



Talking To: Eike Stratmann

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Shanghai's art scene has the will and the drive, but still seems to lack the institutional presence of the more evolved scenes in Hong Kong and Beijing. While this somewhat raw state is frustrating to some, it allows for many others, such as Shanghai Detour founder Eike Stratmann, to explore opportunities they wouldn't be able to find in better-established cities.

"The freedom is possible in Shanghai because there is an art scene, but there's so much left to do...like an art map!" Stratmann says.

This native of Berlin has worked tirelessly for the past three years to bring her experience and expertise to fruition in the form of Shanghai Detour maps. Artfully simple and endlessly handy, these city maps unlock the secrets of Shanghai's art culture by pinpointing the location of commercial and independent galleries and art spaces, exhibitions and museums.

Stratmann strives to offer a democratic approach to publicity for different gallery operators throughout the city by keeping map entry fees low and relentlessly expanding the number of spaces she includes on the map. For the galleries, it's an economical way to advertise in what is rapidly becoming the foremost guide to Shanghai art. For art enthusiasts the city over, it's a free public service to anyone with the time and mind to delve both onto and off of the beaten art path.

"I'm using it for everything: openings, addresses and exhibitions. With it, I can say I'm always up-to-date!" says map fan and operator of Bund 18 gallery Pauline Foessel. Foessel also uses the maps in her gallery to direct patrons to other must-see spaces.

In true democratic fashion, the map is bilingual so that Shanghai locals, tourists and expats can enjoy its bounty. Stratmann translates the locations and gallery names herself word for word, though Mandarin was never a language she studied before moving to the city with her husband in 2009. To this day, she relies only on the aide of her Chinese teacher and the proofreading of the gallery operators themselves.

In addition to providing all of the map's bilingual text, she personally drives the finished project to each location highlighted on the map once it's published. This way Stratmann can keep relationships fresh and stay on top what's new in the art world. This process of discovery and relationship building is the primary motivation for her perseverance.

"I love this!" she says with visible spark and sincerity. "To discover and conquer a new scene is very exciting. If you're not afraid of it, then it's really enjoyable. I get to see places that I would never get to see otherwise." Stratmann came to Shanghai as a press officer for the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition's large sculpture project. During her tenure with the Expo, she marveled at the fact that Shanghai didn't already have an art map, something she deemed as both basic and vital to the proliferation of art commerce.

Having executed art maps for the Office of Contemporary Art at the French Embassy in Berlin, she well understood the power of such a tool. There, the art map is prestigious, competitive and very much an institution. Here, Stratmann duplicates the project but in a way that is much more reflective of Shanghai's artistic character. The bold, colorful and simplistic design indicates both its accessibility and a visible relationship to its content.

"I do not want to sell this map," says Stratmann in response to the idea of having sponsors that would drape their logo all

about the map's façade. In Stratmann's view, this is a public service and should remain as such. While some advertising is necessary, it has a minimal visual presence on the map itself.

Art Hub Asia, a Shanghai-based non-profit devoted to the proliferation of artists throughout the region, had attempted a like-minded project in which consumers were shuttled to different art spaces in the city. They found however that the logistics of the project were overwhelming to many gallery operators. It was at this juncture that Stratmann found her now collaborators.

"The Shanghai art scene is not easy," says Defne Ayas, map collaborator and Art Hub Asia participant. "We immediately handed the project over to [Stratmann] when she approached us back in the day, because of her profound understanding of the map business, as she actually had done this in Berlin unlike us, and her professionalism."

From then on Stratmann researched what she could on different galleries, and allowed her list of places to expand at a feverish pace as she presented it to her supporters at Art Hub, and then to every gallery operator with whom she interacted. In a ping-pong-like pattern, she bounced off hints and recommendations until her list of map-worthy places was well beyond her minimum requirements, resulting in the first published map in September 2009.

Shanghai Detour's warm reception has prompted the expansion of its content to include fashion maps, guides to the city's fashion projects and boutiques that fill their shelves exclusively with garments conceived and produced in Shanghai. The idea is to offer an orientation guide to places where one can find the things they wouldn't be able to find in any other part of the world.

Web: www.shanghai-detour.org



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