

Unique collaboration showcases high-profile commissions

The Deutsche Guggenheim punches far above its weight in the art world. This boutique-sized exhibition space in the heart of Berlin features high-profile commissions and important 20th-century art.

The highlight of Deutsche Guggenheim's calendar is the yearly show featuring jointly commissioned works from a single artist. These site-specific commissions — which have gone to such major figures as Gerhard Richter, James Rosenquist and Jeff Koons — attract a great deal of critical and popular attention.

The current exhibition, featuring three new works by the Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang, illustrates many of the strengths of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's joint venture. The pieces were commissioned by Deutsche Bank and fulfill that partner's obligation to provide material for one of the four shows in Deutsche Guggenheim's annual exhibition cycle. The Cai

Guo-Qiang show consists of a video projection, a large gunpowder drawing and an installation of 99 life-sized wolves, all produced specifically for the Deutsche Guggenheim's exhibition space.

Thomas Krens, director of the Guggenheim Foundation, sees the Deutsche Guggenheim as filling a gap in artistic patronage left by the diminished role of the church and royal courts. "While wealthy individuals continue to collect artwork and even commission projects," he says, "these works have typically remained within the confines of their private homes. As we move into the new millennium, we have a need to fill this void by reinventing large-scale patronage within our culture. This is one of the predominant reasons why the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin was established."

That sentiment is echoed by Deutsche Guggenheim's acting gallery director, Sarah Bernshausen, who adds that the Berlin venue "fills a gap that public institutions and commercial enterprises cannot." She has come to appreciate the "limited but flexible" exhibition space and says there is no desire to expand it. The Deutsche Guggenheim "fills a niche in Berlin's vibrant art scene," she observes.

Text by TERRY MARTIN

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