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 Sydney philanthropist Judith Neilson at her White Rabbit Gallery in Chippendale. Neilson is pictured with Sun Xun's artwork, Republic of Jing Bang. Picture: Darren Leigh Roberts

ARTS

The Sleeper Awakes at Judith Neilson's White Rabbit Gallery in Sydney's Chippendale

Elizabeth Fortescue, Arts Editor, The Daily Telegraph

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“IS it alright to sit on this?” Judith Neilson asks her curator David Williams. She’s about to perch on the edge of a low plinth in the White Rabbit Gallery, the centre of contemporary Chinese art which she owns in Chippendale.

The plinth holds an 8m model of a white ocean liner. A giant has picked up the liner by either end and twisted it. At least, it seems so.

Peng Hung-Chih’s *The Deluge, Noah’s Ark* goes on view tomorrow along with the extraordinary work of a dozen other Chinese artists, some of whom are international “superstars”, Williams says.

Peng’s work asks whether humans have cared properly for the earth following the Biblical deluge. We might be clever and build great ships. But have we forgotten we are still powerless compared to the force of nature?

White Rabbit, established by Neilson in 2009, displays regular exhibitions from her massive collection of Chinese contemporary art.



📷 Judith Neilson at White Rabbit Gallery in Chippendale with *The Deluge, Noah's Ark* by artist Peng Hung-Chih. The work is part of White Rabbit's new exhibition, *The Sleeper Awakes*. Picture's Darren Leigh Roberts

This exhibition is titled *The Sleeper Awakes* after the H.G. Wells novel in which the hero wakes after 200 years to find a world of brainwashed citizens ruled by despots.

“Seventy years after the Maoists vowed to wake China's ‘sleeping lion’ and build a socialist utopia, the future has arrived — but is it the one they dreamed of?” White Rabbit's Elizabeth Keenan writes in the catalogue.

Sun Xun believes history is nothing but lies. Sun's Republic of Jing Bang comprises a 30m scroll painting and a series of large posters, among other components.

Jing Bang is Sun's imagined nation which retains its moral purity because it exists for only as long as it takes a whale to breach.

Liu Xiaodong's computer-driven painting machine will gradually build up a large painted image of central Sydney, guided by a live video stream of activity at Circular Quay.

Xu Bing's *Dragonfly Eyes* is an 80-minute film about a young couple. But in China there are about 200 million surveillance cameras and vast numbers of webcams in homes and offices whose recorded footage can be accessed by subscription, and Xu spliced together myriad segments of such footage to create his film.

It includes footage of people doing day-to-day tasks in their offices or at home, as well as real deaths.

"There's plane crashes, car crashes, people getting struck by lightning and beaten up," Williams says.

"All of this footage is readily available. The thing is, that actually happened."

The Sleeper Awakes, White Rabbit Gallery, 30 Balfour St, Chippendale; from tomorrow until July 29, free, whiterabbitcollection.org



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