



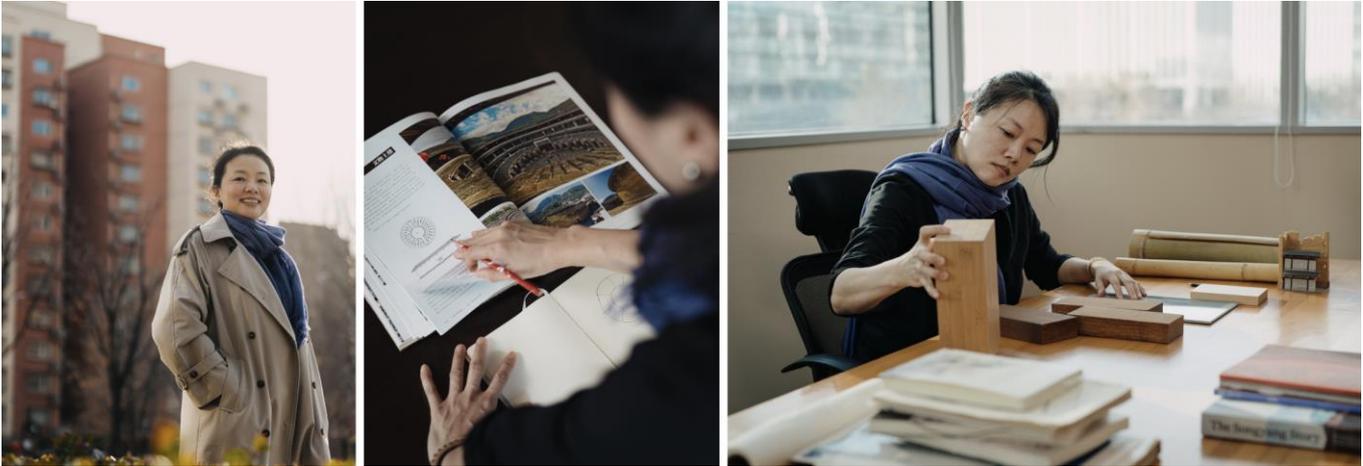
MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission 2026: Xu Tiantian

NGV International, St Kilda Road | 13 December 2026 – April 2027 | FREE



27 February 2026: One of China's most renowned female architect's, Xu Tiantian, whose work has transformed rural communities across China, has been selected as the recipient of the 2026 **MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission**, a major series inviting globally renowned designers to create groundbreaking new work for the NGV Collection.

Based in Beijing, Xu's practice uses architecture to revitalise rural and regional Chinese provinces, helping to protect their economies, cultural heritage and social wellbeing. Coining the term 'architectural acupuncture', referencing traditional Chinese medicine, Xu uses precise, seamless interventions to transform underutilised infrastructure and buildings. Recent projects include transforming a series of abandoned stone quarries into multi-purpose arts venues, and building a theatre stage within a bamboo forest, to facilitate village opera performances and as a site for meditation.

Enticing visitors from across China and abroad, these projects fuse architecture with landscape creating distinctive destinations for music, art and performance. Her holistic design approach emphasises local participation and engagement, empowering communities by championing their practices and resources, and fostering a sense of continuity and care in China's built environment. This approach, acknowledged by the United Nations as a model for strengthening urban-rural linkages, results in impactful projects that preserve heritage and revitalise local communities and their identities.

For the fifth MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission, Xu will present **Bamboo Theatre**, a full scale installation that draws on the landscape and material knowledge of Songyang County, a mountainous region of the Zhejiang Province where dense bamboo forest borders local villages and terraced tea plantations. Handcrafted from locally sourced bamboo, this new work captures the enduring use of bamboo in contemporary architecture and offers a space for gathering and contemplation.

The commission will invite reflection on how architecture fosters community and offers spaces for connection and dialogue. The installation celebrates the universal power of the circular floor plan as a symbol of protection, gathering and shared living, as seen in the architecture of many cultures worldwide. Within the installation will be a large-scale multimedia film, offering visitors an opportunity to experience the unique atmosphere Xu is celebrated for, reflecting the qualities of her increasingly iconic built projects.

Of the Commission, **Xu Tiantian, said:** 'It is a great honour to create this work for the National Gallery of Victoria and MECCA and an opportunity to bring a living material and a collective building tradition into a contemporary cultural setting. The Bamboo Theatre explores how architecture can remain light, adaptive, and rooted in place while shaping spaces for gathering, reflection, and dialogue.'

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Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'We are thrilled to announce Xu Tiantian, a visionary architect who is leading the way globally in rural redevelopment and transformation, as the fifth recipient of the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission. We are extremely grateful to MECCA for their support in this groundbreaking commission and helping Xu to realise this ambitious new work, which we look forward to sharing with our audiences.'

Jo Horgan AM, Founder & Co-CEO MECCA said: 'Five years into our partnership with the NGV, it has been incredibly meaningful to see the impact this commission has had on the careers of these remarkable women. What began as a commitment to champion women in design has grown into something quite rare globally, one of the only commissions of its kind. To know that each of these ambitious works will now live on in the NGV Collection feels important. It means their ideas, their perspectives and their creative courage become part of our shared cultural record. Xu Tiantian's work is a beautiful reminder that architecture is not just about buildings, it is about people. It can nurture community, honour culture and support wellbeing. Those ideas resonate deeply with us at MECCA. Through M-POWER, our commitment is to champion female representation in the arts, encourage participation and careers for women and girls, and ensure that women's voices and experiences are not only heard, but preserved. This commission is one small but meaningful way of contributing to that legacy.'

To celebrate the announcement of Xu Tiantian as the 2026 Commission recipient, NGV and MECCA will host a free day of programs and talks on Saturday 14 March, at NGV International.

Programming:

- From **8:45am – 9.40am**, sound healing practitioner Mellow Habits will lead a group sound bath in the NGV Great Hall.
- From **10:00am – 3:00pm**, NGV will host a Chinese Knotting Workshop, where visitors are invited to create their own bag charm using coloured paracord and beading.
- From **11:00am – 11.30am**, Xu Tiantian will join Ewan McEoin, Senior Curator of Contemporary Design and Architecture, NGV in conversation to discuss the commission and her practice.
- From **12:00pm – 12:30pm**, Ewan McEoin, Senior Curator of Contemporary Design and Architecture, NGV will moderate a talk with MECCA's creative and strategic leaders alongside Anna Cleaver, Former Selfridges Director of Brand Strategy.

For more information on the day of programming and speaker line up, visit the NGV website [here](#).

Xu is the fifth recipient of the annual, five-year commission series, made possible by a significant contribution from MECCA and supported through its social change initiative, M-POWER. The Women in Design partnership aligns with M-POWER's mission to drive meaningful progress towards gender equality, by championing opportunities for women and girls in the arts and design, and to inspire the next generation of female creatives.

The first and only series of its kind in Australia, the commission creates a platform to present topical, world-premiere works of international significance to highlight the contributions and practices of women in design. The MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission is MECCA's single largest commitment to an Australian cultural institution, through this significant contribution MECCA's support will strengthen the NGV's Collection of Contemporary Design and Architecture works by women and advance the NGV's ongoing efforts towards redressing historical gender imbalance in the Collection.

Over five years, commissioned designers are revealed annually coinciding with International Women's Day in March, with the final work being revealed by year's end. The partnership will culminate in a major exhibition in early 2027 to showcase the five bodies of work and the remarkable Collection outcome.

MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission 2026: Xu Tiantian will be on display from December 2026 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Free entry.

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IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/ab61jyzb0u755rkvqbp1p/AEflvfwRhrNKCANBz65ArhM?rlkey=10awwn18etkpwvna8n33kq2cm&st=wx8lwe2k&dl=0>

IMAGE CAPTION: Portrait of Xu Tiantian in Beijing, China, 2026. Photo: Li Chaoyu.

ABOUT XU TIAN TIAN

Xu Tiantian is an architect and the founding director of DnA_Design and Architecture, based in Beijing, China. Her practice has gained international recognition for its impactful cultural projects. Through contemporary architecture, Xu focuses on protecting and revitalising regional economies and cultural heritage in China. Her design approach emphasises local participation and engagement, empowering communities and fostering a sense of continuity and care in China's built environment.

Xu has received numerous accolades, including the Swiss Architectural Award (2022), the Berlin Art Prize (2023), the Marcus Prize for Architecture (2023), the Holcim Gold Award for Asia-Pacific (2023), and the UNESCO Global Award for Sustainable Architecture. In 2025, she received the Wolf Prize in Architecture. Xu was also named an International Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 2020 and elected a member of the German Academy of Arts (Akademie der Künste) in 2024.

ABOUT LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MECCA AND THE NGV

Since 2016, the NGV has partnered with MECCA on several ongoing initiatives designed to empower and engage female artists and designers, including Tatiana Bilbao, Bethan Laura Wood, Christien Meindertsma, Nipa Doshi MBE, Kaylene Whiskey, Nadia Hernández, Naomi Hobson, Louise Zhang, Tammy Kanat, Claudia Moodoonuthi, Rebecca Baumann, Tanya Schultz, Natalya Hughes and Karen Black.

Each year, MECCA and the NGV collaborate with a female artist or designer to create the brand's annual limited-edition holiday packaging and campaign. As part of the collaboration, MECCA supports the NGV to acquire work by the selected artist for the NGV Collection, helping to enrich its holdings of contemporary art and design. The acquired work is also displayed at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia each year.

The NGV has also worked with MECCA on their M-POWER grant program which offers emerging female artists and designers a 12-month tailored mentoring program, professional development and networking opportunities, as well as ongoing learning opportunities with industry experts.

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MECCA x NGV

WOMEN IN DESIGN COMMISSION