

china

OFFICIAL COUNTRY NAME	PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
POPULATION	1,321,851,888
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER CAPITA	US \$7,800
LANGUAGES	MANDARIN, CHINESE DIALECTS



TOTAL VALUE OF ART EXPORTED	US \$65,131,891
ARTS FUNDING	US \$1,660,000
ART PROGRAMS (UNIVERSITY-LEVEL)	300
STUDENTS ENROLLED	208,000
MUSEUMS EXHIBITING CONTEMPORARY ART (PUBLIC + PRIVATE)	28
CONTEMPORARY ART SPACES (NON-PROFIT)	23
COMMERCIAL CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERIES	250
FOUNDATIONS (NGO + PRIVATE)	0

The statistical figures are 2007 estimates. The figures are taken from the most recent censuses and information.*

Source and Acknowledgements: Art Exported – United Nations Comtrade Database; REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT (2007) delivered at the 5th session of the 10th National People's Congress; Contemporary Art Programs & Students – 2004, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States; Nadim Abbas, Jay Brown, Rebecca Catching, Tsong-zung Chang, Biljana Ciric, Michael Hatch, Jin Hua, Carol (Yinghua) Lu, Lu Jie, Meg Maggio, Xenia Piëch, Yan Lei, Zhang Wei.



ZHANG HONGTU — *Shitao (variation of the Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots) - van Gogh* (2006-2007) Oil on canvas, 53 x 240 in, courtesy the artist

Recent years have seen an extraordinary ascent in worldwide

contemporary art prices. Among the high flyers, Chinese artists have emerged as the prime beneficiaries of unprecedented spending and speculation, leapfrogging each other and their international peers at auction. 2007's kingpin was pop-palettled smiley-face painter **Yue Minjun** (SEE FIVE ARTISTS FOR 2007), who surpassed his own records in back-to-back sales beginning in early 2007. This culminated with his *Execution* (1995) hitting an astounding USD 5.9 million at Sotheby's in London in October (SEE AUCTIONS). On the ground, exponential growth of both local and multinational commercial galleries, concentrated in the capital, Beijing, is a no less significant index of market confidence. The institutional landscape is evolving overnight too: new private museums open every year and enrollment at elite universities such as the **Central Academy of Fine Art**, where fulltime students leapt from around 700 in 2001 to over 4,000 in 2006, is reaching new heights. With no slowdown in sight, a looming concern is simply how to staff new galleries, museums and university programs with experienced, disciplined administrators who can address China's unique situation and respond to the diverse international interests flocking to the mainland.

The launch of the privately-funded **Ullens Center for Contemporary Art** (UCCA) in Beijing (SEE AAP 50, 56)—among the year's most anticipated events—suggests a way forward. Established by the pioneering Belgian collectors **Guy and Myriam Ullens** (SEE P. 164), UCCA made a statement with its inaugural exhibition, "85 New Wave: The Birth of Chinese Contemporary Art" (11/5-2/17/08), organized by UCCA artistic director **Fei Dawei**, which sought to contextualize the current market fervor through a historically-driven show. A de facto follow up—with a bigger budget and caviar-fuelled VIP opening

to boot—to "Create History: Commemoration Exhibition of Chinese Modern Art in 1980s" at Shenzhen's **OCT Contemporary Art Terminal** (OCAT) in late 2006, Fei's exhibition featured seminal avant-garde works by artists ranging from international stars-to-be Chen Zhen and Xu Bing to keystone groups such as Xiamen Dada, whose members included Liu Jianhua and Huang Yong Ping. A series of seminars and media programs during the exhibition's run revisited the film and literature of 1980s China, and UCCA kicked off its **Site Commissions** program with a wall installation by American conceptualist Lawrence Wiener.

UCCA is expected to set new standards for curatorial practice and educational

rigor in China, but with no legal apparatus for non-profit organizations and official supervision hindering state institutions, little else measures up. Fan Di'an, director of the **National Art Museum of China** (NAMOC), is supervising a new extension that will provide more room for contemporary programming within the current mix of regional folk art, academic painting and historical shows leavened by state-sanctioned extravaganzas such as "**Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation**" (2/10-4/5), organized by the Guggenheim Museum and the Terra Foundation for American Art, which also toured to the Shanghai Museum (5/1-6/30). The Capital Museum, which reopened in 2006 in a central location on Chang'an

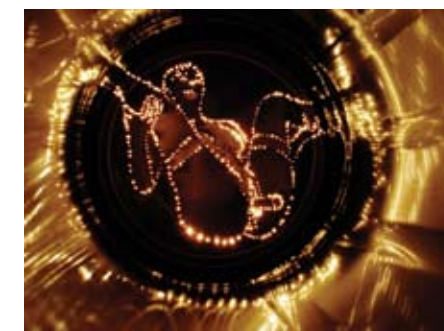
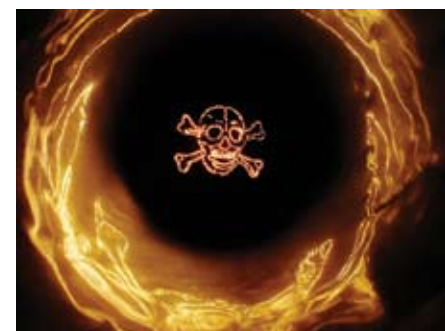
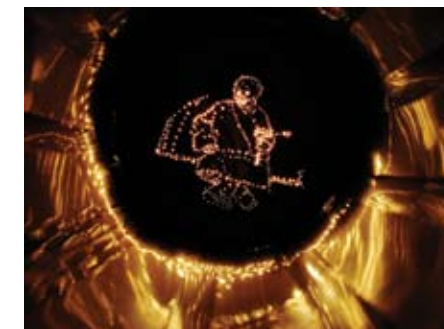
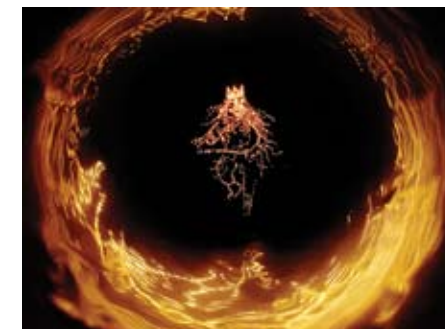
Avenue, followed suit with "**Aftershock: Contemporary British Art from 1990-2006**" (3/19-5/11), organized by the British Council, after it finished its run at the Guangdong Museum of Art (12/15/06-2/4).

Pre-existing private museums have yet to establish ethical guidelines that nominally inform practices in the US and Europe. Nevertheless, **Today Art Museum** earned accolades for its first "Documents" exhibition, directed by Huang Du, under the theme "Energy – Spirit, Body, Material" (10/17-11/13). Beijing World Art Museum, formerly known as China Millenium Art Museum, had a selection of works by 1980s Neo-Geo painter **Julian Schnabel** (9/12-10/14), who also turned up in Hong Kong (11/7-24) and

will travel to Shanghai's Zendai Museum of Modern Art in 2008. Exemplary of the overlaps between institutions and trade, the **Poly Art Museum**, long devoted to showing trophy antiquities in a nationalist key and owned by the same entertainment and weapons conglomerate that runs Beijing Poly International Auction house, held its own "Beijing Poly 2007 Contemporary Chinese Arts Exhibition" featuring usual suspects Zhang Xiaogang, Yue Minjun, Fang Lijun and Zhou Chunya (9/21-25).

Hope for the future lies in the opening of the Arata Isozaki-designed Central Academy of Fine Art (CAFA) Museum of Contemporary Art in 2008. The French **Centre Pompidou's** attempts to open a Shanghai branch have been co-opted by officials in Beijing and remain in limbo, while **Guggenheim** officials, responding to queries by *ArtAsiaPacific*, denied rumors that the museum has acquired prime land near NAMOC in central Beijing. In the meantime, collector **Guan Yi** is pursuing long-simmering plans for his own museum near the airport. Also joining the fray are Tang Contemporary Art Gallery and Moon River, headed by **Victoria Lu**, former director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai.

Commercial galleries run the show in Beijing, with the coalescence of foreign franchises, international blue-chip artists and emerging local talent marking the city as Asia's undisputed art hub. 2007 saw the emergence of a new hotbed in Caochangdi, where artist-architect-entrepreneur **Ai Weiwei** (SEE P. 166, ALMANAC 2 & AAP 53) has his studio and has been happily designing gallery spaces (SEE AAP 55). **Pékin Fine Arts**, underscoring director Meg Maggio's progressive regional outlook, featured Japanese provocateur **Makoto Aida** and Taiwanese Marvin Minto Fang alongside young Chinese talent **Jin Shan**, who displayed an updated room-sized



KESANG LAMDARK — (Top Row, Left to Right) *Gun, Temple Dancer, The Grim Reaper*, (Bottom Row, Left to Right) *Skull, Pussy Cat, Pussy I*; all images (2006) C-print on archival fine art paper, 80 x 120 cm large print, courtesy Rossi & Rossi, London