

FLIP Beijing

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06/05/2016 Just now the automobile manufacturers have presented their latest models at Auto China in Beijing. Now Lui Chen is navigating a Cayenne through the city to show his favorite skateboarding locations.

In a world marked by rapid growth, a new type of thinking is emerging – the thinking of the young generation: speeding up as slowing down. Lui Chen lives fast. He flies over obstacles – skating and filming as he goes. He defines freedom as a luxury, including the freedom of ground clearance. Which brings us to the Porsche Cayenne: the perfect shuttle for Beijing.

Lui bites his fingernails. He fidgets back and forth on the chair, quickly raking his hand through his hair. Usually Lui Chen is the one operating the camera, while standing on his skateboard. But today he's not directing a film; we are, rather, around his city of Beijing. It's clearly making him a bit nervous. And us, too, because in the capital of the People's Republic of China, time and space are defined somewhat differently than in other places. After a 45-minute drive in the Cayenne, we begin to wonder if we

missed something when the theory of relativity was covered in science class. After all, the half-Chinese, half-Japanese skater who grew up in Tokyo described his favorite skateboarding location as being "just around the corner."

Ten minutes later we finally arrive at our destination. There was no detour, nothing out of the ordinary, and we weren't lost either. That would have been all but impossible; the man clearly knows his twenty-million-strong metropolis inside and out. "This being-on-the-move thing is a kind of disease among skaters. We're always on the lookout. Looking for new railings, new stairs, benches, and bollards we didn't know," explains Lui, before continuing with a chuckle, "but it's usually never this comfortable." It's his first time riding in a Porsche. That can't go undocumented. The 34-year-old sends one selfie after another to his friends. The proof. "Porsche? Are you kidding?" reply his buddies before grabbing their boards, catching the subway, and joining the proceedings. The white Cayenne is getting fuller by the minute. We finally run out of room and call a cab.

His medium is moving pictures

Skating is just no fun on your own. And so all is well in his world at the moment: "Heading up the pack is not really my thing. I'm actually always in the background," he explains when we arrive. Lui makes films. Sometimes short films, sometimes documentaries, but always about the Beijing skating scene. His medium is moving pictures in a city in which everything seems to stand still. "I like the acceleration on the board. You only push with one leg, but you can still move so fast. Away from the crowded streets, anyway." He gushes about the freedom that he feels, never getting stuck in a traffic jam. The freedom to overcome every obstacle is an added bonus. "We skaters basically put obstacles in our own path in order to fly over them and feel free," says Lui thoughtfully, before laughing – "because it sounds so philosophical."

On the streets of the capital, we wish the Cayenne had wings. Automobiles cram together. "In Beijing everything is so full, so loud, so full of people and cars everywhere," says Lui. His dream: Quiet. Open expanses. Light. Air. No wonder he doesn't have a driver's license. The high cost and the low probability of being able to register his own car are sufficient hurdles to that. "It's almost impossible to get a Beijing license plate through regular channels. Many people have been waiting for more than a year, in vain." Even more passionately than he desires a driver's license, he would like to have a big dog. That's not possible, because dogs may not be taller than 35 centimeters.

That's China. Beijing. Lui.

Most people in his generation have entirely different aspirations: "Making money, lots of money," says Jun, Lui's friend and an exceptional skater. Lui explains the single-minded assertion of the slender 26-year-old. "Many people have to support their parents financially. Some of our friends work so hard that they've actually given up skating." Lui has the script for his future all worked out. He dreams of having his own production company to "show things about the country that no one has seen before." Like

what? Lui smiles – and keeps mum. Because it's still a secret. That's China. Beijing. Lui. Then he looks around, swings his eyes back to us, and says, "At the moment everything is good in this country, but we have no idea what the future holds for us. So we want to live and enjoy life now, feel free every minute of the day." And again and again, when Lui speaks of freedom, his friends all nod in agreement. They all know exactly what he means.

Leslie too. The dark-haired girl with the almond-shaped eyes and the penetrating gaze is still in her work uniform when she says, "I dream of traveling. And of being able to do what I want to do." She doesn't have a second homeland like Lui does. She's never left the city. She doesn't know what it means to be somewhere else. To become familiar with the foreign. To try new things. But she's got the wanderlust. She feels the urge to discover the world. Canada would be nice. Longing. Lui has traveled a lot in his life, getting to know different cultures, and firmly believes, "I could easily live in Europe as well." When he films, wanderlust is as far away as foreign destinations; he's in his own world. He rides up walls, slides down benches. Enjoys the applause of spectators when he and his buddies have pulled off a difficult trick.

A world shaped by love of one's country and wanderlust

As we move on to the next location in the Olympic City of 2008, philosophizing about ordered chaos, the traffic forces us to an unplanned standstill. We wonder if this is the world for which the Cayenne was created. How this world looks. For what purpose the Cayenne is the perfect means of transportation. For friends, naturally. With skateboards, no problem. As a lounge in a traffic jam, anytime. But for Lui, the SUV is ideal "to go on a camping trip, get out in the countryside. See the stars again, at long last." Indeed, a starry sky is about three hours away from our current location. Goosebumps.

A walk wouldn't be a bad idea right now. We get out. At a food market by the side of the road, Lui buys fried scorpions, boiled mini-snakes, crispy beetles. Amazing what one can eat in his world. In a world that has captured us with its sounds and karma. A world shaped by love of one's country and wanderlust, by friendship and longing. The Cayenne is just a few hundred meters ahead of us. An easy catch. We park the car, finally. And just watch the calm that exudes from Lui. The nervousness of the morning is long gone after a day of flips and ollies, slides and grinds—after a day of freedom, even without a starry sky.

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