

► Swedish artist explores the malleability of the mind



THE STRANGENESS OF SCIENCE

By Nick Muzyczka

Per Hüttner's exhibition in the Zendai Contemporary Art Exhibition Hall (DCA) is a theatrically lit minimalist project that combines installations and videos. In two large neighboring spaces, glass sheets are connected with sweeping electrical cables and four video screens.

The exhibition is built around two videos that were shot in Europe. "You see people engaged in some kind of weird research," Hüttner told the Global Times. "We don't know what it is they are doing. There's one woman eating pages of a book and it is implied that she defecates weird drawings."

In another video, a woman gives very strange mathematical formulas to plants and then ingests the harvested fruit, which somehow al-

lows her to send and receive information. "It is very much unclear what they are doing," explained the artist. "They are simultaneously reinventing and researching their reality."

Hüttner's long career began with a focus on scientific concepts and computer technology in the early 90s. "My aim was to prove that art could be as exact as science but I actually came out with the answer that science is as arbitrary as art," the artist said. "I've always found that when artists talk to scientists, they find their way of thinking very liberating and vice versa. My work is often about the dialogue between the two."

According to exhibition curator Alessandra Sandrolini, Hüttner's work deals "with Henri Bergson's idea that complexity and possibility are not just a pre-condition of creation, but exist as permanent truths."

"The artist reveals affinities between the French thinker and the ancient Chinese philosopher, Zhuangzi (also known as Chuang Tzu), who says that our life has a boundary but there is no boundary to knowledge; to use what has a boundary and to pursue what is limitless is dangerous," continued Sandrolini.

Hüttner, who is originally from Oskarshamn in Sweden, has a reputation as something of a nomad. Currently based in Paris, the artist spends at least two-thirds of his time on the move.

"When you move a lot it becomes very clear how rigid a single culture is. My work is about the malleability of the mind and all the unknown stuff out there. I try to embrace richness. Culture has a tendency to funnel you into acting a certain way. Being on the move allows me the opportunity to try to retain an open mind and share what I have found," he explained.

Internationalism

Hüttner's internationalism is reflected in the fact that his work does not change radically depending on location. Instead, his projects combine and create a dialogue between cultural motifs. In a previous project, *Democracy and Desire*, the artist took a photograph of himself sat fully dressed in a rural Chinese river with a long white piece of cloth attached to his foot, while local people went about their daily chores appearing not to notice him. Hüttner created a corresponding image with a wet cloth in Paris at nighttime.

Hüttner left after the opening of his Shanghai show to take up a residency in Wuhan at the Manufacturas Studios, where, he admitted, "I have no idea what will happen. It's very hard to know because

the organizers are completely crazy, but it will be great."

The concept of chance is important to Hüttner. He has spoken about holding contradictory views on this subject, including being swayed by both Freudian determinism and the aleatory nature of *Yijing* (or *I Ching* – one of the oldest Chinese classical texts). "It is such a fruitful contradiction to hold and I keep living my life according to both," the artist stated.

Hüttner first came to China in 2003 and has situated elements of various projects here, including his celebrated *Jogging in Cities* photographic exhibition, in which the artist is shot jogging through various exotic cities around the world.

"My work is more about the individual and how he, she or it negotiates relationships with power structures," explained Hüttner. "Everything is inscribed in a political and economic situation and it is the dynamics of this that need to be renegotiated."

A former cotton mill built in 1947, the DCA is split into a group exhibition space, a solo exhibition space, a small theater, a contemporary art library and a studio for international artists. For those wishing to visit the exhibition – be warned – DCA is not easier to find. It is located reasonably far from the downtown, near the end of Line 8 in Yangpu district, a 15-minute walk from Exit 2 of Xiangyin Road metro station.

Date: Until January 16, 2011, 10 am to 6 pm (Tuesday to Sunday)
Venue: Zendai Contemporary Art Exhibition Hall, Wuwei Creative Space 证大当代艺术陈列馆, 五维创意园
Address: Bldg 101, 1436 Jungong Road 军工路1436号101幢
Admission: Free
Call 3512-0988 for details

What's On

Films

Crazy Heart

Jeff Bridges' award-winning performance invigorates this film about a rundown alcoholic country songwriter and singer who resurrects his life and career with a relationship with a determined journalist (Maggie Gyllenhaal). The film was written and directed by Scott Cooper.

Date: December 30, 7:30 pm

Venue: Vienna Cafe

Address: No.2, Lane 25 Shaoxing Road 绍兴路25弄2号

Admission: Free

Call 6445-2131 for details

Hachiko: A Dog's Story

This 2009 film was directed by Lasse Hallström and stars Richard Gere, Joan Allen and Sarah Roemer in a true story of a remarkably loyal dog who is found abandoned by a music professor. It is a remake of the 1987 Japanese film *Hachikō Monogatari*.

Date: January 2, 2011, 7:30 pm

Venue: 12th-day House 微薄之盐

Address: No.5, Lane 516 Julu Road 巨鹿路516弄5号

Admission: 30 yuan

Call 3252-7020 for details

On Stage

Hamburg Symphony Orchestra's New Year Concert

Founded in 1957 and now under its chief conductor Robert Heger, the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra has played with some of the world's greatest musicians including Edita Gruberova, Plácido Domingo and Grace Bumbry. This time it will play Leonard Bernstein's *Wide Side Story Suite*, Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No.5*, Strauss's *Pizzicato Polka* and *The Spring Festival Overture* by Li Huanzhi.

Date: December 30, 7:30 pm

Venue: Shanghai Oriental Art Center 上海东方艺术中心

Address: 425 Dingxiang Road 丁香路425号

Tickets: 100 to 800 yuan

Call 6854-1234 for details

Walking with Dinosaurs – The Arena Spectacular

The dinosaurs are heading to town after a 65-million-year sleep. Re-created from the award-winning BBC TV series, *Walking with Dinosaurs*, the giant creatures come to life in a spectacular night of entertainment that will thrill and chill the whole family.

Date: January 19 to 23, 2011, 7 pm

Venue: Mercedes-Benz Arena

Address: 1200 Expo Avenue 世博大道1200号

Tickets: 80 to 580 yuan

Call 400-6103-721 for details

Got an event everyone needs to know about?

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whatsonshanghai@global-times.com.cn

(Top and main) Per Hüttner's installations at the exhibition. Photos: Courtesy of DCA

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