

Press Release

A DAY IN AN OPEN CITY:  
A JOURNEY THROUGH “SPRINGTIME ALONG THE RIVER“  
The Exhibition

Organized by **The Palace Museum (Beijing)** and **Phoenix TV**  
with **Bank of China (Hong Kong)** as chief charity partner

Exhibition Curated by **Beatrice Leanza | B/Side Design**

July 26 – August 25, 2019

Asian World Expo – Hall 3 | Hong Kong

*[please refer to the previous press release for a general introduction to this project – this one contains specific details on the exhibition contents and design]*

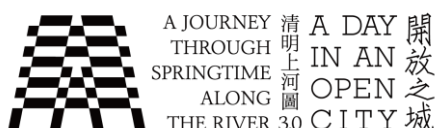
In the painstaking minutiae of its details, the painting “Springtime Along the River” (清明上河图) embodies progressive values of urban and civic nature: diversity is here celebrated both in the monumentality of its environmental scapes - natural, man-made, haphazard or ‘designed’ - as well as in the social and occupational multiplicity which characterized the unparalleled prosperity of the Chinese empire during medieval times. This vision of sociability and accessibility is the timeless and universal feature that from antiquity to contemporary times has never ceased to inspire great thinkers – it is the image of an “open city”.

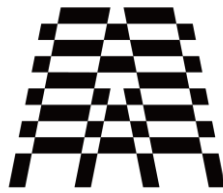
Due to the specific form of consumption that characterizes hand-scroll painting (that is sequential reading), “Springtime Along River“ literally embodies a voyage in both time and space inside the day of a bustling urban centre. The temporal narrative begins at dawn in a tranquil rural scenario, and takes the observer through the city’s suburbs among its markets and busy river banks, until revealing the frenzied life of the inner quarters of the walled city in the afternoon hours.

The main exhibition *A Day in an Open City – A Journey Through “Springtime Along the River”* “covering 1500sqm is accompanied by a library project with a selection of over 80 books and catalogues relevant to research topics explored in the show. They are both curated by **Beatrice Leanza** of the Beijing based **B/Side Design**.

The exhibition is composed of two main parts. The first is dedicated to reveal the “making of“ process of the digital animation of the painting shown alongside, in a multimedia gallery of videos and animations; it also contains an introduction to the painting’ s background.

The second - the main body of the show - is organized following the spatio-temporal narrative present in the scroll. *Eight core scenes*, sections of the scroll itself, function as content frameworks each covering a breadth





of research subjects contextualizing the political, economic, cultural and social history of Song times. Each subject takes inspiration from details that can be observed in the painting itself. These range from figures of historical importance including *emperors, politicians, master builders and philosophers*, to presentations diving into the design of *the built environment, architecture, furniture, civil and naval engineering, the material culture of Song porcelain, fashion* and the unique history of its commercial prosperity and global expansion.

They are:

SCENE 1 | A Capital in the 11th Century: Origins of a Modern Metropolis

SCENE 2 | The Ecologies of 11th Century Civilization: Reforms and Popular culture

SCENE 3 | Geographies of a Medieval City: Waterways and Maritime Trade

SCENE 4 | Naval Engineering

SCENE 5 | Streetscape: Urban Transformation and Commercial Ecosystem

SCENE 6 | The Production and Distribution of Knowledge: The Built Environment as Thought-System

SCENE 7 | Urban Society & Material Culture

SCENE 8 | The Architecture of Everyday Life

Each chapter is composed of textual, visual and video contents created specifically for the show, including interviews with Chinese scholars and experts from The Palace Museum elucidating on key aspects of Song culture such as architecture and urbanism, the evolution of Chinese typography and the history of the Song typeface, traditional Chinese painting and restoration techniques among others.

A highlight of the show are **ten installations** commissioned especially for this exhibition to ten of the most talented designers working in China today and specialized in a variety of design languages, from architecture to graphic and info design, craft research, product and textiles as well as visual communication. The result of months of research, each of these works focuses on a particular aspect of Song history to offer audiences ways to experience more broadly the importance and relation of said subjects to contemporary urban life and visual culture. In order of their appearance in the exhibition, these are the topics they have chosen:

Designer **Wei Xingyu** and his **Weestar Studio** have taken an interest in the history of money which saw the appearance during Song China of the first paper currency worldwide. **Henny Van Nistelrooy** from **HVN Studio**, an expert textile designer, celebrates one of the most revered symbols in Chinese art and folklore that appears prominently in the painting – the willow tree. The visual design studio **LAVA Beijing** takes us in a visual detour inspired by the drinking culture unique to the Song which was sublimated by some of the most renown Chinese literati in a profusion of drunk poetry. **Pinwu Design Studio** known for its extensive knowledge of Chinese traditional crafts, has chosen to work with paper cutting to construct a garden referencing stories in the painting. Architects from **MAT Office** explore the genealogy of the open city and the birth of public space through the urban patterns present in the scroll, in an installation inspired by one of the most prominent architecture elements seen in the painting called ‘cailou huanmen’ (a decorated archway). System and information designer **Zhang Shoupin** of **MAX Office** instead works with the

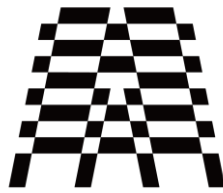


entanglements of technological and intellectual progress unique to the Song Dynasty by analysing its system of knowledge production and distribution through printing and books. **ATLAS studio** reconstructs the legacy of incense culture and its material history in relation to both the expanded global trade of the times and its holistic functions. **Nod Young** of Blackcover Design dives into the social and aesthetic history of one of the most ordinary of objects in Chinese material culture, the fan which is omnipresent in the scroll. Product and space designers from **BenWu Studio** have developed a unique furniture collection built with the millenarian technique of the Chinese mortise and tenon (*sunmao*) to explore its contemporary revival. Architect **Zhao Liqun** of **FIELD** brings the architectural knowledge preserved in the painting into relevance for the bottom-up tactics of spatial appropriation that still govern the social rituals of urban making nowadays.

The exhibition design is developed by **reMIX Studio** in a series of connected structures where visual transparencies and materials juxtapositions highlight the three core spatial sections (Rural Scape – City Outskirts – Inner City) with the eight content chapters each bearing its own visual character, within a conceptual rendering of the overall exhibition as an *entanglement of urban alleys as observed in the painting*.

The graphic design project is by **Studio NA.EO** of designer **Liu Zhizhi**, has developed an iconized visual system referencing key details in the scroll – such as willow trees, ships, mountains and waters, the city gate, the decorated archways, the bridge. The colour coding system has been determined by an analysis of those actually used in paintings and porcelain of Song times, and they are differently employed to mark the sections of the show.

Curator Beatrice Leanza says: “the exhibition aims to offer viewers a variety of coexisting planes of engagement; merging an archival impetus with research-led experimentalism it presents itself as a repository of knowledge where past and present are reconciled in celebrating the relentless search for balance between man and world of which creativity and innovation are both an expression and vessel.”



## INFO

**Organizers:** The Palace Museum, Phoenix TV

**Chief Charity Partner:** Bank of China (Hong Kong)

**Supported by:** Home Affairs Bureau

**Promotion Support:** Hong Kong Tourism Board

**Venue Support:** Asia World Expo

**Executive Organizer:** Phoenix Digital Technology, The Forbidden City Publishing House

**Co-organizer:** Phoenix Exhibitions

**Chief Curator:** Beatrice Leanza – B/Side Design | [www.bside.design](http://www.bside.design)

**Space & Exhibition Design:** Remix Studio | [www.remixstudio.org](http://www.remixstudio.org)

**VI Design:** Studio NA.EO | [www.studionaeo.com](http://www.studionaeo.com)

## **Special Installations:**

ATLAS, BenWu Studio, FIELD, HVN Studio, LAVA Beijing, MAX Office, MAT Office, Pinwu Design Studio, Weestar Studio, Nod Young

Tickets Info: [www.cityline.com](http://www.cityline.com)

## PRESS CONTACTS (INTL)

For press materials and to receive further details on the exhibition please send an email to:

**Sarah Orlando | B/Side Design**

[info@bside.design](mailto:info@bside.design)

For regular updates follow [www.bside.design/blog](http://www.bside.design/blog)

## Download Links:

[Press Announcement](#)

[Full Press Kit](#) (available from July 3)

