

[*Carol (Yinghua) Lu*: Surreale Realität – Imagination und Interpretation einer anderen Kultur]

Als ich aus China vor gut einem Jahr das erste Mal nach Schweden kam, ohne jemanden zu kennen oder auch nur ein einziges Wort Schwedisch zu sprechen, war es für mich weder ein Problem, Mitreisende im Zug einzuspinnen, mir mit meinem viel zu schweren Gepäck behilflich zu sein, noch die Schliche der Taxifahrer zu durchschauen, die Wagen an Wagen vor dem Hauptbahnhof von Malmö auf ortsunkundige Neuankömmlinge warteten (immer in der Hoffnung, ihnen ein Vielfaches des eigentlichen Fahrpreises abzuknöpfen), noch die über das Internet gemietete Woh-

[*Carol (Yinghua) Lu*: Surreal Reality —Imagining and Interpreting the Other Culture]

When I first arrived in Sweden from China more than a year ago, speaking no Swedish and knowing no-one, I successfully bullied my fellow-passengers on the train into helping me with my overweight luggage, bypassed the clutches of the local taxi drivers lining up outside Malmö Central Station (hoping to charge first-time visitors ten times more than the actual fare) and found my way to the

apartment I'd booked online. However, I encountered my very first obstacle in Sweden as soon as I went to the neighborhood supermarket. It turned out that I was unable to tell washing powder from sugar. Too ashamed and stunned by my unexpected "handicap" to ask for help, I left empty-handed, defeated and alienated. German artists Christine de la Garenne and Via Lewandowsky had a similar moment early on during their visit in Beijing. They bought a sizeable plastic container of strong Chinese liquor, mistaking it for water. Trying to brew coffee with it, they were soon overpowered by an awful smell. When in a foreign country, you are constantly reminded of your own

apartment I'd booked online. However, I encountered my very first obstacle in Sweden as soon as I went to the neighborhood supermarket. It turned out that I was unable to tell washing powder from sugar. Too ashamed and stunned by my unexpected "handicap" to ask for help, I left empty-handed, defeated and alienated. German artists Christine de la Garenne and Via Lewandowsky had a similar moment early on during their visit in Beijing. They bought a sizeable plastic container of strong Chinese liquor, mistaking it for water. Trying to brew coffee with it, they were soon overpowered by an awful smell. When in a foreign country, you are constantly reminded of your own

schlug ihnen ein geradezu penetranter Geruch entgegen. Was aber tun, wenn man in einem fremden Land durch alltägliche kleine Dinge wie diese fortwährend daran erinnert wird, fremd zu sein? Es hilft nichts: Man muss den Kaffee ausschütten, das Malheur im Freundeskreis zum Besten geben, und weiter geht's! Aus Erfahrungen kann man schließlich nur lernen. Wer sich auf Entdeckungsreise begibt, muss jederzeit mit kleineren und größeren Missverständnissen, Fehlern und Überraschungen rechnen, zugleich aber auch mit neuen Eindrücken, Abenteuern, Wundern und Einsichten. De la Garennes und Lewandowskys Projekt umfasste einen Zeitraum von 120 Tagen, in dem jeder Tag durch ein Bild und einen

foreignness by small things like this. What can you do other than throw away the coffee, laugh about it with friends, and move on? After all, it was a harmless lesson learned. Any journey of discovery in a foreign country is full of misunderstandings great and small, mistakes, and surprises, as well as excitement, wonder, discoveries, and insights. De la Garenne and Lewandowsky's project lasted for 120 days, and is recorded with an image and a short text for each day. The resulting images are a series of loosely (un)related pictures capturing details of their daily encounters as well as the city they were doing their

kurzen Text dokumentiert wurde. So entstand eine Reihe mehr oder weniger lose verbundener Bilder, die Einzelheiten, wie sie den deutschen Künstlern tagtäglich begegneten, ebenso wiedergeben wie Facetten der Stadt, die sie zu verstehen und erfahren suchten. Der Alltag in Peking hat die Aufmerksamkeit und Fantasie der beiden derart in seinen Bann gezogen, dass er zum Gegenstand und zum Vehikel ihrer Geschichte wurde. Das Gefühl der Fremdheit, das unverkennbar aus ihren Bildern spricht, überkommt selbst jemanden wie mich, der an diesen Orten lebt und mit den auf den Fotos dokumentierten Dingen vertraut ist. Sie eröffnen eine neue Perspektive auf Peking, die sich Einheimischen wie Fremden gleichermaßen erschließt.

best to understand and experience. Everyday life in Beijing caught the attention and the fantasy of these two visiting German artists and become the subject and vehicle of their storytelling. A sense of the unknown is clearly evident in their images, even to the eyes of someone like me who lives in the places and among the objects captured in their photographs. They provide a new dimension to one's perception of Beijing for natives and non-natives alike. Their exploration of the city was that of the tourist: subjective and spontaneous. Having quickly acquired two second-hand bikes, a once popular mode of transportation that is fast disappearing in Beijing where a thousand new cars are bought every day, de la Garenne

and Lewandowsky were soon fully mobile and embarked on their daily field trips. These travels took them to a whole spectrum of very different localities: parks, museums, gyms, streets, apartments, restaurants, shops, manicure salons, construction sites, retirement homes, garbage dumps, prisons, and so on. Their information sources were also miscellaneous, everything from the workshops and lectures organised for those participating in the art project "Beijing Case," supported by Kulturstiftung des Bundes, to less official comments from their interpreters, their own

and Lewandowsky were soon fully mobile and embarked on their daily field trips. These travels took them to a whole spectrum of very different localities: parks, museums, gyms, streets, apartments, restaurants, shops, manicure salons, construction sites, retirement homes, garbage dumps, prisons, and so on. Their information sources were also miscellaneous, everything from the workshops and lectures organised for those participating in the art project "Beijing Case," supported by Kulturstiftung des Bundes, to less official comments from their interpreters, their own