

China's Badiucao and Galschiot in unique cooperation over freedom of expression



In the shadow of the corona crisis, Hong Kong's local government continues its crack-down on freedom of expression. To draw attention to this, the world-renowned Chinese artist and dissident Badiucao and artist Jens Galschiøt will hold a happening around the Pillar of Shame sculpture in front of the Danish Parliament

With everyone's attention directed towards fighting COVID-19, Hong Kong authorities chose to arrest 15 of the city's prominent pro-democracy veterans last month and accuse them of organizing and participating in demonstration that took place more than six months ago. On Monday 18, their trial begins.

The severe attack on Hong Kong's freedom rights has led Jens Galschiøt to form an artistic collaboration with China critical dissident and artist Badiucao. This will materialize in the form of a new decoration of Galschiøt's artwork the Pillar of Shame, which is already placed in front of the Danish Parliament in solidarity with the Hong Kong protesters' struggle.

"China is exploiting the global crisis to weaken the principles of the free world. Hong Kong's democracy and freedom is one of the most direct victim of Beijing's crackdown" says Chinese Badiucao, who has drawn a picture of a tank with a corona-virus onboard for the Pillar of Shame.

In front of the tank a peaceful protester from Hong Kong stands with a yellow umbrella.



“15 Hong Kong democracy activists got arrested overnight recently. Beijing’s authorities deliberately choose the moment assuming that the free world is too busy to pay attention to Hong Kong’s freedom fight due to the deadly virus crisis. It is a tactic that has been used by Beijing a lot such as sentencing influential democracy leading figures like Liu Xiaobo on Christmas in 2009,” says the Chinese artist, who has become known for his drawings, portraying China’s leader, Xi Jinping, chasing Winnie-the-Pooh.

Until recently, Badiucao remained anonymous, but he revealed his identity last year at the 30th anniversary of the student revolt at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The arrest of the 15 Hong Kong democracy icons is a major crack down on Hong Kong’s democracy movement, which over the past year has demonstrated in large numbers in the city’s streets to preserve the freedoms promised to them when Britain in 1997 handed over Hong Kong to China.

“It is completely obscene that China is now exploiting a global health crisis to try to eliminate fundamental human rights by cracking down on the peaceful part of the Hong Kong democracy movement. In the most shameful manner, China exploits that Hong Kong citizens have limited opportunity to protest, and the world community is more occupied with the corona crisis, the world economy, and whether the ZOO should reopen than keeping an eye on China and their attempts to stifle democracy and freedom of speech in Hong Kong,” says Jens Galschiot.

Galschiot is a big fan of the unique drawing made by his Chinese artist colleague for the Pillar of Shame.

“It’s amazing that we got Badiucao, one of China’s most prominent street art artists - China’s response to Banksy - to create a unique work for our happening. It is artistically brilliant that he has managed to link the brutal use of power, the democracy movement and the exploitation of the corona crisis. At the same time, there are references to the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, where China slaughtered thousands of peaceful protesters fighting for basic democratic rights. History now repeats itself 30 years later with young people in Hong Kong fighting to preserve these rights.”

The Danish government must take a stand against China

Amnesty International is closely following developments in Hong Kong and documenting the violations of freedom of speech and assembly as well as police violence against the protesters. On the occasion of the event, Amnesty Denmark has approached the Danish party leaders with a number of recommendations which the organization believes Denmark should work for.

“We need to make sure that the EU takes a strong stance and clearly condemns the prosecution of peaceful protesters by the Hong Kong authorities, and increase international pressure on Hong Kong’s government to decriminalize the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In addition, Denmark must actively push for an impartial, independent, and effective investigation into the police’s excessive use of force against the protesters - including police violence” says Trine Christensen, Director of Amnesty International Denmark.

The former party leader from the Alternative, Uffe Elbæk, supports Amnesty’s recommendations and urges his political colleagues to do the same.

“China’s political leadership has once again viciously cracked down on Hong Kong’s democracy movement in the wake of the Corona crisis. Most recently with the arrest of 15 high-profile local politicians and activists. Therefore, it is vitally important that both Denmark and the EU at a high level take a stance against China,” he says.

A broad range of the Danish youth parties supports the recommendations, including the Danish People’s Party Youth, SF Youth, Conservative Youth, Left Youth, Alternative Youth and the Danish China-Critical association.

“The free world must watch China closely more than anytime, and we must understand that Hong Kong is the front line of a freedom fight for China. The success of Hong Kong’s democracy movement will not just be a win for Hong Kongers but also a great inspiration for Chinese people to join Hong Kong’s fight one day. And a China respecting democracy and rule of law will benefit the rest of the world for all of us,” says Badiucao in a statement for the Danish event.



Background: On Monday, 18 May 15 prominent pro-democratic leaders and activists will face trial in Hong Kong. One of the defendants is 81-year-old Martin Lee, who is known for being the father of Hong Kong's democracy movement and the architect of the freedoms that the city's citizens now fight to preserve. The 15 are accused of "organizing and participating in unauthorized assemblies". Five of them are also being prosecuted for "announcing unauthorized assemblies". These charges are based on Hong Kong's Public Order Ordinance, the provisions and application of which fail to meet international human rights law and standards on the right to peaceful assembly. At the same time, there are politicians among those arrested who risk being disqualified from running in the upcoming legislative council elections in September - the LegCo. Under current law, a person is disqualified for 5 years after being convicted of an offence for which they have been sentenced to imprisonment for a term exceeding 3 months. The defendants face up to five years in prison.

Jens Galschiot, who has also been involved in Hong Kong's democracy movement back in the 90s, personally knows several of the defendants. In 1987, he set up his sculpture *The Shame Support* in Hong Kong in memory of the students who were killed at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Find more Photos at www.galschiot.com

Kind regards,
Jens Galschiot

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About Jens Galschiøt:

Danish artist **Jens Galschiøt** has created many socio-critical sculptures and installations through the years. Most often they are placed in public spaces around the world – as needle-sticks and silent reminders of a world that, in his opinion, is out of balance, and where exploitation of the world's resources, inequality and migration are a constant part of the picture.

General information about Galschiøt can be found at:

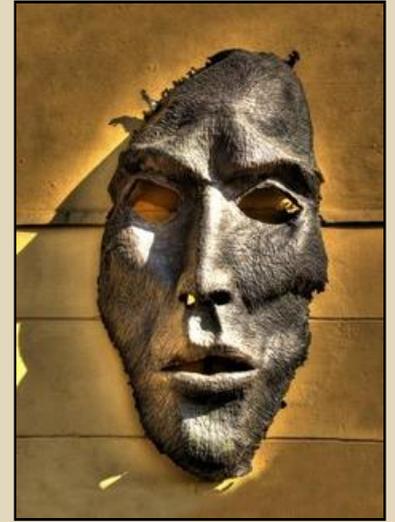
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This mail has been sent from the sculptor Jens Galschiøt's workshop.

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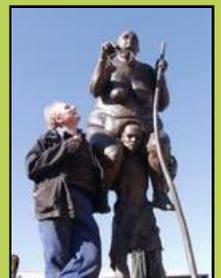
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