

Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -I* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Directions regarding attacks on multiple tanks."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -I* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Directions regarding attacks on multiple tanks."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -II* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Manual on targeting paratroopers."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -II* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Manual on targeting paratroopers."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -III* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Directions on rifle usage."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -III* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Directions on rifle usage."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -IV* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Directions on targeting enemy air-craft with heavy artillery."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War - V* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Manual on targeting paratroopers"



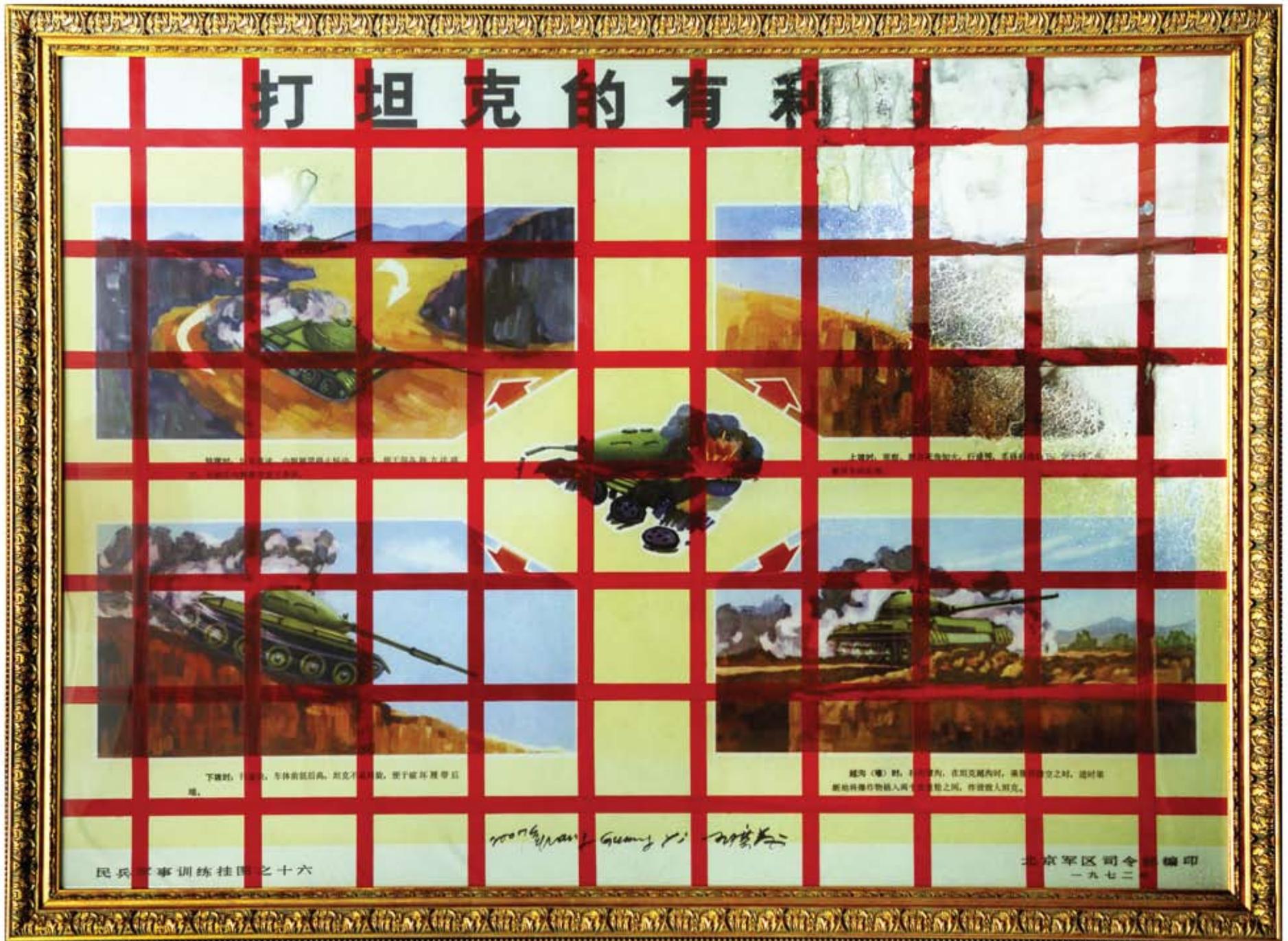
Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -VI* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Directions on cluster bombs placement and usage."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -VI* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Directions on cluster bombs placement and usage."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -VII* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Directions on timing and positioning while attacking tanks."



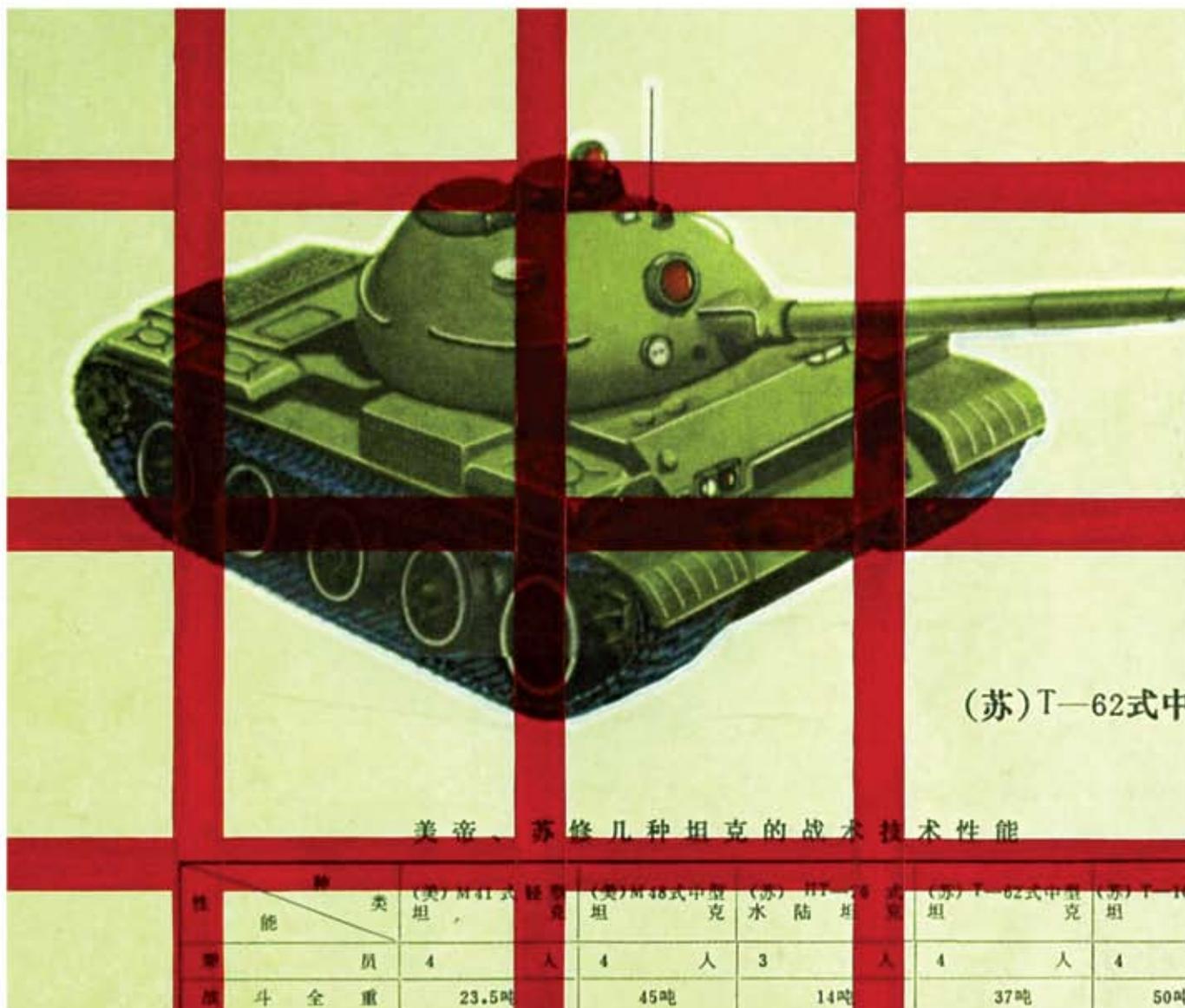
Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -VII* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Directions on timing and positioning while attacking tanks."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -VIII* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Directions regarding attacks on tanks."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -XIII* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Directions regarding attacks on tanks."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -IX* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm

"Manual on hand-granate warfare."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War -IX* (2007), installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Manual on hand-granate warfare."



Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War - X* (2007), Installation: 10 mixed collages in golden frames, each 170 x 230 cm, detail

"Manual on cluster bombs placement regarding destruction of tanks. "

Wang Guangyi, *Aesthetics of Cold War* (2007)

Wang Guangyi's new compelling series of work *Aesthetics of Cold War, 2007* (ongoing), leans heavily on the visual vocabulary prominent during the Maoist era (1949 – 1976). It is the context of the reality and culture of that period that imbue the work with meaning. Wang Guangyi returns to a now well-established theme in his work, taking his subject matter from post-war propaganda, memorabilia and historical documentation. His work consistently explores and re-works immediately recognizable political symbolism, which he appropriates with modern compositional techniques overlaid by a grid-pattern of red paint. Combining 10 large collage-assemblages each surrounded by golden baroque frames, this exhibition of works, all created in 2007, is impressive in its range and complexity. All pieces utilize the familiar 1950's iconography of military training manuals and heroic peasants to evoke idealized images of community. In all pieces this aesthetic is juxtaposed with an unruly organicism. As if to emphasize and undermine the message, Wang Guangyi has incorporated a raster of red checks. These grid-patterned checks can be interpreted as coordinates that help adjust an image. In other words, the raster is an artistic tool that works as a corrective device that (re)interprets the aesthetic and ideology of the cold war period.

Wang Guangyi's work is nothing if not intelligent, ludic and visually compelling. Now, as in previous works, he is able to give attention and release to the apparently contradictory impulses operating within Chinese history specifically, and invoke this dichotomy. There is also, however, a sense of engagement and critique of ideology as a whole – although this is perhaps a strategic play on the visual languages and the interactions Wang Guangyi investigates. Similarly, by avoiding entering into a more incisive discourse with his subject matter, Wang Guangyi might be accused of sidestepping the real issues at stake. It is not always clear, therefore, if the slight dissatisfaction one feels when looking at these works points towards a more genuinely problematic absence in Wang Guangyi's practice or whether such criticisms are themselves just a product of his subtle, deliberately contrary aesthetic.

At the center of his practice is that unique mixture of utopian confidence, revolutionary liberation theology, subjective annihilation and communal heroicism endemic to socialist visual culture on one side, and a critically ironic attitude toward this imagery so extensively framed by ideological perceptions. This socialist realism was the only technique allowable, dictated by political servitude and power. The primary *raison d'être* of art was therefore its role as political tool. The new paintings *Aesthetics of Cold War* suggest that resistance or protest in the visual arts is deeply dependent of the cultural context in which works are made. For while Wang Guangyi's works may be read as a subversion of China's recent history, they may have passed (with slight modification) for cold-war propaganda not too long ago. It is precisely this inherent ambivalence in Wang Guangyi's paintings that is their most attractive force.

Wang Guangyi was born in Harbin, Heilongjiang province in 1956. He graduated from Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, Oil Painting Department in 1984. He resides and works in Beijing. Selected exhibitions include Wang Guangyi Solo-Exhibition, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac (Paris, France, 2007), *Avant Garde China: Twenty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art*, The National Art Center, Tokyo and The National Museum of Art, Osaka (Japan, 2007), *85 New Wave*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (Beijing, 2007), *Absolut Images*, Arario Gallery (New York, USA, 2007), *Mahjong*, Kunstmuseum Bern (2005), *China, le corps partout?* Museum of Contemporary Art (Marseilles, 2004), *Alors, la Chine?*, Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2003), *The First Triennial of Chinese Arts*, Guangzhou Art Museum (2002) and *45th Venice Biennale* (1993).

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