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## 798 in Transition: The Beijing 798 Biennale explores shifting cultures

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Beijing has of late been touted as “trans-cultural” and “transitional,” making it fodder for cross-cultural examinations in art, music, drama and literature. These dynamics of change and migration form the premise of the inaugural installment of the **Beijing 798 Biennale**, which kicks off at 706 Art Space on August 15. Entitled “Constellations,” the Biennale is meant to evoke those celestial clusters by positioning artworks as incubators of separate, yet connected, communities.

Conceived of and organized by curators Marc Hungerbühler of New York City and Zhu Qi of Beijing, the Biennale integrates work from Chinese and international artists selected by a pool of global curators chosen by Zhu and Hungerbuhler. Each curator has assembled a unique group of work around a specific theme.

“Viewing it from the outside, the exhibition is a space in which a group of people is traveling,” says Zhu. “Everyone gravitates to the places they are most interested in.”

Connecting artists from around the world and showing that they have paths in common should already be the work of a good international Biennale. What remains to be seen about Beijing 798 Biennale is whether or not it can be done critically, in a way that investigates the tensions inherent in multi-nationalism.

The organizers have no doubt it will. They cite parts of the Biennale, like its “Transitional Aesthetics” exhibition, as must-see explorations of overlapping cultures and societies. Curated by Jaishri Abichandani and Alexandra Loewenstein, this is a satellite show that features female artists, primarily from South Asia and the Middle East, who are now working in the U.S.

Collectively, the curators hope the work initiates a new dialogue about the relevance of contemporary art and redefines its relationship to the commercial art market. “The possibility of vital communities in China,” adds Zhu, “starts with the opening up of markets.”

If the Beijing 798 Biennale can inspire the co-existence of grassroots art movements and a healthy market system, it will indeed reach its goal of linking unique communities.

### By Honora Shea

**What:** Beijing 798 Biennale  
**When:** August 15-September 12  
**Where:** Venues around 798  
**Web:** [beijing798biennale.com.cn](http://beijing798biennale.com.cn)  
**How Much:** Free

*“The exhibition is a space in which a group of people is traveling”*



Posted Aug 7th 2009 3:01p.m. by Taylor Smith  
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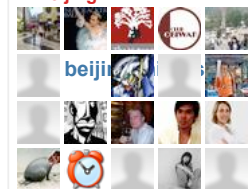


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