

心聲舞

hsin: a visible spirit



HSIN: A VISIBLE SPIRIT

Contemporary Photography From The People's Republic Of China

Cypress College Photography Galleries

BC Space Gallery

August 23 - September 24, 1999

An Hong (J.G.)

Fang Zhong

Han Lei

Hong Hao

Li Yuxiang

Lu Zhirong (Rong Rong)

Sun Hongbin

Tang Xiaomei

Wang Mai

Wang Qiang

Wang Xingwei

Wu Xiaojun

Xie Wenyue

Yuan Dongping

Zhang Chaoying

Zhang Dali

Zhang Hai'er

Zhang Ou

Zheng Guogu

Curated By: Clayton Spada

In Collaboration with: Jerry Burchfield

“How many people go to art galleries? Even in a big city like Beijing, it’s a tiny number. But ordinary people see my work every day.” Indeed, all of Beijing is Zhang Dali’s canvas and virtually every quarter of the city has been adorned by thousands of his signature profile of a bald head, surreptitiously scrawled with black spray paint during the quiet of late evening hours. As recently as five or six years ago graffiti was regarded by authorities as an unwelcome Western problem and individuals caught engaging in such acts of civil disobedience

張大力

faced extreme punishment. Zhang Dali was thus primed to appreciate the significance of this unencumbered means of expression in his initial encounters with graffiti during a visit to Italy in

Zhang Dali (AK-47)

the late 1980s. He returned to Beijing to wage visual guerrilla warfare under the very public but very anonymous identity of ‘AK-47’ and ‘18K’—the former in reference to the universally recognized Kalashnikov-style automatic assault rifle and the latter to the lure of materialism beguiling new China. Walls are AK-47’s preferred substrate because he believes that the Chinese find comfort in surrounding themselves with metaphorical as well as physical walls; with urbanization and the uncritical rush toward modernization promoting a steadily increasing sense of estrangement which causes people to become more solitary and deranged, he feels that it is only a matter of time before these barriers are ruptured by violence. AK-47’s first step in establishing dialogue was to force the issue by directly assaulting the barrier. The strategy worked: local authorities branded AK-47’s work as vandalism or social sabotage and the press still publishes outcries for his arrest and liability for restoration of the surfaces he has marked. One Beijing resident tried to sue the artist because the heads brought on a depression that affected his ability to perform well at work. Each graffito is actually a single aspect of a continuously evolving creation that Zhang Dali has called *Dialogue*, and the recent incorporation of performance events has further extended the reach and context of his message. Photographic documentation is an integral part of AK-47’s process and not merely an afterthought. The *Demolition* suite offers perhaps the most concise summary of his intent.

Demolition (1998)

Color inkjet on canvas; 39-1/2 x 26-1/2 inches



