

MOUSSE

Wang Tong “TRACES OF TIME” at [dip] contemporary art, Lugano

[dip] contemporary art is delighted to invite Chinese artist Wang Tong, chief photography editor of Chinese National Geography magazine as well as one of China’s most talented photographers, for its second exhibition in Lugano, Switzerland. This will be Wang Tong’s first solo exhibition in a gallery in Europe. The exhibition is a project jointly organized with Beijing-based independent critic and curator Manuela Lietti.

Wang Tong (b. 1967 in Jilin, China, lives and works in Beijing) explores photography with the accuracy of a philologist, while continuously expanding the scope of a genre which, for him, is a meta-language for investigating the complex liaison between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the real and the ideal, the historical and the daily. As an author of documentary images rooted in the keen observation of past history and contemporary reality as well as the tension between strong narrative elements, Wang Tong has devoted his career to portraying the abrupt changes that his mother country has undergone. He documents the construction and incessant renegotiation of China’s identity in both the individual and collective senses. His photographic work is the prism through which we can view the various layers of Chinese history that are inevitably intertwined with the artist’s personal experience. In Wang’s oeuvre, these elements overlap with thrilling results, and each photograph reflects a specific moment in his mental and geographical topography.

“TRACES OF TIME” will showcase two different yet complementary bodies of work created by Wang Tong during the last decades: the ongoing project Forging Cities and the iconic series Mao on the Wall, both examples of historical accuracy and the artist’s commitment to long-term projects. The landscape, especially the urban one, becomes a metaphor not just for the incessant metamorphosis of Chinese society, but for the Chinese condition. Desires, hopes, fears, and a sense of transiency are all rooted in and reflected by this landscape.

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The series Forging Cities epitomizes this core aspect of Wang's work. Forging Cities is an encyclopedic project on which the artist has been working for more than a decade, an open series focusing on the hundreds of cities across China that Wang Tong has visited and captured in his insatiable lens. Wang has assembled an urban Wunderkammer of expanding cities suspended between reality and fantasy, desire and fulfillment. Amusement parks under construction, a bridge by a lake enveloped in mist, concrete walls that unquestionably divide the rural from the urban, towering skyscrapers, iconic vistas recognized even by casual viewers, and anonymous urban corners are just a few of the myriad subjects incorporated into this massive project. These Chinese cities are captured in black and white photos that are often intentionally blurry, presenting the urban world as a collage, constantly unfinished and challenged by new visions. Mao on the Wall is another massive project undertaken by Wang Tong since the early 1990s. The series documents the images of Chairman Mao that were stenciled on the walls in peasant China during the years of the Cultural Revolution. Today almost all of the buildings that appear in the work of Wang Tong (almost 200 photos taken across China) have been demolished, disappeared or simply have changed their connotations due to the social- economical changes undergone by China in the last decades. This aspect makes this body of work not just the witness of the political turmoil that impacted China during its most conflicting decade (1956-1966), but also of the incessant passing of time, of the incessant quest for modernity that characterizes this country always on the move.

Le città di Mao a Lugano

Alla galleria [dip] la Cina che cambia fotografata da Wang Tong



Lugano (Svizzera). Per la sua seconda mostra (quella inaugurale, nell'ottobre scorso, era di Melik Ohanian), il nuovo spazio culturale **[dip] contemporary art** ha scelto l'artista **Wang Tong** (Cina 1967), caporedattore per la fotografia della rivista «Chinese National Geography», qui per la prima volta in Europa. In «**Traces of Time**» (fino al 5 marzo), Wang Tong presenta due progetti degli ultimi

decenni, nei quali esplora le radicali trasformazioni della Cina: uno, tuttora in corso, s'intitola «Forging Cities» e documenta le città cinesi in tumultuosa espansione, nei loro luoghi iconici ma anche in angoli banali, anonimi, in una prospettiva di costante non finito. L'altro, «Mao on the wall» è stato avviato negli anni Novanta, per documentare il culto diffuso del «Grande timoniere», testimoniato da innumerevoli omaggi murali, spesso ormai distrutti o perduti.

Ada Masoero
“Le città di Mao a
Lugano”.

Il Giornale dell'Arte
January 24, 2017

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