

# **Appeal for a worldwide reading on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 for Liao Yiwu, and in commemoration of the Tiananmen Square massacre**

The international literature festival Berlin (ilb) calls for cultural institutions, schools, radio stations and interested parties to participate in a worldwide reading of prose and poems by the Chinese author Liao Yiwu on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2010. This day is the anniversary of the massacre at Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989 during which roughly 2,600 people died, according to the Red Cross. The event itself, from which a democratic movement arose, is not covered in the official Chinese media, and censorship was further increased on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre, extending deep into the Web 2.0 internet platforms. The enforced silence in China - which also covers the period of the Cultural Revolution - and the extremely high number of executions in the country, as well as the treatment of Tibet, must be even more clearly communicated by the civic institutions in democratic societies.

For this reason, the following works by Liao Yiwu will be read on June 4<sup>th</sup>: »My Teacher, my Enemy«; »The Public Toilet Manager«; »The Peasant Emperor«; »Nineteen Days«; »Memories of My Flute Teacher« and, by Wen Huang (the author's American translator), »Liao Yiwu - Lunatic Outcast«.

Liao Yiwu is one of the authors whose works are not published in China despite their international success, as the powers-that-be claim that they promote »the dissemination of counter-revolutionary propaganda with foreign help«. Even his name may not be mentioned. From 1990 to 1994 he was imprisoned for his literary and socio-political activities, and was only released early from jail due to international pressure. His interviews with underdogs (*Interviews with People from the Bottom Rung of Society*) and his poetry (including »Massacre« and the anthology »The Fall of the Holy Temple«) have been published abroad in recent years by renowned publishing houses and journals like *Lettre International* (German edition) and the New York journal *The Paris*

*Review.*

Despite owning a travel permit, Liao Yiwu was not allowed to attend either the 2009 Frankfurt Book Fair or the lit.cologne by the Chinese authorities. The ilb and the Harbourfront Festival in Hamburg have invited him to both festivals in September 2010. We can only hope that the Chinese authorities grant him the fundamental right to travel abroad, and to return to China.

The goal of the worldwide reading is to share Liao Yiwu's works with a broader readership, to commemorate the massacre of Tiananmen Square, and to urgently admonish China's human rights record.

On the occasion of the the third anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, the international literature festival Berlin and the Peter-Weiss-Stiftung für Kultur und Politik for the first time called for a worldwide reading on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2006 – this initial »Anniversary of the Political Lie«, with a reading of Eliot Weinberger's »What I Heard About Iraq«, was followed by other worldwide readings after the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, during the run-up to the Olympic Games in China, against the leadership of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, in memory of Mahmoud Darwish, and in support of the democratic opposition in Iran. As many as 100 institutions, including radio and television stations, either participated in or reported on the worldwide readings across all continents.

The texts intended to be read on this worldwide reading are available in English, French, German and Spanish. Institutions and persons who would like to participate in the reading on June 4<sup>th</sup> are asked to inform us of their wish to be involved. The email address is: [worldwidereading@literaturfestival.com](mailto:worldwidereading@literaturfestival.com)