

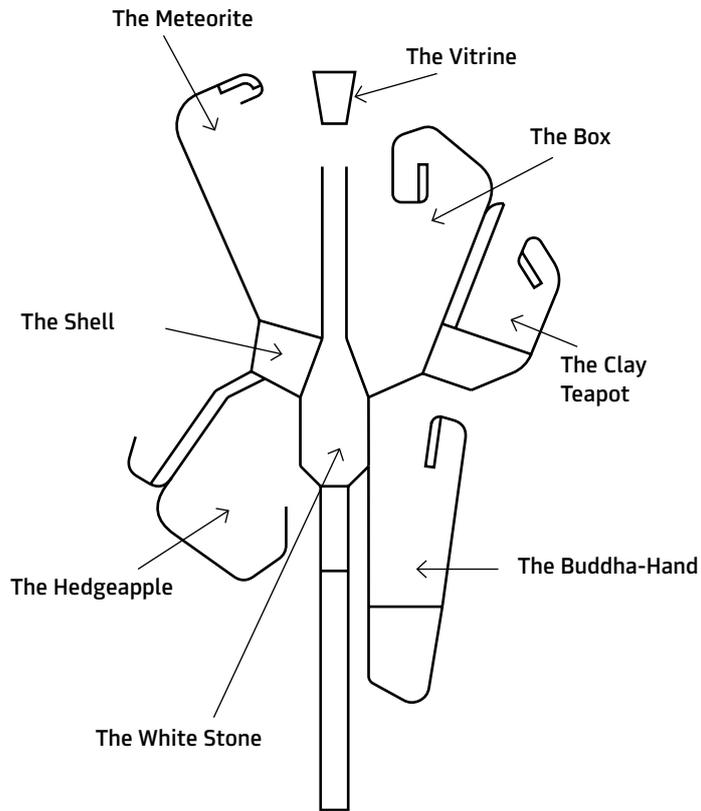
Antje Majewski

The World of Gimel.

How to Make Objects Talk

01.10.2011-15.01.2012

Space01



Antje Majewski creates her own universal museum. A spatial structure grows from the biomorphic shape of the space 01, blossoming from its center like a flower. Walking through the rooms, one enters the labyrinthine *World of Gimel*, a universe as intricately woven and enmeshed as the stories that emerges from its main objects. The point of departure for this boundary-crossing *gesamtkunstwerk* is the question of how the museum alters the meaning of objects and what roles cultural definitions and constructions play in that process. How does an object's significance change when it is moved from its original context and brought into the museum? And is there something in them that resists this; do the objects have a life of their own beyond these cultural narratives?

For this exhibition project, the artist has selected seven objects from her collection. Objects that she brought from various countries and cultures without knowing exactly what they were. As outstanding painter, Antje Majewski works on a visual level. Her painting concerns the symbolic content contained in things, through which she construes utopian, surreal realities in a very realistic way. In this sense, every object becomes an actor in her own unique world of images, generates a reality, poses the existential question as to what reality really is. Besides her picturesque contextualization of objects, Majewski goes on journeys – to Senegal, China, Poland, France and Germany – to seek out their meaning in their countries of origin. There she meets older artists and engages them in philosophical conversations; about the objects, but also concerning the way we deal with all things (and people) in the world. These conversations are shown in

the exhibition as videos. Further “conversations” take the form of contributions and artwork by other artists that had become involved in Majewski’s works and her thoughts about the objects.

Finally, Majewski turns to experts at the Universalmuseum Joanneum for a precise, European-scientific classification and evaluation. Listening to the experts, the objects are of very little value; they are things found in nature or mass-produced commodities, cheaply made and of poor quality. But listening to the complex, multilayered stories, the objects operate in a force field of magic. They take on an aura loaded with meaning, one that transcends the dead, silent reality of things. In the World of Gimel we learn not only about the teapot or the shell, we also learn a lot about how we deal with objects in general, how we sometimes need them in a way that goes beyond their perceived material value and often find it

difficult to part with them. In museums, this phenomenon is taken to the extreme – a collection for a collective that not only perpetuates, but also generates memories, history and identity. To what extent can we experience the life of things within the museum and by what means? Every visitor is invited to draw his or her own, new associations and carry these connections from the museum to the outside world.

The Hedgeapple

The fiction: It is the year 2024. Antje Majewski develops a living artwork for a biotechnology firm in Düsseldorf: the “Entity”. A living organism that has no sensory organs. In her painted narrative, the hedgeapple / Entity becomes a cult object that a patron presents to the director of the “Pavilion of the Entity”. The purpose of this slowly dying thing is to arouse sympathy. A number of Kunsthallen designed by architects Markus Miessen and Ralf Pflugfelder are erected in 2056, within which the “Entity” replaces all other artworks. There was a revolution and only one element of a building element remains, a piece that had once adorned the passage to the shrine (2101). Below it is a glass cube containing the remains of the Entity, which had slowly mummified itself.

The Shell

Antje Majewski bought the large shell in Senegal. She returned there in 2010, met two local artists and asked them about the shell. The film documentation

shows the clarifying conversation. *“Issa told me that we should not deprive things of their history, because that would negate the history of all the hands that made them or through which they had passed. Even objects contain a force within them.”* Antje was urged to ask the shell itself, to listen to what came out of it. This state is indicated by the black parts in the film.

The Meteorite

The painting shows a woman dressed in white holding the “table” yoga pose. An oversized meteorite is perched on her stomach, though it does not look as though it is a burden. Instead it appears to be floating just above her. She purchased the stone in Beijing in 2005. For it she traveled to a Chinese village where there is a large, legendary meteorite and learns of the theory that meteorites that have fallen to earth are the origin of all life. To the village, the meteorite is also a lucky charm – one that they can certainly use, because the village is being threatened with relocation. Their environ-

ment is being polluted by neighboring zinc and lead mine.

The Vitrine

The main painting in the exhibition shows the whole of this universe together in a single vitrine, more attended than watched by a dandyish, longhaired man whose shirt and footwear suggest fashionable ease. The man sitting with these objects is no typical guard. This unusual *Wunderkammer* of objects pulled from all over the world becomes the point of departure for a long, complex and multi-layered investigation.

The White Stone

Antje Majewski found the very round, white stone on a shelf at her grandparents’ house after the death of her grandmother. To her, it appeared as though the stone contained an entire world within it, an idea rooted in Chinese philosophy. The fireplace room devoted to it is “built” of painted stones and has an artificial fire that visitors are more than welcome to sit in front of. It was the first object – the hedgeapple –

that led to this room. While researching its origin, Majewski discovered that the fruit is native to Oklahoma, where it is called the “Osage orange”. John Joseph Mathews was an Osage Indian that became a writer and built this fireplace room in his home in order to live there, to hunt and to observe his natural surroundings. The inscription “VENARI LAVARI LUDERE RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE” says: “to hunt, to bathe, to play, to laugh, that is what we call life.”

The Box

The box made of fragrant Moroccan walnut wood contains a black ball or two glass eyes. Why decide between the two? The painting shows only the box. It is closed, self-contained, and its grain almost looks like the surface of a planet, one that warrants a closer look. The box comes from a flea market in Paris, the wooden ball from Warsaw and the glass eyes were film props from Berlin. What brings them together? To Antje Majewski, the ball had a connection to two Polish artists: Edward Krasinski and Pawel Freisler. Kra-

sinski had converted his apartment into an immersive exhibition in which he lived with many surreal objects. Majewski used the ball to spatially mark off the area and redraw it later in the Parisian landscape (photos: Antje Majewski), enabling a journey through time to Krasinski’s “Ball in the Country”, which we see here in his photographs. Polish friends told her that Pawel Freisler had carried a steel egg around with him much like she had carried her wooden ball, an egg that he characterized as the “standard egg of steel”. It was never exhibited; instead it was entrusted to certain people who were obliged to show it upon request. Sound documentation of the performance that Antje Majewski staged with Agnieszka Polska can be heard on the audio guide. The two went on a fictional journey to Pawel Freisler’s in Sweden to steal his steel egg. Now, the egg has actually been conferred to them for this exhibition and they can show it in the exhibition vitrine. After Antje Majewski had already contacted Pawel Freisler, Simon Starling and Rasmus Nielsen (Superflex) had also proposed a project to

the Kunsthau – completely independent of Majewski’s – in which nine steel eggs of various sizes were to be brought into various departments of the Joanneum. And so it came to be that the Super Egg and the Standard Egg were able to meet in the exhibition.

The Teapot

At first sight, we recognize a hand made of clay, also from China. The hand is presumably no more than a cheap tourist souvenir, but it can also pour tea. Anyone wanting to know what it means to drink tea should just drink tea, said the Chinese tea master; only then would he or she also understand why the Chinese believe that tea is a living thing, a being that one can communicate with by tea drinking. This teapot is apparently “not a good one,” but its gesture means, “Let go”. In his conversation with Antje Majewski, Alejandro Jodorowsky says that, of all her objects, he liked the teapot the best: “That is the hand that gives. And what I give, I give *myself*. To receive the world is to give to the world.” This not unlike

the way he gives in his public tarot readings and psychomagic prescriptions – without expecting thanks. This return flow, the reflux of that which one gives to the world, are perfectly embodied in these gold bars made of clay. They were given to him by his son Cristobal, as payment for everything his father had done for him.

The Buddha-Hand

This strange little sculpture was modeled after a citrus fruit called the Buddha’s hand. The first place that Antje and her assistant Xu Shuxian visited on her trip to China was a temple where devotees were celebrating the birthday of Guan Yin – the Bodhisatva of mercy and compassion who sacrificed her arm for her ailing father – with a procession leading to the water. According to legend, Guan Yin used it to make a soup and tipped the rest into a field. A tree sprang up right where it fell, the fruit of which looked like hands. She herself grew thousands of new arms with which she now helps all of the suffering creatures in the world. The video “Procession” shows Antje’s niece

and her friends as they carry abstracted, paper forms of her objects in a procession through Berlin before casting them into the water.

Finally, Antje Majewski and her assistant drive to a plantation that is now used to cultivate the Buddha-hand citrus. Both are given a seedling that each of them now looks after in their own respective surroundings. In her painting, Majewski shows the larger-than-life sculpture beside a woman dressed in an old, Romanian folk costume, holding her like a trophy in front of a luminous background. This room also contains work by other artists, all of whom work with the idea of cell division and growth.

Gimel

“Gimel” derives from the Hebrew word “gamal” which means “to give”. As the third letter in the Hebrew alphabet it has the numerical value of three, which symbolizes perfection. Like the book of transformations, the World of Gimel reflects all of the possible levels of perception on simple things. In this context, the word “Gimel” stands enigmatically for the universal, for an all-encompassing unity dominated by permanent energy and a flow of movement.

The Meteorite

Conversation between Lu Ling, the villagers of Wang Fu Shuo village and Antje Majewski

Wang Fu Shuo Village, 2011

Film by Antje Majewski. Text Editing and Translation Antje Majewski

To find out more about my meteorite, in Guangzhou I met with the “people’s scientist”¹ Lu Ling, who researched meteorites and also works for an NGO that mediates between the villages and the government. She explained to me her theory that the impact of meteorites striking the primordial earth caused enormous clouds, and that these cloud formations generated all other forms on earth. She then offered to take me on an excursion to a village that owns a very large meteorite called the “Iron Ox”. Together with my assistant and friend Xu Shuxian, who translated all of the conversations, we journeyed out of gray Guangzhou and into the wonderful landscape near the Longtan Mountain, where we reached the village of Yang Wu Sha ². There we were greeted by the mayor and – after taking many photos – treated to a sump-

1

A scientist that does not work for a government institution

2

Yang Wu Sha 杨屋厦

tuous meal. I explained to them that I wanted to find out more about the meteorite. This is what the villagers told me:

Villager 1: ‘I’m here to guard the pool. I’ll keep all the evil away.’ Then, after saying that, he jumped back into the pool and fell asleep until now. It became a stone.

Villager 2: At that time, the children played with the stone, it was just lying there. But after we found out that it came from the sky, we started to protect it. We built a pedestal and put it up there, just to protect it. We believe that this stone brings us fortune and happiness.

Villager 3: I don’t know anything about the meteorite. I heard that there are two meteorites, one big, one small, but from what I saw and what I know it’s just one. And the children play with it, ride the meteorite as a horse, the children play with it.

Villager 4: If this meteorite brings more people to visit the village, I

think it’s good.

Head of the Village: It was 300 years ago that our ancestors came to this village to build this temple. I just heard this from the older generation, so I’m not sure whether or not it’s true, I think they just told us the story. So when the people dug this pool, they found this stone. It’s called the ‘Iron Ox’ Stone. And the fish died sometimes. Then we used the axe to chop it, you can see the scar from the iron. And after that, we hoped that the ‘Iron Ox’ wouldn’t eat the fish any more. So, that’s the story of this ‘Iron Ox’ stone, and in 2006 Lu Ling came to this village and found out that it is a meteorite. People from this village, they believe that this meteorite brings us luck and also keeps us safe. And also we invited some Feng Shui masters here, they also said that this is a treasure for the village, and that it can keep us safe.

Antje: And this stone, is it like a human being or is it like a - what do they feel about it?

Head of the Village: A guardian.

Villager 5: I hope it can protect our village better, protect our environment. I hope.

Antje: I hope so, too.

Villager 5: Ah! It's better if it can protect the whole world, not just this village.

Villager 6: So, there were lots of big trees before, but in the 1970s, because at that time the economy was very bad, even if we worked the whole day, we could only earn a few Yiao, which is very low, although our village is in fact the best - other villages, they can only earn a few cents. But at that time, we decided to chop all the big trees down and sold them to the ship company. They used these big trees to make big ships. So we were able to earn some money and to build a bridge over there. Before we built a bridge, it was very difficult to cross, to go out. At that time, we only had a very small piece of wood for people to cross. It was very dangerous. But after we sold the trees, we were able to build a bridge, and now it's very convenient.

Villager 7: They ride it. So it's like

an animal that children can ride on. When they were young, they played like this. And there were many big trees around it, and old men told them stories.

Lu Ling: I want to tell you how I found out that it's a meteorite. Because the villagers told me that this meteorite, it was here 300 years ago. And at that time, modern industry, maybe it had just started, and in China there was no modern industry at all, so there was no way we could have made such pure iron. This iron, it has 99.32 percent iron inside. I also discovered that the left side of the meteorite, the shape looks like it leans to the other part, so it's broken from the other parts, and the right side is the bottom that hits the ground. And when I look at the textures on the surface, you can see lots of holes, so I can imagine that at that time there must have been a very high temperature, and there is air, there is strong energy, that made these holes. When we look at the characters, we can see the story of this meteorite. This meteorite is from the sky. And there are stories about the 'Iron Ox' catching fish, and now it's a guardian of this

village. And the signature there, the name Yang Ho Huang, he is the one who brought me here. After that, our villagers were encouraged, and we hope that this meteorite could help us to protect the environment. And we're working on developing the ecological area here.

Villager 8: There were more people living here and there was not enough space, so they moved to a bigger place.

Villager 9: I hope the next generation will have a better environment. I hope the government cares more about this. And I really hope that our children can live in a more beautiful place.

Lu Ling: 'Long Tan Town' means dragon, so let's say that Long Tan Town is a dragon, and Nan Kuen Xan is a mountain, and this village is called Yang Wu Sha village. And this is the first village near the Nang Kuen Xan mountain. So this is actually the eye of the dragon. So we need to make this village more beautiful. We call it: 'draw a dragon' - and you draw the whole dragon, but without the eye, it's dead. So the most important part

is, you draw the eye as beautiful, as bright as it can be, so the dragon will be alive.

Villager 10: He wants to collect all kinds of meteorites to give to the scientists, so that the scientists can find out where this meteorite came from, from which star system. And he also thinks that the meteorites are from the very beginning of the world. There is a Chinese story, a Chinese god called Nüwa. Nüwa, she is kind of at the very beginning. And this Nüwa, she makes human beings. And that time the sky was broken, and Nüwa made stones to repair the sky. I think these meteorites come from that story. The broken sky is a human disaster. In order to save human beings she used this.

Antje: So the meteorite offers protection against catastrophe?

Villager 10: Yes. At that time, in the story, the sky was broken and fell down. It caused huge fire and explosions. So I think that was the first time human beings discovered meteorites. I don't think the meteorite brings luck. I think it brings disaster. Look at the mine

[of rare earth metals]. I think because of the meteorite, because of the mine, our environment was polluted. And I really hope the scientists can study it and find out what problem it caused, and it helps us to protect our environment, to move the mines away or something else, to realize how serious this problem is.

Lu Ling (*Pointing at a crack in the wall of villager 10's house*): It's caused by the mine.

The villagers gave me a smaller meteorite as a gift. After a warm farewell, we left the village and drove up the mountain. There we met an old man, the former mayor. He took us on an enchanting walk during which we saw wild dogs, large bamboo groves and the foggy mountains. Finally we came to a valley full of large boulders and orange trees, where he has built a hut behind two enormous lumps of rock. He has named them Yin and Yang. Standing on these boulders, another view opened up to us.

Shuxian: There is a Guan Yin stone...

Antje: Which one?

Shuxian: That one! It's a Guan Yin stone.

Antje: Can we go and see?

Former Head of the Village: This is a Guan Yin stone and this is a Holy Cup Stone. And over there, there is a human head stone. It's over there. (So he also explained the tree here) and this tree... he just tells me about the name of the tree. - He thinks that this is a very special place. People call this place Xu Wei Tao Ye. It means: Paradise that is in the world.

Antje: In the world?

Shuxian: Yeah. Or maybe a Paradise outside the world, but what I mean, 'in the world' - it's still on the earth but what I mean by 'outside the world': it's outside the city and outside reality...

Antje: Hmm. And can you ask him, he was also the head of the village, no, for quite a long time?

Shuxian: Yeah, but not any more.

Antje: Not any more. So can you ask him also about the meteorite, what he thinks about that?

4

Hua Long Dian Jing 画龙点睛

5

Nüwa 女媧, early Chinese goddess. She and her brother and husband Fuxi are shown as having the lower body of a serpent. She melted down stones to repair the sky in the time of primordial chaos, when heaven and earth had not yet settled into place. She cut off the legs of a tortoise, using its four feet to create the four cardinal directions. Nüwa also created mankind out of clay. Shaping them took too long, so instead she dipped a rope in clay and flicked it so that blobs of clay landed everywhere, and these blobs became individual people.

6

The nearby mines are rare earth element mines (lead, zinc). They pollute the water and the agricultural products. The entire village is supposed to be relocated. This village was founded 300 years ago and arranged according to the principles of Feng Shui; it has a very unusual layout, as one can see on Google Earth.

Former Head of the Village: (He thought that), well, he just told us a story, but it is a little different from what we heard from the villagers. The stone was discovered when they dug the pool. Then they put it up on the roadside, but it just went back to the pool again. This happened three times. So they thought this was a beast, that this beast ate the fish. They used an axe to chop, to cut it, and cut it three times, so there are three scars on it. After that, it didn't eat the fish any more.

We remain seated on the stones a bit longer. It is very peaceful.

Former Head of the Village: My idea is to develop an ecological tourist industry here. This can be designed for people to pray.

A few days later, Shuxian explains to me that the photographs of my visit to the meteorite were to be hung in the ancestral temple. With her help, I wrote a letter thanking the village residents for their hospitality and expressed my confidence that many Western tourists like myself would want to come there, not only to visit the meteorite, but also for the good,

healthy food and to enjoy the landscape. Hopefully, this will help them show the government how important it is to close the toxic mines and prevent the village from having to relocate.

7

The Sacred Bowls are placed on the altar - one for Yin and one for Yang. The stones look like two sacred bowls turned upside-down, with the opening towards the bottom. They are connected by a tiny bridge.

8

Shi Wai Tao Yuan 世外桃源

The Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand

Conversation between Huang Jian and Antje Majewski
Guangzhou, 2011

Film by Antje Majewski. Text Editing and Translation Antje Majewski

We are sitting in "Tian Shui's Private Kitchen", a vegetarian restaurant on the Guangzhou University campus. The restaurant has only three tables and serves fresh, unusual Southern cuisine. Huang Jian is currently finishing a dissertation in history. He is an expert on teapots. Jun, the waiter at the restaurant, has taken a seat at our table. I don't speak Chinese, so my assistant and friend Xu Shuxian translates for me.

1

Xi Shi 西施: The four beauties of old China were four fair and beautiful women said to have caused the fish to forget how to swim (Xi Shi). Birds fell from the sky after looking at them (Wang Zhaojun); the moon hid itself for fear of being compared to them (Diaochan); and the flowers were put to shame (Yang Guifei). Each of them had a tiny flaw that only made their beauty all the more unique: Xi Shi, for example, had chest pains and large feet. The teapot is reminiscent of her breast. Xi Shi lived in the 6th - 7th century B.C.

Antje: Ok. So - can you tell them that I'm very happy that they take the time for me?

Huang Jian (translated by Shuxian): He said, he is happy too, to have something like that, something in common to share.

Antje unpacks the teapot.

A: I have this teapot, but - I just show it to him, no?

Huang Jian examines it from all angles.

HJ/Sh: This is a conceptual pot.

The orange lid falls inside. Huang Jian tries to get it out again.

A: It happens all the time. I can do it.

HJ/Sh: At the very beginning, the teapot was made for use. The function was most important. So it was usually like a sphere. After a few more years, beginning in the Ming dynasty, people liked to add more and more ideas to the teapot; they started to make something different.

A: So for me, I would be interested to know if he has any idea in what era this teapot could have been made? But more important for me is, if he knows something about the ideas maybe or he has -

HJ/Sh: - his own ideas -

A: his own ideas about what idea could be behind this teapot.

HJ/Sh: I think this is a new generation teapot artist. Because it doesn't belong to a traditional artistic perspective. It does not belong to that. So he thinks that this is by a new generation artist, who wants to make something new. If it is not traditional, usually people will not use it. Because it's the shape, the shape of this pot, it doesn't fit in with the usual artistic perspective. Usually, the artist will use the form of other things to make a teapot, for example the tree, or for example, there is a very famous teapot, it's called the Xi Shi teapot. Xi Shi is one of the four beauties of ancient China, and this pot, it's actually the shape of a breast. But usually, even if artists use the form, the

shape of other things, they make a very abstract shape, not so clear as this (one). So he thinks that it's a contemporary artist, for example now.. - And he mentioned that from 2008 to the Olympics in 2010, lots of these conceptual teapots were born, and I think they were sold to foreigners, I don't know, but just lots of this kind of conceptual pot were born. But he thinks that it just looks creative; they don't have a deeper sense related to traditional culture.

A: For me, you could say, it's a teapot, but maybe it's also just a sculpture, you know?

HJ/Sh: Yeah, he also mentioned that. Now this teapot - the sculpture is more the teapot, because it's for looking at and not to use.

A: Yes. Because I tried to use it as teapot, and you can use it as teapot, but just as he said, you feel uncomfortable. You don't get a nice feeling using it. Well, there is something about the shape of the hand that I really like. So I have the feeling that the artist maybe tried to express something about

drinking tea, you know?

HJ/Sh: People from different cultural backgrounds will see different meanings in it, but my own perspective is: if I go to the store, for example the teapot market, I will say: 'Oh, that's interesting!', but I will just look at it for a while. I go to buy a teapot with friends - because he usually chooses teapots for friends, he knows about teapots - but if they don't know about the Xi Shi teapot, they might choose it because the shape looks very different from the traditional ones, and it's kind of creative, but after looking at it, I would not buy it, because...I don't know why, but -

A: No, I understand.

HJ: It's not a good teapot!

A: Yes!

HJ/Sh: It's not a good teapot! - He thinks that usually the traditional paintings or whatever, the art pieces, they are usually kind of abstract, because for example they wouldn't draw a hand, they would not really draw a hand,

they would not draw all the details; they would care more about the meanings behind the hand - but if you draw a hand, so it shows everything immediately... so that's what he thinks.

A: This traditional teapot, is it more like this?

Antje puts the meteorite on the table.

A: What I mean is this feeling, that something is - you know, like: one colour, and natural, and simple form. Could he describe what makes a beautiful teapot?

HJ/Sh: He said he agrees, that the traditional Chinese like something that is nature, simple, maybe kind of not so new, maybe a little older.

A: Yes.

Huang Jian puts a teapot on the table. It's rather small and reddish in color.

HJ/Sh: So, and he said: this teapot is not really a good teapot, because...

A: Too much decoration...

HJ/Sh: Too perfect, and too detailed. He can see that it's made by machine. And he also mentioned that there is a Chinese painter, Cheng Man Ching. His painting is not so perfect, and it doesn't look so smart, but from his painting we can still see that there are lots of movements inside. Look, for example... My own understanding is: this is too perfect, there is no movement at all, but when things are not so perfect, you'll see many movements, many changes.

He just mentioned the birth of a teapot. The first teapot was born in a temple. The story goes like this : the temple is called Xing Chao Zhou temple. And the old monk wants to drink water and he teaches his student to make a pot in which to boil water, and the first teapot was born.

Huang Jian's mobile phone rings, he leaves the room. The cook starts to talk.

Cook / Shuxian: He wants to talk about the teapot. He thinks that this teapot means to him: Put down. Put down - it's in the

Buddha's book. Put down means - I think, it is called: Let go. Let things go.

A: It's this gesture, yes?

Antje zeigt mit ihrer Hand die Geste der Hand, die eine Tee-kanne ist.

Cook / Shuxian: Let all your problems go. Let all your thoughts go. And the Buddha said: in our life we need to let many things go, then your life becomes better. The Guan Yin - have you seen Guan Yin's hand?

A: No.

Shuxian: It's usually - something like that.

Shuxian Shows one hand up, one down; the cook makes the same gesture.

A: Oh, really?

Shuxian: Yeah, one up, one down.

A: Oh, I see. So it could be like this.

Shuxian: Yes. That means: Let go.

Let things go.

A: Aha. And the upper hand, what does it mean? The other hand?

Shuxian: I don't know. But I think it's connected to the great intelligence. The things of all the cosmos, all the world, the big intelligence.

A: Maybe we could come back for a moment to this question that I had before - he can also answer, it's for me... just this question, if they could describe what makes a beautiful teapot beautiful.

Shuxian: The shape.

A: Yes, but not only the shape. The question was: is there something - how can you describe this energy, this movement, this inner movement? And is this something that for them is connected to nature or - I don't know if they can describe it. If it's possible.

Shuxian: Oh, that's a big question.

A: I know, I know! I'm sorry!

S: I'm not ready to answer that.

2

Chen Man Sheng 陈曼生

3

Jin Sha Si 金沙寺

4

Guan Yin: 观音, "Listener of the Cries of the Suffering in the World". This bodhisattva of mercy is venerated in the female form.

HJ/S: Let's take this teapot as an example: because it's made by machine it's not man made... He mentioned that's what makes a teapot that is not beautiful. First: If people cannot see the maker's thoughts inside, this is bad. Because firstly, it doesn't follow the traditional culture, and secondly, it's not creative. Two things that make it not beautiful.

A: Hmhm.

HJ/Sh: He just takes a word, a sentence from the bible: 'Your good mind, your good heart needs to be expressed by your good behaviour.' So, this pot, maybe it has a good idea, but just the technique is not good. I just asked him, what makes a teapot beautiful, and he said: It's the feeling that it can be too far away and it can also be very close to your heart. So he just gives a simple example: it's like when you're doing nothing, and lying on a beach, with the sunshine, it's warm, and you're relaxing, and after the sun has gone down, you wake up. And it's also like when you go to church and listen to a song, a beautiful song from the bible, Holy song, then you'll

be in the environment, and it's like you're far away from the world, but somehow you're closer to God or to nature or to your heart or whatever.

A: Yes. I was reading, before coming here, I was reading Lao Tzu, and it's what he also says, that you should not put up any resistance to anything, just -

S: Just doing nothing?

A: Just doing nothing, yes. (*Both laugh*). Is that the same?

HJ/S: Lao Tzu's 'Doing nothing' - we call it Wu Wei - Wu Wei, so doing nothing, it also means doing everything. Everything. But he said, this Lao Tzu's word has a specific background, society background. So at that time, he was the most intelligent person in that world. But now, look at the human being now. Take as an example this crisis in Japan, the nuclear power station. If there were no nuclear power station, there wouldn't be any disaster today. So technology brings us convenience, but also brings us disaster.

A: Hm. - So, now I want to ask one more question: I mean, here, this little restaurant, it's almost like a - you know, in the traditional paintings, sometimes you see people in the mountains - in former times, you know, maybe, let's say, in the landscape paintings. So in former times, for example, you have China, there is a war, or there are problems with the Mongols, or other problems, yes, and there you have people, maybe poets, and they go to the mountains and they look for a little hut -

S: Look for a little hut?

A: Like a little house in the mountains, to live far away from the world, you know, just drink tea or drink wine, maybe, and write poetry - you know about this tradition?

S: Yes. Somebody will, you know, the intelligent people, the sages - if the world, society, like for the war or something like that, they will choose to live in the mountains and just share with... maybe to write poetry or to draw, to take tea with friends...

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Wu Wei 無為, Taoist principle of non-action, or doing nothing that goes against nature/the Tao. Man is contained within the Tao. As such, non-action or "inaction" is neither active nor passive. "When traveling on water it's best to use a boat. But when you walk on land... you will not get any further and will only have trouble. You will accomplish nothing and only damage yourself." Zhuangzi XIV.

A: Yes! So, I had this feeling a little bit when I came to this restaurant. I just want to know if they -

S: If they agree with you. Ok -

HJ/S: He thinks that this place, it's part of a balance, a balance with society outside, the noisy world. And he also mentioned that we just talked about people who are hidden, who are hiding in the mountains - let's call them 'hiders' - is it right? The greatest hiders, the best, are hidden in the noisy world. The ones who are not very good, they are hidden in the mountains.

All laugh.

So, he also said that Chinese people like to be in society. So, to him, this is not a place that is far away from the world, but it's part of a balance, part of a balance.

A: I understand.

Later that evening we go all together to a teahouse.

HJ/S: To make a teapot better one should use it more. You need to use good tea.

A: And do they think that each teapot is like an individual?

HJ/S: Yes. Every teapot, we can say that it's like a painting, and it's a life form. It's alive.

A: And so, if this teapot is from the Qing dynasty -

S: Before that.

A: Before that - does it also contain the history that it has already had?

HJ/S: Yes.

A: So, if it's alive, you know, if you drink the tea, is it as if you are talking with the teapot, a little bit? Like you are sharing tea with the teapot, it comes from the teapot? What is happening? Between you and the teapot?

All laugh.

HJ/S: It's like a communication between two lives.

A: Hmhm.

S: That's it.

A: Ok. - And this communication is without words, no?

HJ/S: It's a communication between two lives but it can be also between yourself and the other world. It's the hidden world... this afternoon we talked about the distance, sometimes you feel far away from the world now but somehow you feel closer to nature or to God or something like that, so it's a communication with the life that is not you.

A: So it's a communication with the teapot, but the teapot also contains this bigger life?

S: You mean, does the teapot contain bigger life?

A: Yes. The other - otherness.

S: No, it's just a carrier.

A: A carrier. Yes. And yourself, are you also a carrier?

HJ/S: He said that he thinks that he himself, I mean, the body itself is also a carrier. But if you're intelligent enough, you don't really need tea or something else, you only need yourself and then you can connect to God or whatever. And - when drinking tea, however - the tea sometimes can be a taste, a piece of meat, or sometimes it can be you yourself. Yes.

Antje Majewski

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Painter, video artist, photographer

1986 -92 studied Art History, History and Philosophy in Cologne, Florence and Berlin

Since 1991 solo and group exhibitions

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Program

Cosmopolitanism, Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices

Lecture by **Chantal Mouffe**

30.9., 7.30pm, Needle

Guten Morgen in der Gimel-Welt!

Performative talk and breakfast with **Antje Majewski**

and artists prior to the exhibition opening

01.10., 9.30am, Space04

Cruising on the Deck

by **Mathilde Rosier**

Performance during the exhibition opening

01.10., 12am, Needle

my own private cinema: Alejandro Jodorowsky

El Topo / The Holy Mountain

Film evening presented by Antje Majewski

18.10., 6pm, Space04

my own private cinema: Djibril Diop Mambéty

Touki Bouki / Die kleine Verkäuferin der Sonne / Das Los

Film evening presented by Antje Majewski

13.12., 6pm, Space04

What is an Object?

Lecture by **Marcus Steinweg**

01.12., 7pm, Space04

This text is published on the occasion of the exhibition

Antje Majewski

The World of Gimel.

How to Make Objects Talk

Kunsthaus Graz

Universalmuseum Joanneum

01.10.2011–15.01.2012

In cooperation with
steirischer herbst



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Graphic concept
and design

**Lichtwitz Leinfellner visuelle
Kultur KG**

Layout

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Supported by:

**Raiffeisen-Landesbank
Steiermark**



MAGNA STEYR

