



^ Swimmers in the No.1 bathing beach in Qingdao, Shandong.

v The Ancestral Temple inside the ring clay-house of Hakka in Yongding, Fujian.





^ A sculpture of PLA (People's Liberation Army) overlooking a 'white house' hotel in Sanya, Hainan.

✓ A garment market with underwear advertising on its façade in Zhengzhou, Henan.





^ The city wall tower in Xi'an, Shanxi.

✓ Footing groove in front of a 1930s' Catholic Church in Qingdao, Shandong.





^ An island of old housing resisting tabula rasa in Chaoyang, Guangdong.

v A dragon boat located on the lake of the North Song dynasty's forbidden city in Kaifeng, Henan.



Editorial For some time now this magazine has advocated for a journalism which is no longer ‘the art of being too late as early as possible’, but the herald of future opportunities. A journalism which detects, anticipates, is proactive and even pre-emptive, if necessary. It uncovers potentialities, rather than covering done deals. Architectural journalism in particular has for too long humiliated itself by retreating into the reactive mindset – waiting until events finished, but arriving before any real life has had a chance to settle into itself.

Our journalistic question is what are the new challenges to architecture, or what are the possible domains for the application of architectural intelligence? The answer to this question lies in the realm of potential, not the chronicling of results. Instead of studying erected buildings whose intellectual inception began five or ten years ago (the average number needed to complete an architectural project) should we not draft the future of architectural intellect?

So, willingly or unwillingly, we turn to China to see if the empire of change can also be the empire of ideas. Can this new economic powerhouse be the catalyst for new and innovative practical reflection and reflective practice? If journalism can project destiny, let’s focus on the destiny of the country that almost seems to monopolize it. Nobody in China asked for it, but we don’t mind. It’s a gift anyway, paid for by our readers and sponsors.

Perhaps we should scrutinize the destiny of the West first. There is a widespread and very accepted idea that the West won the Cold War. The Soviet Empire collapsed because it was simply outperformed by the Western World and its system of capitalism. The Soviet Union could no longer compete.

However, what is much less acknowledged, is that since about 1990, the same period since the Soviet collapse, the Western capitalist system has directed hundreds of billions of dollars to the emerging economy of China, enabling a wave of modernization that has now almost outgrown the West’s energies, resources, knowledge bases and ultimately their very own flows of capital. Gorbachov would have died for such an opportunity. Put more dramatically: while the West reveled in its triumph in the war against Soviet communism, it handed the Chinese communist system the money necessary to transform China into the West’s most important rival of the 21st century. The capitalist devotion to gaining the highest yield on an investment, bit itself in the tail by strengthening the Chinese nation for, who knows, maybe another 5000 years.

Thus, if we want to explore Chinese modernity and its reservoir of ideas, it is good to acknowledge how much western capitalism sheepishly contributed to its own future contestation. While the West prided itself on its historical superiority (as voiced by people like Francis Fukuyama) it laid the foundation of its own long term historical dissolution. And rather than the best minds and talents flocking to the West, now the best minds of the West have become consultants in China. How hilarious foolishness can be!

But geopolitical shifts are part of even larger world historical changes. From this perspective there’s little to laugh about. Things just happen beyond any blame or stupidity. So now it may simply be China’s turn to decide over the destiny of mankind, over geography, over value systems, over symbolic orders, over all the key concepts by which we organize our lives. The interesting thing is that this triumph will not be achieved by military

conquest or other forms of aggressive domination. It will be the future losers who, whether they like it or not, will keep contributing to China's position, either by investing money, by accepting its rules of the game, by sharing technology and scientific knowledge, or by exporting their intelligence. Moreover, China will win this war not with weapons, but with its values that until today seem unaffected by the worldly successes: mental flexibility, perseverance, focus, and loyalty to the state; all values that have been carefully dismantled in western consumer society. It will also win by adopting a lifestyle that does not place people in the straightjackets of collectivism, but in the regime of materialist aspiration that the west knows so well. The Chinese have expanded their political and economic power by relinquishing some of their cultural and ideological hang ups, so to speak. Good trade! Vice versa, the west wins the culture war, at the price of undermining its own political and economic power. They mutually take each other hostage. Who bothers with terrorists hitting soft targets, when the soft targets are happily and massively surrendering to the other side? Capital will kill capitalism. Or to be more precise: global capitalism will kill western capitalism.

Let's now focus on the winner who will take all. It is no longer enough to consider China solely with an anthropologic view or via business interests. We need to think by China, through China, with China. And for that we need to think Chinese.

We also can no longer call the advance of China a matter of 'expansion', a stage of its diaspora, or even a conquest. No, it's better to talk about a cultural mutation, a dimension of globalisation, a world-historical fatality. With China, modernity has begun a new phase that the west will not substantiate, but that, at best, it will only serve and witness. Paraphrasing and updating the famous poet of modernity Arthur Rimbaud, 'Il faut être absolument Chinois' to be modern. Or in more contemporary words: after the Dotcom Bubble, you better be part of the Comdot Boom.

After considering Chinese output, as so many magazines and cultural institutions in the west do these days, the most obvious way to be Chinese, is to engage ourselves with Chinese worldviews. It is the next step of understanding. After awe, must come comprehension.

But this is not an adequate assessment of impact. We can still manage to feel neutral, beyond, far away. In the past this magazine has offered this perspective several times, chronicling the enormous modernization of the country China. Now we need to go further and probe the intellectual energies within this country, anticipating their future objectives. That's why we have invited many Chinese voices to talk about a broad range of topics – from city planning to preservation, from utopianism to the Taoist-Confucian nexus, from Beijing to Chinatowns. These authors, whether they like it or not, are going to craft the agenda for a world to come. Listen to Yung Ho Chang, Jiang Jun, Qingyun Ma, Shi Jian, Zhi Wenjun, Wang Jun, and many others, writing about China's building conditions, interesting locations, revolutionary programs, urban urgencies and social ideas beyond the mantra of Car, Condo and Credit Card. Guest Chinese in this issue is Rem Koolhaas, writing about the public sphere of China. Guest editor is Linda Vlassenrood, curator at the Netherlands Architecture institute, and responsible for the exhibition 'Contemporary China: Architecture', and the research which laid the foundation for this issue. Volume thanks the NAI for the collaboration and editorial inspiration. ★