

SEAN KELLY

Bei, Hu. "Interactive art creates optical illusions," *Global Times*, November 19, 2013.



Interactive art creates optical illusions

At present, a huge installation is on display in the open space of the atrium of the Jing An Kerry Centre (1515 Nanjing Road West) alluring passers-by to become a part of the optical illusion Argentine artist Leandro Erlich has created.

A life-size façade of an authentic shikumen terraced house lies flat on the ground with a large-scale mirror hung overhead at a 45 degree angle reflecting the image of the horizontal façade as an upright building. Visitors can crawl on the façade and the mirror shows them scaling a wall like Spider-Man. Those who simply stand on the façade appear to protrude from the wall, defying gravity.



Shikumen House

Born into an architecture family, Erlich is renowned for dealing with the physicality of space. Influenced by film directors like Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch and Stanley Kubrick, Erlich takes familiar, everyday spaces and subverts them to blur the line between reality and illusion.

The *Shikumen House* installation is the Shanghai incarnation of his Reflective Optical Illusion House series. Previously, Erlich wowed Londoners with Victorian terrace façade Dalston House and installed a classic Parisian house front at Le Centquatre.

Erlich said that whenever he designs an installation for a particular place, he always tries to use something that local people can understand or recognize so that "something ordinary and familiar is transformed into something new, something that would be surprising."

"I know shikumen is a very typical architecture that was built in Shanghai in the early 20th century by the Europeans that came here, and later, it was adapted with local references to Chinese culture," Erlich said. "So for this project I'm doing here, they both can be regarded as a point of encounter between these two cultures. And incredibly, the magic of the installation is that it can make anyone inside, no matter where you are from, which culture you belong to, you can all enjoy the same feelings without thinking how different or how similar you are."



Changing Rooms Photos: Courtesy of Jing An Kerry Centre

Another interactive installation by Erlich, *Changing Rooms*, is in the lobby of the Jing An Kerry Centre, making clever use of its location in a shopping mall. A sly commentary on consumerism, the titular

changing rooms feature a series of mirrors that lure visitors to chase their own reflections.

Erlich designed *Changing Rooms* after an on-site visit to the Jing An Kerry Centre. "I think for an artist, it's an opportunity to bring the artwork to its source of inspiration. We are somehow making real our dream of being able to go through a mirror. What is behind the mirror? I think the interpretation of the work always belongs to the audience, the public. And I think there is absolutely a correlation between the shopping mall and the exhibit. It changes the art itself just because of this context."

Erlich's interactive installation exhibition is part of the 15th China Shanghai International Arts Festival. The exhibition will run until November 22 and is open daily from 10 am to 9 pm.