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## **Exhibition Examines Chinese Art from New Perspective**

***On the Edge: Contemporary Chinese Artists Encounter the West***

**February 15 – May 24, 2006**

**Wellesley, Mass.** — An exhibition scheduled to open at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College on February 15, 2006 will explore recent Chinese art from a perspective rarely presented in the West. Featuring experimental work from the 1980's through 2004 by 12 of China's leading avant-garde artists, ***On the Edge: Contemporary Chinese Artists Encounter the West*** explores the Chinese artists' position in a West-centric global art world, and China's political situation in regard to the West. The exhibition aims to replace old assumptions concerning China's contemporary art with a fresh appreciation of its form and substance and of its interconnectedness with the international art world.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Davis Museum has commissioned Chinese artist Xu Bing to realize a site-specific lobby installation titled "**Any Opinions?**". A key figure in the Chinese *New Wave* movement, Xu Bing gained international recognition for his iconic and monumental installation *A Book from the Sky* (1988). His playful, probing and often politically controversial work earned him the MacArthur Award in 1999. "**Any Opinions?**" addresses his fascination with words, calligraphy, the evolution of language and the juxtaposition of eastern and western culture, and will be on view from February 15 through June 3, 2006.

"China's avant-garde artists are doubly marginal. They are marginalized in their own country, and China's art is considered marginal by the international art community,"

explains Britta Erickson, independent scholar, guest curator of *On the Edge*, and one of the leading Western authorities on Chinese contemporary art. "This has given many Chinese artists — whether living in China or the West — a heightened appreciation of their tenuous situation. The result is the creation of a large body of bold experimental works dissecting the artist's position in the art world and China's position in the world."

Art and politics are inseparable. Chinese artists now in their forties learned this during their adolescence when Mao's theories on art shaped the visual landscape. Younger Chinese artists have become obsessed with a blend of art and politics — cultural politics — focusing on the positioning of Chinese art within the global art scene. Artist Zhou Tiehai stated, "The relations in the art world are the same as the relations between states in the post Cold War era."

Just as wealthy nations have controlled trade barriers, tariffs, and other international trade mechanisms to promote their own interests, Western curators and critics have controlled the standards for what is deemed "world class" art. Some of China's best artists have reacted to this by producing biting humorous pieces commenting on the situation. *On the Edge* includes the most important of these works.

Artists represented in the exhibition include Hong Hao, Huang Yong Ping, Qiu Zhijie, Sui Jianguo, Wang Du, Xing Danwen, Xu Bing, Yan Lei, Yin Xiuzhen, Zhang Hongtu, Zhang Huan, and Zhou Tiehai, with works in a full range of materials, including oil, airbrush, photography, resin, installation, and video. *The West*, an interactive CD-ROM by Beijing-based artist Qiu Zhijie, allows visitors to explore Chinese ideas of the West, ranging from ridiculous or shocking popular misconceptions, to historical views. MacArthur award winner Xu Bing has created a classroom—included in the exhibition—where visitors can learn to write Square Word Calligraphy, a method of writing English words as square graphs resembling Chinese characters.

*On The Edge* is curated by Britta Lee Erickson. The Davis Museum's Curator of Contemporary Art and Exhibitions, Anja Chávez, organized Xu Bing: "Any Opinions?" installation. The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue, edited by Erickson, which encompasses an introduction to the major themes and development of

Chinese art from the late 1980s, and a focused examination of the individual artists and works in the exhibition.

***On the Edge*** was organized by the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University. The exhibition and catalogue are made possible in large part through the generosity of Karen Christensen; an anonymous donor; the Shenson Exhibitions Fund; the Center for East Asian Studies, the Office of the Dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences, and the Department of Art and Art History at Stanford University; The Christensen Fund; the J. Sanford and Constance Miller Fund; Linda and Tony Meier; Rex Vaughan; Jean-Marc Decrop; and Eloisa and Chris Haudenschild.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMMING All events are free and open to general public.**

**February 15, Wednesday 6-8 pm**

**Opening Reception** for *On the Edge: Chinese Artists Encounter the West* and Xu Bing: "Any Opinions?" featuring 7:30 pm lecture by Britta Erickson.

**March 1, Wednesday 6:30 – 8:30pm**

**The Art of Chinese Calligraphy: An Evening with Professor Qianshen Bai.**

A hands-on demonstration and interactive workshop by renowned calligrapher Boston University Professor Qianshen Bai.

**March 4 Saturday 9:30 am – 1:15pm**

**Panel Discussion: Contemporary Art and Contemporary China.**

Eminent scholars explore critical issues of contemporary Chinese art including the tensions of tradition and reform, the interpretations of avant-garde and experimental art, the problems of globalization and national identity, and the art market and collecting.

**March 29 Wednesday 6:30 – 7:30 pm**

**Xu Bing Lecture: Between Vision and Language**

Artist Xu Bing talks about major themes in his work and some of his most recent projects including his site-specific installation for the Davis.

**New Chinese Cinemas Film Festival - March 8 – April 19, 2006**

Films from five acclaimed Chinese directors are as diverse in style as in content giving viewers a window onto the best in Chinese cinema today. All films in Collins Cinema.

**March 8 Wednesday 7 pm**

*Shanghai Dreams* (2005) by Wang Xiaoshuai

**March 15 Wednesday 7 pm**

*Election* (2005) by Johnnie To

**March 29 Wednesday 8 pm**

*Everlasting Regret* (2005) by Stanley Kwan

**April 5, Wednesday, 7pm**

*Three Times* (2005) by Hou Hsiao-hsien

**April 19 Wednesday 7 pm**

*Seven Swords* (2005) by Tsui Mark.

**DAVIS MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER HOURS AND INFORMATION**

The Davis Museum is open Tues–Sat, 11am-5pm, Wed until 8pm, and Sun noon-4pm, closed Mondays and holidays. Admission is free. The Center is located on the Wellesley College campus at 106 Central Street in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Parking is free and available in the lot behind the museum. Additional parking is available in the Davis Parking Facility.

For docent tour information, please call 781-283-3382. The museum's Collins Café, recognized for its innovative cuisine, offers a fresh menu daily and is open weekdays until 3:30pm. The museum, Collins Café and Collins Cinema are wheelchair accessible and wheelchairs are available for use in the Museum without charge. Special needs may be accommodated by contacting the Director of Disability Services, Jim Wice at 781-283-2434 or at [jwice@wellesley.edu](mailto:jwice@wellesley.edu).

**For information call 781-283-2051 or visit [www.davismuseum.wellesley.edu](http://www.davismuseum.wellesley.edu)**

**FREE ADMISSION. FREE PARKING.**

**MEDIA NOTE: For more information, digital images, or to set up an interview with Britta Erickson, Xu Bing or Anja Chávez, please contact Nina J. Berger at 617.971.9340, [ninajberger@hotmail.com](mailto:ninajberger@hotmail.com); or Barbara Levitov at 781-283-2034, [blevitov@wellesley.edu](mailto:blevitov@wellesley.edu).**

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