

Ming Pao Weekly – 2012 January 21 issue 2254

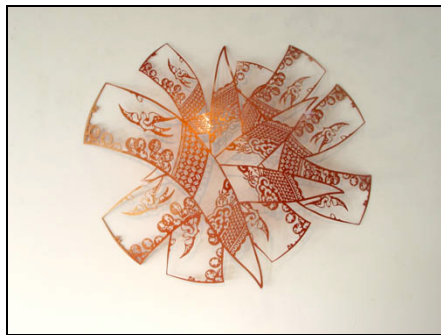
### ***Chinese New Year – Western Way***

By Kwan Yee Chan (translated from Chinese)

“In the past, when we saw a work of art we could identify the cultural background of the artist. But nowadays is this still the case? In *Laisee: 10 Years of Koru Contemporary Art in Hong Kong* exhibition most of the artists prove the answer to be no. Due to the globalization trend this exhibition gives the audience the true fusion of west meets east.

In *Laisee: 10 Years of Koru Contemporary Art in Hong Kong* artists use their own imagination to create artwork in response to the coming year of the dragon and the custom of *laisee*.

When different artworks combine different Chinese elements in the exhibition, can we recognize where are the artists from, west or east?



### **The Pattern Returns to the Place of Birth**

Neil Dawson is a New Zealand sculptor combining fanciful Chinese design, borrowed from ceramic patterns, in particular the willow-pattern, to create contemporary sculpture, with easily recognizable Chinese motifs.

During the 18th century British ceramic makers used what they imagined to be a Chinese ceramic pattern as a reference to create the willow-pattern, and this was widely used on English dining sets. When Neil Dawson began to create his artwork, he used some broken ceramic pieces, and re-created the fragments cut from steel, using a laser, to create his own willow-pattern. Traditionally the colour used would be blue but after seeing the colour of the *laisee* pocket Neil Dawson changed the colors to red and gold.

Since the Europeans used the patterns on the ceramics, we can still easily find the pattern in the present day. How many people still know about the story behind the pattern? Two centuries ago an image came into existence inspired by China, it became a western pattern and now under Neil Dawson's creation he brings the pattern back to its place of birth.



## **A Dragon Not From China**

From Neil Dawson's artwork we can find the root of the culture of the work, while another artist David Reekie from the United Kingdom, his artwork gives us a different view of the dragon.

This year, according to the lunar calendar, is the year of the dragon, and David Reekie uses this as a starting point to create his sculpture. He names the artwork *Dragon Boy I & II* and uses glass and enamel to make the sculpture. The upper part of the artwork is a dragon, and the lower part is a boy, he is inspired by the tradition of the Lord Mayor parade in his hometown of Norwich, United Kingdom. The parade features, Snap, the happy dragon, who is traditionally played by a boy in costume, and the dragon boy's task is to extract money from people, with the money later donated to a local charity.

David's cartoony *Dragon Boy* varies from the Chinese dragon but from the artists point of view the dragon in both western and eastern culture is based on imagination, and both cultures use dragons to represent hope.

While in the year of dragon it is rare to see a dragon, David draws inspiration from the Norwich, United Kingdom traditional dragon, Snap the green dragon.