Media Release
14 April 2016

Chinese Challenges
Building the Future: The Role of Architecture in China’s Great Transformation

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (Switzerland), Wednesday, 27 April 2016, 7pm

The highlight in a three-part series of panel talks hosted by Uli Sigg in conjunction with the exhibition ‘Chinese Whispers’ at Kunstmuseum Bern and Zentrum Paul Klee will take place on 27 April. With the guests Ai Weiwei and Jacques Herzog, the focus is on architecture in China. Uli Sigg, entrepreneur, former Swiss ambassador to China and lender to the exhibition, talks with his famous guests about challenges facing China today.

Due to intense public interest – the Auditorium at ZPK sold out within a few days of the initial announcement – live video screening of the talk will be available throughout other spaces at Zentrum Paul Klee.

No other country of similar size has seen anything like China’s construction projects and activities. However, architecture meets more than material, physical needs. It also symbolises a new departure and proves the economy’s ability to make a rapid and efficient transition from project to implementation.

In their panel talk, Ai Weiwei, China’s most illustrious artist, and Jacques Herzog, the globally active Swiss architect, share their experiences and address the risks and opportunities involved in China’s impressive leap forward.

As concept artist, sculptor and curator, Ai Weiwei rose to celebrity status for being a critic of the country’s Communist system. A less well-known fact is that architecture has long been one of Ai Weiwei’s key areas of work and source of income, alongside his activism, photography, sculpture and blogging. His focus is both on realised building projects, and on pursuing a discourse on architectural visions and their power. Ai Weiwei currently lives in Berlin, Germany.

In 1978, Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron founded their own architectural partnership firm in Basel, Switzerland. Since then, Herzog & de Meuron have achieved stardom in the world of architecture, realising massive international projects such as the Beijing National Stadium, in which Ai Weiwei was also...
involved. Lovingly nicknamed ‘Bird’s Nest’, the city’s new icon constitutes the focal point in a piece by Shi Guorui which features in the exhibition ‘Chinese Whispers’. Herzog & de Meuron also designed the M+ Museum for visual culture in Hong Kong’s West Kowloon Cultural District. Uli Sigg has gifted a substantial portion of his collection – now designated the M+ Sigg Collection – to the new museum. Due to open in 2019, M+ Museum for visual culture will be one of the world’s largest museums. In 2001, Herzog & de Meuron were awarded the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize for their outstanding architectural achievements.

**Moderator:** Martin Meyer, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* and Swiss Institute of International Studies (SIAF)

**Languages:** English; simultaneous interpreting into German (headphones)

**Media conference with Ai Weiwei and Uli Sigg:**
Wednesday, 27 April 2016, 4:30pm: Lecture Room 3/Seminarraum 3, Zentrum Paul Klee

**Forthcoming event:**
24 May 2016, 7pm: Auditorium, Zentrum Paul Klee
‘Changing Tack: The Chinese Economy and its Challenges’ with Uli Sigg, Danny Zheng (Vice President, DJI) and Jixin Dai (founder and chief investment officer, Xin Tian Fund Management Company Limited)

**Admission**
The event will be held at the Auditorium of Zentrum Paul Klee. Due to intense public interest – the Auditorium sold out within a few days of the initial announcement – live video screening of the talk will be available in the Forum and in the Lecture Rooms (*Seminarräume*). Please arrive early (in the afternoon of 27 April, if possible) as tickets will not be available in advance.

On 27 April 2016, the exhibition ‘Chinese Whispers’ will be open until 7pm.

**Co-organizer of the three panel talks:**
Asia Society Switzerland
Swiss Institute of International Studies (SIAF)

**Main sponsors of the exhibition:**
Credit Suisse | Die Mobiliar | Burgergemeinde Bern | Stiftung GegenwART

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