

kemperMUSEUM

of contemporary art

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Censored in China **Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art to Show Works by China's Gao Brothers**

First US Exhibition Only in Kansas City, on view September 17–January 2

Chinese artists Gao Qiang and Gao Zhen, known as the Gao Brothers, have collaborated on their art since 1985. Much of the Gao Brothers' work is inspired by their family's experiences during China's Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Due to their subject matter, the Gaos' works are frequently censored by authorities in China. Featuring large-scale sculpture, painting, and photography, the exhibition *Gao Brothers: Grandeur and Catharsis* is the artists' first museum exhibition in the United States. The exhibition, curated by London-based scholar Arthur Hwang, is on view September 17, 2010–January 2, 2011, only at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri. Admission is free.

The exhibition will open with a free public reception, Friday, September 17, 5:30–7:30 p.m. at the Kemper Museum.

The artists and curator will be present. See page 4–5 for a complete list of events related to the exhibition.



Mao's Guilt, 2009; bronze, 45 1/4 x 28 1/2 x 30 1/4 inches; Courtesy of the artists

In 1968 the artists' father was arrested as a counter revolutionary, and days later

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he died while in custody. Their father was among the estimated 1.5 million people who died during the Cultural Revolution, when much of China's cultural heritage and family foundations were destroyed. The Gao Brothers' works of art seek to understand China's complicated history and government controlled by the Communist Party. The Gaos' works range from politically charged to satirical and irreverent works, but in the end the brothers seek to understand the wrongs and shortcomings of China's past. In many of their works, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), former leader of the People's Republic of China, plays the lead, but in others, viewers will find a variety of portraits of famous and infamous public figures.

With many of their works of art being critical of the Chinese government and its leaders, the Gao Brothers find it difficult for them to express themselves freely as artists and generally show their works at secret art exhibitions to avoid seizure of their works by authorities. In 2006, an exhibition of their works in Beijing's gallery district, called 798, had several works removed by the government.

The brothers are not afraid to create contextually loaded, controversial works of art. In the sculpture *Execution of Christ* (2009), a half dozen life-sized bronze sculptures of Mao Zedong point bayonets at a life-sized sculpture of Jesus Christ. At the back of the group, one Mao appears to be turning away from the execution, perhaps regretting or rethinking his act. The positioning of the artwork's figures mirror two well-known paintings, Francisco de Goya's *The Third of May 1808 (The Executions on Príncipe Pío hill)* (1814) and Edouard Manet's *The Execution of Maximilian* (1867–69). In both works, a central figure stands before a firing squad. When China became a communist state in the 1940s, its government adopted atheism and forced many religious followers, including Christians, to observe their faith in secret.

Other works mock Mao and China's evolving practice of Communism. In the outdoor sculpture *Miss Mao Trying to Poise Herself at the Top of Lenin's Head* (2009), a relatively small Mao figure balances on the head of Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), leader of Russia's Bolshevik revolution and first head of the USSR. After Mao's forces

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defeated Chiang Kai-shek and his army in 1949, China emerged as the People's Republic of China and private enterprises became state owned and farms became collectives. In this monumental sculpture, the artists satirize the careful balancing act that China practices today now that it has evolved into State Capitalist economy controlled by the Communist party.

Free Educational Programs

Panel Discussion: Gao Brothers

Saturday, September 18, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

**Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art | Atkins Auditorium | Free
4525 Oak Street, Kansas City, Missouri**

In the years since the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese artists have been allowed latitude in creating art that references this historic period when Maoist Red Guards attacked traditional Chinese and Western philosophy, the intelligentsia, religion, and other "bourgeois" or "reactionary" traditions. Under the scrutiny of the Chinese Communist Party, the Gao Brothers have pushed the boundaries of expression and anti-Mao sentiment.

In this panel discussion, the Gao Brothers, Kemper Museum Curator Barbara O'Brien, exhibition curator Arthur Hwang, and Associate Professor and Director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Kansas, Megan Greene will discuss their monumental and politically provocative artwork. Greene will talk about China's Cultural Revolution and the frenzied transition from the Maoist era to the China of today.

This program is free and requires no ticket for admission. Seating is first-come, first-served.

Sunday Cinema Series

Kemper Museum Meeting Room | Free

Experience contemporary China through the lens of documentary and artistic filmmakers in this Sunday Cinema Series. At each screening, experts from the Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas will lead discussions before and after the films.

Sunday, September 19, 2:00 p.m.

Art in the Cultural Revolution (1997). 33 minutes. directed by Kubert Leung
Digital Underground in the People's Republic (2008). 18 minutes. directed by Rachel Tejada

Sunday, October 17, 2:00 p.m.

The Sun Behind the Clouds: Tibet's Struggle for Freedom (2010). 79 minutes.
Tibetan and Mandarin with English subtitles. directed by Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam

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Sunday Afternoon Cinema Series, cont'd

Sunday, November 14, 2:00 p.m.

The World (2004). 139 minutes. Mandarin and Shanxi dialect with English subtitles. directed by Zhang Ke Jia

Sunday, December 12, 2:00 p.m.

The Other Half (2006). 111 minutes. Sichuan dialect with English subtitles. directed by Liang Ying

Contemporary Connections in the Classroom

Friday, October 15, 6:00–7:30 p.m.

Meeting Room | Free | Registration Required

High school educators are invited to this evening workshop that will explore China's Cultural Revolution and its impact on today's China while learning about trends in contemporary Chinese art that have emerged along side a market-driven economy. Educators will receive a tour of the exhibition and a teacher resources packet with classroom activity materials. Light refreshments will be served. Space is limited. Register by contacting Beth Harris at 816-457-6134 or bharris@kemperart.org.

About the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

Kansas City's renowned free modern and contemporary art museum, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art opened in 1994 and draws more than 120,000 visitors each year. The Museum boasts a rapidly growing permanent collection of modern and contemporary works of artists from around the world and in three locations—the signature Gunnar Birkerts-designed building, Kemper at the Crossroads, and Kemper East. The Museum hosts temporary exhibitions, installations, lectures, concerts, children's workshops, and other creative programs.

The Museum (4420 Warwick Blvd.) is open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday. Café Sebastienne, a four-star restaurant, serves lunch 11:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday; and dinner 5:30–9:30 p.m., Friday–Saturday. The Museum and Café are closed on Mondays and major holidays. Admission is free.

Kemper at the Crossroads (33 West 19th Street) is closed for renovation. It reopens October 1.

The galleries of Kemper East (200 E. 44th Street) are open 10:00 a.m.–4 p.m., Tuesday–Friday. Admission is free.

The Museum thanks its annual sponsors

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For more general information about the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, visit www.kemperart.org.

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