

Edition Patrick Frey

Press Release

Christian Lutz
The Pearl River



Post-empire in the new Middle Kingdom: what once was America is now China. After his *Insert Coins* project (2016) about the decline of Las Vegas, Swiss photographer Christian Lutz set off to explore the world's new gambling capital, Macao, where everything revolves likewise around money, luxury, surfaces. This former Portuguese colony in the Pearl River delta, now one of China's "special economic zones", began its meteoric ascent after the turn of the millennium when the Macao government ended the monopoly on gambling and opened up the market to foreign investors. They erected temples to Mammon, monumental marble- and gold-faced casino resorts algorithmically modelled on generic Venetian and Parisian templates, bringing in thirty million—mostly Chinese—tourists a year. Macao's regulated microclimate of gambling halls, boutiques and bars is packed with the usual businessmen and politicians in ill-fitting suits alongside upwardly mobile Chinese families in sweatpants and flip-flops.

Everything here is sanitized, antiseptic, dust-free. And everything refers to simulacra of simulacra. Lutz's insistent photographic gaze laconically scans the smooth surfaces of this brave new world—in which the first cracks are beginning to show.

Photographer Christian Lutz (b. 1973 in Switzerland) takes an approach based on painstaking observation of social dynamics and issues such as political, economic and religious sway in society. His work is regularly shown and published internationally. He has been freelancing, based in Geneva, since 1996.

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T +41 (0)44 381 51 02 E wismer@editionpatrickfrey.ch