

**CAPITAL FILM FESTIVAL 2024
ONLY AT DENDY CANBERRA**



WELCOME TO BABEL

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ever since Jiawei first told me in April 2012 about his ambitious and slightly crazy plan to paint a monumental Tower of Babel that tells the history of world Communism, I've been fascinated by this project. We started filming with Jiawei and family in December of that year and have since become entwined in their lives.

I had previously visited China numerous times with my wife Cathy Li (RIP), and we had filmed there with artist Zhou Xiaoping for my film Ochre and Ink (2011). Later in 2015 we received time critical funding to shoot in Beijing with Jiawei and family at the Beijing Art Biennale and other significant locations.

The story of Jiawei & Lan's lives, from growing up during the Cultural Revolution in Mao's China, their unlikely relationship, and their migration to Australia in the late 1980s, is representative of many Chinese-Australians, but particularly engaging due to their great artistic talents and illustrious reputations. Through their own personal stories and Jiawei's Tower of Babel, we can experience the dramatic and often traumatic world of 20th Century Communism, from the inside. From visions of Socialist Utopia through extraordinary adventures and profound comradeship, to misery in the frozen Gulag, we get a window into the lives of many millions of people.

While the subject matter is serious, Jiawei and Lan tell their stories with a lot of humour, expressing the absurdity of life in Revolutionary China, where so little made sense to the people themselves who had to live through times of constant tumultuous change. There is also a lot of surreal humour in Jiawei's Tower of Babel, as famous personalities, artworks, love stories and battles jostle for space on the walls of his massive studio, hidden in the sleepy NSW coastal town of Bundeena.

Welcome To Babel will be a rare opportunity to experience art and history in a film that incorporates drama and entertainment through multifaceted story-telling with great production values, lensed by Peter Coleman, with brilliant editing by Karen Johnson and a magnificent music score by Caitlin Yeo.

-James Bradley