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Artforum

"Critics' Picks"

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Shanghai

Wang Wei

META PROJECT SPACE

No.5&7, Lane 212, XuHui District

May 14–July 20

Meta Project's inaugural exhibition, "Wang Wei's Guest," exploits its setting within the heart of Shanghai in a timeworn Western-style housing block where the householders are inquisitive and rarely keep secrets. Similar to Arrow Factory—an art space in a residential area of Beijing that the artist cofounded—such surroundings naturally foster a sense of reciprocated observation between artists and locals. This potential for art to interact with its context has always interested Wang, and his work here—*Wang Wei's Guest*, 2016, an uninhabited, slightly lopsided but otherwise exact replica of a police security post set in the residential courtyard—superimposes a layer of contradiction and complexity onto the existing "see and be seen" relationship.

The detailed replication of the security post is evidenced by the placement of its air-conditioning unit and bits of packing tape still clinging to the window. We are compelled to peek inside—but, as with attempts to identify authoritarian power, it is impossible to know anything from the outside. By way of remedy, Wang has transferred all of the sentry box's contents, including a standard-issue chair and a list of "booth personnel management regulations," into Meta Project's adjacent exhibition space. Owing to the security post's erroneous placement, however, many passersby have overlooked this dimension to the artwork. The paradox he creates relies on the dismantling of the ready-made to achieve its apposition: indoor and outdoor realms are, in fact, parallel worlds that keep an eye on and serve to elucidate each other.

Clearly, neither the artist nor the curators at Meta Space are satisfied with the traditional, safe white cube. They instead focus on bringing invisible ideologies and assumptions into the exhibition space. In doing so, Wang has transformed a place of neighborly observation into a subject to be observed.

Translated from Chinese by Lee Ambrozy.



View of "Wang Wei's Guest," 2016.

— *Han Jian*