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Vancouver Art Gallery Presents First Retrospective of Contemporary Chinese Artist Huang Yong Ping Media Preview Wednesday, April 4 at 9AM

“...not one of the crouching tigers of the new Chinese art, but one of its hidden dragons.”
— New York Times, 2006

VANCOUVER, BC — The **Vancouver Art Gallery** will be the only Canadian venue to present ***House of Oracles: A Huang Yong Ping Retrospective***, a provocative exploration of cultural identity and globalism. The first retrospective of work by the acclaimed Chinese-born, Paris-based artist, the exhibition will be on display at the Gallery from **April 5 to September 16, 2007**. Organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, *House of Oracles* showcases a diverse range of more than 40 works from 1985 to the present, many on a grand scale, including a sculpture of a snarling tiger clawing its way atop a life-sized elephant, the cockpit of a U.S. spy plane, a 100-foot wooden snake skeleton, and a sculpture of a Beaux Arts-style bank constructed of 40,000 pounds of sand.

“House of Oracles presents a powerful voice in contemporary art. Huang Yong Ping is one of a growing group of contemporary Asian artists who are being heard with increasing volume around the world,” said Kathleen Bartels, director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “His challenging ideas are enriching and especially intriguing for Vancouver, where a multitude of traditions come together and new ideas of culture are continually being constructed.”

Born in Xiamen, Fujian province, China, Huang Yong Ping formed the Xiamen Dada group in 1986. One of the most radical of the Chinese avant-garde artists' groups active at the time, members were motivated by their interest in the work of Marcel Duchamp, Dada and the role of chance in art. The activities of Xiamen Dada, particularly Huang Yong Ping's artistic production, are considered among the first post-modern works in Chinese art, and the group is credited with opening up new channels of art making for peers previously influenced by Socialist Realism.

Created by the artist in collaboration with the Walker Art Center's chief curator Philippe Vergne, *House of Oracles* was envisioned as a “total work of art,” an immersive sculptural environment that is a hybrid of fun house, diorama and menagerie. Navigating the divide between East and West, tradition and the avant-garde, the exhibition takes the visitor on what the artist describes as a metaphorical—and sometimes literal—journey through the “belly of the beast.”



Huang Yong Ping, 11 June 2002 - The Nightmare of George V, 2002
Concrete, reinforced steel, animal skins, paint, fabric cushion, plastic, wood, and cane seat 96 x 140 x 66 in.
Courtesy the artist, Paris

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The exhibition begins with a choice between two entrances, both marked by light boxes reminiscent of an airport immigration checkpoint, one reading “Nationals” the second reading “Others.” Heightening the tension of the decision, each entrance is obstructed by a lion’s cage strewn with the remains of earlier meals – obstacles the visitor must sidle past to enter. Inspired by the artist’s experiences with intense questioning as a non-Westerner crossing Western borders, the installation compels visitors to consider their own identity as they pass inside.

Once in the exhibition, an artistic vision comprised of provocative and often massive sculptures and installations invites the viewer to reassess everything from the idea of art, to national identity, to recent history. A monumental sculpture of an elephant mounted with a hunter’s platform under attack by a tiger provides an insightful twist on the safaris of bygone colonial days. A fragile 3.5 meter high sand sculpture of a British-owned bank from 1920s Shanghai serves as an allusion to increasingly delicate Western influences in China. Also included is a life-size replica of the U.S. spy plane that set off an intense diplomatic standoff in 2001 after colliding with a Chinese fighter jet – an event that dominated the international news media for several weeks. Measuring more than 12 meters in length and incorporating an authentic cockpit and fuselage adorned with 300 taxidermic bats, the work addresses issues of censorship and the perception of international news events over time. In addition to these spectacular installations, the exhibition showcases significant early drawings, sculptural objects and installation works, reflecting the artist’s ongoing interest in the use of chance and divination in the creative process.

Huang Yong Ping has been an important presence in the international art world since participating in the groundbreaking 1989 exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre (Magicians of the Earth)* at the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. He was invited to the 2004 São Paulo Biennale, the 2003 Venice Biennale, the 2001 Yokohama Triennale, the 2000 Shanghai Biennial, and the 1997 Gwangju and Johannes Biennales. He has been included in group exhibitions at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, P.S. 1 and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams. The artist represented France with Jean-Pierre Bertrand at the 1999 Venice Biennale and was a finalist in the biennial Hugo Boss Prize, held at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1998.

House of Oracles is accompanied by a 250-page fully illustrated catalogue, the first to address the full range of Huang Yong Ping’s artistic accomplishments. Included is an anthology of the artist’s writings translated for the first time into English, essays by Vergne and critic-curators Hou Hanru and Fei Dawei, as well as a conceptual map and dictionary of the artist’s work by Doryun Chong.

House of Oracles: A Huang Yong Ping Retrospective is organized by Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and is made possible by generous support by Altria Group, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, étant donnés: The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

Media Preview and Breakfast

April 4, 2007 at 9am, in the Gallery

The Vancouver Art Gallery will present a joint media preview in collaboration with Centre A Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art to introduce the work of Huang Yong Ping and his wife, Shen Yuan, China's 2007 Venice Biennale representative who will be featured in the Centre A exhibition *Shen Yuan: Solo Exhibition* from April 6 to May 6, 2007. The preview will include a tour of *House of Oracles* and opportunities to interview both artists using an interpreter.

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