



Berlin, 20 August 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Kulturforum, Sonderausstellungshallen

Matthäikirchplatz 6, 10785 Berlin

Tue, Wed, Fri 10 am – 6 pm, Thur 10 am – 8 pm, Sat + Sun 11 am – 6 pm

Micro Era. Media Art from China

5 September 2019 – 26 January 2020

A special exhibition of the Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Chinesischen kulturellen Austausch e.V. (GeKA e.V. 德中文化交流基金会), on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the city partnership Berlin-Beijing, funded by the Lotto Stiftung Berlin

Press conference: Wednesday, 4 September 2019, 11 am

Opening: Wednesday, 4 September 2019, 7 pm

From 5 September 2019 to 26 January 2020, Berlin's Kulturforum will present the group exhibition *Micro Era. Media Art from China*. The two artists Cao Fei (*1978) and Lu Yang (*1984) asked the artists Fang Di (*1987) and Zhang Peili (*1957) for a dialogue. The artists selected the works together with the Chinese and German curators Anna-Catharina Gebbers (Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin), Victor Wang (freelance curator, Shanghai/London) and Yang Beichen (freelance curator and film researcher, Beijing). The exhibition will be accompanied by Pi Li (M +, Hong Kong) as curatorial advisor.

The exhibition project was initiated by Yu Zhang 张彧, president of the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Chinesischen kulturellen Austausch e.V. (GeKA e.V. 德中文化交流基金会). The exhibition concept was developed by Anna-Catharina Gebbers (curator, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin) in cooperation with Udo Kittelmann (director, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).

Micro Era is tied in with the group exhibition *living in time. 29 contemporary artists from China*, which was presented in 2001 at the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin. This exhibition already showed works of Cao Fei as well as Zhang Peili and was also devised by a Chinese-German team of curators, to which, amongst others, Pi Li also belonged. The exhibition showed how contemporary Chinese artists have responded to the economic, political, ideological but also technological changes in China since the 1980s. This approach is now continued with *Micro Era*.

From documentary film images, and the adapted use of classical film language to the aesthetics of Japanese Anime, the works of this exhibition focus on and explore the relationships between mind, body and technology – with installations and single-channel videos ranging from the 1980s to the present. Historically, within the Euro-American context, video art is often regarded as a democratising art form – through the rapid circulation of information and global events by fast-access technologies. Cao Fei, Fang Di, Lu Yang, and Zhang Peili scrutinise the seductive thesis of this

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democratisation by reflecting in their visual language the mass production of goods as well as how images and virtual subjectivities are produced and consumed, and how we understand our world through imaging technology. At the same time, in the cross-generational exhibition with documentary, narrative and installation references and the expansion into virtual space, the central directions in the development of media art in China are presented.

Cao Fei (*1978 in Guangzhou, lives in Beijing, China) combines in her films and installations social comments, pop-cultural aesthetics as well as references to surrealism and documentary film. Her works reflect the rapid, chaotic changes that are taking place in today's Chinese society. For "Micro Era" Cao Fei presents her works "Asia One" (2018) and "11.11" (2018) for the first time in Germany. The multimedia installation, which is about the logistics sector, conveys the hyper-real vision of a near future and shows the effects of accelerated economic growth, technological developments and globalization on society. Cao Fei wished to see the young multimedia artist Fang Di as a dialogue partner on her exhibition area.

Fang Di's works (*1987 in Shenzhen, lives in Shenzhen, Guangdong, China) deal with issues of racism in a broader geopolitical context. By incorporating film materials from news and documentaries, his works combine various visual languages in order to critically examine these interconnections. In his first large-scale institutional presentation in Europe so far, Fang Di shows two multimedia-installations and one object. The three works "Minister" (2019), "Sepik River Ring" (2019) and "The Magical of Pipes" (2019) are based on Fang Di's work experience in Papua New Guinea for a *Belt and Road Initiative* company (which has been pooling China's interests and objectives to build up and expand intercontinental trade and infrastructure networks between the People's Republic of China and over 60 other African, Asian and European countries since 2013). His activities in the South Pacific Island Nation allowed him, analogous to *embedded journalism*, an intimate documentation of the current social situation.

Lu Yang (*1984 in Shanghai, lives in Shanghai, China) interweaves virtual and physical architectures in her installations. The artist lures the viewer into the hells of images of an augmented reality and manipulated emotions symbolically represented by transcranial magnetic stimulation. With knowledgeable references to traditional Buddhism, techno religions, cyber feminism and Japanese subcultures, her works circle around gender stereotypes, beliefs in science and post-human ways of life. For "Micro Era", Lu Yang has embedded the largest ever presentation of her works in an installation reminding us of the labyrinthine constructions of Comic Cons. She asked her former professor Zhang Peili for an exhibition dialogue.

Zhang Peili (*1957 in Hangzhou, lives in Hangzhou, China) is a pioneer of multimedia art and crucial to the development of the Chinese avant-garde and the emergence and spread of Chinese video art. His early work is often associated with the socio-political events that occurred during the heyday of the '85s New Wave movement, which led to the fact that the notions of *xingwei yishu* 行为艺术 (performance art) and *yingxiang yishu*

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影像艺术 (video art) were canonized in China. For "Micro Era", Zhang Peili presents pioneering video art pieces such as "30x30" (1988), "Document on Hygiene No. 3" (1991) and for the first time in Germany the installations "Uncertain Pleasure I" (1996) and "Opposite Space" (1995). The one-channel video work "30x30" (1988) is often referred to as the first video art work produced in China.

Micro Era. Media Art from China is curated by Anna-Catharina Gebbers with co-curators Victor Wang and Yang Beichen, curatorial advisor: Pi Li, curatorial assistant: Alexander Wilmschen.

For the exhibition, Kerber Verlag publishes a publication with prefaces by Michael Müller, Governing Mayor of Berlin, Yu Zhang, and Udo Kittelmann, as well as text contributions by Anna-Catharina Gebbers, Pi Li, Victor Wang and Yang Beichen, 128 pages, 100 illustrations, German / English, ISBN 978-3-7356-0620-4, 30 €.

Deutschlandfunk Kultur is media partner of the exhibition.

For more information please visit: www.smb.museum/microera.

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