

Australian! proposal
The Consolation of Constellation'
Guan Wei, 2007

In the Middle Ages, an aura of mystery emanated from the graphic depiction of the universe and the natural world. People were usually looking up to the universe, God and the heavens. They both revered and dreaded the natural world. With the Renaissance, especially after the emergence of perspective drawing, humankind for the first time was placed in the centre of the world. We started to look upon the outside world with our own eyes; everything in our field of vision became an object we could fix our eyes on. The universe and the natural world were no longer held in awe by people, but were reduced to resources that could serve as models to be developed and transformed. People and the natural world gradually dissociated from one another.

As humankind expanded, we came to believe that nature was ultimately for us to rectify. Our destructive behaviour towards nature, especially over the past 200 years with the advent of the industrial revolution in the West, has already riddled the Earth with gaping wounds, to the point that our very existence is seriously threatened. Today's environmental crisis is our own doing. Acid rain erosion is killing a great number of forests; arid deserts are rapidly swallowing vast stretches of green countryside; living species are becoming extinct; great quantities of all sort of chemicals are being discharged into the atmosphere causing the hole in the ozone layer; the greenhouse effect is bringing about sudden global climate change, leading to floods on a large scale. Not to mention the problems inherent in the human species: all kind of wars are waged on grounds of differences in ethnicity, nationality and belief, because of greed that leads to struggles for our limited global resources. The menace of nuclear conflicts and terrorism, in particular, causes us to hate and mistrust the other. The future development of the human species has become an extremely pressing issue.

This work, '*The Consolation of Constellation*', consists of 24 panels, as well as murals and large-size installations (see pictures). It features a few groups of people closely bunched together. They do not differentiate between Christians, Moslems or Buddhists. They represent the embodiment of humankind. They love, encourage and support one another. In the sky, over the white clouds, they fly across the universe and start on a new journey in search of our spiritual homeland. With this work, I want to express the desire to smash the boundaries imposed on us by ethnicities, beliefs and nationalistic ideologies and revert to the reverence and awe the medieval man had for the universe, God and the natural world, with the hope that it will lead to mutual sympathy and compassion in individual relations and among ethnic groups. This is why I used, as a backdrop for this work, a great deal of cosmological elements from the medieval West and the Moslem world, particularly images from beautiful legends about constellations. I also put in a representation of *Sukhavati* (Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha) and the symbolically auspicious Chinese dragon. My purpose here is to use the universe and nature as imagined by humans of earlier times to console today's people from their restlessness and anxiety.

I wanted to reveal all sorts of details in a minute and vivid way to create a sense of marvel and elegance with a medieval flavour, a yearning for the past and an atmosphere of mystery. I have combined notions of time, space and noumenon, such as East and West, reason and perception, science and mythology, etc. I have interconnected the time past, the time present, the East, the West, and various different symbols, while blurring the bounds of then and now. My ultimate goal is to make people reconsider their relations with the environment, time and themselves, to make us decide for ourselves.