

THE CHINA PROJECT

GALLERY OF MODERN ART, BRISBANE
28 MARCH – 28 JUNE 2009

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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THE CHINA PROJECT IMAGES

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FACT SHEET

'Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection'

28 March – 28 June 2009

Gallery of Modern Art

- *Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection* is an exhibition of outstanding contemporary Chinese art drawn from the Queensland Art Gallery's internationally recognised collection of contemporary Asian art. It brings together an astonishing group of works that date from the 1980s to the present.
- Featuring 50 artists and 146 works, the exhibition reflects the extraordinary achievements of contemporary Chinese artists that have taken the international art world by storm. Presenting contemporary painting, sculpture, video, prints, photography and installation, it showcases a broad range of contemporary art production.
- Augmenting the Gallery's Collection, a major commission has been made specifically for the Long Gallery in GoMA by eminent artist Wang Qingsong, titled 'China Red' 2008-09. Also premiering for the first time in Australia will be a group 36 bronze busts by Chinese Australian artist Ah Xian on loan for this exhibition.
- *Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection* is featured as part of *The China Project*, a series of three exhibitions that focus upon Chinese art and culture. Paralleling the exhibition is *Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul*, a major solo exhibition exploring the work of one of the foremost painters of the Chinese avant-garde art. *William Yang: Life Lines* presents two bodies of works, including a commissioned installation for the foyer wall at the Gallery of Modern Art.
- *Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection* celebrates contemporary Chinese art by focusing on the key thematic strengths of the Queensland Art Gallery's remarkable and important collection of contemporary Chinese works. This exhibition is the first time that this collection has been brought together to showcase the Gallery's magnificent holdings in this area and highlights contemporary Chinese art created over three decades of practice.
- Breakdown by media:
 - 60 Sculpture
 - 6 Installations
 - 24 Paintings
 - 24 Works on paper
 - 13 Photography
 - 13 Moving image
 - 6 AssemblageTotal works: 146

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- Key works that the visitor will encounter include Wang Qingsong's 'China Red' and Ah Xian's 'Metaphysica' series in the Long Gallery; rare avant-garde paintings by renowned artists such as Yu Youhan and Fang Lijun; installations such as Chen Zhen's *Invocation of washing fire* 1999; a display of video works, many of which reflect on the post-Tiananmen experience of living in China; and a group of sculptural works such as Ai Weiwei's reconfigured forms using Ming and Qing dynasty furniture, or Ni Haifeng's humorous porcelain casts of everyday objects – the latter drawing on a history of cultural trade between China and the Netherlands.
- The earliest works, a portfolio of black and white prints by documentary photographer Li Zhensheng taken during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), present an important preface to the exhibition. The presentation of little known yet important works from the 1980s provides key historical perspectives, while monumental installations such as Xu Bing's renowned *A book from the sky* 1987-91 together with a new commission by Wang Qingsong add a spectacular element.
- Photography and video form an important component, while contemporary explorations of traditional mediums, such as porcelain and calligraphic script, are used as a material base for radical and innovative expression.
- The exhibition is built around five thematic groupings. The first engages with a growing avant-garde and the legacies of the Cultural Revolution. The development of the two styles — 'Cynical Realism' and 'Political Pop' — are in close dialogue with this first group. The importance of the written word, or the Chinese ideogram, provides a point of departure for a third thematic configuration. The significance of performance art and photography is registered through a group of key photographs and single channel video pieces. The last thematic grouping includes works that cite tradition and history, as technique and motif, to radically transform and comment.
- The Queensland Art Gallery has been collecting and displaying contemporary Chinese art since the early 1990s, most prominently through the ground breaking Asia Pacific Triennial events. Since 1993 the Gallery has steadily built this outstanding collection of works, the only one of its kind in Australia.
- The China Project will be accompanied by a fully illustrated colour catalogue featuring the three exhibitions. A suite of major essays by scholars with specialist knowledge in Chinese contemporary art will be included in the publication. Each of the artists will have entries on their works as well as individual biographical details. A chronology and selected bibliography will also be published. The catalogue will feature the breadth of the contemporary Chinese collection, including works not featured in the exhibition.
- *Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection* will have a cinema program and exhibition will also be supported by a number of public programs under the aegis of the Gallery's Australian Centre of Asia Pacific Art, including artist's talks and a symposium.

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'Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul'

28 March – 28 June 2009

Gallery of Modern Art

- *Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul* is a major solo retrospective exhibition that explores the work of one of the foremost artists of Chinese avant-garde art. Encompassing three decades of his practice, this exhibition will expand the understanding of Zhang's *oeuvre*, presenting works in various media and from fresh perspectives, while also showcasing his most recent works.
- Opening 27 March–28 June 2009, the exhibition has been co-curated by well known Chinese curator Leng Lin and the Gallery's Curatorial Manager, Asian and Pacific Art, Suhanya Raffel.
- *Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul* is featured as part of *The China Project*, a series of three exhibitions that focus upon Chinese art and culture.
- Paralleling this solo show is *Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection*, a collection-based exhibition exploring the Gallery's holdings of contemporary Chinese art; and a commissioned project, *William Yang: Life Lines*, presenting two bodies of work – the first a suite of self portraits, and the second a large photographic collage commissioned for the foyer wall at the Gallery of Modern Art.
- Breakdown by media:
 - 29 Paintings
 - 46 Drawings
 - 4 Photographs
 - 1 SculptureTotal works: 80
- The majority of the works in *Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul* will be loans from the artist's personal collection, with selected works from important private collections.
- The earliest works date from 1982, while the latest include a large-scale painting and a major new bronze sculpture of five figures.
- Two large suites of early drawings have not previously been shown in a public museum context.
- Importantly, the exhibition displays Zhang Xiaogang's use of a variety of media, from drawings, prints, photographs, paintings and sculpture, highlighting his enormous creative range.
- By bringing together works that span thirty years of practice, recurring themes and motifs weave together throughout the exhibition to form a compelling exhibition.

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- *Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul* reveals a singular artistic journey that is underscored by the monumental historical events of China's recent past.
- Common themes underlying all of the works, and traced in this exhibition, are the private experience of the individual within the context of collective experience and the psychological tensions of navigating unpredictable and volatile moments in contemporary China's history.
- The China Project will be accompanied by a fully illustrated colour catalogue featuring the three exhibitions. A suite of major essays by scholars with specialist knowledge in Chinese contemporary art will be included in the publication. An essay on Zhang Xiaogang by Leng Lin will feature, along with an extended biography of the artist.

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'William Yang: Life Lines' 28 March – 28 June 2009 Gallery of Modern Art

- William Yang has received international acclaim for his intimate and direct photographs and slide monologue performances. His images of Sydney's gay subcultures and social worlds, of his Chinese-Australian family, and of Indigenous communities, as well as his landscapes and portraits, present a uniquely rich document of Australian life.
- *William Yang: Life Lines* will present two newly commissioned photographic displays in the Gallery of Modern Art, focusing on the artist's individual and family history as a Chinese-Australian.
- This project will bring together for the first time a series of Yang's self-portraits, presented in the foyer cabinet. They trace Yang's childhood in Queensland, his life as an artist and gay man in Sydney and his recent travels to China. These will be accompanied by a collection of objects, family photographs and mementoes, providing a richly textured portrait of the artist.
- A large photographic collage will be presented on the foyer entrance wall, featuring portraits of family members from several generations and across the world, as well as images of Chinese buildings and historical sites from around Australia. Together they form a complex cultural landscape, expressing the long history of Chinese presence in Australia, as well as the strength and diversity of the Chinese diaspora.
- The focus on portraiture foregrounds a central strand of Yang's practice as a photographer, which combines personal experience, observation and memory with elements of social history, travel and documentary.
- *William Yang: Life Lines* is featured as part of *The China Project*, a series of three exhibitions that focus upon Chinese art and culture.
- The other exhibitions are *Three Decades: The Contemporary Chinese Collection*, and *Zhang Xiaogang: Shadows in the Soul*. Yang's exhibition will complement the two other exhibitions by providing an Australian context, connecting a history of Chinese presence in Queensland with contemporary stories of individual journeys and belonging.



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