

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

Chen Wei

Fractured Chapters

Apr 12 – Jun 01, 2024

Opening: Thursday, Apr 11, 2024, 6–9 pm



Chen Wei, New Gate, 2021, Archival Inkjet Print, edition of 6, 150 x 200 cm, © Chen Wei

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle is pleased to present a new solo show by Chinese photo artist Chen Wei after six years. The exhibition title “Fractured Chapters” alludes to the fragmentary perception of people, which is often subjectively distorted. Chen Wei plays with this ambiguity in his image-making. ‘We all live in mutual misunderstandings and biases. Differences breed culture and propose coexistence. These give birth to unreachable goals, unspeakable subjects, and a New City that is always under construction.’

Since 2013 the artist has been working on the series “New City”, which primarily reflects the effects of the rapid growth of Chinese megacities since the 1990s on Chinese society and its cityscape. It shows the simultaneity of modernity, innovation, decay and abandonment. The speed of progress creates a feeling that is characterized by a mixture of fascination and melancholy.

Chen Wei consistently seeks to express this sentiment in his iconic, mostly deserted and stage-like images. The urban scenes seem like frozen moments from a movie or memories of a dream, often leaving behind an ungraspable feeling. These fictitious, surreal pictorial creations are based on observations that Chen Wei draws from his everyday surroundings.

The artist had long been preoccupied with the question of how to complete the “New City” series of works. The stagnation of progress in urban development caused by the pandemic provided a natural end, so to speak, to the idea of the continuity of this “New City”.

The work “New Gate” marks a kind of transition between these two worlds. An idyllic street corner, illuminated in warm light, leads the viewer to a small staircase with a supposed entrance, but the wall remains sealed, there is no gate. Due to the rapid pace of construction in China, it happened time and again that doors were installed in the wrong places – despite structural specifications - and thus needed to be removed again. The title of this work is also an allusion to the old Zen wisdom that the great path is without a gate.

The formal orientation towards the old masters of painting and photo artists such as Jeff Wall or the Dusseldorf School of Photography remains recognizable in Chen Wei’s latest works. The poetic pictorial composition, in which color, materiality and light are perfectly attuned to one another, invariably stands in the foreground and exerts an immediate effect on the viewer. The socio-political allusion to contemporary life in China only comes to light on closer examination of his works. The human presence is reinforced by its absence.

Chen Wei (*1980 in Zhejiang Province) lives and works in Beijing. He is one of the most important Chinese photo artists of his generation. Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle has been working with the artist since 2010 and is the only gallery in Europe to represent his work. In 2021, his works were last shown in solo exhibitions at the HOW Art Museum and the West Bund Art Museum in Shanghai. End of 2024 Chen Wei will present a solo project at Fotografiska Shanghai.

(Text: J. Singer)

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