

## David Cotterrell: MapGames: Dynamics of Change (Birmingham)

Venue: Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Curators: Feng Boyi, Monica Piccioni (offiCina beijing), Rosario Scarpato (offiCina beijing), Varvara Sharova.

Date: 1st October 2008

Co-exhibitors:

### Participating Artists

Ai Weiwei, Bai Shuangquan-tozer pak [hk], Sarah Beddington [uk], Anna Boggon [uk], Chen Shaoxiong, David Cotterrell [uk], Andrea Gotti [italy], Guan Shi, Li Juchuan, Lin Yilin, Michael Najjar [germany], Perino & Vele [italy], Varvara Shavrova [russia/ireland], Tang Hui, Hugo Tillman [uk], Wang Jianwei, Wu Wenguang/Wen Hui, Yin Xiuzhen, Yuan Shun, Zhan Wang.

### Participating Architects

Marcella Campa + Duliao Studio [Li Wenjun, Stefano Avesani, italy], Ma Qingyun [Mada Spam], Ma Yansong [Mad], Winy Maas [Mvrdv, Netherlands], Wang Hui [Urbanus].

### FROM BIRDS NEST TO BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham is the first city in the world outside Beijing to host the groundbreaking contemporary art and architecture exhibition *Beijing Map Games*, open to the public from the 18th October 2008 to the 4th January 2009.

Since winning the 2001 bid for hosting the 29th Olympic Games, Beijing has been the focus of continuous international attention. The face of the city has been changing dramatically, with futuristic high-rises replacing old courtyard houses (siheyuan) and traditional hutong neighbourhoods giving way to high-tech shopping centres, multi-storey car parks and new roads.

With dramatic changes happening almost overnight, the city becomes an impossible and illusive entity, both exciting and exhausting for those who experience it. 24 Chinese and international artists and architects explore the dynamics of these changes, and in their multi-layered interpretations of the city map out Beijings past, present and future.

The show is one of the first in the UK to combine works by both Chinese and international artists and architects. Many of the works have been specially commissioned for the exhibition, which explores the role of the map within the rapidly expanding urban metropolis that is Beijing.

The works that shape the content of the show are above all individual statements of every artist and architects personality and aesthetics. Marcella Campa + Duliao Studio rethink the identity of the city; Tang Hui investigates the interference between private and public space, self and architectural language and its icons.

Some artists invite the viewer to participate in the game and interact with their work in progress, (Wang Hui, Hugo Tillman) or involve the global web community in the map game (Chen Shaoxiong). Others urge the audiences to see beyond the norm, to distinguish the alternative side of things whilst trying to decode the authentic (Anna Boggon, Ma Qingyun of Mada Spam: his *From Eclipse to Olympics* is a looped video projection that is inspired by the total solar eclipse that China experienced on 1st August this year and the following Beijing Olympic Games).

Some artists envision the future (Najjars E-topian city of bits) and disclose evolutionary urban

planning perspectives that involve synergic participation of citizens (Winy Maas), investigate the critical interplay of old and new (Gotti, Cotterrell) and question the patterns of social awareness related to rural areas (Wu Wenguang). Other artists explore historic truths and untruths related to mapping. Varvara Shavrova's drawing and painting installation traces the transformation of Beijing city over the centuries, and employs CIA declassified maps from 1970s and 1980s as a fossilised imprint of the city's past that is still visible in the present. Ai Weiwei's work - the artistic consultant for the design of the Birds Nest Olympic Stadium, - is a video called Beijing: The Second Ring which documents the two opposite views of traffic flow on 33 bridges along Beijing's Second Ring. The film documents the historic aspects of the city, modern development, its nearly 13 million people, mass transport, and the urban reality that defines Beijing.

An interesting aspect is the acute observation of the city space when it stages itself as a theatrical setting and reveals the surreal aspects of existence. Sometimes this happens in non-places such as a highway (Wang Jianwei), a money-cashier machine (Sarah Beddington) or through a role-playing that brings again to the attention the issue of true and false, artificial and real (Lin Yilin). A deserted space with a floor covered with concrete also defines Yin Xiuzhen's Map. This map made of void and cement conveys a universal feeling of desolation associated not only with Beijing but also with all other urban wastelands scattered over the planet.

The environmental question is also an important thematic focus for other participants in *Map Games*. Ma Yansong advocates green thinking and proposes the installation of a green arterial line in the middle of Beijing city, thus freeing urban dwellers from alienating pollution and maddening noise, and providing an escape from the city's stifling every-day life. In the museum space all different fragments of the vast metropolis that have emerged out of the minds of all the map games players (the other invited artists are: Bai Shuangquan, Guan Shi, Li Juchuan, Perino&Vele, Yuan Shun) will come together into one lively, dynamic, thought provoking whole.

*Beijing Map Games* a curatorial and creative collaboration between independent curator Feng Boyi, Monica Piccioni and Rosario Scarpato (offiCina art project space co-founders) and artist Varvara Shavrova. The exhibition was first premiered at China Today Art Museum in Beijing in June 2008. Following the show in Birmingham, the exhibition will tour to the Terni Centre for Contemporary Art officio Siri (CAoS, Italy) in February 2009.

The exhibition received support from six embassies in China (Germany, Ireland, Italy, Russia, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom). It received additional support from the following: the Italian Embassy Cultural Office, the Goethe Institute (China), the British Council and The Emperor Hotel.

Exhibition launch  
Thursday 16 October 2008  
6-8pm  
Gas Hall  
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery  
Chamberlain Square  
Birmingham B3 3DH

Councillor Ray Hassall, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, invites you to the official launch of Beijing Map Games: Contemporary Art & Architecture in Beijing.

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ADULTS: TWO  
Please arrive by the Gas Hall entrance on Edmund Street.

**BEIJING  
MAP GAMES**  
CONTEMPORARY ART & ARCHITECTURE IN BEIJING

This exhibition is curated by offiCina and an international curatorial team, in collaboration with Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery.

Exhibition Invite (2009)