



Design & Architecture



Search

Home UK World Companies Markets Global Economy Lex Comment Management Personal Finance Life & Arts

Arts ▾ Arts Extra FT Magazine Food & Drink House & Home Style Books Pursuits Travel ▾ How To Spend It Tools ▾

September 24, 2011 12:02 am

Share Clip Reprints Print Email

‘Designed in China’

By Caroline Roux

Feedback?

Beijing Design Week intends to reposition the country as a place where ideas are created rather than appropriated



Paul Cocksedge with his installation

There is a Chinese saying that “a foreign moon is always rounder”, and when it comes to contemporary design it’s no secret that privileged China tends to look beyond its own borders for what it considers to be the most desirable products and furnishings. Just this summer, upmarket retailer Da Vinci (based in Singapore with stores in Beijing and Shanghai) was investigated over its highly profitable practice of slapping a “Made in Italy” sticker on home-made furniture.

It’s no surprise, then, that for its new Design Week, which launches on Monday, Beijing has invited participants from 30 countries. Over eight days, international designers and local counterparts will be showcasing objects and ideas in more than 130 events spread across the city.

More

ON THIS STORY

- The art market [Testing, testing ...](#)
- The market in ... [oriental rugs and carpets](#)
- [Wallis Simpson costume jewellery auction](#)
- The Art Market [Not so fizzy](#)
- The market in ... [Travel posters](#)

The ultimate intention of Beijing Design Week is to reposition China, and particularly Beijing, as a place where ideas are created rather than appropriated. “As the well-worn saying goes, we want to replace the words ‘Made in China’ with ‘Designed in China’,” says its creative director, Aric Chen. A thirty-something American of Chinese extraction, Chen studied architecture and anthropology and was an arts journalist in New York before moving to Beijing three years ago.

“You have to move from manufacturing to service and creativity. This is a platform to support that, the beginnings of an infrastructure,” he adds.

Editor’s Choice

ARTS



Peter Aspden on Beijing, culture’s First City

HOUSE & HOME



Green architecture in the age of flower towers

Most popular in Life & Arts

1. [The year of reading differently](#)
2. [The age of flower towers](#)
3. [The ordeal of Christopher Jefferies](#)
4. [Sweeney Todd, Chichester Festival Theatre](#)
5. [Lunch with the FT: Bill Bratton](#)

We’re moving.

Switch to the new FT web app. Available via your browser. No need to download.

On your iPad



Multimedia

Quick links

The range of activities certainly looks good on paper. Empty spaces in Dashilar, near Tiananmen Square, have been lent to the festival for its duration and will house pop up shows including a charming piece by Ab Rogers (architect Sir Richard's designer son) which imagines the life of a fictional character called Ernesto Bones through designed installations. A Finnish initiative called Wonderwater is taking over an existing restaurant, Tian Hai, and creating a new menu highlighting how much water it takes to get certain foods to the table (beef is seriously bad).

In various locations, Jingjing Naihan Li, one of the country's first designers to be successful on the international stage, will show pieces including her Crate series. This range of furniture, created out of wooden packing crates, started out as a way for the designer – who studied architecture at London's Bartlett School and was project manager on the radical China Central Television building in Beijing – to furnish an empty studio she moved into in the 798 art district. Her Table Football table is selling well at department store Lane Crawford in Beijing and Hong Kong. "I'm still looking for other homegrown designers," says Ross Urwin, creative director of lifestyle at Lane Crawford, based in Hong Kong. "And they're not out there. But Beijing is so exciting – grungy and individualistic, a city looking for its own style – that it's most likely to happen here."

While there may be a shortage of innovative thinking, there is no lack of manufacturing expertise. That has benefited British designer Paul Cockledge, who was commissioned to make an installation at the China Millennium Monument for the event. Created from 30 sheets of rolled steel, etched with Chinese and English poetry, it is a monumental piece that the public can sit and lie on. "It weighs 55 tonnes, so it was important to make it here anyway. But the speed and the workmanship has been incredible," says Cockledge.

Over in Ditan Park a group of Chinese architects and designers will be creating site-specific LED lighting displays. "From water conservation, to the greening of the city, to recycling, to sustainable lighting, these are the prevailing contemporary cultural ideas, and I hope people will realise that they are as significant here as anywhere," says Chen. "Sometimes, you do get the feeling that people only hear the bad news from China. Well, here's the good news."

Beijing Design Week, September 26 to October 3, various locations,
www.bjdw.org

Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2011. You may share using our article tools. Please don't cut articles from FT.com and redistribute by email or post to the web.

[Share](#) [Clip](#) [Reprints](#) [Print](#) [Email](#)

Video	Mergermarket
Blogs	How to spend it
Podcasts	SchemeXpert.com
Interactive graphics	Social Media hub
Audio slideshows	The Banker
Tools	fDi Intelligence
Portfolio	Professional Wealth Management
FT Lexicon	This is Africa
FT clippings	Investors Chronicle
Currency converter	Services
MBA rankings	Subscriptions
Today's newspaper	Corporate subscriptions
FT press cuttings	Syndication
FT ePaper	Conferences
Updates	Annual reports
Alerts Hub	Jobs
Daily briefings	Non-Executive Directors' Club
FT on your mobile	Businesses for sale
Share prices on your phone	Contracts & tenders
Twitter feeds	Analyst research
 RSS feeds	Company announcements