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WEST LAKE EXPO / CULTURE / TOURISM / ECONOMICS

**Xu Wenwen**

**G**o to any city in China and you're sure to see street corner vendors selling battery-operated toy soldier figures that crawl along the sidewalk, stopping only to fire their rifle.

Swiss artists Stefan Baltensperger and David Siepert bought one of these familiar toys and discovered that if the figure was placed in a standing position his movement took on a completely different meaning.

Placed horizontally, a twisting motion at his waist propels the toy soldier along; placed vertically the same twisting motion makes him look as though he is dancing, before pausing to shoot his gun skyward, as though in celebration.

The sinister sniper skulking along the ground is transformed into an exuberant, joyful dancer.

Inspired by this change of perspective, the duo made a video of the toy soldier dancing along to Abba's "Dancing Queen."

It starts with a single dancing figure; then there's three; then a line of them, and eventually serried ranks of the figures, twisting their hips in a figure 8 in sync and saluting with guns.

"We thought that it was strange to have a soldier shooting as a children's toy, so we've changed it into something more playful," says Siepert.

The artist is convinced that small gestures like this can cumulatively bring positive change.

"If everyone tries to change the world a bit, it will become a better place," insists Siepert.

The "Dancing Queen" video is among works by Baltensperger and Siepert featuring in a new exhibition at Inna's Contemporary Art Space in Hangzhou that opens tomorrow and also features works by Swiss artist Bignia Wehrli and Chinese artist Liao Wenfeng.

The exhibition is a result of a residence program "A Very Hot Pot" featuring the four artists in Hangzhou this month. Its name came about because the four become friends over a Chinese hotpot and because "they influence each other and sublimate each other," creating a hotpot of styles and inspiration, says curator Li Shengzhao.

Political and sociological meaning informs Baltensperger and Siepert's work. Also in the exhibition is their "Imaginary Landscape," a series of photographs of national borders. However, all the frontier fences have cut been from photos, leaving only landscapes.

Some of the photographs have been

# Everyday tales of dancing soldiers



"Fighting Pigeons Forget Peace"  
by Liao Wenfeng



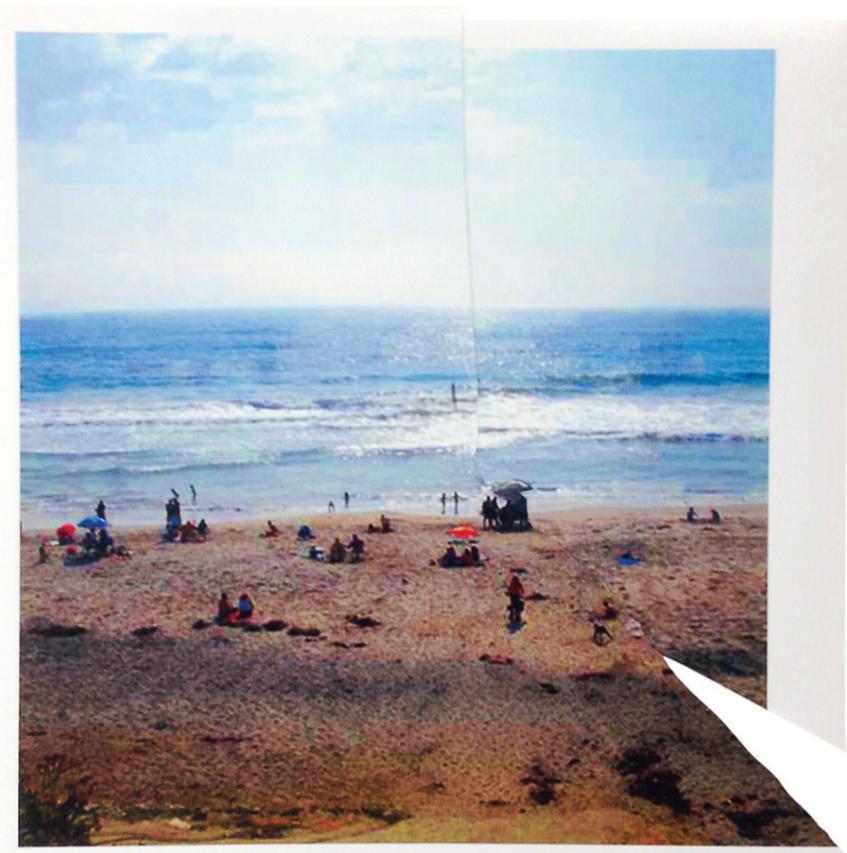
One of the photographs of star trails  
by Bignia Wehrli



A screenshot of "Dancing Queen" by  
Stefan Baltensperger and David Siepert

cut into several pieces since the border fences have been "moved." The artists stick them back into one, so that two beaches may become a single beach and hills are connected.

Wehrli and Liao are a couple but work separately. Some of Wehrli's work on show focuses on trails in



"Imaginary Landscape" by Stefan Baltensperger and David Siepert

nature and astronomy.

Her work in the exhibition will include photographs of star trails that map a route taken by her father over a series of days when he was walking in the mountains. She used GPS to track his route and transferred it onto a star path through a camera following his route while photographing the night sky using a long exposure.

"The GPS route records the connection between the man and the land, and the photo shows the connection between the land and the sky," says Wehrli.

In another work a negative film is sealed in a round pencil sharpener. Some light still leaks in through the hole for the pencil tip, creating a pinhole camera. And when a pencil is sharpened, some shavings fall onto the film, leaving their images on the exposed film.

Photographs developed from this seems like "an explosion in a micro cosmos," says the artist.

Liao, whose work is renowned for its novel observations, is exhibiting

drawings, photographs and video.

In one drawing two doves fight in front of a rainbow flag; in another a pair of glasses are poked by fingers from opposite direction.

His videos seem simple but are infused with meaning. "To Drink the Sun" shows a glass of water reflecting dazzling sunshine, but the sunshine disappears when the water is drunk.

"I love to pay attention to detail," says Liao.

"And with simple methods I hope to inspire people to rethink our world."

"The artists make works about daily life," says curator Li. "Daily life is very much a routine and art helps people to rethink it without being bound by stereotypes."

The exhibition will run to May 15. The four artists will be present at the opening ceremony tomorrow at 3pm.

Date: Tomorrow-May 15

Address: No. 12 Building, Dongxin Creative Zone, 139 Liuhe Rd

Admission: Free

## Foreign entrants for photography competition

FOREIGN residents and visitors are invited to take part in the 2015 Hangzhou Citizens Photography Week, and share pictures that reflect the city's natural beauty, cultural heritage, sustainable development and social harmony, say organizers.

**Requirements:**

- Each entrant can submit no more than five photographs which must have been taken in Hangzhou.
- These should be emailed to 931153838@qq.com before April 28.
- Photographs should have captions, as well as the

photographer's name, nationality and contact details.

- Submitted pictures should be free of copyright violation.
- Photos should be sent in JPG or TIFF formats with a file size larger than 2M.
- A photo essay with four to eight pictures should be marked in a sequence order.
- With the exception of cropping and changing brightness, contrast and color saturation, images must not be modified.
- The original photographs must be saved by the photographer and submitted in good time if required by the

organizers. Entrants who fail to submit original files on request will be considered as forfeiting.

Photographs selected by the judges will be exhibited during the 2015 Hangzhou Citizens Photography Week. There is no entry fee.

Submitted works will not be returned and may be used for non-profit exhibitions and publications.

2015 Hangzhou Citizens Photography Week runs from May 15 to 21 at Gushan Hill, Bai Causeway, West Lake Expo Museum, Hupan Photography Society, Hangzhou Library and communities along the Grand Canal.