

MA YONGFENG

THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD

28 July - 16 September 2007

Preview and Reception for the Artist, Saturday 28 July, 2pm - 4pm

The Cretaceous Period is the first UK solo exhibition of art work by Ma Yongfeng.

Ma Yongfeng is a Beijing-based artist who has received international recognition for his photographic and video pieces examining the ways that humans position themselves in relation to the natural world. The artist describes his photographic work and video installations as “relating to aspects of animal culture, man-made environments and topographic modelling”. Hosted at the Chinese Art Centre in Manchester for three months and subsequently in residence at ArtSway, Ma Yongfeng has spent a total of five months researching and developing his work.

Ma Yongfeng came to international prominence with his notorious work, *Swirl* (2003), exhibited at MOCA in Los Angeles, and PS1 in New York in which six coy carp were subjected to a fifteen minute wash cycle in the drum of a washing machine. The work raised a debate about the human treatment of animals both within and outside an artistic context. The artist has continued to explore the relationship between humans and their nature displays, photographing empty dioramas and “natural habitat” enclosures in zoos and museums, and revealing the centrality of humans and their own narratives in these spaces.

During his residency in Manchester, Ma Yongfeng visited numerous zoos and museums and conducted exhaustive research relating to all aspects of Natural History. For his subsequent residency and exhibition at ArtSway the artist has chosen to focus on a significant period in Earth’s history, *The Cretaceous Period*, after which he has named the exhibition of video works and large-scale photographs. These images examine the cretaceous period in relation to the artist’s continuing research into natural history, animal culture and fossil archaeology alongside his interest in archaeological simulations, geographical models and displays in natural history museums.

Ma Yongfeng’s new work has developed from the photography of animal enclosures and man-made environments to the documentation and recreation of these sites as ‘sets’ in his own studio, as in the work of German photographer Thomas Demand. Ma’s images, however, create what he terms an “installation after an installation”, referencing and refashioning earlier media such as television, stage-production, film set building and installation. *Hibernation* (2007) depicts a bright chocolate box snow-scene in which one imagines a hiding animal, and the photographic work *Volcano* (2007) depicts a miniature volcano, complete with authentic looking lava that the artist constructed in his studio in Beijing. This working volcano is also featured in one of two video works in *The Cretaceous Period*, and comments upon the relationship between artificial environments, natural habitats and aesthetics.

For press images, interviews, and further information, please contact Laura McLean-Ferris on 01590 682260 x 16 or email laura@artsway.org.uk

Notes for editors:

Ma Yongfeng was born in Shanxi, China in 1971 and is a media artist currently based in Beijing. He has exhibited widely across Europe, the United States and China – most recently in *Chinese Video Now* at the John Hansard Gallery, *The Fragmented Gaze: Video Art from the PRC* at Deborah Colten Gallery, Houston TX, and *Becoming Landscape*, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing. He was selected for a residency by ArtSway and the Chinese Art Centre Manchester from an exceptional shortlist of artists nominated by Chinese curators and professionals.

ArtSway is a unique place in the UK's New Forest to see, discuss, make and engage with significant contemporary visual art from the local to the international. A purpose-built and architecturally important gallery space hosts a changing programme of exhibitions and wide ranging creative opportunities for all.

ArtSway, Station Road, Sway, nr Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 6BA
w: www.artsway.org.uk e: mail@artsway.org.uk t: +44 (0)1590 682260
ArtSway is open: Tuesday - Sunday 11am - 5pm, Admission is FREE.



Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, is the national agency for the development and promotion of Chinese arts and culture in the UK. Located in the North West of England, Chinese Arts Centre is part of the region's rich Chinese heritage.

Chinese Arts Centre
华人艺术中心

Chinese Arts Centre, Market Buildings, Thomas Street, Manchester, M4 1EU
w: www.chinese-arts-centre.org e: info@chinese-arts-centre.org
t: +44 (0) 161 832 7271

Exhibition Related-Events

GALLERY TALK: SATURDAY 28 JULY, 3PM:

Join **Rob La Frenais**, curator at the Arts Catalyst and **Peter Bonnell**, ArtSway Exhibitions and Education Officer, in conversation with **Ma Yongfeng** as the artist discusses the link between science and art in his work, and his experiences of being in residence at ArtSway. **FREE, BOOKING ESSENTIAL**

GALLERY TALK: WORK IN CONTEXT (GEOLOGY): THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER, 7PM:

Dr Derek Siviter, Oxford University Museum of Natural History will talk about the presentation of geological findings in the natural history museum, with visual representations of fossils from China and the UK. New fossil discoveries in China record the earliest diversification of animal life, and those from the UK are presented as 'virtual fossils', and have been obtained by micro-grinding, digital photographic, and computer rendering techniques. **FREE, BOOKING ESSENTIAL**

To book a place on any of these events or for more information please call Laura McLean-Ferris on 01590 682260 x 16, or email laura@artsway.org.uk