



Paintings link past and present

Belt and Road artworks are among those chosen for display at the Beijing International Art Biennale

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Last year, five Chinese painters were commissioned by the China Artists Association to execute two works for the seventh Beijing International Art Biennale (BIAB).

Zheng Baizhong, an artist from the southeastern city of Fuzhou who specializes in the traditional ink-and-wash painting, has done a 6-meter-long scroll, *A New Chapter of the Maritime Silk Road*. To create the work, he used the time-honored blue-green landscape and the *gongbi* technique of realistic drawing to depict the evolution of East-West sea links.

The painting juxtaposes ancient Chinese merchant ships at important stops along the Maritime Silk Road with modern Chinese naval fleets escorting ships in the waters of the Gulf of Aden.

The other four oil painters produced *The New Chapter of the Silk Road*, an 8-meter-long work on the latest developments sparked by Belt and Road Initiative, China's plan to revitalize the historical Silk Road trading routes.

It portrays a panoramic view of the changes in transportation modes between China and Europe — including scenes of merchants in ancient times and the modern China Railway Express that carries freight between Chinese and European cities.

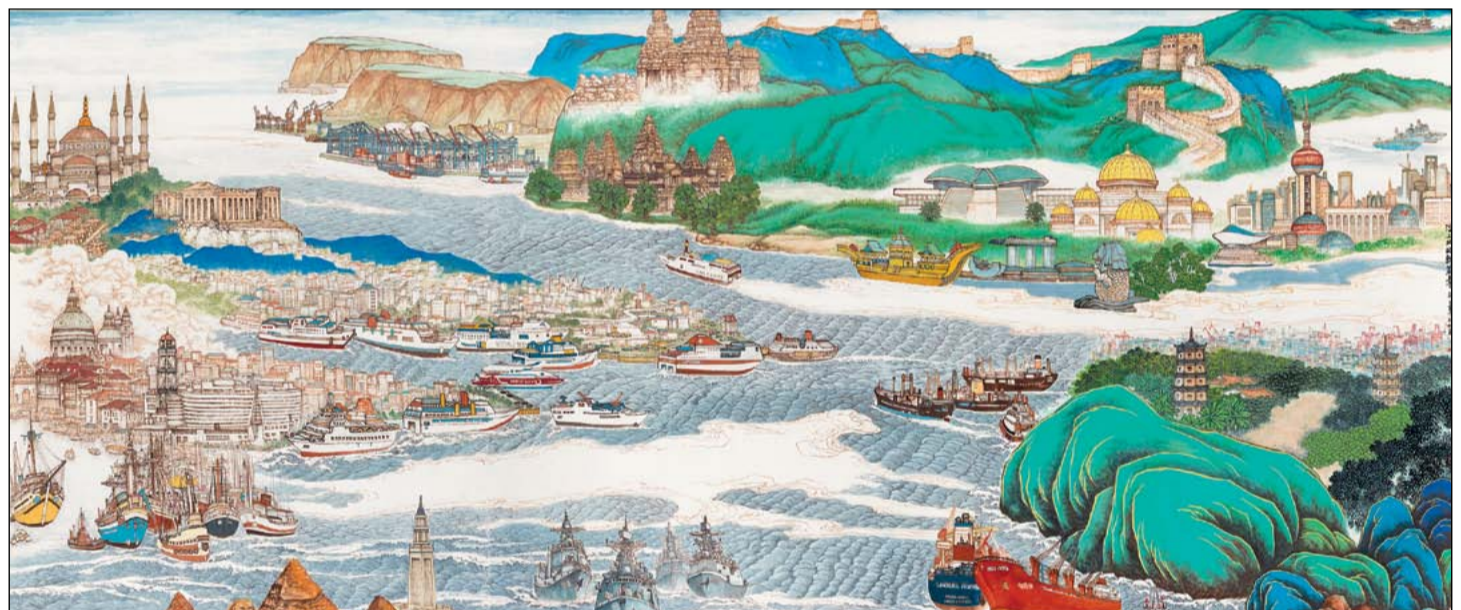
The two works are currently on display at the National Art Museum of China during the BIAB that runs until Oct 15.

The China Artists Association, which is the nation's top organization for fine art, is showcasing 567 artists from more than 100 countries at the biennale.

The first event in 2003 featured 400 works by artists from 40 countries.

Liu Dawei, who chairs the China Artists Association, said the first event was not easy because it was held in the immediate aftermath of the lethal SARS outbreak in the country.

The seventh event focuses on mainly paintings and sculptures that are on the theme of this year, the Silk Road and World's Civilizations.



Two commissioned paintings (top and above) focusing on the Belt and Road Initiative are highlights of the Beijing International Art Biennale.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Sydney and Yunnan in 1894 is an oil painting by Australian artist Shen Jiawei.

Xu Li, the vice-chairman of the China Artists Association, said that since its launch, the biennale has committed to cater to Chinese audiences, and therefore it highlights developments in painting and sculpture, the two major art forms that are favored by local viewers.

"We have also included some installations

and videos in the last two editions of BIAB because essentially, the event underpins openness, inclusiveness and diversity," said Xu.

He added that BIAB is all-embracing, because it gives space to not only countries where art is booming and highly commercialized, but also to countries that are much less developed but want their artists' voices to be heard internationally.

He said that, for example, the latest exhibition displays works by artists from countries along the ancient Silk Road that are now in chaos, such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

He said their paintings are focused on families who are being ripped apart by conflicts, and they pay homage to mothers who bravely protect their children.

"The works stress even more on subjects like peace and expectations that are at the heart of the Silk Road spirit," said Xu.

The 600 works that have been selected for the event were selected from more than 10,000 applicants.

BIAB will hold six special shows this year, including four country shows that feature art from Georgia, Indonesia, Mongolia and Greece.

"Chinese audiences have seen a lot of art from western Europe and North America. So, we hope that these four shows will increase their knowledge of less familiar cultures," Xu said. "Many might have traveled to countries such as Indonesia and Greece, but fine art will provide them with new perspectives."

One show looks at the influence of Italian Renaissance painter Tintoretto (1518-94) on contemporary African artists. Several African artists are being exhibited at BIAB for the first time.

Another show features a selection of artworks exhibited at previous editions of BIAB, which have been donated to the China Artists Association.

Tao Qin, the association's deputy secretary-general, said BIAB is not a commercial event and that the displayed works are returned to their creators, but many artists have donated pieces to the association in the past.

Earlier this year, the association took 40 Chinese works from its collection to European cities, including Helsinki and London. The works address universal issues, such as conflicts, environmental protection and digital living.