

BENDIGO ART GALLERY

Two new exhibitions opening at Bendigo Art Gallery in August reflect the vast continuum of Chinese art and cultural traditions and their expression and importance in both local and international contexts.

Treasures of Dai Gum San: Chinese artistry from the Golden Dragon Museum

Curated by Bendigo Art Gallery in collaboration with the Golden Dragon Museum, *Treasures of Dai Gum San: Chinese artistry from the Golden Dragon Museum* highlights the rigor, craftsmanship and rich symbolism of Chinese art and design.

While the Golden Dragon Museum is known for its iconic collection of processional dragons, lions and vibrant Cantonese costumes, this new exhibition also highlights other treasures held within its vast collection of over 30,000 objects – a collection amassed since the 1880s after Chinese miners first arrived in Bendigo to seek their fortune in the 1850s. Many miners referred to the region as Dai Gum San – literally 'Big Gold Mountain' - and those who stayed on after the Gold Rush built families and communities which to this day continue to celebrate Chinese cultural traditions.

The Golden Dragon Museum was established in 1991 to preserve and showcase the Chinese contribution to the Bendigo community. This exhibition draws on the Museum's collection of much-loved processional pieces and other significant items of Chinese art and design to highlight specialised and unique art making processes – from metalwork, silk-embroidery, paper craft and ornamental wood and stone carving – which have been transported across the world and passed through generations.

Works that reflect the exquisite craftsmanship of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), the mastery of natural materials and the longstanding traditions of Chinese cultural and artistic expression are featured, including:

- Ornate costumes from the Cantonese Opera tradition, imported in the 1880s for use in the Bendigo Easter Fair and other performances on the goldfields, revealing intricate silk embroidery and paper craft.
- A pair of elegant wooden chairs resembling imperial thrones, embellished with hand-carvings as well as jade, cloisonné and ivory symbols and motifs.
- A rare 18th century cloisonné urn.
- Ritual objects such as a collection of incense burners linked to Tibetan Buddhism and Mongolian and Chinese artistic traditions.

Hugo Leschen, Chief Executive Officer of the **Golden Dragon Museum** said he and his team were pleased to work with Bendigo Art Gallery curators to explore the collection from a fine art perspective. "While the Museum shares stories from a social history context, this exhibition is an exciting opportunity for us to tell a different story, and to look at these pieces as outstanding works of art."

In Our Time: Four decades of art from China and beyond - the Geoff Raby Collection

Over a 35-year period beginning in the mid-1980s, Australian economist and diplomat Dr Geoff Raby AO assembled a vibrant trove of works by more than 75 artists working in China and in Australia, as members of the Chinese diaspora. The collection, recently donated to La Trobe University, records a dynamic period of recent Chinese history, as artists responded to and navigated changes in economic and political eras.

Curated by LaTrobe Art Institute, this exhibition features 70 pieces from the Geoff Raby Collection, with works that address a range of themes from urban life, Chinese philosophy and cultural difference to social justice, human rights and nationhood. The represented artists work in media including painting, photography, drawing, ceramics, sculpture and textiles.

Highlights include works by Beijing-based artist Chen Wenling, known for his epic sculptural installations presented at biennales around the world including several from his *Red Memory* series, self-portraits by celebrated contemporary artist Cang Xin, known as a 'modern-day shaman', and paintings by Guan Wei, who first came to Australia in 1989 in the wake of the events at Tiananmen Square and now divides his time between Sydney and Beijing.

La Trobe University Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Dewar AO said he was delighted that these culturally and artistically important artworks could be enjoyed by the community. "As well as being a major asset of the University's wider collections, the Geoff Raby Collection is a very significant resource for the University, contributing to our research and teaching, and complementing our strategic focus on Asia and China. We are pleased that, through our longstanding partnership with Bendigo Art Gallery, the single largest cultural gift made to La Trobe University in its history will now be on display for all to enjoy."

Jessica Bridgfoot, Director of Bendigo Art Gallery said these complementary exhibitions reveal the complexity and nuances of Chinese identities. "Presented side by side, the exhibitions demonstrate the fundamental place Chinese cultural tradition and history has for both the community of settlers in the early days of Bendigo and contemporary artists breaking into the international art scene of the early 2000s."

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Images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kwq56b7xibo86w2/AADEpKtdxlXe5wfiTzsNnEhAa?dl=0>

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Images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zfq625wh697xheh/AACIRmirtoVV1vmUgdhA7kSxa?dl=0>

20 August 2022 – 19 February 2023, Bendigo Art Gallery. www.bendigoartgallery.com.au

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