

Art in America



\$10 JUNE/JULY 2013 100 YEARS COVER BY SARAH SZE



China Invades Venice

Miao Xiaochun,
*Out of Nothing—
Public Foe*, 2012,
oil on canvas,
157½ inches
square.

No fewer than 10 exhibitions organized by Chinese institutions or featuring Chinese artists are on view in this year's Venice Biennale. With a total of some 300 artists participating, the mini cultural invasion is greater in scope but similar in format to previous forays. Chinese artists have been included in the Biennale since 1993, and the country got its own pavilion in 2005, but the 2011 biennial was the first time that participants from the People's Republic were fully integrated into international group exhibitions.

The Chinese Pavilion hosts "Transfiguration," featuring seven artists. (Hong Kong and Taiwan have separate pavilions.) Organized by Wang Chunchen, head of the curatorial research department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts Museum, Beijing, and adjunct curator at the Eli and Edythe Broad Museum at Michigan State University, East Lansing, "Transfiguration" focuses on the transformation of life into art amid China's rapid social changes.

Collateral surveys—including one boasting 170 artists—have been mounted around the city by institutions such as the Nanjing Sanchuan Modern Art Museum; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu; the M+ Museum for Visual Culture, Hong Kong; the Guangdong Museum of Art; and



the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai.

Presented by Venice's own Zuecca Project Space, the ubiquitous Ai Weiwei offers *Straight* (2012), a floor sculpture made from steel reinforcing bars recovered from school buildings that collapsed in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

"The Encyclopedic Palace," curated by the biennial's artistic director, Massimiliano Gioni, includes China's Guo Fengyi, Kan Xuan and Lin Xue among its scores of international artists. The Venice Biennale runs June 1–Nov. 24.