



Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space

Wu Hung

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In 1949, Beijing still retained nearly all of its time-honored character and magnificence. But when Chairman Mao rejected the proposal to build a new capital for the People's Republic of China and decided to stay in the ancient city, he initiated a long struggle to transform Beijing into a shining beacon of socialism. So began the remaking of the city into a modern metropolis rife with monuments, public squares, exhibition halls, and government offices.

Wu Hung grew up in Beijing and experienced much of the city's makeover firsthand. In this lavishly illustrated work, he offers a vivid, often personal account of the struggle over Beijing's reinvention, drawing particular attention to Tiananmen Square—the most sacred space in the People's Republic of China. *Remaking Beijing* considers the square's transformation from a restricted imperial domain into a public arena for political expression, from an epic symbol of socialism into a holy relic of the Maoist regime, and from an official and monumental complex into a site for unofficial and antigovernment demonstrations.

Wu Hung also explores how Tiananmen Square has become a touchstone for official art in modern China—as the site for Mao's monumental portrait, as the location of museums narrating revolutionary history, and as the grounds for extravagant National Day parades celebrating the revolutionary masses. He then shows how in recent years the square has inspired artists working without state sponsorship to create paintings, photographs, and even performances that reflect the spirit of the 1989 uprisings and pose a forceful challenge to official artworks and the sociopolitical system that supports them.

Remaking Beijing will reward anyone interested in modern Chinese history, society, and art, or, more generally, in how urban renewal becomes intertwined with cultural and national politics.

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