

Intercultural dialogue: Germans and Chinese discuss Enlightenment in Beijing

**Together with the National
Museum of China, Stiftung
Mercator initiates
“Enlightenment in Dialogue”
series / The objective is to
promote mutual
understanding**



Essen/Beijing, 26 November 2010. In the spring of 2011, the National Museum of China will reopen at Tiananmen Square following extensive renovations. The first international exhibition at what will then be the world's largest museum will be devoted to the art of the enlightenment. The exhibition is the result of cooperation between the Berlin State Museums, the Dresden State Art Collections and the Bavarian State Painting Collections in Munich. To officially accompany the exhibition, Stiftung Mercator is staging the “Enlightenment in Dialogue” series of events together with its partner, the National Museum of China. Stiftung Mercator is making available a total of some 1.5 million euros for the purpose.

“Like a mediator, this series of events is intended to help get China and Europe talking to one another – to allow them to get to know and understand one another even better”, explains Bernhard Lorentz, director of Stiftung Mercator. The objective of the dialogue is to discuss enlightenment as a universal phenomenon, one that stands for diversity, openness and tolerance.

The programme comprises five dialogue blocks which will continue for the entire duration of the exhibition, from spring 2011 until spring 2012. At intervals of around two months, Chinese and European scholars will discuss different facets of the Enlightenment at the National Museum of China. Each dialogue will consist of a public lecture and a panel discussion.

The series, which was designed by a group of German and Chinese experts, will describe the basic principles of the European and Chinese Enlightenment. “The term, however, will not be limited to its philosophical and historical meaning”, says Lorentz. Instead, it will be placed in the present cultural context and linked to other themes: Chinese tradition, modernism, science and art. The aim is thus to reveal the contemporary value of the Enlightenment for China and Europe. Members of the expert group include the journalist and historian Tilman Spengler, the sociologist Wolf Lepenies and Huang Ping, professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as well as the director of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Pan Gongkai.

Most of the funding for the exhibition "The Art of the Enlightenment" comes courtesy of the German Federal Foreign Office. The three German museums are presenting more than 450 exhibits on a total area of 2700 m² at the National Museum of China in Beijing. At the heart of the exhibition will be artworks which reveal the central ideas of the Enlightenment, its influence on fine art and the history of its impact from the artistic revolutions of the 18th century to the present day.

Alongside the programme at the National Museum of China, Stiftung Mercator will host in cooperation with various Chinese partners a series of salons on the subject in which German and Chinese intellectuals will have the opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions on philosophical, social and artistic aspects. The salons are designed to imitate the classic salon of the Enlightenment. Adapted to the circumstances of today, they are intended to offer a forum for open discussions of art, culture and philosophy. After each dialogue block, the salon will change venue, taking place at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art and at Beijing University (Beida), among other places.

In addition to the "Enlightenment in Dialogue" series, Stiftung Mercator is committed to promoting cultural management in China. In a programme of training for people working in different fields of culture, selected during a nationwide application process in China, some 20 culture professionals each year will be taught in seminars and practical sessions about the contents and structures of German and European cultural management with a view to strengthening the transfer of knowledge between China and Germany. The training programme for young Chinese cultural managers is a joint project run by Stiftung Mercator in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut, the Institute of Cultural and Media Management and the Free University of Berlin.

For further information, visit:

www.aufklaerung-im-dialog.com

www.kunstderaufklärung.de

About Stiftung Mercator:

Stiftung Mercator is one of Germany's largest foundations. It initiates and funds projects that promote better educational opportunities in schools and universities. In the spirit of Gerhard Mercator, it supports initiatives that embody the idea of open-mindedness and tolerance through intercultural encounters, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and culture.

The foundation provides a platform for new ideas to enable people – regardless of their national, cultural or social background – to develop their personality, become involved in society and make the most of the opportunities available to them. It is thus committed to inspiring ideas. Stiftung Mercator takes an entrepreneurial, international and professional approach to its work. It has a particular affinity with the Ruhr area, the home of its founding family.

www.stiftung-mercator.de

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