

PRESS RELEASE

“The Power of the Public Realm, Phase I”

Guo Fengyi, Jiang Jiwei, Li Tianbing, Wang Wenhai

2003.9.18 – 12.20

Long March Space, Beijing

Long March Space is proud to present The Power of the Public Realm, a long-anticipated exhibition opening September 18th. One major aim of the Long March project has been to re-appraise public space, to research and document public resources and to study and exercise the connection between display culture and artistic originality. The project also takes as its aim an exploration of practice and theory, arts and text and audience and works, all on the basis of the correlation between arts and life, individuals and the collective society. The goals of the Long March Project are reflected in their criticism towards the historical attitudes that characterize contemporary art in China as represented by elite culture.

The four artists featured in The Power of the Public Realm are key participants in the Long March Project, where folk visual culture and elite artistic production come to terms. Master Li Tianbing, a villager of western Fujian Province, a former revolutionary base, is a Guinness record-holder and is famous for taking and developing photos using only natural light. He took part in the first site of The Long March, held in Ruijn, themed “Utopia and Chinese Context.” Jiang Jiwei, the “Maxim Mountain Creator,” is known for his carvings of quotations and images into a Quanzhou mountainside. His work was a major site at the third stop of the Long March (Roads and Borders/Translation and Transition). In Lijiang and Lugu Lake, the sixth site of the Long March, the high-spirited works of retiree Guo Fengyi of Shanxi were featured as part of a dialogue between Chinese feminist artists and Judy Chicago. Wang Wenhai, a retired guide of the Yan’an Revolutionary Museum, is also a participant of the current exhibition. He has created 1200 sculptures of Chairman Mao over the last

Address: 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Rd, Chaoyang District, Beijing

Mailing: Long March Space. Mailbox 8530, Beijing. P.R. China 100015

地址：北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路4号798艺术区 | 邮址：北京市8503信箱长征空间 邮编 100015

twenty years. Next year, he will be a highlight the latter part of the Long March, though his collaboration with the Long March began over a year ago.

The Long March faces multiple issues. First are the pros and cons of directly exporting contemporary Chinese art "from inside-out" to international exhibitions and markets. Second is the way in which Chinese contemporary art superficially adopts practices of the international art system without criticism. Western practices are adopted though they may not be suitable for contemporary Chinese art and may, in fact, be harmful. Third are the continuous discussions of post-colonial theory without developing or adding anything new to the theoretical debate. The fifth issue involves the tension and gap between the idealism of the newly formed Dashanzi Art Zone and the surrounding community. The Long March Space exists as a ground to balance these issues. Its focus is to contextualize the lives of Chinese artists through their works. Personal space, individualism and social environment are an inseparable part of the lives of the four folk artists participating in the current exhibition. They challenge our conception of what defines an "artist."

The discourse generated by the historical Long March and the visual representation of folk life following the revolution demonstrated that elite art and folk art could co-exist and bond in an interactive and dynamic way. The success of this time period proved to us that the tension we are experiencing between art and society and the anxiety of the Chinese art community towards the West in recent times is not necessary when facing the conflict between the traditional and modern. Hence, as we bring art to the public realm, we also bring "folk-art" and "non-art" into our space. We hope that the public's adoption of contemporary artistic language and the representation of their life and art from a contemporary perspective can create a dialogue focusing on "what is art and what is contemporary."