



With a four-floor public Gallery located near Sydney's Central Station, **THE WHITE RABBIT COLLECTION** is one of the world's most significant collections of contemporary Chinese art. Founded and entirely funded by the philanthropic Neilson Foundation, it focuses on works produced after 2000. White Rabbit's origins go back to the late 1990s, when Judith Neilson engaged Wang Zhiyuan, a Beijing artist living in Sydney, as her art tutor (see next page). After moving back to China a few years later, he introduced her to the astonishing artistic renaissance fuelled by the country's economic boom.

On her first trip to Beijing, Judith Neilson bought a few works, but she soon ran out of places to hang them. "Later, I started thinking, It would be wonderful if we could have a space to show what contemporary Chinese art really is," she recalls. So she and her husband Kerr Neilson, a funds manager, decided to open a public gallery.

Opened in August 2009, the White Rabbit Gallery has fast established itself as one of Sydney's most popular art venues. The Collection now contains the work of more than 140 artists and is still growing. Since the Gallery can hold only a fraction of these works, its entire contents are replaced with a new exhibition every six months.

"The size and personal nature of the collection makes White Rabbit unique in Australia," says manager Paris Neilson. "The fact that we aren't beholden to anyone else for funding gives us enormous freedom in both selecting and displaying the art."

The Neilson family are committed to making White Rabbit a place where everyone will feel welcome. As well as frequently changing exhibitions, the Gallery has an extensive library on Chinese art and culture and hosts regular discussions on Chinese art, films and book. Visitors can also enjoy a range of fine Chinese teas and home-made dumplings in the Gallery's tea room. **The Gallery is open from Thursday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and admission is free.**



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A Decade of the Rabbit: About the White Rabbit Collection

From “Dialogue”, by Wang Zhiyuan, in the Collection’s book, *The Big Bang* (2010)

How did the White Rabbit Contemporary Chinese Art Collection begin?

The Director, Judith Neilson, and I met in 1999, while I was still living in Sydney. We became acquainted as a result of her collecting my work. ... In the spring of 2006 [after I had returned to China], Judith brought her youngest daughter to Beijing for a holiday. I took them to visit several artists’ studios, where Judith acquired a few works. Beijing’s and China’s transformation left a very strong impression on Judith’s mind. A month after her return to Australia I received a call from her, detailing very clearly her plan to establish a not-for-profit collection of Chinese contemporary art in Sydney, and inviting me to help her make it happen. ... I never imagined that as time went by, the collection would grow into such a significant and magnificent project.

What was behind the decision to collect only works created in 2000 or thereafter?

The year 2000, as the turning point of a century and a millennium as well, has symbolic significance. It is also an important point in the process of China’s artistic opening-up, which is, of course, inseparable from the bigger changes taking place in the country. ... How are these enormous social changes manifested in art? These are the issues in which the White Rabbit Collection is most interested.

How do the Collection’s works, all made since 2000, differ from works done before that year?

The environment Chinese artists now face is one of ever more complex “multiple antagonisms”: between environmental concerns and money worship, market and art, native and Western cultures, tradition and modernity, wealth and poverty. There is also the issue of people’s growing self-consciousness and the anxieties that result from it.

Chinese contemporary artists have entered an age that is anarchic yet diverse, vibrant and dynamic. The way in which social changes and changes in the creative environment are affecting art, and how they are reflected through art, is the focus of the White Rabbit Collection.

How significant is the White Rabbit Collection for driving contemporary Chinese art forward?

In a way, the White Rabbit Collection serves as a form of sponsorship for Chinese artists. Of course, China is very large, and White Rabbit alone is only capable of doing so much. I hope that many more private organisations, both in and outside China, will participate and contribute. Not only is the White Rabbit Collection providing spiritual encouragement for many artists, it is also bringing them financial support, making it possible for a limited number of artists to continue their creative pursuits. Every artist has a dream. But in art today, no dream can be realised without the backing of capital.