human as well as financial terms - to outdo any European form of work ethic. This is why China is both feared and admired by the rest of the world. Notably China's role as producer of many of the amenities enjoyed in the Western world - whether it is as copies or originals - is an important force in the relation to the rest of the world. Low market prices have a cost in the production phase, a price we despise clamorously, but ultimately pay gladly: Child labour under slave-like conditions, lacking democratic rights and principles and an energy consumption that makes the entire Danish Climate Ministry look like a chocolate caramel."

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wars and illegal arrests are more common than ever before, all in the name of democracy and freedom of speech. Democracy and freedom of speech was also what the unarmed students at Tiananmen Square fought and risked their lives for.

Exhibition

Based on China's cultural, political and economical history we want to mark the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in relation to China's current position

on a world market in the throes of a global crisis. The exhibition will be based on investigations and discussions of the circumstances that framed the tragedy in 1989 and, like the demonstrations at that time, it will take place between April and June. With this as a common

point of departure, we will establish a number of dogmas or rules that must be followed - or broken - in the exhibition. These could be principles for the physical arrangement of the works, certain ideas for the public's meeting with the works or the way the artists in the group interact. We want to make this exhibition a total installation of objects, banners, flags and texts. We want to create a square of peace in which actions and social devices are subjected to a 'set of rules' that reflects our Western perception of

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- SLAVOJ ZIZEK

how millions of Chinese still experience their everyday life. One place you are prohibited from entering, one place you are not allowed to meet with others, one place you are not allowed to walk, but only crawl, one place you are not allowed to

look at a particular work, because you are obliged to face East.

For sale

In the Western world, we are subjected to a similar and yet more subtle curtailment of the citizens'

freedom of movement, behaviour and speech. The state of emergency becomes the foundational norm in the 21st century: from prosperous societies in which the citizens are

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- WIKIPEDIA

criminalized through surveillance, political refugees are turned away and prisoners are tortured, to 'dis-

tant skies' ravaged by hunger, civil war and disease. Crises seem to be one of the chief characteristics of the current political, financial and social situation in a world where capital, the market and mass media still rule supreme. The current financial crisis marks a new form

of state of emergency in which the neo-liberal regime recognises the limitations of capitalism as a dominant structure: Banks and investment trusts are controlled by the government and provided with capital to save them - at any cost. The order of things is turned upside down - again. Or, in the words of the sociologist and philosopher Slavoj Zizek:

[W]ith the financial meltdown, the urgency was unconditional; a sum beyond imagination was immedi-

ately found. Saving endangered species, saving the planet from global warming, finding a cure for Aids, saving the starving children [...] All that can wait a bit, but 'Save the banks!' is an unconditional imperative which demands and gets immediate action [...] The sublimely enormous sum of money was spent not for some clear 'real' task, but in order to 'restore confidence' in the markets - i.e. for reasons of belief.

Because of the financial crisis, many have learned for themselves what the individualizing market forces are like, e.g. by seeing the market value of their home skyrocket only to plunge down again with a hollow thud - this is the condition in the whirling of the modern everyday. Everything has become a commodity to be owned, exploited

and negotiated by way of the market. Just prior to the financial crisis - as a sort of precursor, you might say, with fatal consequences - we witnessed the food shortage crisis.

This showed us what must be one of capitalism's most extreme and perverted faces: food as a commodity of which the value is controlled by economics, on stock exchanges far from rice fields and potato hoeing. The price of food was no longer determined by the concrete relation between supply and demand, but was suddenly rather an expression of speculation in abstract stocks and currency rates.

Work ethic

China is a republic that is able - in human as well as financial terms - to outdo any European form of

work ethic. This is why China is both feared and admired by the rest of the world. Notably China's role as producer of many of the amenities enjoyed in the Western world - whether it is as copies or originals - is an important force in the relation to the rest of the world. Low market prices have a cost in the production phase, a price we despise clamorously, but ultimately pay gladly: Child labour under slave-like conditions, lacking democratic rights and principles and an energy consumption that makes the entire

Danish Climate Ministry look like a chocolate caramel by comparison. In 2008, China hosted the Olympic Games - a trusted old friend of the international community with a sinister history of negotiating compromises between culture and international politics - which enabled the country to signal to the rest of the world that China was a merry place that was all about concord and strength, fireworks and elite sports. These Olympic Games were favoured with Danish royal and ministerial participation. For a brief moment we allow ourselves to forget what we know as we follow the whole spectacle on television.

Assemblies

To follow all these traces, to untie all these knots and to delineate the links between money, sports, ob-

livion, TV and politics, this is the task we want to frame and undertake with the exhibition project. Not just as an artistic collaboration, but also as a joint venture including the

audience. This is why we call part of the project *Assemblies*. Assemblies are created as temporary devices in order to give ourselves and the audience an impression of some of the issues involved in a state of emergency and the situation that prompts it as well as the possibilities inherent in the crisis. The assemblies will take place continually throughout the exhibition period and they will serve as an accompaniment to the project as a whole. *China Shop. State of Emergency*, then, aims to create new images - spatial as well as immaterial, concrete as well as imaginary.

Special Offers

By Mathias Kryger

Phone Conversation, DKK 8,00

Conversation with sales representative from IRMA - the grocery store.

- For how long have you carried the item called MAO shoes?

- I can't remember the exact year off hand and our product history hasn't been archived. But I believe it was sometime in the sixties.

- How many shoes do you sell a year?

- I could do a report but it will take some time before I'll be able to get back to you on that. Last year's numbers are completely unreliable and say nothing about our general sales because we have been having delivery problems - they simply couldn't keep up out there and when the shoes didn't arrive we decided to go with another supplier that uses organic cotton. So now the MAO-shoes that we sell in Irma are organic as opposed to the ones you can get in e.g. COOP.

- Are sales different in periods with financial crisis?

- Oh, that's going to be a longer investigation. I don't know with this specific product.

- Is it possible that the shoe sales might even go up a little now?

- Yes, that is possible.

- Thank you.

Two stories that are alike in many ways, DKK 44,00

The first one:

As a regular at a gay bar in the centre of town you experience a little of everything. You are used to it, so it takes a lot to bring you out of bounds - I mean, there is ass sucking on a daily basis right here in the middle of the bar and only God knows what goes on in the toilet stalls - so we aren't exactly prudish in here. This episode though was different. A couple of years ago a Russian guy worked here, I believe his name was Alexij, he was such a stout little guy, toned, trained and with a saucy ass. He only had two shifts in the bar because on his second day a group of four Neo Nazis came in and started shouting about why we were gay and how disgusting it was. They surrounded me but I wasn't scared although it was a very strange thing. Alexij was furious and said that the four should leave immediately and then he grabbed them. But then the other bartender, Troels, showed up and said that we should relax because the guys were all right since he knew one of them from old times in Northern Jutland. So the Neo Nazis stayed in the bar. But Alexij wouldn't have it, so he took his key and flung it to the floor and said: "I don't want to work in such a Nazi bar." And then he left. So did I. At least a couple of months went by before they saw me in there again.

And then the other:

There was a restaurant in Lemvig called Peking. Every time my father and I went out to eat we went to Peking. I loved Peking. I loved the finicky music and the wallpaper, the porcelain bowl with noodle soup and the tiny, elegant Chinese that served it. I loved the word Peking. It was in the beginning of the nineties. Ace of Base went to the top on Radio Bovbjerg's top 30 with *Wheel of Fortune*. I loved that song. I was sure that Ace of Base was from China. I felt I had required access to another dimension. An invisible thread in me had started to attach itself to a place outside of me far, far away. I bought *Happy Nation* and learned the lyrics by heart, I begged my father to take me to Peking every day. All of a sudden I was in contact with the world. Until one day when Danish Front (an extreme right and nationalist organization) came into Peking. They were four young men with back patches that ordered spareribs. They smiled at me, but it wasn't the Chinese's smile. Something was terribly wrong. I could sense it from my father, I could feel it on the waiter, I could hear it when the string music disappeared and the men started singing. The day after that episode my sister told me that one of the men in Ace of Base was a Neo Nazi. I can't remember if it was Buddha or Joker, but there were ill concealed references in *Happy Nation* both in text and composition. I never went to Peking again.

A song for your child, DKK 23,00

Ching Chong, Chinaman

Sitting on a wall.

Along came a white man.

And chopped his tail off.

The creeps, DKK 12,00

In the Chinese horror movie *Zhixi* (Suffocation) from 2005, directed by Zhang Bingjian, Chinese actor Ge You plays the part of a photographer who following a boating accident suffers from hallucinations about killing his wife. He loads the body into an old skiff, which he then proceeds to set afloat in the middle of the night in the storming rain. But the murdered wife haunts the man who is slowly pulled under in a suffocating mess that is possibly a product of his own dreams. This film is the first Chinese film to use elements of the psychological thriller and which is modelled on a suspense template.

Predictions (fortune cookies), DKK 2.50 a piece - 10 for DKK 20,00

A fresh new start will put you on your way.

Your greatest fortune is the large number of friends you have.

Your kindness will be repaid.

All your hard work will soon pay off.

The best times of your life have not yet been lived.

Recognition will come from unex-

pected sources.

When you speak honestly and openly, others truly listen.

Trust your intuition. The universe is guiding your life.

You are a source of wisdom and strength to many others.

All your hard work will soon pay off.

Naming (translation), DKK 12.50

Peking -> Beijing

Canton -> Guangzhou

Tientsin -> Tianjin

Chungking -> Chongqing

Yangtzekiang -> Chiang Jiang

Mao Tse-tung -> Mao Zedong

Chiang Kai-shek -> Jiang Jieshi

Cleansing, DKK 24.50

When a Chinese sends a kite into the air, she lets go of her sorrows and worries.

Cleansing, DKK 10.95

In 2008, according to BBC News' website, the Chinese police discovered a factory in the Chinese province of Guangdong that produced and exported the Tibetan flag. Using the Tibetan flag has been illegal in China since 1959.

The flag features two snow lions on a white mountain in front of a radiant sun. The flag is yellow around the edges except in the right-hand side. The fact that the right hand side is not yellow symbolizes Tibet's openness towards non-Buddhist thinking.

Break-ups/Make-ups, DKK 4.50

Imagine me and you, I do

I think about you day and night, it's only right

To think about the girl you love and hold her tight

So happy together

If I should call you up, invest a dime

And you say you belong to me and ease my mind

Imagine how the world could be, so very fine

So happy together

I can't see me lovin' nobody but you

For all my life

When you're with me, baby the skies'll be blue

For all my life

Happy Together by The Turtles is the title song of Wong Kar-wai's terribly beautiful love movie from 1997. In *Happy Together*, a couple from Hong Kong travels to Argentina in order to reinvigorate their

love, which has been turned into an endless series of break-ups and make-ups because of mutual abuse. One of the couple's objectives in Argentina is to visit the big waterfall Iguazu. Along with the tango, the cigarette in the corner of the mouth and the boiling pots, the waterfall is the image of their love. The couple is played by Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung. The director was born in 1958 in Shanghai.

Textual state of emergency, DKK 17.95

It's when you're sitting there, a little grease in the eye half-blind heavy sauce with the rather sour sweet-and-sour sauce from the Chinese take out place. The kind of heavy blindness you dream about in cars, window wipers at full blast before the cars crash into each other or into the buildings along the roads. A filmed blindness, and because it is constantly underway, it is possible to shoot it. Otherwise the film would soon come to a halt. If blindness set in.

A good tip, DKK 3.50

They make a killer roast pork sandwich at the Chinese junk food place in Istedgade. This is what my friend tells me, and she buys them preferably two at a time. It's supposed to be quite good compared to the price.

Space, DKK 6.50

Tiananmen Square is placed in the centre of Beijing, and with its 440,000 square meters it is larger than any other open space in the world. The square was built in 1651 and expanded in 1958. It was made four times bigger than its original size. The Chairman Mao Memorial Hall was inaugurated in May 1977. The mausoleum is placed in the centre of the square. Chairman Mao wished to be cremated after his death, but now he's lying there, embalmed.

Mathias Kryger has an MA in Visual Culture. He works with contemporary art in the field between theory and practice.

CV

Kristina Ask (b. 1971) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Hochschule der Künste Berlin and Malmö Art Academy. **Tanja Rau** (b. 1970) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. **Ursula Reuter Christiansen** (b. 1943) is educated at the University of Marburg and the Arts Academy Düsseldorf. **Jens Haaning** (b. 1965) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and Akademie der Bildende Künste München. **Jens Hultquist** (b. 1978) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. **Huskegruppen** was founded in 2004 and consists of **Peter Brandt** (b. 1966), who is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and The Royal University College of Fine Arts, Stockholm and **Tomas Lagermand Lundme** (b. 1973) who is educated at the Theatre School Centrum, Writing School and at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. **Frans Jacobi** (b. 1960) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and Lund University. **Olof Olsson** (b. 1965) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and Stockholm Academy of Film and Photography. **Lars Rank** (b. 1972) is educated at The Jutland Art Academy. **Mette Winkelmann** (b. 1971) is educated at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.

ASSEMBLIES

Thursday 7 May at 6pm. Brick Day. Discussion and workshop, build your own wall, tumble down your own wall.

Sunday 10 May at 1pm. Chinese Cooker. Cooking and food performance.

Sunday 24 May at 1pm. Crisis and Money Day. Debate on democracy and money, action and wall paper.

Thursday 4 June at 6pm. The International China Day of Christianshavn. On the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre all who lives at Christianshavn and have a relation to or a non-relation to China are invited to Chinese tea, Chinese chess and Danish theater. Please wear orange clothes and Mao shoes.

The events will be held in Danish.

UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Friday 26 June 2009 Overgaden presents a solo exhibition by the artist Pind. The last day of the exhibition is Sunday 16 August 2009.

Kristina Ask and Tomas Lagermand Lundme would like to thank jeweller Jørgen Bindsbøll, Cityprint, St. Kongensgade, Mathias Kryger, Jannik Lagermand and Ditte Marie Størner.

Translation: Morten Visby

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 KUNSTRÅDET

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