

NEWS RELEASE

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A CONVERSATION WITH CHICAGO: CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURES FROM CHINA

**Large-scale public sculptures by leading Chinese artists
will be exhibited in Chicago's renowned Millennium Park
April 9, 2009 – October 2010**



The City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs is excited to announce the exhibition of four large-scale sculptures by four leading Chinese sculptors and installation artists in Millennium Park this spring. Organized especially for the celebrated venue, the presentation brings works by Sui Jianguo, Zhan Wang, Shen Shaomin, and Chen Wenling to Chicago this April 9, 2009 through October 2010. The exhibition is available for all to enjoy free of charge.

In recent years, contemporary Chinese art has emerged from a domestic avant-garde movement into one of the fastest growing and most dynamic components of the international art scene. Representing the current stage of contemporary Chinese art, the four large sculptures, never before seen in the United States, bring the global conversation into one of Chicago's most popular public spaces.

Coming from different regions and educational backgrounds, the artists each employ different materials and visual styles, but they also show commonalities. Each work is intensely engaged with important contemporary issues such as the energy crisis, materialism, and globalization. They also share inspiration from traditional Chinese art, commercial culture, folk art, and industrial machinery as they explore ways to react to a public space.

The sculptural works will be on view in Millennium Park's outdoor Boeing Galleries. The piece by Shen Shaomin will be presented in Millennium Park's North Gallery, while the South Gallery will

feature works by Chen Wenling, Sui Jianguo, and Zhan Wang. The exhibition is curated by Wu Hung, University of Chicago Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor of Art History and a Consulting Curator for the Smart Museum of Art, and by Millennium Park staff.

Contemporary Sculptures from China is presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, Millennium Park, in cooperation with Millennium Park Inc., and is sponsored by The Boeing Company with support from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

"This will be another world class exhibition in Chicago's spectacular Millennium Park. People have come to expect great projects, like the popular Mark DiSuvero works, in the outdoor Boeing Galleries, and the massive Chinese sculptures will captivate and intrigue visitors," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Lois Weisberg.

"Boeing's investment in visual arts exhibitions in the galleries is part of our mission to provide all people with greater understanding and access to diverse art and cultures," said Nora Cargie Moreno, director of Boeing Chicago Global Corporate Citizenship. "We're excited to assist in bringing this exhibit to Millennium Park, so people can experience and enjoy these leading Chinese artists' works in the U.S. for the first time."

The public is encouraged to learn more about **Contemporary Sculptures from China** and Millennium Park. From June 11 through August 27, 2009, staff members from Millennium Park will offer free tours of the sculpture every Thursday at 12:15 p.m. The tours start in the North Boeing Gallery and last 45 minutes.

Millennium Park is located in the heart of downtown Chicago. It is bordered by Michigan Ave. to the west, Columbus Dr. to the east, Randolph St. to the north and Monroe St. to the south. The Boeing Galleries are located along Millennium Park's midlevel terraces, just east of Michigan Avenue. Millennium Park is open every day from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Millennium Park is an award-winning center for art, music, architecture, and landscape design. The result of a unique partnership between the City of Chicago and the philanthropic community, the 24.5-acre park features the work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists and designers. Among Millennium Park's prominent features are the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the most sophisticated outdoor concert venue of its kind in the United States; the interactive Crown Fountain by Jaume Plensa; the contemporary Lurie Garden designed by the team of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol, Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel; and Anish Kapoor's hugely popular Cloud Gate sculpture. Since its opening in July 2004, Millennium Park has hosted more than 15 million people, making it one of the most popular destinations in Chicago

For more information about **Contemporary Sculptures from China** and Millennium Park, call 312.742.1168 or visit www.millenniumpark.org.

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Note to Press: Electronic Images Available Upon Request

Image Above: Zhan Wang, *Jia Shan Shi No. 46*, Courtesy of the artist.

The following artists' works will be featured:

Sui Jianguo (b. 1956)

Professor and head of the Department of Sculpture at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Sui Jianguo emerged as one of the leading Chinese experimental artists in the early 1990s. His sculptures often respond to China's social and political transformation, and reflect on cultural clashes in the process of globalization. With 'Made in China' engraved on their chests, his larger-than-life toy dinosaurs reference the cheap, mass-produced goods that have become a foundation of the booming Chinese export economy. Witty and incisive, such work questions the source of China's economic prowess as well as a stereotypical image of China in the West.

Zhan Wang (b. 1962)

Having graduated from Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1988, Zhan Wang has become world famous for his stainless steel copies of "scholars' rocks" found in classical Chinese gardens. By applying a pliable sheet of steel over a scholar's rock and hammering it thoroughly, he achieves a form that reproduces every minute undulation on the surface of the stone. To him, both the original rock and his stainless copy are material forms created for people's spiritual needs; their different materiality suits different cultural environments at different times. With their glittering surface, ostentatious glamour, and illusory appearance, his stainless rocks symbolize how the Chinese cultural tradition has adapted to today's postmodern conditions and acquired new aesthetic qualities.

Shen Shaomin (b. 1956)

An energetic sculptor, installation-artist, and film maker, Shen Shaoming has been pushing the boundaries of Chinese experimental art through various daring projects. Kowtow Machines---his contribution to this exhibition---is inspired by his childhood experience of growing up near one of China's major oil fields, where numerous oil pumps (which local people call 'Kowtow machines' because of their rhythmic, up-and-down movement) stand next to schools, hospitals and residential compounds. Squeezing the last drops of oil out of the soil, their silent, incessant movement generates anxiety, as if the ground beneath one's feet were being hollowed out. By refitting the mechanical transmission, Shen changes the pumps' stable, uniform motions into twitching, convulsing gestures; the result is like an old man suffering from constricted blood vessels and atrophied nerves, struggling to complete the task before him. Moved from Beijing to Chicago, Kowtow Machines forges a contemporary allegory for the dangerous dependence of modern society on oil production.

Chen Wenlin (b. 1969)

The youngest among the four artists, Chen Wenlin also most acutely responds to the heightened commercialism and materialism that has seized Chinese society in recent years. Made of stainless steel and painted red and gold, his sculptures frequently consist of blissful, self-indulgent human and animal figures, who embrace one other to form a tight, three-dimensional cluster. Chen derives the pig motif---one of his signature images ---from the folk art of his birthplace in Fujian, but he turns this local symbol of wealth into a humanized icon of contemporary Chinese society. His human figures, on the other hand, are often animal-like, absorbed by the simple delight of material possession. Displaying a highly organic style, these images are at once fantastic, ironic, satiric, and comical.