

# The ultimate guide to SH Contemporary 2011

*Where to go, what to see and who to check out at the mainland's largest art fair*

By Xing Zhao 7 September, 2011

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*This year's SH Contemporary covers 13,000 square meters -- roughly two hours of legwork even without stopping to view anything.*

While Shanghai's weather cools, the city's art industry is rapidly heating up as [Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair 2011](#) (aka SH Contemporary) is just around the corner.

As mainland China's largest art fair, this year's SH Contemporary has almost 100 galleries participating and runs from September 7-10 at the Soviet-style Shanghai Exhibition Center (上海展览中心).

## New curator, new direction

Under the new direction of Italian Massimo Torrigiani, the fifth SH Contemporary boasts a new aim: to establish itself as a trendsetting platform for Asian arts.

This new outlook is reflected in the setup of this year's programs, which not only promote new galleries, but also contain several curatorial projects co-organized by not-for-profit organization [Arthub Asia](#) and its extended network of artists and curators.

"It's focusing on positioning [itself] as a pioneering Chinese art fair in the mainland," says gallery owner Cheng Xixing (程曦行), whose Shanghai-based Don Gallery is taking part in the immense fair for the first time.

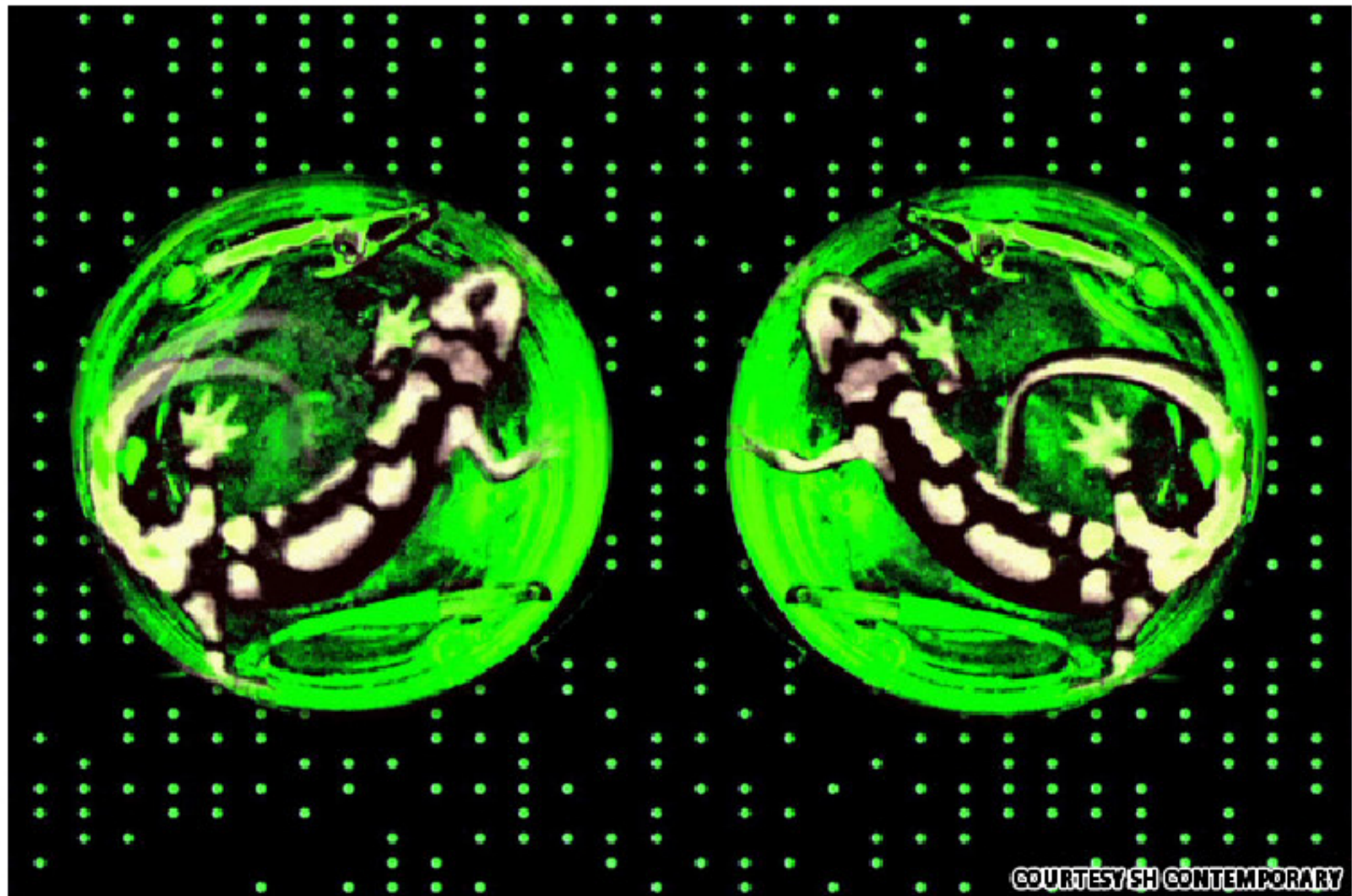
**More on CNNGo: [Best Shanghai art outside the galleries](#)**

"This time round will see some young artists with the most potential," Cheng continues.

SH Contemporary's new art director is Massimo Torrigiani, the former editor of edgy Italian art and fashion magazine, *Rodeo*. He emphasizes the fair is "contemporary" as well as being "diffused, experimental, open, paradoxical and ambiguous."

Visiting the 13,000-square-meter fair can be an overwhelming experience. So we've picked the top four events to check out:

### Must-see section 1: "First Issue"



COURTESY SH CONTEMPORARY

Lu Yang's (陆杨) video piece "Dictator -- E" will be showcased in Art Labor Gallery's booth. Lu, 27, is one of the young artists highlighted by "First Issue" section.

As a section of this year's Special Projects, "First Issue" brings some not-yet-curated works to the forefront. It will showcase art pieces ranging from video to animation, created specifically for the fair.

"We aim to close the gap between Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai," says Defne Ayas, director of Arthub Asia.

"For example, we have invited Qiu Zhijie (邱志杰) and his 20 art students from Hangzhou to present their performance piece."

The not-to-be-missed piece in the "First Issue" exhibition is Su Chang's (苏畅) installation "Bike."

It is inspired by the young Shanghai artist's nostalgia of how Shanghai residents were related to the city they live in -- riding a bicycle and creating a poetic experience, which has now been abandoned in most Chinese cities.

The installation also shows the contradiction in the city's obsession with "new" things.

***More on CNNGo: Lu Yang: Defying Chinese art conventions***

Click to see [a full list of artists](#) from "First Issue."

Also included in the section is an action art piece.

Participating artists' works will be hung over the stairs of the main hall at 8 p.m. on September 7, and at 5 p.m. on September 8. An improvised symphony will be performed on site to accompany them.



**COURTESY SH CONTEMPORARY**

*Jennifer Wen Ma's (马文) conceptual installation conveys one of SH Contemporary's focuses: ink painting in contemporary art practices across Asia.*

## **Must-see section 2: "Hot Spots"**

"Hot Spots" presents a new generation of conceptual artists in this year's SH Contemporary. While its exhibits come in different forms and are displayed throughout the exhibition center, the next two pieces are worth extra attention.

Defne Ayas and Davide Quadrio, the organizers of the Special Projects, have invited Hangzhou-based Double Fly Collective (双飞艺术中心) to carry out an alternative action art project -- acting as an agents provocateur of the art fair.

Double Fly members will take on the role of enthusiastic participants -- be they presenters, collectors or buyers. By doing so, they can provocatively solicit viewers to take notice of the power structures of the Asian art world and poke fun at the fair's commercial aesthetic.

The other noticeable piece is Jennifer Wen Ma's (马文) ink and plant installation "In Furious Bloom."

Commissioned by Arthub Asia, this site-specific work applies Chinese ink to 10 selected plants.

Ma coats the plants black with tons of ink, in an attempt to create the effect of classic ink painting compositions.

She poetically transcends the traditional legacy of ink painting by making her installation plants blossom, referring to the significance of timing in the use of ink for Chinese painting.

## Must-see section 3: Photography



COURTESY SH CONTEMPORARY

*Take one step closer to Liu Gang's "Paper Dreams" to see the point of the piece.*

Another highlight of this year's SH Contemporary is its focus on photography.

Beijing-based photographer Liu Gang snaps real estate advertisements in Beijing newspapers and combines them with a pastiche of architectural elements from around the world. His work "Paper Dreams" (2008) is showcased at C-Space's booth.

A closer look at the piece reveals the details in the advertisements which glorify the bourgeois lifestyle and commercial success in today's fast-changing China.

***More on CNNGo: [Art for the masses: Public art in Shanghai](#)***

Photography lovers can't miss the talk "Photography Update: The New Generation," which focuses on the changing landscape in contemporary photography in the past decade in China and beyond.

Photography artists, curators and critics including Liu Gang, Birdhead, Leo Xu, Emma Reeves and Christopher Phillips will cover such topics as views and inspirations of the new generation of Chinese artist photographers, and the position of queer aesthetics and fashion in today's photography.

"Photography Update: The New Generation" will take place at [Glamour Bar](#) from 4 p.m.-6 p.m on September 10. RMB 75, one drink included. RMB 20 for students.

## Best VIP event: Exhibition on a touring bus

Another highly-anticipated event is the [James Bollen](#) photography exhibition curated by cutting-edge Shanghai novelist Mian Mian (棉棉).

A bus doubling as a nightclub will take riders to the 1940s Shanghai of novelist J.G. Ballard through the lens of China-based shutterbug Bollen.

### **More on CNNGo: [How to buy Chinese art for less](#)**

The bus will circle Huaihai Lu and Nanjing Lu, two major thoroughfares the young Ballard used to bike along.

VIP invitation card required. Email [concierge@shcontemporary.info](mailto:concierge@shcontemporary.info) to reserve a seat on the bus. Bus tour starts from 9 p.m. on September 7.

*2011 SH Contemporary (上海艺术博览会国际当代艺术展), September 7 (media show, invitation only), September 8-10 (public show), Shanghai Exhibition Center, 1000 Yan'an Zhong Lu, near Tongren Lu 延安中路1000号, 近铜仁路, 5 p.m.-7 p.m. (September 7), 11 a.m.-6 p.m. (September 8-9), 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. (September 10), RMB 50, <http://www.shcontemporary.info/en>*



Now a writer and art communicator based in Shanghai, Xing has also been covering the Shanghai's LGBT issues for local publications since the summer of 2009.

Read more about [Xing Zhao](#)

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