

Michael Wolf
- Made In China -
24 November 2006 – 6 January 2007

Fifty One Fine Art Photography is proud to present the new exhibition 'Made In China' by photographer Michael Wolf.

In 2003, Michael Wolf started his project "Architecture of Density" for which he explored the architecture of Hong Kong. The result is a series of large-scaled close-ups of the dense mass of skyscrapers. At first sight, the vertical and horizontal grids of the immense industrial and residential buildings appear like complex and abstract patterns. But when having a second look, you can take a glimpse at the life behind the large walls of Chinese architecture. This creates the feeling of balancing on the edge between anonymity and privacy, alluding at the same time to the economic and cultural undercurrents in the region.

In the past fifty years Hong Kong has experienced an enormous economic boost but also a huge shortage of space. This lack of space has consequently given birth to towering skyscrapers, one by one built as swift as an arrow. Besides the aesthetics of urban existence, "Architecture of Density" draws a picture of the Chinese culture and the Chinese way of living. Michael Wolf: "With these images, I want to convey the visual impact of the buildings which are built to house so many people on so little space. They remind me of beehives or supermarket bar codes seen from a distance. But I especially like the ambivalence in many of the Density-images. They are documents and abstractions at the same time."

The series "Copy Artists" shows portraits of Chinese artists, who are expert in copying Western master art. The artists, holding one or more of their replica's, pose in small, obscure alleys close to their studio. Not only do they reproduce the work of Dürer, Da Vinci, Richter, Prince or lesser known artists, but the conceptual date paintings of On Kawara are also very popular as is copying photographs to canvas. Every artist and every artistic trend is equal. Sometimes it even seems as if the Copy Artists laugh at the skill of great masters by giving the impression that all of it is merely banal: like the image of more than thirty "Sunflowers" drying like linen on a clothesline. The series also reflects on the established art prices and puts the elitist status of art collectors in perspective.

The work of Michael Wolf is tremendously popular throughout the world. "Chris Doyle, the cameraman for director Wong Kar Wai, and I are the two foreign artists who have had the greatest impact on the image the world has of Hong Kong. But, ironically, our work is not accepted by the country that in the meanwhile has become our home", says the photographer.