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## Promoting Young Chinese visual artists | Focus on Talents 2012



[caption id="attachment\_24631" align="aligncenter" width="512" caption="Winners Wang haiyang,Chen Fei,Zhao Jingyan,Li Wei(from left to right)"][/caption]

[Focus on Talents 2012](#) is a project jointly organized by Today Art Museum and Martell Art Fund, aiming to continuously **promote the development of Chinese contemporary art and outstanding young art talents**. Since 2002, as China's first non-profit, non-governmental art museum in China, [Today Art Museum](#) has been cultivating talented young artists and promoting the contemporary art development in the long term. Founded in 2007, [Martell Art Fund](#) upholds the spirit of Martell, the famous French cognac brand, which has long been supporting the art world.

After works submission, expert recommendation, and committee review, a process which has lasted nearly six months, ten outstanding young artists have been chosen from more than 400 candidates. The artists are: Chen Fei, Chen Zhou, Hu Yun, Han Bing, Li Wei, Liu Guoqiang, Pan Honggang & Hu Youchen, Wang Haiyang, Yan Xing, and Zhao Jingyan. The shortlisted artists' works encompass paintings, videos, installations, and other forms, displaying the wealth of imagination and experimental spirit of contemporary young artists.

The artwork of the final "Talent Award" winner is collected by Martell Art Fund and donated to Today Art Museum for collection. Besides, to further encourage and identify the creation of young artists, the "Talent Award" winner is funded by Martell Art Fund for its solo exhibition or art studio exchange program in France.

At the same time, Today Art Museum continues to invite cultural scholars and art education experts to participate in this programme and discuss the future of China's contemporary art development with

higher education institutions and art institutes.

The award ceremony for “2012 Focus on Talents,” as well as the shortlisted exhibition, were held in May at the Today Art Museum in Beijing.

In this context, [www.culture360.org](http://www.culture360.org) interviewed the representatives of the two organisations that put this cultural project into practice: **Zhang Zikang, Director of Today Art Museum** and **Kathie Wang, Communications Director of Pernod Ricard (China)**

**Mr. Zhang Zikang, Director of Today Art Museum:**

**When and how did the joint project with the Martell Art Fund start? Was it a mutual idea or the Today Art Museum came with a proposal of collaboration towards the Martell Art Fund?**

The project “Focus on Talents” started in 2010 and the first award ceremony and finalists exhibition opening was held in May 2011. Martell Art Fund has donated two artworks of the “Talent Award” winners to Today Art Museum for collection.

The cooperation between Martell Art Fund and Today Art Museum to launch “Focus on Talents” is aimed at continuously promoting the development of Chinese contemporary art and outstanding young art talents. It’s a mutual idea.

**The 10 shortlisted candidates ( Chen Fei, Chen Zhou, Hu Yun, Han Bing, Li Wei, Liu Guoqiang, Pan Honggang & Hu Youchen, Wang Haiyang, Yan Xing, and Zhao Jingyan) were chosen from more than 400 candidates. How long was the selection process?**

After works submission, expert recommendation and committee review, a process which has been nearly six months, ten young artists stood out from more than 400 candidates.

We had a judging committee of “2012 Focus on Talents”, which is composed of a team of professional judges, who are responsible for the recommendation and selection of talents. The judges participating in the selection include Fan Di’an, Director of the National Art Museum of China, artist Chen Danqing, curator Huang Zhuan, curator and critic Lv Peng, curator Karen Smith, Tan Ping, artist and Vice President of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Wu Hongliang, artist and the curator of Beijing Academy Gallery, as well as Xu Lei, artist and Art Director of Today Art Museum. To ensure the fairness and equity of the selection, the committee members have not taken part in the recommendation of the candidates.

**The shortlisted artists exhibition took place from 13th to 27th of May. How were they received in China? What are the echoes from the press?**

[caption id="attachment\_24632" align="aligncenter" width="640" caption="2012 Focus on talents project finalists and judges"]



[/caption]

Most of the different media support our project and they are eager to find something new from these

most of the different media support our project and they are eager to find something new from these emerging artists. Some international critics and curators are involved in the project and they also wrote some articles and comments for these finalists. We could also find the comments on Frieze and Artslant and some Chinese local media. Some media also give us some useful inputs and want to be part of the project. We appreciate all kinds of feedback from the media no matter if it is good or bad. In the future we will try to make the project more influential and attractive for different types of visitors.

**For the past ten years your constant work has been to promote Chinese talents abroad, to make them visible on the international market. Please tell us a few success stories of artists that were exhibited in Today Art Museum and then went for the international recognition.**

Today Art Museum was founded in 2002. We held many artist's solo exhibitions like Fang lijun, Zhang Xiaogang, Yue minjun, Tan Ping, Jannis Kounellis and so on. In addition, we also had many large-scale international group exhibitions like Today Document Exhibition, we showed Richard Deacon and many renowned established artists' works. This year Future Pass will come to our museum. The exhibition is curated by Taiwanese critic and curator Viki Lu, Murakami Takashi, Nara Yoshitomo and many other artists' works will be shown here.

**The project Focus on Talents 2012 is a platform for young artists to have the opportunity to express themselves and to be seen. What do you think the trend is in today Chinese visual art in terms of expression forms (paintings, videos, installations, and other forms) and/or the choice of subjects/themes? What are they interested to creatively explore?**

In the rush to define the new talents and differentiate them from older artists, critics and curators alike have characterized the entire generation with the same stereotypes already entrenched in Chinese society at large: namely, that those born after 1980 are more selfish and introspective, and less politically engaged, than their elders. **Most of their works are controversial, private and emotional.** The first Talent Award was given to two artists: Lu Yang and Ying xinxun. This year the award was given to four artists and they are Chen Fei, Wang Haiyang, Li Wei and Zhao Jingyan. Their works are very impressive. Most of the young artists break the boundary of the forms of arts.

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**Kathie Wang, Communications Director of Pernod Ricard (China):**

**How did everything start for the Martell Art Fund and what are the aims?**

It was established in 2007 aiming at encouraging art development in China and supporting young talents to collaborate with international art communities with a broader exchange platform. Martell has defined visual arts as its communications platform, which varies from photography, painting, sculpture, installation and new media.

[caption id="attachment\_24643" align="aligncenter" width="640" caption="Talent Award winners' works donation ceremony"]



[/caption]

### **What type of projects does the foundation support?**

The pursuit of creativity and independent thought that defines the art world perfectly reflects Martell's inspired and independent spirit.

The Martell Art Fund started its first programme in 2007 through the partnership with China Central Academy of Fine Arts to set up a long-term scholarship programme. From 2007 to 2009 the Martell Art Fund has funded excellent students and teachers from the Central Academy of Fine Arts to go on a three-month overseas exchange programme in leading French art academies.

In 2010, the Martell Art Fund expanded the collaborations with leading art museums and organizations, starting from the partnership with Today Art Museum, the first non-profit, non-governmental art museum in China with credibility and reputation in the art circle. The new patronage programme Focus on Talents under the name of Martell Art Fund is the first ever of its kind in China, offering the opportunity for emerging young artists' works to be collected by the Martell Art Fund and exhibited at Today Art Museum.

The first "Focus on Talents" award ceremony and exhibition was held in May 2011 in Beijing at the Today Art Museum, showcasing the 10 finalists' works. The Martell Art Fund has donated two artworks of the "Talent Award" winners to the Today Art Museum for collection. The second "Focus on Talents" project has attracted over 400 applicants to run for the competition, with the 10 finalists' artworks including their tailored pieces for "100 Years" theme to be showcased at the Today Art Museum in May 2012. Four young artists have received "Talent Award" with their winning artworks to be collected by the Martell Art Fund and donated to Today Art Museum for collection.

Furthermore, the Martell Art Fund has collaborated with Today Art Museum to present Today Art Lectures for a long time, with the common enthusiasm to promoting art education for the public. Reputable artists, curators and critics have been invited to conduct present topics of contemporary art such as painting, sculpture, photography, installation and architecture.

### **Could you tell us more about the concrete actions the Martell Art Fund has taken to promote and make visible the winner of 2011 Artists of The Year prize and some envisaged actions for the 2012 Talent Award?**

Martell Artists of the Year and Martell Art Fund are two separate art projects. Martell Artists of the Year has recognized established artists at home and abroad since 2004, over the past ninth years, 38 prominent artists working with a variety of mediums including painting, sculpture, and photography, have been recognized. The exhibitions of the annual winning artists have been hosted in leading art museum in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou.

Martell Art Fund is focusing on supporting young art talents. It supports the "Talent Award" winner towards a short overseas artist's studio programme or to hold a solo exhibition.

## How will Martell Art Fund continue to promote visual arts in the future?

The Martell Art Fund will continue to collaborate with Today Art Museum for the Focus on Talents project and explore various ways of supporting visual arts through art sponsorship.

In China, besides a dynamic and attractive visual art market there are initiatives such as this one, of successful cooperation between a non-governmental body and a private foundation that uses fund from business revenue.

More about the project and the bodies on: <http://www.todayartmuseum.com/> and [www.focusontalents.org](http://www.focusontalents.org).

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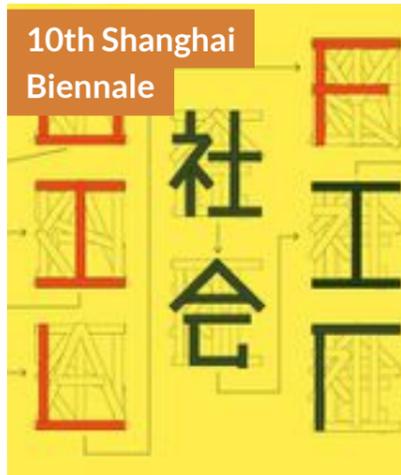
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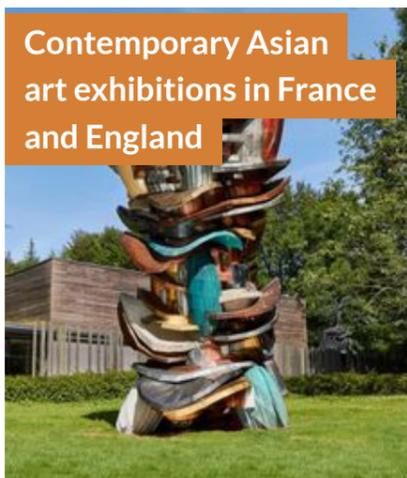
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