

PRESS RELEASE

March 22, 2023

Performance / Dance / Video and Art Installation

Premiere April 21, 2023, 7 p.m., Humboldt Forum, Hall 2

Additional dates: April 22/23/26/27/28/29

In German, English, Mandarin – Duration approx. 90 minutes

Tickets: 16/8 euros

Revolution. A Thorn in the Flesh

Revolution. The Foe of an Arrow Wound

On seven evenings starting April 21, 2023, the performance *Revolution. A Thorn in the Flesh* by theater and dance collective Paper Tiger Theater Studio (Beijing/Berlin) examines transcultural revolutions in the context of colonial history. Taking the scroll painting *Machang Breaks through Enemy Lines* in the Museum for Asian Art as its starting point, the collective led by director Tian Gebing turns its focus to the collections in the Humboldt Forum.

Five dancers and performers, a witness to GDR leader Erich Honecker's trip to China in 1986, a skateboarder, a percussionist, and a DJ develop an associative panorama and get the audience to join them at the table of history. *Revolution. A Thorn in the Flesh* highlights events ranging from the masquerades of the Qianlong Emperor in the 18th century to the colonial looting of the imperial palace and the black market for artworks in Beijing during the so-called Boxer War around 1900 to the present day. The artistic production has been commissioned by the Humboldt Forum Foundation in the Berlin Palace.

We see the deadly moment of an act of war: Struck by an arrow and hunched in pain, a Dzungarian horseman flees at full gallop. Behind him, also on horseback, is a Manchurian officer of the imperial army, Machang, bow in hand and about to send another arrow after the fleeing man. The scroll painting *Machang Breaks through Enemy Lines*, again on display in the "China and Europe, Chinese Court Art" gallery in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (3rd floor) from April 19 to May 8, 2023, was created in Beijing in 1759 as part of a large-scale propaganda program that the Qianlong Emperor (1736–1795) commissioned from his court

painter Lang Shining a.k.a. Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) upon completion of the victorious campaign against the Dzungars (today Xinjiang). It was intended to glorify the imperial expansionism in the northwest and south of the Chinese empire. The Italian Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione had lived in Beijing since 1714. Although unable to pursue his missionary activities there as originally planned, he became a court painter held in high esteem by the emperor. In 1914, the painting somehow found its way from Shenyang via Hamburg to Berlin, in the wake either of looting during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900–1901 or of the turmoil during the 1911 revolution. It is now part of the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in the Humboldt Forum. Currently, further research is being conducted on its provenance and that of other works from the Imperial Palace in German museums.

Combining the realist tradition in European painting with Chinese aesthetics, the work of Castiglione and his workshop represents an early form of cross-cultural encounter. The complex history of the painting's origin and migration serves as the starting point for a performative and installational inquiry into the historical and contemporary contexts of colonization and revolution. For *Paper Tiger*, the painting is a probe for investigating the present. As an object that has traversed time and space, torn between the conflicting poles of artist and emperor, human and animal, imperial power and powerless resistance, it raises fundamental questions.

Paper Tiger Theater Studio

Founded in 1998 in Beijing by Tian Gebing and based also in Berlin for the past three years now, *Paper Tiger Theater Studio* (Beijing/Berlin) is the most important independent theater collective from China today. Artists with different professional backgrounds from the fields of dance, theater, and the visual arts come together here to develop projects at the intersection of theatre, performance, and dance.

From 2010 to 2015, Paper Tiger Theater Studio had its own theater space in Beijing where artists from other disciplines could work as well, thus creating a joint artistic network that decisively shaped Beijing's theater scene. The collective's productions have been shown in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Antwerp, Kraków, Zurich, and Amsterdam, as well as all over China. For additional information, please visit www.papertigertheater.com.

Produced by the Humboldt Forum Foundation in the Berlin Palace / Paper Tiger Theater Studio, Beijing/Berlin; **conceived and directed by** Tian Gebing; **dramatization by** Christoph Lepschy; **choreography by** Wang Yanan; **set design by** Eva Veronica Born

Premiere: April 21, 2023, 7 p.m., Humboldt Forum, Hall 2

Additional dates: April 22/23/26/27/28/29

In German, English, Mandarin – Duration approx. 90 minutes

Tickets: 16/8 euros

For additional **information and tickets**, please visit humboldtforum.org/papertiger
Press images for download: humboldtforum.org/presse

One building, four stakeholders: polyphony is already inherent in the collaboration of the various partners. Entities cooperating in the Humboldt Forum include the Humboldt Forum Foundation in the Berlin Palace, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation with the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Humboldt University of Berlin with its Humboldt Laboratory, and Stadtmuseum Berlin with its Berlin exhibit.

PRESS CONTACTS

Michael Mathis, Press Officer
+49 30 265 950-525, michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org

Hendrik von Boxberg, project PR
+49 177 7379207, presse@von-boxberg.de

Mirko Nowak, Head of Communications
+49 30 265 950-520, mirko.nowak@humboldtforum.org