

# The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

258 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Tel 203.438.4519, Fax 203.438.0198, aldrichart.org



Xu Bing, *1st Class* (detail), 2011

Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond

Photo: Travis Fullerton

## Xu Bing Tobacco Project

January 29 to June 10, 2012

Ridgefield (January 2012): *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project* explores the production and culture of tobacco as seen through the eyes of one of China's most ground-breaking contemporary artists. Organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the exhibition's only venue in the New York Metropolitan area will be The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, on view from January 29 to June 10, 2012.

In 1995 Xu Bing was invited to visit Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Exploring the area, he visited the Duke Homestead and Tobacco Museum, tobacco farms, and a former cigarette factory, experiences that planted the seeds for a body of work that now spans more than a decade.

A prolific artist, Xu Bing's interest in language has manifested itself in work that is strongly conceptual in nature, and this exhibition's use of research, archival materials, and text points to the artist's idea-driven methodology. The *Tobacco Project* employs tobacco as both a material and a subject with which to explore a wide range of issues, from global trade to the complex sociology of tobacco use. Xu Bing has written, "Everyone knows that tobacco is harmful, but we are inseparable, caught in an entanglement that resembles the relationship between lovers: getting too close is no good, but neither is being too distant...."

The dramatic centerpiece of the project is the work *1st Class*, a carpet-like sculpture resembling a tiger-skin rug that has been made from nearly half a million cigarettes. His new works include *Traveling Down the River*, a sculpture which includes a thirty-four-foot-long cigarette which is ignited on a reproduction of a famous Chinese scroll painting by Xhang Zeduan, commenting on the way tobacco culture spread into China. John B. Ravenal, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, said, "Xu Bing brings his usual wit and insight to his work with tobacco, as well as his sense of craft and showmanship. The exhibition is a stunning and thought-provoking display of Xu Bing's innovative art."

Richard Klein, exhibitions director at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, adds, "We are very pleased to bring this important exhibition—one of Xu Bing's most ambitious undertakings—to Ridgefield, especially as Connecticut shares Virginia's history of tobacco production, with the Connecticut River valley being the only region in the United States that produces premium cigar wrapper tobacco."

An exhibition catalogue published by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project, Duke/Shanghai/Virginia, 1999–2011*, includes several essays and reproductions of all the tobacco works and will be available at The Aldrich's Museum store.

**Found Opening:** The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum will celebrate the opening of *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project* along with five other *Found* exhibitions—by artists working with appropriated ideas and salvaged materials—at a reception on Sunday, January 29, 2012, from 3 to 5 pm (\$7 adults; \$4 seniors; FREE for members, pre-K–12 teachers, and children 18 and under). Prior to the reception the Museum will host a panel from 2 to 3 pm where artists Barrão, Jim Dingilian, Roy McMakin, and Kathryn Spence will discuss their relationships with the found objects central to their work. Onsite parking is available, as is direct round-trip transportation from New York City. Reserve your seat on the January 29 Aldrich shuttle, now leaving from a new location; please consult [aldrichart.org](http://aldrichart.org) for particulars.

**Also on view:** *Barrão: Mashups*, *Jim Dingilian: Subtractive Images*, *Roy McMakin: Middle*, *Regina Silveira: In Absentia (Collection)*, and *Kathryn Spence: Dirty and Clean*.

**Sponsors:** The Aldrich is supported, in part, by the Connecticut Office of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Art Works. The official media sponsors of exhibition openings are *Ridgefield Magazine* and WSHU Public Radio. *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project* has been organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts with generous support from Carolyn Hsu-Balcer and René Balcer. Materials provided by Marvin Coghill; Phil James, Mundet International. Live tobacco at The Aldrich generously provided by The New York Botanical Garden.

**Artist:** Born in 1955, Xu Bing was raised during the Cultural Revolution in China; he moved to the United States in 1990, shortly after the Tiananmen uprising. He was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 1999, followed by a number of additional awards, including the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize in 2003 and the Southern Graphics Council Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006. In 2008, Xu Bing was appointed vice president of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, one of the most important positions in the Chinese art system.

**Museum:** The Aldrich is one of the few independent, non-collecting contemporary art museums in the United States, and the only museum in Connecticut devoted to contemporary art. The Aldrich is accredited by the American Association of Museums. Founded on Ridgefield's historic Main Street in 1964, the Museum concentrates its exhibition program on solo exhibitions by emerging and mid-career artists, complemented by acclaimed gallery-based education programs that use the work on view to help adults, families, and over 7,000 students annually to connect to our world through contemporary art. The Museum is located at 258 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877. All exhibitions and programs are handicapped accessible. Free on-site parking. Regular Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 12 noon to 5 pm. For more information call 203.438.4519.

Contact: Pamela Ruggio  
Phone: 203.438.4519  
Email: [pruggio@aldrichart.org](mailto:pruggio@aldrichart.org)