

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture (ACIAC) 2021 Annual Address

Vice-Chancellor's Opening Speech

**Thursday, 27 May 2021
4.00 pm – 6.30 pm**

**Room 18 (Theatre), Building EA, Ground Floor
Parramatta South Campus**

Thank you Professor Jing Han for the introduction.

Welcome everyone to Western Sydney University's Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture (ACIAC) 2021 Annual Address. It is a wonderful opportunity to come together during the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our thoughts are with those interstate and overseas who are impacted by the pandemic. I would like to acknowledge that today's event is being held on the country of Burramattagal People of the Darug Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Indigenous Australian people present.

I would like to acknowledge distinguished guests Consul (Cultural Affairs) of the Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China, Ms Shuyu Wang; Professor Nicholas Jose – who will deliver the 2021 address; Guest speakers Australian cultural figure and philanthropist, Dr Gene Sherman AM; renowned Chinese Australian artists, Guan Wei and Liu Xiao Xian; Professor Li Yao and Professor Wang Jinghui from China who appear via video; and Western Sydney University Whitlam Chair, Professor Ivor Indyk.

Welcome ACIAC Board members Kevin Hobgood-Brown AM, Annette Shu Wah, Sallie Beaumont and Distinguished Professor Ian Ang; Founding Director of ACIAC, Professor Jocelyn Chey; University supporters, including highly respected expert in Chinese art and culture, Associate Professor Claire Roberts of Melbourne University,

contemporary Chinese art writer and researcher, Luise Guest, former Counsellor for Public Affairs and Culture at the Australian Embassy in Beijing, Maree Ringland, the Director of Chinese Art at NSW Art Gallery Cao Yin; and colleagues from the University and the community.

We are honoured to have Professor Nick Jose deliver the 2021 Annual Address. Professor Jose is an outstanding scholar, diplomat, novelist, essay writer, playwright, educator and researcher.

He studied at the Australian National University and went on to receive his PhD from Oxford University in 1978. He taught English literature at the Australian National University for seven years, then at the Beijing Foreign Studies University and China East Normal University in 1986 before he served as the Cultural Counsellor at the Australian Embassy in Beijing from 1987 to 1990. During that time, which was known in China as a period of ‘culture fever’, Nick discovered many contemporary Chinese artists and introduced them to Australia, including Guan Wei and Liu Xiao Xian.

After returning to Australia, Nick continued promoting contemporary Chinese art and collaborated closely with key figures in the contemporary art field including Dr Gene Sherman. As history has illustrated, contemporary artists from China have fundamentally changed and enriched the contemporary art scene in Australia.

Professor Jose has written and published 13 books, including the novels *Paper Nautilus*, *Avenue of Eternal Peace* – which has been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award; *The Custodians* – which has been shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize; and *Original Face*. In addition, he has published two short story collections; a volume of essays, *Chinese Whispers*; and the memoir, *Black Sheep*.

He was general editor of the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature* and his recent publications as co-editor include *Antipodean China: Reflections on Literary Exchange* (published this year) and *Everything Changes: Australian Writers and China—A transcultural anthology* (published in 2020). I am pleased that *Antipodean China* will be launched at today’s event.

Professor Jose has had a longstanding connection with Western Sydney University through the Writing and Society Research Centre. He was pivotal in establishing the most influential China Australia Literary Forum in 2011, a biannual ongoing program between the China Writers Association and Western Sydney University. At the third Forum in 2013 in Beijing, Nick brought together the two Nobel Prize winners for literature, Mr Mo Yan and Mr JM Coetzee.

The 2021 ACIAC Annual Address focuses on the importance of the arts. Arts play an indispensable role in civilisation and human society, and are effective in bridging and connecting different cultures, and deepening interactions between countries. Under the current geopolitical climate, arts and culture are becoming more important than ever in continuing long established relations and exchanges between our countries.

ACIAC was established to enable the development of deeper ties with China, through open, intellectual and dynamic engagement with centuries old and emerging Chinese arts and culture. The Institute has made some remarkable achievements, including its innovative audio-visual art exhibition, *Coronavirus in Children's Eyes*, which was featured in the ABC's Breakfast program. In December 2020, with the China Writers Association, ACIAC co-hosted an inaugural online dialogue between ten prominent Australian and Chinese writers on the theme *Pandemic. Reflection. Creation*. It was a great success, and very timely. In addition, The Contemporary Australian Literature Translation Program has been set up. Sponsored by the Foundation of Australian Studies in China, it features Indigenous writing and works by Asian Australians.

The Director of the Institute, Professor Jing Han, a distinguished subtitler and literary translator, has completed the Chinese translation of the Miles Franklin award winning novel, *Too Much Lip*, by Indigenous writer Melissa Lucashenko. Professor Li Yao is currently translating another Miles Franklin award winning novel, *The Yield*, by Tara June Winch. In collaboration with the Belvoir Theatre, the Institute is producing a new play, *Miss Peony*, with trilingual subtitles in English, Cantonese and Mandarin – the first trilingual production in this country.

The Institute welcomes opportunities to engage and collaborate with the diverse communities and organisations. I pay tribute to Professor Jing Han, following from Professor Jocelyn Chey, in taking ACIAC to yet another level.

Once again, welcome everyone. I look forward to hearing from all of our guest speakers, including Professor Nick Jose's address. Thank you all for attending and supporting the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture 2021 Annual Address.

Thank you.