

PRESS RELEASE

## **MAO**

**Group show**

Exhibition from February 21<sup>st</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Monday - Friday, 10am – 7pm, Saturday by appointment  
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© Yan Pei-Ming, 1992

Galerie 75 Faubourg presents "MAO", an exhibition highlighting the vision of various contemporary artists on Mao Zedong (1893-1976), an emblematic figure in Chinese and world history. The image of Mao is explored through a selection of paintings, works on paper and sculptures by Chen Changwei, David Mach, Yan Pei-Ming, Richard Pettibone, Li Shan, Andy Warhol, and Wang Ziwei.

"MAO" offers an in-depth reflection on different perspectives on the cultural and political impact of Mao Zedong in China and around the world, examining how contemporary artists are responding to his complex legacy. The representation of Mao Zedong in contemporary art is a rich and diverse subject, reflecting the different ways in which artists approach Chinese history, politics, and culture, as well as more universal questions of power, authority and collective memory.

Mao Zedong, as China's revolutionary leader and founder of the People's Republic of China in 1949, played a central role in modern Chinese history. His reign, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, was marked by events and policies that profoundly influenced Chinese society and the course of world history.

The official portrait of the Chinese President, taken from Chinese propaganda, shows him from the front, expressionless and extremely neutral. This image gives the impression that the photographer has completely disappeared to capture Mao in an objectively detached way. There is no hint of the president's personality. In this way, the artist seems to disappear behind the technique, without any visible intervention in the form.

This neutral portrait was subsequently taken up by a number of contemporary artists, each transforming it with their own distinctive style. Artists adopt a variety of approaches, revisiting traditional iconography, criticizing the policies and actions of his regime, exploring nostalgia, and historically reassessing his impact, all the while indulging in a sometimes ironic or satirical cultural reappropriation. Some artists deliberately draw on the aesthetics of communist propaganda, creating works that explore the relationship between art, politics, and popular culture.

**CHEN CHANGWEI**

*Born in 1973 in China*

Born in China during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, Chen Changwei is known for his sculptures inspired by Chinese culture. In 2004, he created his own zodiac with twelve signs possessing qualities and flaws, represented by surreal animal busts. In 2005, he created a series of busts of Mao in resin.

**DAVID MACH**

*Born in 1956 in Scotland*

Known for his sculptures in matches or in coat hangers, Scottish artist David Mach created a series of four-dimensional works in 2007, depicting a number of prominent contemporary icons, including Mao, Buddha, Marilyn Monroe, Barbie, Elvis Presley and many others. His technical mastery enables him to assemble and glue matches until he has composed the complete head, without stopping at the simple mask. These powerful figures, known to all, admired and even venerated to the point of wanting to be possessed, are offered up to visitors as trophies.

**YAN PEI-MING**

*Born in 1960 in China*

Yan Pei-Ming is a French artist of Chinese origin, known for his expressive paintings. The iconography of Mao Zedong is a recurrent motif in his work, and he often uses it provocatively and critically. Initially a propaganda artist, Yan Pei-Ming painted the figure of Mao Zedong to acquire his artist's materials. Arriving in France in 1980 at the age of 19, he enrolled at the Beaux-Arts in Dijon, where his talent as a portrait painter was noticed despite his distance from the leading art movements of the time.

Born during the Cultural Revolution, Yan Pei-Ming lived through tumultuous periods of Chinese political history. Using the image of Mao Zedong, he questions and reflects on this era and its consequences. By depicting Mao, often in black and white, he also questions the idolatry surrounding the figure of the political leader. He underlines the authoritarian and often destructive aspects of the politics of the time. His portraits are characterized by bold brushstrokes. This expressiveness helps create an intense atmosphere, highlighting the controversial aspects of the political figure.

Yan Pei-Ming combines elements of contemporary Western art with traditional Chinese themes and motifs. He creates a dialogue between tradition and modernity, while referring to China's cultural and political heritage.

**RICHARD PETTIBONE**

*Born in 1938 in the USA*

Richard Pettibone is an American artist associated with conceptual and pop art. He is particularly known for his miniature reproductions of famous works of art and iconic objects. The artist has appropriated images and icons from popular culture, including reproductions of works by renowned artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

Pettibone has reproduced images of Mao, often taken from Warhol's works, on a smaller scale, creating a reflection on originality, authenticity and reproduction in art. This approach questions notions of artistic ownership, the aura of the original work and the very nature of artistic representation.

By reducing these icons to miniature dimensions, Pettibone plays with the idea of the value and status of art, while inserting a critical dimension into his work. His approach highlights questions of artistic appropriation, mechanical reproduction and the place of iconic images in contemporary society.

**LI SHAN**

*Born in 1942 in China*

Li Shan is a contemporary Chinese artist who is a fervent advocate of the "Political Pop" aesthetic. In some works, he appropriates the ubiquitous imagery of Mao Zedong with a distinctive touch of irony, bringing into play the taboo of sexuality in relation to politics. Li demonstrates an evocative clash between consumerism and communism by presenting the leader's instantly recognizable portrait with flamboyant colors and a luminous background, blurring the boundaries between power and sexuality.

**ANDY WARHOL**

*1928-1987, USA*

Andy Warhol has created numerous works featuring icons of popular culture, including political figures. The iconography of Mao Zedong in Warhol's works is a manifestation of his fascination with celebrity, power and the way images of political figures can become symbols of mass culture.

Shortly after U.S. President Richard Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972, gallery owner Bruno Bischofberger suggested that Warhol paint the most important figure of the century, suggesting Einstein. "Good idea", replied Warhol, "but I've just read in Life that the most famous figure of the century is Chairman Mao". So Warhol created a series of silkscreens and drawings depicting the Chinese leader.

**WANG ZIWEI**

*Born in 1963 in China*

"Political pop art" and its representatives, led by Wang Ziwei, have convincingly demonstrated that artistic standards in China are no longer dictated by the state. Wang Ziwei's unprecedented hybridizations leave a singular impression. He blends the United States and China through surprising artistic juxtapositions. The artist plays with iconic references, presenting a surprising mix of Marilyn and Mao, with the skull of the Chinese leader associated with the face of the Hollywood celebrity.

The graphic motif and the fixed idea of the "little father of the people" are omnipresent in Wang's works. The painter skilfully mixes graphic references. The cheerful, childlike image of Mickey Mouse is represented, multiplied, alongside military portraits of Mao.

**ABOUT GALERIE 75 FAUBOURG**

Galerie 75 Faubourg is a contemporary art gallery mainly dedicated to the first market. It has recently presented solo exhibitions devoted to Renk, Enoc Pérez, and Rafa Macarrón, as well as group shows, notably with partners to bring this space to life through other eyes (Harper's, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Galerie Frank Elbaz and Vincent Fraikin for an exhibition devoted to A.R. Penck).