

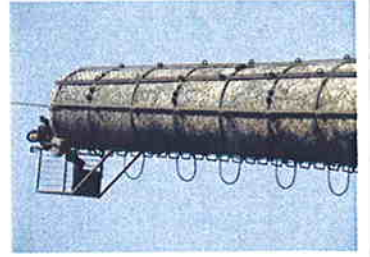
Art, but not as we know it

THE 2006 DASHANZI INTERNATIONAL ART FESTIVAL

It's amazing what you can run off the scent of an oily rag these days. In a very modish office in the 798 Art District in Dashanzi you will find a small group of dedicated people, slaving away to realise the massive, and hugely popular, Dashanzi International Art Festival (DIAF).

Although only in its third year, the Festival is arguably the premiere art event in China, and certainly one of the most talked-about in the world. According to Executive Director, Berenice Angremy, last year saw an estimated 100,000 people from across the globe flock to the Dashanzi Art District over the Festival, and she's confident that these numbers will be surpassed in 2006: "Why not 150,000, if everything is perfect!"

The overall aim of the Festival (this year with the theme "Beijing / Background") to emphasise urban dynamics around the world) is, according to Angremy, "to create an independent platform for all kinds of art – not only visual arts – and to give an open and transparent space to art that was supposed to be



DON'T MISS IT...

With so much going on, we asked Berenice to give us her advice on the "must see" events at DIAF 2006. Although she insisted everything was worth checking out, we managed to coax out a couple of standout attractions:

SOLDIERS AT THE GATE

A three-year collaboration between artists, architects and developers showcasing issues and challenges in Beijing as the city rushes towards its future. May 8 – 20.

I'MPULSE

20 emerging DJs from Europe and Asia experiment with digital music. With guest DJs Yang Bing, Sam Zaman (Bengal) and Ges-E (UK). Workshops: Dashanzi, May 14 – 18. DJ party: Tango, May 19 & 20.

BEIJING 1966

A Chinese and a French photographer present their photographic works that have captured China over the last 40 years. Some incredible images providing detailed insight into life at the time. Until May 21.

A NEW GENERATION OF VIDEO MAKERS

Showcasing a selection of around 20 fresh, innovative films from up-and-coming artists from the Fresnoy National Studio of Contemporary Arts and Chinese Academy of Fine Arts. Until May 7.

BAL MODEME

Professional dancers from China and Europe show the crowd the moves, then everyone gets up and gets involved moving limbs, gyrating, skipping, twirling... May 12 & 13.



underground... We really want to focus on the idea that art is not 'just for art's sake'... We really want to connect art with society."

Collaborating with a number of large sponsors, including the Danish Cultural Institute, BMA (Bureau de Musiques Actuelles) and the British Council China, this year the Festival will see participating artists making the pilgrimage from the UK, Netherlands, France, Japan, Belgium, Italy, Korea and Brazil, amongst others. In conjunction with local artists – who provide around 70 percent of the content – guests will present their creations in categories including performance, circus, visual arts, cinema, and music.

And it's precisely this diversity that, according to Berenice, makes the festival so attractive to the public. "DIAF is successful because it is the only independent festival of this scale in China, and also because of the maturity of the programs that have developed yet remained avant-garde; people are continuing to discover things and it is very exciting. The urban environment is ripe for people to have the opportunity to appreciate that culture is not only for 'art lovers.' I also believe that DIAF has contributed to making and strengthening the link between art and people in Beijing. So it is kind of a complementary circle."

DIAF 2006 runs until May 21. Check out What's On or www.diaf.org for all details.