

Sleeping Chinese

HUMOUR / PHOTOGRAPHY / CHINA by Bernd Hagemann

We hear news reports of the rise of China and its sleepless economy, often with sinister undertones supposed to alarm us. The reality can look very different.

German photographer Bernd Hagemann has long been fascinated by China and its people. He carries his camera at all times, because on every street corner you can find people napping in the strangest positions and situations, even snoring in deep slumber.



“When China wakes, she will shake the world,” warned Napoleon.

This may be true. But let’s not forget that hardworking people need their sleep too.

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Bernd has an unerring eye for soporific spectacles that make for superb pictures. The objects of his ever-alert lens are pictured sleeping in the most unlikely places: under trucks, in plastic buckets, on shopping carts, atop scooters, and even on butchers’ slabs. A pumpkin serves as a pillow here, a random pile of bricks provides a mattress there. Was any of this this set up? No: this is the modern China of long working hours, and a enlightened tolerance to catching up on sleep whenever – and wherever – possible.

Sleeping Chinese captures the downtime of China’s weary masses who, in their waking hours, are powering the nation’s economic rise. And in delivering this excellent work, Bernd provides a long-overdue human dimension to the much-reported story of the growth of Asia’s economic superpower.

The sleepyheads are divided into three categories: “hard sleepers”, “soft sleepers” and “group sleepers”. Hard sleepers are able to fall asleep anywhere, on any surface. Soft sleepers need something a little more comfortable. And group sleepers snooze using the buddy system, be it friends, family or complete strangers. But in almost every case, the photograph elicits the reaction: “How is that possible?”



Bernd’s website www.sleepingchinese.com has received over 1.5 million visitors.

Media Attention

"An amateur photographer has gained a global following by taking snaps of slumbering mainlanders." — *South China Morning Post*

"Chinese show the art of extreme napping: A German photographer has spent six years taking photographs of Chinese people sleeping in any position and situation." — *The Daily Telegraph*



"China's passion for the siesta is captured at *Sleeping Chinese*, where Shanghai photographer Bernd Hagemann has put up over 700 photographs of Chinese sleeping in seemingly impossible positions: under trucks, on shopping carts, scooters and butcher slabs, vividly illustrating the millions of weary masses who helped power the nation's economic rise. On his site – which has attracted almost half a million visitors – Mr. Hagemann wrote that he started his site to show the outside world the less threatening side of China's rise." — *The Wall Street Journal*

"In a country with a billion people, it can be hard to find a place to lay your head, as these amusing pictures of Chinese catnappers show." — *Daily Mail*

Book Details

ISBN: 978-988-17742-5-5
Format: Paperback, 148 pages, 160 x 120 mm
Cover price: HK\$85 / US\$9.95
Pub date: November 2009 (Asia)
July 2010 (North America)

Further Information

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Excerpts from the book may be viewed online at www.blacksmithbooks.com

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