

PRESS RELEASE

ALAIN DELORME – Totems **18 November 2011 – 21 January 2012**

Galerie ftc., Berlin, is pleased to show the first German exhibition of the *Totems* series by French photographer Alain Delorme.

The works were created while the artist was in residence in Shanghai from 2009-2010, the year that the city hosted the World Expo. With its reputation as one of China's most important centers of industry and business, the city also stands for the country's booming economic progress, and it is in this context that Delorme's series belongs.

Unlike the predominant media image of China as a place defined by the masses, Delorme's works focus on individuals: migrants from the Chinese provinces, whom he photographed on the city streets. The motifs are of laborers who are substantially responsible for the country's rapid economic progress – people carrying goods on their bicycle racks or trundling them along the streets of the metropolis in large, old wooden carts.

Meter-high piles of chairs, cardboard boxes, plastic bottles, and colorful bundles of fabric make the people look very small; some even seem to be broken or crushed by their weight. Consumer goods "Made in China" are being transported here – a label that is all too well-known to us, one that stands for cheap products that allow the economy in the Republic of China to flourish. With a socially critical eye, Delorme closely examines the antipodes of traditionalism and modernism, of rich and poor.

How can the burden of these "Totems" be managed, though, in fact? Although one admires the people for their strength and endurance, one begins to doubt that the piles are really that big. And, indeed, Delorme has retouched the photos somewhat, paying tribute to the power of the individual by endowing each one with practically inhuman, even heroic powers – thus alluding to the worth of the individual and the fact that each person is indispensable to the country's economic situation. At the same time he asks: what is reality? What is fiction? What is exaggerated? And what is commensurate?

Hence, the big piles also symbolize society's immoderate consumption, goods that are fetishized and thus make the individual disappear almost entirely. The credo of "higher, faster, further," which is the main driving force behind capitalism, is metaphorically visualized. Even the skyscrapers in the background are there for a reason, as yet another symbol of this aspiration for something higher.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the individual is the motor behind the progress: with his works, Delorme creates a monument to the "common man".

Alain Delorme graduated in 2005 from the University of Paris with a degree in photography and multimedia studies. He received the Arcimboldo Prize in 2007.

*Alain Delorme born 1979 in Paris, France.
He lives and works in Paris, France.*