

MEDIA RELEASE
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XU ZHEN®: ETERNITY VS EVOLUTION

International contemporary artist XU ZHEN® – famous for his large-scale works exploring the collision of cultures – will present his first major solo Australian exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in March.

Curated by the National Gallery of Australia in partnership with the White Rabbit Collection, Sydney, XU ZHEN®: ETERNITY VS EVOLUTION showcases the artist's work from early videos to more recent monumental sculptures. The exhibition will also celebrate the international debut of "Hello" 2018-19 – a Corinthian column-like snake that watches and follows visitors as they move through the gallery.

Opening on 14 March, the exhibition will be made up of 14 works, as well as a series of performances of *In Just a Blink of an Eye* 2005/2020 in August. A leader among China's younger generation of artists, XU ZHEN®'s eclectic works examines the role of art and culture in the distribution of global power.

"A leading artist of his generation, XU ZHEN® grapples with the implications of globalisation, not just in China, but around the world. He deftly combines cultural forms with equal parts provocation and humour, exposing the fault lines between cultures and suggesting new ways of living together," National Gallery of Australia Director Nick Mitzevich said.

Co-ordinating curator Peter Johnson, from the National Gallery of Australia, said the artist was interested in how globalisation intersected with ideas around the body, alienation, trade, control and the commodification of culture, which saw him establish the Madeln Company, a factory-like cultural production corporation, in 2009.

“In 2013, Madeln Company launched the brand XU ZHEN®, skewering the romantic notion of artistic genius and exploring new possibilities for expression through the combination of art and business,” Mr Johnson said.

XU ZHEN® said people in China were anxious about the relationship between art and business but he felt it created new possibilities. “Most things are a business nowadays so the fact of creating a company, in a way, solves the conflict between art and business. The company itself brings together these aspects in a magical way,” he said.

In his latest work, “*Hello*”, being exhibited outside of China for the first time, XU ZHEN® turns the spotlight on twisted perceptions that emerge with the meeting of different cultures.

“I’ve used a traditional thing and renewed it in some way,” he said. “It’s interesting because, in the west, such columns would be used in official buildings such as courthouses and banks, whereas they most often appear in front of public baths in China, or places where you can sing karaoke.”

The scale of his homeland, XU ZHEN® says, is one of the inspirations for his colossal works, such as the *European Thousand-Armed Classical Sculpture 2014*, which has the familiarity of classical European sculptures overlaid with eastern religious imagery of a multi-armed deity. “I’m drawn to such things because of what they say about power and what is valued in different societies,” he said.

XU ZHEN® is on display at the National Gallery of Australia from 14 March until 13 September 2020. Entry is free.

Thursday Art Talk | Thursday 19 March | 12.45pm-1.30pm | Free

Coffee with the Curator | Thursday 16 April | 9am-10.30am | \$20 NGA Members \$30 Guests

Art IRL: ETERNITY VS EVOLUTION | Friday 1 May | 6pm | Free (bookings essential)

In Just a Blink of an Eye 2005/2020 | Performances to be announced soon

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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Image: Installation of *European Thousand-Armed Classical Sculpture 2014* in XU ZHEN®: ETERNITY VS EVOLUTION, National Gallery of Australia in partnership with White Rabbit Collection, Sydney