

Trash tornado and neon porn

By [Scott Kara](#)

11:58 AM Saturday Jun 25, 2011

A great big pile of rubbish welcomes you to Sydney's White Rabbit gallery. But what a finely sculpted whirlwind of trash this piece by Beijing artist Wang Zhiyuan is. Made from hundreds of discarded plastic bottles he collected from dumps around the city, as well as one bottle from Australia and two from South Korea thrown into the mix, *Thrown To the Wind* starts on the bottom floor of the gallery and swirls up 11m – that's around three storeys – in an inverted twister shape to the top floor.



He An's light installation made up of stolen neon signs. Photo / Supplied

While it's a comment on the environmental impact his country is having on the world, on the flipside, it also signifies the power of China.

Close by, and on an equally large scale, is a disturbing painting, entitled *I Watch Myself Dying*, by fellow Beijing artist Bingyi, painted after she was badly burned in a house fire. The images are brutal, as she depicts herself as a limbless monster.

These two pieces are typical of the often provocative works on display at White Rabbit. Located in the secluded streets of Chippendale (a suburb dotted with many interesting boutique galleries), the gallery is owned by Judith Neilson who set it up to display contemporary Chinese art made from 2001 onwards. It opened in August 2009 in the converted knitting factory and these days it's home to a vast – and ever-changing – collection of not only controversial, but clever, intricate, and exquisite works.

Much of it wouldn't have a chance of getting a showing in the artists' communist homeland with its strict political and social controls. But in the middle of Sydney it seems anything goes. For starters there is Li Jianfeng's large painting *Newton's First Law*, which depicts Chinese society as a mess (or in the the artist's words, "sick and chaotic").

Meanwhile, there's a warning outside the entrance to video and animation artist Wang Bo's double-screen treat whose subversive films are a kind of extreme and funny Ren and Stimpy-style comment on Chinese culture. Apparently, in recent years Chinese authorities have tried in vain to get rid of his film *Blow Up the School* from the internet.

And He An's light installation, *What Makes Me Understand What I Am*, is made up of a collection of stolen neon signs that is both a memorial to his father and a tribute to a Japanese porn star. It's beautifully fruity stuff.

Then there are the works of exquisite beauty, like Zhou Jie's mini-Beijing made from porcelain and rice, and Wang Lai's imperial robes woven with paper from the pages of the Chinese-English dictionary. But most remarkable of all is Gao Rong's apartment entranceway which is entirely embroidered in fabric, sponge and thread – even down to the rust on the down pipe and the footprints on the porch. Now that's clever.

* Scott Kara travelled to Sydney courtesy of Events NSW and Tourism NSW.

Exhibition

What: White Rabbit Gallery

Where: 30 Balfour St, Chippendale, Sydney

By [Scott Kara](#)