



A girl is attracted by Chinese artist He Qiang's sculpture *Inrush* which features a swarm of cars from a cage.



*Can I Change My Career for a Little Fun?* by Austrian artist Dejan Kaludjerovic



*Weed shoal: the front and the back of the house*, by Chinese artist Chen Shuzhong

## Gallery and guide deepen Sino-Aussie artistic connections

By STUART BEATON  
FOR CHINA DAILY

A newly re-opened art gallery in Sydney focusing on contemporary Chinese art and a bilingual introduction to Australia's prominent fine art institutions and works will help deepen ties in the art scenes of China and Australia.

The White Rabbit Gallery in Sydney has one of the world's largest and most significant collections of contemporary Chinese art. Founded by Kerr and Judith Neilson, it focuses on works after 2000.

Their latest collection, *The Big Bang*, celebrates the explosion of creativity that has rocked China since its reform and opening-up.

"Contemporary artists went into freestyle dance mode, applying their superb technical training to a dizzying array of new subjects, styles and media," says Paris Neilson, manager and curator of the gallery.

"For the youngest generations — wired and Web-smart products of the family planning policy — artistic movements and political dogmas are passé. If their works share a common theme, it is change. And if they have a common perspective, it is *zi wo*, or 'I myself'."

*The Big Bang* surveys this artistic supernova through the work of 35 extraordinarily diverse artists, and features a 500 kg pile of porcelain sunflower seeds, individually painted by hand, an endlessly expandable Slinky-man, made entirely of paper, and Chinese artist Wang Zhiyuan's *Thrown to the Wind*, a three-story tower of plastic containers that spirals towards the roof of the gallery.

The origins of the White Rabbit collection go back to the late 1990s, when Judith Neilson engaged Wang Zhiyuan, then living in Sydney, as her art tutor. He introduced her to the astonishing explosion of creativity taking place in China in the wake of the economic reforms that began in 1979.

Neilson began buying works, but soon ran out of space to hang them. She and her husband then decided to open a gallery that would make the exciting world of contemporary Chinese art available to all Australians.

The White Rabbit Gallery, a converted knitting factory near Sydney's Central Station, has four floors of exhibition space as well as a theater, a library and a teahouse. Only a fraction of the collection is on show, but the entire contents of the gallery are re-hung twice a year.

Meanwhile, Chinese art collectors can also obtain a better understanding of Australian art as *A Guide to Australian Art and Galleries*, in both Chinese and English, was launched at a gala dinner in the Australian Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo last month. Australian art luminaries, Shanghai art scene regulars and cultural figures and dozens of high-end art collectors attended the lavish function to celebrate the production of the visually stunning coffee table book.

"A country's art has the potential to reveal the soul of a people, and I hope that this publication can foster a greater understanding of Australia and deepen the already strong exchanges between our two countries," says Lyndall Sachs, commissioner general for Australia.

The joint production of the Shanghai International Culture Association and the Australian Consulate General in Shanghai Commercial Section includes an overview of the history of Australian art and sections on public and commercial art galleries.

Twenty-three member galleries of the Australian Commercial Art Galleries Association are profiled in the *Guide*, as well as seven public galleries.

The *Guide* showcases each gallery's unique aspects and gives details of collections, as well as past and upcoming major exhibitions. There are even maps and floor plans to help visitors chart out their visits in advance.

Australian art is as wide-ranging and diverse as the multi-cultural mix of its population, and the *Guide* is extensively illustrated with examples of these works.

Indigenous artworks, celebrating a culture thousands of years old, rub shoulders with the latest in multi-media installations, while Colonial-era art sits close to iconic Pop Art pieces.

In his introduction to the *Guide*, Zhu Junbo, deputy chairman of the China Periodical Association, writes: "Art has always been an essential element and lubricant for communication between nations and countries. People are as eager for art as sunlight, air and water in this era of globalization."

For more information, go to <http://www.whiterabbitcollection.org>. *A Guide to Australian Art and Galleries* is available at Xinhua stores across the country.



The White Rabbit Gallery in Sydney has one of the world's largest collections of Chinese art works created after 2000.

# Art of survival

Artists from some 90 countries and regions mull the future of mankind at the 4th Beijing International Art Biennale. **Zhu Linyong** reports

German artist Tobias Marx's installation *Teethburger* may be small but packs a punch in its message that "capitalism is symbolized by fast food, which is threatening to eat us."

"When it comes to environmental concerns and human existence, I have a lot to say," says the noted artist.

So, it appears, do artists from about 90 countries and regions whose 562 works are on display at the National Art Museum of China, as part of the ongoing 4th Beijing International Art Biennale.

Marx says man's insatiable quest for profits has led to disastrous results and environmental and ecological crises now loom large.

The theme of the 2010 Beijing Biennale — environmental concerns and human existence — was well received by artists around the world, says Wu Changjiang, vice-chair of the Chinese Artists Association, a key organizer of the event.

The displayed works have been picked by a panel of judges comprising Chinese and foreign curators, art critics and senior artists.

While some participating artists eulogize nature through their poetic or idyllic visual representations, "more are trying to warn mankind about the worsening environment," Wu says.

For instance, young Chinese artist Deng Ke's painting portrays a man lying on parched land, his hands outstretched.



*Net Strings of Fortune*, by Chinese artist Luo Si

The huge oil painting *We Have No Choice*, by Vietnamese artist Ho Minh Quan, depicts a group of people in their polluted village.

Mexican artist Angel Martinez questions the rapid development of society driven by science and technology, in his oil work *Falling*, which shows a burning aircraft engine crashing.

"I am not saying development is bad or wrong but human greed and selfishness have caused a sharp deterioration in the ecosystem," says Ryu Ilji, a South Korean artist whose oil work *The Resurrection of Life* expresses her hope for a new balance between man and nature.

"Nature has lost its balance and is taking revenge on us through shocking disasters. The situation is very disturbing," she says.

This year's Biennale also includes two special exhibitions from Austria and Chile.

Presenting more than 30 cutting-edge contemporary artworks in various genres, the Austrian exhibition provides some insight into how young artists are exploring the contemporary reality, says curator Karin Simmer.

The Chilean Special Exhibition, meanwhile, has a more personal dimension to it, according to curator Patricio M. Zarate.

Some of the works are by survivors of the earthquake and ensuing tsunami that struck Chile on Feb 27, 2010, and reflect their personal experiences.

Nicolas Saez's *Water Line Marks* displays a collage of photographs of the walls of buildings destroyed in the disaster and purports to show how unpredictable nature can be.

In her untitled conceptual/installation work, Carolina Maturana presents shoes collected from river banks in Chile, to express her concern about the unemployment facing traditional fishermen with the development of trawling that has exhausted coastal resources.

"The global economic order only obeys free market rules and is oblivious to environmental regulations," the artist says.

Li Shujie, a visitor from Tianjin, is clearly impressed with the exhibition. He says it will certainly help raise awareness of environmental protection.

It will act as a bridge between people from different nations, says young French artist Frederique Trey, who is participating in the Biennale for the first time with a mysterious acrylic-on-canvas work titled *Sidereal*.

She says this trip to Beijing is a golden chance to see a rapidly changing China, one that is very different from what she had imagined or learned from the media.