

UNIVERSALSTUDIOS-BEIJING

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Forged Realities

curated by Pauline J. Yao

April 14 – May 12, 2007

opening reception Saturday, April 14

featuring works by:

Ai Weiwei (b. 1957, Beijing)

Patty Chang (b. 1972, San Francisco; lives in New York)

Gao Shiqiang (b. 1971, Shandong)

Hong Hao (b. 1965, Beijing)

Jonathan Monk (b. 1969, Leicester, England; lives in Berlin)

Kaz Oshiro (b. 1969, Okinawa, Japan; lives in Los Angeles)

Ni Haifeng (b. 1964, Zhoushan, lives in Amsterdam)

Qiu Zhijie (b. 1969, Zhangzhou)

Stephanie Syjuco (b. 1974, Manila, Philippines, lives in San Francisco)

Yan Lei (b. 1965, Hebei province)

What does it mean to call something authentic or fake? And how should we consider these terms in relation to contemporary art? Distinguishing between fake and real, truth and fiction, fact and fantasy is part of our negotiation with everyday reality and yet, within the context of art, issues concerning fakes, forgeries and copies pose profound philosophical concerns. One can cite the presence of “fakes and copies” throughout recent contemporary art both in China, from Xu Bing and Gu Wenda’s “fake” Chinese characters to Ai Weiwei’s experiments to Qiu Zhijie’s tireless *One Thousand Copies of the Orchid Pavilion*; and internationally, from Sherrie Levine, Elaine Sturtevant and Jeff Koons to current examples Jeff Wall and Jeremy Deller. The dictum “falseness rules the world,” assumes the existence of its historically determined opposite: that there was a time when all was true and real. Similarly, to use the term ‘fake’ implies the very existence of something genuine or real when all efforts to define this realness are progressively more elusive and subjective. With our surroundings increasingly dominated by the presence of fake products, piracy, black markets, fake representations of culture (i.e. Beijing World Park, Shenzhen’s OCT and most major tourist sites), and simulated experiences and environments, we have become accustomed to zones of ambiguity where ‘fake culture’ outstrips the real, and questions of authenticity are routinely destabilized and made arbitrary. Such ‘grey zones’ are most evident in the economic sector, where issues of copyright, piracy and counterfeits abound, but extend also into realms of contemporary art and current understandings of cultural authenticity.

Forged Realities is an exhibition that brings together ten artists from America, China and Europe to probe questions of authenticity, authorship, copying and production as these intersect with art, culture and mechanisms of cultural representation. The exhibition examines the ways in which artists reference fakes and copying in their practice and implement strategies of reproduction and fakery in light of this critical point in our culture where the attribution of 'original or fake' carries overblown and at times arbitrary significance. Sculptures by **Kaz Oshiro** and **Stephanie Syjuco** are designed to challenge the autonomy of the indistinguishable while juxtaposing the handmade with the blandness of pre-fabricated furniture. Retelling existing narratives through film across different cultures or strategies of with deliberate anachronism are part of the work of **Gao Shiqiang**, **Jonathan Monk**; while **Patty Chang's** *Shangri-La* undertakes and documents her physical journey to a mythical place. Referencing China's unique global relationship with regard to copying and art production, past and present, is **Ni Haifeng**, whereas **Qiu Zhijie's** photographs looks at the ways in which self-conscious borrowing of iconic forms manifests itself on a more localized level. Works by **Ai Weiwei** and a collaborative piece **Hong Hao & Yan Lei** lay bare the underlying assumptions and power dynamics within the artworld ten years ago and form the basis for more recent experiments which, instead of copying or appropriating a specific style of artwork, now copy the ubiquitous features of the contemporary art industry.