

PRESS RELEASE

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GUARDIANS OF TIME

A monumental installation
By Jiang Qiong Er

President of Guimet Museum
Yannick Lintz

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MUSÉE
GUIMET

27 April 2024 – February 2025

Guimet – French National Museum of Asian Arts

Press preview Tuesday, 30 April 2024 at 9.30am

To celebrate with splendour the year of China at the Guimet, monumental and spectacular installations take over the museum in a contemporary and singularly imaginative interpretation of Chinese cultural and mythological symbols.



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From late April until February 2025, the Guimet welcomes internationally-renowned visual artist and designer Jiang Qiong Er, originally from Shanghai, to creatively enter into dialogue with this leading centre for Asian Arts, through a unique installation.

With *Guardians of Time*, Jiang Qiong Er revisits several emblematic areas of the museum, inviting visitors to intuitively follow the emotional and otherworldly path she conceived and engage with her in a visionary reflection on time, between tradition and technology, heritage and innovation, memory and imagination.



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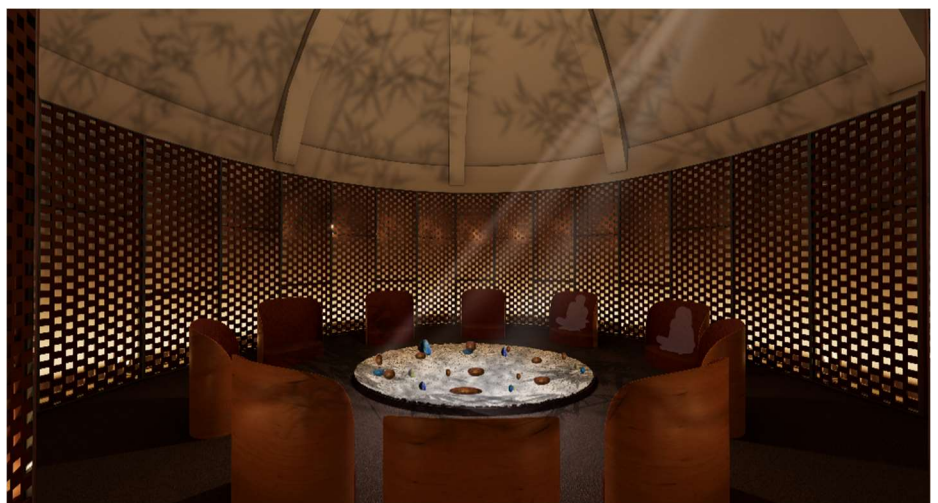
For **Origin**, the façade of the building at Place d'Iéna is entirely covered in red tulle, adorning the museum with Chinese culture's auspicious colours, evoking vitality and prosperity, and creating a bridge between past and present. The museum is "reborn" as a contemporary reinterpretation of the Chinese grottoes of Mogao, Yungang and Longmen, which boast some of the finest examples of cave art. Assisted by artificial intelligence, Jiang Qiong Er has created twelve mythical creatures which the artist believes represent the essential values of the 21st century. These creatures appear at the top of the Guimet's notable rotunda and on the windows of the façade, as though guarding these modern-day, miniature grottoes. Inspired by legendary Chinese creatures, each one tells a unique story, and in celebration of the Year of the Dragon, each incorporates dragon iconography in their morphology – bringing to mind a new, 21st-century bestiary.

The entrance hall becomes the stage for **Initiation**. The pillars of the entrance are covered in different shades of the propitiatory colour red, each with its distinct poetic resonance in China.

As they enter the historic library on the first floor, visitors are immersed in a visual and sound installation, **The Twelve Calls**. Each of the twelve mythical creatures from the façade reappears in bronze, the whole forming a circle: Authenticity, Fraternity, Inclusion, Peace, Equality, Benevolence, Time, Exploration, Bravery, Nature, Wisdom and Freedom. Seemingly floating in the air, they appear to be whispering, their murmur of different languages enveloping the room, bringing to life the centuries-old artwork on the walls.

On the roof garden, **Her Voice – Bravery** is a gigantic net suspended above the rooftop of the museum, on which the collective poetic words of sixty Chinese women are embroidered, using a new "women's scripture" inspired by *nu shu*. Long ago, *nu shu* was the only scripture in the world created and used only by women. Now out of use, this writing system is revived thanks to Jiang Qiong Er, with the assistance of AI, with a unique script embroidered into metal, emanating life and resilience, grace and spirituality.

The journey concludes in the rotunda on the fourth floor, which has been transformed into a modern cave, titled **Introspection**. Inside the dome is a scented partition made up of 5,000 bricks of Pu'er tea. Stones have been placed to invoke a mineral garden in the centre, capturing the creative energy of the cave. The dome becomes a space for meditation, but also for creation in connection with time, echoing the passing of the seasons through tea and incense ceremonies, Chinese music and opera, poetry readings and gatherings... Each becomes guardian of their own time.





The artist explains: “I designed *Guardians of Time* as a sensorial and spiritual experience, at once individual, deeply personal, and collective. A bridge between the French and Chinese cultures, generally and on a personal level, in how these two cultures have come to influence my work. An open door onto each person’s imagination, a suspended instant of poetry, bearer of values I feel strongly about.”

For Yannick Lintz, President of the Guimet Museum: “Jiang Qiong Er’s work with the Guimet gives a unique dimension to *Guimet x China 2024*. Through the scale and diversity of work specifically created for the museum’s spaces, she elicits distinct Chinese tonalities and nuances which resonate through space and time, ushering visitors, with remarkable creative generosity, into new imaginaries, nurtured by colours and scents of China, and beyond.”



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Daily events

Every two hours and throughout the day, each of the twelve mythical creatures in the rotunda take turns to express themselves, staying true to traditional Chinese timekeeping. Three times a day, all the creatures come to life to playfully and joyfully mark the link between the past and the future. Once the sun has set, they are once again to be seen on the illuminated façade of the museum, chatting and whispering, telling their unique stories. When the silence returns, the rotunda lights up Place d’Iéna like a lighthouse, the creatures disperse, with only their dark silhouettes visible at the entrance of their individual grottoes, their haloes floating in the night like hanging lanterns.

About Jiang Qiong Er

Jiang Qiong Er is a multidisciplinary Shanghai-born artist who blends art and design. After graduating from Tongji University with a degree in Art & Design, she pursued her interest in French culture and attended the Decorative Arts School in Paris. With Hermès, she founded the lifestyle brand Shang Xia, dedicated to creating objects that showcase Asian craftsmanship through contemporary designs. In parallel, she has led a very productive career as an artist. Jiang Qiong er draws inspiration from traditional Chinese art which she reinterprets with resolutely contemporary designs, creating works that transcend cultural barriers. Some of her work is now in the permanent collections of prestigious museums such as the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Museum of Decorative Arts.



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INAUGURATION WEEKEND FOR THE YEAR OF CHINA AT THE GUIMET MUSEUM

Choreography

Saturday 27 April 2024 at 2.30pm, 3.30pm and 4.30pm

Inspired by the artistic heritage of ancient China, this visit takes visitors on an imaginary journey and weaves a poetic story around classic Chinese dance and works from the museum's collections. *La Compagnie de Danse Chinoise de Paris* (Paris Chinese Dance Company) was founded by Wenhui Wang and is the first professional Chinese classical dance company in France.

Duration: 25 mins – Chinese Rooms – Free upon presentation of entrance ticket.



Silk and Bamboo Ensemble

Traditional Chinese music

Saturday 27 April 2024 at 8pm

With Xiaoran Shi (*erhu* - violin), Wenqi Gu (*guzheng* – 21-chord zither), Dingfu Zeng (*gu qin* – 7-chord zither), Hongze An (*sheng* – mouth organ, *bawu* - flute) and Clément Zannit (*dizi* - flute)

The Silk and Bamboo Ensemble (*Si zhu yue*) is made up of graduates from the Haute École de Musique de Genève, from the class of Lingling Yu and Xavier Bouvier. The term “silk and bamboo” refers to the types of instruments the musicians play: *si* refers to the instruments with silk chords and *zhu* refers to the traditional Chinese flute which is made out of bamboo. Most of the music performed in their programme was composed more than 700 years ago.

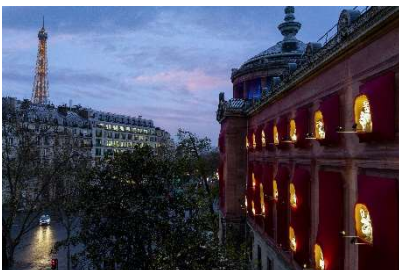
Auditorium - €18, tickets may be purchased online or at the museum, free same-day tickets subject to conditions and availability.

The Chinese art of tea

Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 April 2024 at 11am, 2pm and 4.30pm (duration: 45 mins)

During the inaugural weekend, the rotunda on the 4th floor will be transformed into a contemporary grotto where a tea master, who has come specially from China for the occasion, will be inviting visitors to enjoy the refined and unforgettable experience of a tea ceremony.

Rotunda on the 4th floor - €18 (including entry to the museum), tickets available online.



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Late-night opening

Saturday 27 April 2024 until 9pm (last entry 8.30pm)

Enjoy the Guimet Museum after hours. The Khmer Courtyard, the historic library, the 4th floor rotunda and the exhibit *T'ang Haywen, a Chinese painter in Paris (1927-1991)* will be exclusively open to visitors until 9pm.

Chinese circus

Sunday 28 April 2024 at 5.15pm

The auditorium will be welcoming visitors of all ages for a magical show of visual performances, Chinese dance and circus acts performed by Chinese acrobats.

Auditorium - €18, tickets may be purchased online or at the museum, free entry for under 25s, free same-day tickets subject to conditions and availability.

