

DRESSING UP BABY BUMPS WITH STYLE MAKES FOR HOT MAMMAS. P8 >>

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AN INFINITY
POOL MEETS
THE BEACH TO
MAKE THE HOT
FRANCHISE PLOP



LE FRENCH
WAY FESTIVAL
BRINGS THE
ROMANCE OF
FRANCE P9



Dozens of deals to be signed with African countries

Focus on local cooperation
during visit to continent

By [Name] in [Location]

China is expected to sign dozens of deals with African countries during its visit to the continent, officials said. The deals will cover a wide range of areas, including infrastructure, trade, and investment. The visit is part of China's efforts to strengthen its ties with Africa and promote economic cooperation.

From sound waves to light waves

By CHEN NAN
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When Ai Jing, a popular singer-songwriter in the '90s, returned to the limelight after a long hiatus, she did so as a visual artist.

She held her first solo exhibition, *I Love Ai Jing*, at the iconic National Museum of China in November 2012. It was a big success.

She went for a massage shortly after the exhibition's opening.

"What do you do?" the blind masseuse asked.

When she said she's an artist and her works were on display at the National Museum of China, he asked: "Are you Ai Jing?"

He explained one of his clients mentioned she'd taken her daughter to the exhibition and enjoyed it, she says.

The museum's deputy director Chen Lusheng says: "(Ai) was the first Chinese contemporary artist to hold an exhibition here, and she's very special. The National Museum of China is better known for revolutionary history exhibitions than for modern art. But Ai's works are close to our audiences. And her theme, love, is shared by all."

Her installation work *Spray* joined the museum's collection in 2013.

The 44-year-old says the critical acclaim left her feeling both excited and lost.

"It was overwhelming as a newcomer to the art world. I didn't

know what to do next," she recalls, sitting in her two-story studio near Beijing's 798 Art Zone.

"It was like when I made albums, I always wanted to get to the next one. Because if I stop, the albums I've made become history — memories. I'm embracing my new life as an artist and want to keep going."

Soon after the exhibition, she flew to New York and Paris to take painting courses. It was like the life she had when she first started studying painting in 1999 with acclaimed artist Zhang Xiaogang.

She moved to New York in 1997 and spent nearly a decade there polishing her art skills, focusing on installations.

"That kind of life made me feel real. And I had enough time to think what I want to do next," she recalls.

She decided to return to canvas after creating such installations as the environmentally themed *The Tree of Life*. In the work, a lonely raven perches on a leafless oak tree made of disposable chopsticks.

Ai will display her latest oil works in her second exhibition *I Love Color* at Shanghai's China Art Museum.

The show retains "love" as the theme.

It's inspired by her early installation *My Mother and My Hometown* — a 6-meter-wide, 16-meter-long tapestry of more than 2,400 pieces of fabric knit by nearly 60 people, including her mother, bearing the word "love".



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AI JING
PAINTER AND SINGER-SONGWRITER

IF YOU GO

China Art Museum

205, Shangnan Lu (Road), Pudong New Area, Shanghai.

9 am-5 pm, May 25-June 29.

400-921-9021 or 021-2025-2018.

She has created eight oil paintings by repeatedly depicting colorful blocks on canvases with "love" underneath.

"Her new works are as uplifting as her early ones," says Chen Lusheng, curator of Ai's Shanghai exhibition.

"She's bolder and much more confident as an artist."

She was inspired by her 8-year-old nephew when she returned to her hometown, Liaoning province's capital Shenyang, to spend Spring

Festival with her family.

"He painted everywhere, and his paintings are full of imagination," Ai says.

"I admire his courage and freedom. As an artist, I want to be like him."

She then initiated the idea of holding a painting competition for children younger than 12 before her May exhibition. She and nine judges, including Chen of the National Museum of China, will select several children's works to be displayed during the exhibition.

"I'm not an artist who started painting at an early age and has good technique. But I want to be brave like a child as an artist," she says.

A small concert will go with her upcoming exhibition. Ai says it was the organizer's suggestion.

With five albums released in China, Japan and United States since 1992, Ai says that she doesn't want to return to music since she has found a better way to express herself.

"Since I came back, many people asked me when I'll release a new song. I said never because I've moved on," Ai says.

She'll invite musician friends from Japan, New York and Paris to sing her early songs at the concert.

"I have many ideas about my artworks," she says.

"And I won't get lost again after this exhibition."



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Ai Jing, who was big in the '90s, is rediscovering artistic painting her world with brushes rather than songs.