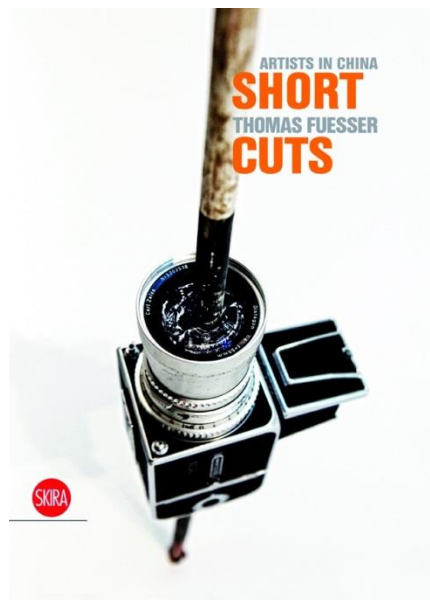


Short Cuts: Artists in China, photographed by Thomas Fuesser, ed. by Rosa Maria Falvo. Skira, May 2013. 528 p. ill. ISBN 9788857214863 (cl.), \$75.00.



Can you judge a book by its cover? The answer depends as much on the cover and the information inside as it does the person processing that information. In the case of *Short Cuts: Artists in China*, the title of the work, the author attribution, and the front cover image of *Focus*, a sculpture by the Chinese collective MadeIn Company, yield some interesting clues, which may escape most readers. Thomas Fuesser captures the piece, an aboriginal spear piercing a Hasselblad camera, on the gallery wall using a deliberately shallow depth of field, drawing attention to the shattered Zeiss lens. Outmoded technologies from two cultures clash, and the focus is squarely placed at the point of collision.

Meanwhile, a list on the back cover includes the names of the subjects inside: seventeen contemporary artists living and working in China, some famous in the West (Ai Weiwei, Cai Guo-Qiang), others less so. Given the size of the book, and depending on familiarity with Fuesser, most

would take this for a survey of contemporary Chinese artists and expect a scholarly essay about each subject and photographs of their notable work, but this not the case. Rather, the book is a collection of highly stylized photographic essays depicting portraits of the artists, shots of their studios, and editorialized images of their work, which combine to open a very intriguing view of the subjects.

Along with the paucity of text, there are some other notable omissions: an index, a list of artists' works, and information about Fuesser's photographs, such as dates and titles. While this lack of specificity may frustrate some, inclusions such as brief interviews with several of the artists (usually conducted by another artist), a page in each chapter listing notable exhibitions, birthplaces and dates, and education are quite helpful. Four short introductory essays in the first twelve pages provide additional context, and combined with the images, will likely provide a spark for those exploring contemporary Chinese art.

The relatively recent Western influence and the impact of a global marketplace for art is palpable on the artists portrayed, and it isn't always comfortable. And perhaps a filtered view from someone like Fuesser, who has spent the last decade documenting Chinese artists, and making many friends along the way, is as good a place to start as any other.

Ultimately *Short Cuts: Artists in China* is a gateway, an accessible entry point, though probably not the final destination for those studying intently, unless it is Fuesser's work they are investigating. It is a thoughtful, well-crafted work and would be very appropriate for libraries that collect material on photography or those supporting the study of non-Western and especially contemporary Chinese art, a subject imbued with conflicting forces.

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