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FEARLESS
MEN'S
FASHION

PLUS
ADVENTURES AROUND THE WORLD

SPRING IS
LOOKING
BRIGHT

MODEL SEARCH WINNER JAKE
IN CALVIN KLEIN
BY PETER LINDBERGH

US \$5.50 CAD \$9.25 DISPLAY UNTIL APRIL 30, 2009



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THE GAME OF LIFE ▶

On a five-acre plot of land in the southern Chinese town of Yangjiang, a life-sized replica of the historical video game *Age of Empires* is rising from the orange clay. It's the work of 38-year-old artist **Zheng Guogu**, who bought the property from a peasant and leveraged his relationships with government officials to flout rules requiring the land to be used for agriculture. Instead, Zheng has sought to recreate the landscape of *Empires*, a strategy game in which players assume roles like Indian chiefs, European merchants, and Japanese Samurai, by hiring a team to plant trees, bring in large stones, dig an artificial lake, and erect structures corresponding to the various epochs depicted in the game. (The edifices will double as guest houses for Zheng's friends.) With no deadline for the project, Zheng has embarked upon an installation of epic proportions—a real-world equivalent to the never-finished, ever-growing stage set from Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York*. *Empires* may never be completed, but it already welcomes decay.

It's a fitting project for Zheng, who treats art as an endless game. Zheng debuted in 1996 with *The Various Life of Yanjiang Youth*, a series of high-contrast glossy photos in which his friends reenacted Chinese thrillers. Since then, his career has soared. His playful installations were highlights of the latest editions of Art Basel in both Switzerland and Miami Beach. At the former, he and his friends spent five days in Vitamin Creative Space's booth at Art Unlimited, phoning in Chinese takeout, gambling online, drinking beer, and smoking cigarettes for the benefit of onlookers. At the latter, he presented *Lehman Gate*, a monument to the fallen financial services firm in the form of a wall-to-wall collage of images of crestfallen day traders, plummeting line graphs, and laid-off bankers with brown boxes under their arms. But unlike the victims of the economic crisis, Zheng is here to stay. **SIMON CASTETS**

PHOTO COURTESY VITAMIN CREATIVE SPACE

