



THE GREEN HOUSE
UNITED NATIONS PROJECT
BAKER-BERRY LIBRARY
JUNE 6-OCTOBER 28, 2007
WENDA GU
RETRANSLATION AND REWRITING
TANG DYNASTY POETRY
HOOD MUSEUM OF ART
JUNE 6-SEPTEMBER 9, 2007

Dartmouth Library Hours

June 6–20: Mon.–Fri. 8 a.m.–8 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sun. 1–8 p.m.
(except Sun., June 10, 12–6 p.m.)

June 21–August 27: Mon.–Thurs. 8 a.m.–2 a.m.; Fri. 8 a.m.–10 p.m.;
Sat. 10 a.m.–10 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m.–2 a.m. (except closed at 8 p.m. July 3,
and closed all day July 4)

August 28–September 25: Mon.–Fri. 8 a.m.–8 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.–6 p.m.;
Sun. 1 p.m.–8 p.m. (except closed Sept. 1–3)

September 26–October 28: Mon.–Thurs. 8 a.m.–2 a.m.; Fri. 8 a.m.–10 p.m.;
Sat. 10 a.m.–10 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m.–2 a.m.

Hood Museum of Art and Shop Hours

Tues–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sun. 12 noon–5 p.m., Wed. evening to 9 p.m.
Closed Mon.

Wenda Gu: the green house and Retranslation and Rewriting Tang Dynasty Poetry were organized by the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, in partnership with the Dartmouth College Library, and generously funded by a grant from the LEF Foundation, the William B. Jaffe and Evelyn A. Hall Fund, the Eleanor Smith Fund, and the George O. Southwick 1957 Memorial Fund.

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The green house is a site-specific installation by avant-garde Chinese artist Wenda Gu. Part of his ongoing global *united nations* hair monuments project, this massive sculpture was created from hair collected in 2006 from thousands of Dartmouth College students, faculty, and staff and Upper Valley community members. Resonating with José Clemente Orozco's utopian vision in his Baker Library mural titled *The Epic of American Civilization* (1932–34), *the green house* arises from the museum's hope that major contemporary art projects on campus will celebrate diversity and spark transformative moments in our audiences, specifically around the making and presenting of works of art.

Wenda Gu encourages us to explore our own personal responses to his work. For more information, images, questions, and responses, please visit the Hood's Wenda Gu Web page: www.hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/exhibitions/wendagu. If you have questions or comments that you would like to share, please email us at wendagu@dartmouth.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Wenda Gu?

Born in Shanghai, China, in 1955, artist Wenda Gu graduated from the Shanghai School of Arts in 1976 and received an M.F.A. from the China Academy of Arts, where he taught until 1987, when he moved to the United States. He now divides his time between his home in Brooklyn, New York, his studio in Shanghai, and the sites of his art installations throughout the world. For more information about Wenda Gu, go to www.wendagu.com.

What is the united nations project?

This fifteen-year ongoing global art project aims to be inclusive. Wenda Gu writes, “The *united nations* art project is committed to a single human body material—pure human hair. Hair is a signifier and metaphor extremely rich in history, civilization, science, ethnicity, timing, and even economics.” His dream is that his art might unite humanity and encourage international understanding. More than one million people have donated their hair to the project worldwide, and *the green house* is made from the clippings of over 42,000 haircuts, collected at Dartmouth and in Upper Valley salons between April and September of 2006. Wenda Gu has created *united nations* monuments in Australia, China, France, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sweden, Taiwan, and the United States.

The multicolored hair braid in Berry Library’s main corridor is six miles long and punctuated by stainless steel tags that represent all of the United Nations member countries with their names written from right to left. The blank tags at the end of the braid await inscriptions, signifying the current proliferation of new countries in the world. For images of all of Wenda Gu’s *united nations* projects, go to www.wendagu.com.

Why does Wenda Gu use hair?

Contemporary avant-garde artists have often experimented with unconventional artistic materials. Wenda Gu has been particularly drawn to bodily matter to make works of art, sometimes controversially. In order to create a universal dialogue, he confronts prejudice and explores cultural attitudes. Although hair is common to all humankind, the artist is aware of its many connotations, as well as the charged histories that have been associated with it. These include the collecting of holocaust victims’ hair, the prohibitions against cutting hair in the Sikh religion, its loss during chemotherapy, its significance as a marker of racial difference, and its specific cultural and ceremonial importance in some African and Native American traditions. Wenda Gu chooses human hair as the ideal medium for his *united nations* project, demonstrating humanity’s fundamental connection in the world’s cultural, racial, and spiritual tapestry.

How big is the green house and how was it made?

Forty panels of hair coated in glue comprise a work that is eighty feet long and thirteen feet tall. Each panel, created upon a plastic template, has a length of twine embedded in it to facilitate assembly. The work was shipped from Shanghai in separate panels that Hood staff linked together and hung in Baker Library’s Main Hall. The hair braid arrived in one length exactly as you see it installed, with the stainless steel tags in place, and it was hung by Hood staff, students, and volunteers. Dartmouth’s Facilities and Operations Management Department did tremendous work in preparing both sites for the installation.

Why did the Hood choose Wenda Gu?

Responding to the College administration’s invitation to install art in unexpected places and inspire dialogue around artistic issues, the Hood considered significant contemporary artists who favor inclusive and engaging large-scale art installations. The museum consulted with the Dartmouth College Library as to whether its facility might be a possible site for an installation. Wenda Gu was invited to campus to consider how he might respond to the challenge, and he and the Hood began to develop the project together.

The artist and the Hood hope that the resulting project will raise questions about, among other things, contemporary art itself, the implications of hair, the United Nations, and the continuing growth of nationalism amid globalization. This major departure for Dartmouth engages the community in dialogue through the catalytic effects of a work of art. It also demonstrates that new and unusual partnerships—such as this one involving the Hood, Baker Library, area hair salons, and salon clients—can yield strong, creative, and inclusive interactions on campus and in the community.

What are the written characters on the green house?

The essence of contemporary art is the exploration of an idea through the engagement of our senses and our emotions. Informed by his upbringing in China, Wenda Gu explores the play of language in the world of politics, advertising, and cultural expression. The Hood invited Wenda Gu, through his *united nations* commission, to “say something” to Dartmouth. His response in *the green house* is two words placed one on top of the other, each with ten letters: “EDUCATIONS” and “ADVERTISES.” The artist invites the viewer to think about issues of contemporary education and how our own cultural values inform the structure of our society.

Wenda Gu: Retranslation and Rewriting Tang Dynasty Poetry Hood Museum of Art June 6–September 9, 2007

The Hood Museum of Art premieres Wenda Gu’s new series of large books that elucidate the themes explored in his hair monuments by demonstrating what happens when poetry is translated. The book on display at the Hood is based on the artist’s *Forest of Stone Steles*, a set of one-ton hand-carved steles created between 1993 and 2005. The project confronts written communication and especially the impossibility of true or faithful translation from one language to another. Translation, for Wenda Gu, sacrifices the cultural and social context of the original while introducing both conscious and unconscious bias and misinterpretation. The fifty stone steles, recently completed and displayed in their entirety at the OCT Contemporary Art Terminal in Shenzhen, China, are carved with the artist’s own contemporary versions of ancient poems—a literal translation of the poems from Chinese to English and then a literal translation back to Chinese. The resulting texts are wry, witty examples of the misreading of language over time.

Admission is free.