



# GUAN WEI



*WHERE'S NED KELLY*  
2004 (180 x 306 CM)

Acrylic on 12 canvas panels. Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney



*SEARCHING FOR THE REAL NED KELLY*  
2004 (180 x 306 CM)

Acrylic on 12 canvas panels.

Guan Wei was born in Beijing in 1957 and graduated from Beijing Capital University in 1986. Following the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989, Guan Wei left China to take up an artist-in-residency at the Tasmanian School of Art. He undertook further residencies at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Canberra School of Art, ANU, before settling in Australia in 1993. He has gained a significant reputation in the last decade both in Australia and internationally. His work has been included in numerous national and international exhibitions including 'Face Up: Contemporary Art from Australia' (Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin 2004), the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial (1999), Australian Perspecta (1995), 'Silent Energy' (Museum of Modern Art, Oxford), 'Mao Goes Pop' (MCA, Sydney) and 'New Art from China' (Hong Kong and Taipei) all in 1993. He was awarded the prestigious Sulman Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW in 2002.

In the 2003 'Art and Human Rights' exhibition he was represented by a monumental painting on the theme of refugees which was purchased by the National Gallery of Australia. Many of his most recent works have been inspired by traumatic issues such as the plight of refugees and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. His two paintings in this exhibition from the series cryptically entitled 'Looking for the enemy' are ironic commentaries on war and 'security'.

He suggests that for many the search for security is fraught with fear and trepidation. In these paintings Australia is being invaded by armed troops who are hunting the 19th century bushranger

and folk hero, Ned Kelly. But who is Ned Kelly and who indeed is the enemy?

Guan Wei has commented that when he came to Australia: 'Consciously or unconsciously, I embarked on a journey of exploration of my own identity... Identity needs time for it to be proven and it is a two-way, interactive process... In my first few years here ...I floated freely between two cultures, fascinated by my role as an outsider. As time elapsed, however, I went from seeing Australia as something strange, to something familiar, to something for which I had a conscious appreciation. I see Australia as an enormous natural testing ground. I myself am making attempts to transform Western and Eastern culture...'

(Quoted in Larry Strange (ed), "Asia-Australia Institute, University of New South Wales...: A celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Australia and China", Office of the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural New South Wales. P.80)