

GLADSTONE GALLERY

"China in Four Seasons: Guo Fengyi," *Art & Artworks*, September 12, 2009

ART & ARTWORKS

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12 September – 29 November 2009

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery



China in four seasons: Guo Fengyi, opening at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand, features the extraordinary drawn works of one of China's most captivating artists. The exhibition explores the possibility and potency of mark making. Mapping the flow of energy, or Qi, through the body in her intricate, colourful and large-scale scrolls and drawings, Guo Fengyi's art is an astonishing journey into the realms of figuration, scale, and psychic and bodily exploration.

This is the Govett Brewster's second exhibition in the year-long, four-part series China in four seasons which explores the vitality and power of art from today's China.

China in four seasons: Guo Fengyi co-curator and Govett-Brewster Director Rhana Devenport says 2009 is a potent moment to examine contemporary arts practice in China after twenty years of tremendous social, political, economic and cultural upheaval since 1989.

"This century has witnessed unprecedented attention on Chinese contemporary art from the (western) international arts community while art production, infrastructure and distribution within China has radically expanded and redefined itself. Museums alone have grown exponentially

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from 300 to 2,300 over the period. The current global financial crisis has now provoked an equally dramatic deflation of the Chinese art market 'bubble'."

Devenport says that rather than intending to make art, Guo Fengyi's process was one of healing. After graduating from high school in Xi'an, Sha'anxi Province she entered into the workforce as part of the physical testing and chemical analysis department of several major rubber and adhesive plants.

Forced to retire due to illness, Guo began practicing qi-gong as a means to alleviate her sickness and strengthen her health. After two years of sharpening her awareness of energy and balance, Guo had a vision so powerful that she felt immediately compelled to take up her brush and soon began producing a large number of works.

Much of the subject matter of her drawings, as well as the concepts and physical structure she uses come from traditional Chinese philosophy, myths, historical anecdotes, astrology and medical theory. Her claim to art is her coherent expressive style and consistent formal pictorial structure.

Although she has exhibited infrequently, her work has recently been seen in the Taipei Biennale in 2006, Yokohama Triennale and Prague International Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2005, and this year at the Art Basel Fair, the 2009 Frieze Art Fair and Mori Art Museum in Tokyo.

This exhibition is co-curated with Zoe Butt, Director of International Programs, Long March Project, Beijing who has been working closely with Guo Fengyi in recent years.

The Long March Project is a contemporary art organisation based in Beijing that collaborates with participants from around the world to reinterpret historical consciousness and develop new ways of perceiving political, social, economic and cultural realities. The project, founded in 2002, was inspired by the historic Mao Zedong-led Long March (1934-36) when the Communist Red Army undertook a grueling 6,000-mile retreat across China from pursuing Nationalist forces.

Artists presented in the China in four seasons project have so far included Jin Jiangbo and will further include Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen.

'China in four seasons: Guo Fengyi' is presented with generous support from Radio Network Taranaki, Asia New Zealand Foundation and Te Kairanga Wines.