

Urban balancing act

Stencil artist Evol shows plain Berlin facades in the German Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo

By Ulrike Münter

Evol is a flâneur who finds his stories in seemingly accidental traces of the city. As a chronicler of the unfinished, the artist kicks off the art program of the German Expo Pavilion, whose theme is "balancity – a city in balance."

A portbellied worker is shouldering a moving box with a sack cart standing in front of him – a man of action. The biblical quote "carry each other's burdens" is printed on the case in washed-out blue (picture). Berlin-based stencil artist Evol is delighted by this accidental find. And he feels challenged to intervene: with a technique similar to screen printing – but with the help of a spray can and stencil. In 15 layers, he copies the windows of a shabby facade, which he had previously photographed, onto the picture of the mover.

The dialogue between printed advertisement and art begins: Who is moving out and where to? Is it happening deliberately or because the rent was unaffordable? Who is carrying whose burden? Evol takes on the role of a chronicler who archives things overlooked by others. This is also the intention behind his Internet photo series "Evoldaily." Crumbling plaster, garbage in the streets and even dog excrement are subtitled and immortalized. The juxtaposition of pictures from Berlin and other cities give the visual journal a global character.

Evol is one of six artists representing Germany for one month

each at the Expo beginning in May in Shanghai. Their work, displayed in the German Pavilion, aim to reflect the utopia of a city in which, according to the concept of the exhibition, there is "a balance between renewal and preservation, innovation and tradition, urbanity and nature, community and individual development, and work and leisure." Visitors move through artificial urban settings, underwater worlds, a factory, a city planning office and a so-called "energy source" on moving walkways and escalators.

"What I like about Berlin is that many buildings still tell the story of the city and its people," said Evol. "And, of course, a non-renovated facade tells me more than a freshly painted one. On my walks I feel like strolling through the chapters of a book." Looking at his facades sprayed on scrap cardboard and moving boxes, it soon becomes obvious why Evol choose the former working class neighborhood of Friedrichshain in the east of Berlin as his home almost 10 years ago. Here many facades facing the street or the courtyard, on which the decades have left their mark, tell their own stories of life.

After squatters had moved into the many empty apartments in Friedrichshain, several artists followed at the end of the 1990s. Evol was one of them. The area offered plenty of living and working space for little money. Low shop rents attracted young designers and other entrepreneurs. Cafes furnished with tables and chairs from the flea market radiated a rather existential charm. Meanwhile, Friedrichshain has become

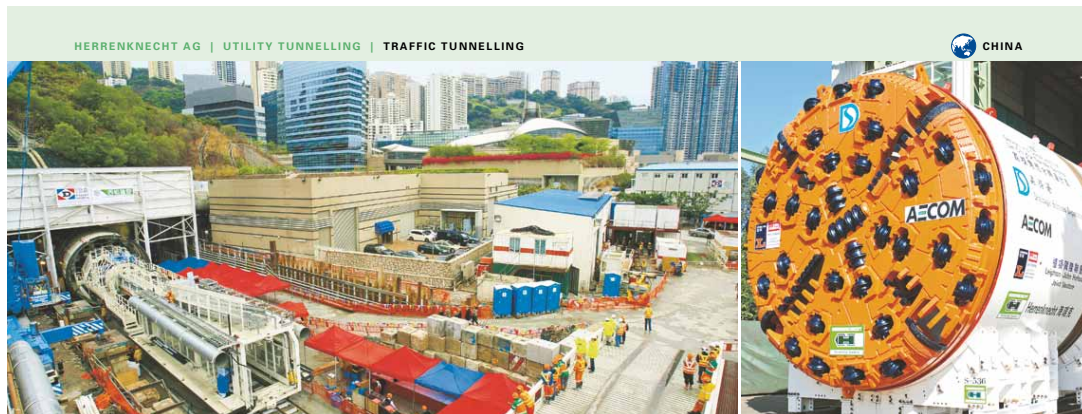
trendy and the intoxicating era of change is coming to an end.

Time and again pictures of miniature prefabricated buildings appear in "Evoldaily" that bear witness to the aesthetic pragmatism of East Germany that can also be found in the suburbs of Moscow, Tokyo or Beijing. On closer observation, however, they turn out to be pictures sprayed on electricity distribution boxes. "To avoid trouble, I don't spray the paint directly onto the boxes but apply transparent foil first," said Evol.

The fact that Evol of all people was chosen as a representative of a "city in balance" in the German Pavilion may seem baffling at first glance. His homage to the urban environment does not reflect a bourgeois understanding of functionality, order and cleanliness. Instead, he turns urban balance into a sensitive juggling act of different interests, always including the conflict between the legality and illegality of street art.

Yet Evol can cotton up to the Expo's motto: "Especially in an unfinished city like Berlin, and of course in other big cities too, balance is something that has to reinvent itself over and over again. When familiar ways are no longer practicable, each individual is required to look for new ones." What Evol says of Berlin also applies to Asian megacities, only that there it even happens much faster. Yet it is hard to imagine finding tolerated graffiti in public spaces in Chinese cities, or even just gray facades sprayed on moving boxes in the Chinese Pavilion.

www.wilde-gallery.com/artist_evol.html



THREE MACHINES, TWO TUNNELS, ONE BENEFIT: FLOOD PROTECTION IN HONG KONG.

HONG KONG CHINA	
PROJECT DATA	CONTRACTOR
S-486, S-487	Dragages Nishimatsu JV;
2x Double Shield TBM	Dragages Hong Kong Ltd.,
Diameter:	Nishimatsu Construction
8,280mm, 7,210mm	Co. Ltd.
Cutterhead power:	
3,150kW, 2,800kW	
Tunnel length:	
6,640m, 4,350m	
Geology:	
granite, volcanic rock	
S-536, Mixshield	Leighton John Holland JV;
Diameter: 5,650mm	Leighton Contractors
Cutterhead power:	Pty. Ltd., John Holland
1,570kW	Engineering PVT. Ltd.
Tunnel length: 3,484m	
Geology:	
fresh granite, granite	
with varying degrees	
of weathering	

A comprehensive flood protection program is being realized in Hong Kong to better control the consequences of the heavy rainfalls and typhoons that occur annually. Large tunnels are designed to collect the huge amounts of rainwater and channel them safely into the sea.

The "Dragages Nishimatsu Joint Venture" is employing Herrenknecht's Double Shield technology for the construction of the "Hong Kong West Drainage Tunnel". The S-486 and S-487 sister machines have a diameter of 8.28m and 7.21m respectively, and have been driving ahead the eleven kilometer long tunnel since April and June 2009, respectively. The tunnel is scheduled to offer protection against floods for the city's business and finance center from 2012 onwards.

It is also planned to complete the "Lai Chi Kok Drainage Tunnel" by then. The "Leighton John Holland Joint Venture" will excavate the 3.5 kilometer long tunnel using the Herrenknecht S-536 Mixshield. The machine, with a diameter of 5.65 meters, is being assembled on the construction site with an expected start of tunnelling early 2010.

The tunnel has sufficient capacities to collect the water of even the most extreme rainfalls and storm surges which have been seen up to now and will protect the inhabitants against floods in the long term.

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