

German Federal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle opens “Enlightenment in Dialogue” series in Beijing

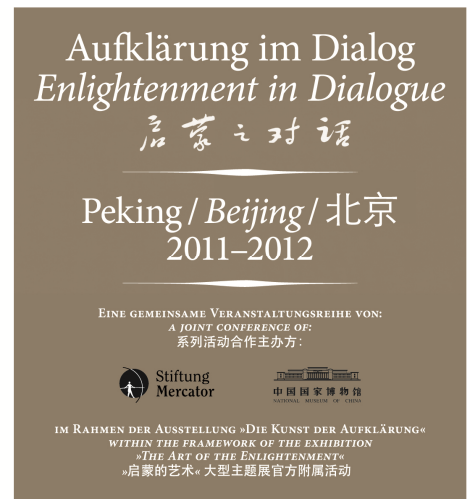
Stiftung Mercator and the National Museum of China jointly present the first forum

Beijing/Essen, 25 March 2011. 2 April 2011 sees the start of a year-long series of events entitled “Enlightenment in Dialogue”, organized by German foundation Stiftung Mercator together with its partner, the National Museum of China. The dialogue between European and Chinese scholars will be inaugurated in Beijing by the German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in the presence of high-ranking representatives of Germany and China. The subject of the first event is “The Art of the Enlightenment – The History of an Exhibition”.

The “Enlightenment in Dialogue” series is being staged by Stiftung Mercator in cooperation with its partner, the National Museum of China. The series, which accompanies the exhibition “The Art of the Enlightenment”, is an initiative of the German Ambassador to China and is supported by the Chinese Ministry of Culture. The programme comprises five dialogue blocks which will continue for the entire duration of the exhibition, from spring 2011 to spring 2012. Chinese and European scholars will take part in the dialogue blocks at the National Museum of China, where they will discuss various facets of the Enlightenment. Each dialogue will consist of a public lecture followed by a panel discussion.

Official opening of the event series and first dialogue block on “The Art of the Enlightenment – The History of an Exhibition” Saturday, 2 April 2011, 9 am to 12 pm at the National Museum of China, Beijing

Following a welcome address by Lu Zhangshen, director of the National Museum of China, and opening speeches by Chinese Minister of Culture Cai Wu and German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, the exhibition’s organizers will take part in a panel discussion in which they will describe how the exhibition came about, introduce the sites of the collections from which the exhibited artworks were taken and explore the reasons for choosing this exhibition theme. In addition, the participants will discuss the past, present and future significance of the term ‘enlightenment’ and consider how art and this term are interrelated.



Statements about the first dialogue:

Dr Bernhard Lorentz, President of Stiftung Mercator

"Through the 'Enlightenment in Dialogue' series of events, it is Stiftung Mercator's intention to foster a dialogue between China and Europe on topics of relevance to the future – promoting even better relations and mutual understanding."

Ambassador Dr Michael Schaefer, German Embassy in Beijing

" 'Enlightenment in Dialogue' accompanies the most important exhibition that Germany has ever presented abroad: 'The Art of the Enlightenment'. During the course of our 'Enlightenment dialogue', we will be discussing the values and ideals of the European Enlightenment with our Chinese partners and friends. European representatives of the Enlightenment movement enjoyed close ties with Chinese society and were inspired by China's rich tradition, philosophy and literature. We wish to take advantage of this to achieve a productive intercultural dialogue."

Lu Zhangshen, Director, National Museum of China

"Looking at the history of humankind, the aim of this event is to experience different civilizations, to learn from one another and to jointly achieve success."

Professor Martin Roth, General Director, Dresden State Art Collections

"Accompanying the exhibition 'The Art of the Enlightenment', the 'Enlightenment in Dialogue' series represents an important bridge between the art historical and contemporary interpretations of the term 'enlightenment'. This being the case, the subject will interest a broad spectrum of people from different fields."

About "Enlightenment in Dialogue"

To accompany the exhibition, Stiftung Mercator will be staging the "Enlightenment in Dialogue" series 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. The programme comprises five dialogue blocks which will continue for the entire duration – from spring 2011 to spring 2012 – of "The Art of the Enlightenment", an exhibition presented by the Berlin State Museums, the Dresden State Art Collections and the Bavarian State Painting Collections in Munich, in cooperation with the National Museum of China. The exhibition has been made possible by Germany's Federal Foreign Office and is supported by the BMW Group.

Each dialogue will consist of a public lecture and a panel discussion. Alongside the programme at the National Museum of China, Stiftung Mercator is teaming up with various Chinese partners to host 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 of the Enlightenment. The series, which was designed by a group of German and Chinese experts, will describe the basic principles of the European and Chinese Enlightenment. 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.

www.aufklaerung-im-dialog.de

The objective of the series of events is to illustrate the value of enlightenment for a future that is worth living in China and in Europe. The term "enlightenment" should be

re-rooted in people's consciousness. Dialogue is the path, intercultural understanding the goal. Like a mediator, the series of events is intended to get China and Europe, and the different groups in society, talking to one another with a view to bringing about greater mutual understanding.

About "The Art of the Enlightenment"

On 1 April 2011, "The Art of the Enlightenment", an exhibition presented by the Berlin State Museums, the Dresden State Art Collections and the Bavarian State Painting Collections in Munich, in cooperation with the National Museum of China, will be officially opened in Beijing. The exhibition has been made possible by Germany's Federal Foreign Office and is supported by the BMW Group. The National Museum of China, which is currently undergoing extensive modernization and expansion, will be the world's largest museum building when it reopens; the first international guest exhibition it will host is this comprehensive exhibition on the art of the Enlightenment. Under the joint patronage of Chinese President Hu Jintao and Germany's Federal President Christian Wulff, the exhibition will be on show in Beijing for a period of twelve months. For more information, visit www.kunstderaufklaerung.de

Press accreditation: For reasons of security and space, accreditation is necessary. Members of the press who are interested in taking part in the discussions are kindly requested to obtain accreditation by 30 March 2011 at www.aufklaerung-im-dialog.de/participation.

Language: Simultaneous interpretation between German and Chinese will be provided during the event.

If you should have any questions, please contact:

Nora Neuwinger
Stiftung Mercator
Communication Manager
Phone: +49 201 245 22-840
nora.neuwinger@stiftung-mercator.de