The HomeShop space, close to Beixinqiao subway station, is a haven for creative collaborators. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Catalysts for creativity

By EDWARD SANDERSON
FOR CHINA DAILY

Until recently, Beijing has mostly lacked the facilities for the growing number of people who work on their own or in small groups, without regular offices, but who see the social and inspirational value of working alongside like-minded people.

Co-working is one solution to this need. In Beijing there is now a handful of such spaces or groups, which have grown up over the past year offering facilities and community to the capital's telecommuters.

Although a popular option abroad, co-working has only taken off sustainably in China in recent times.

Shanghai's xindanwei.com blazed the trail, launching in 2009. Beijing's 798 Library space followed suit in 2010, with the group beijingcoworkers.com.

In January of this year, artist-run space HomeShop launched its own offering, suggesting that this way of working has tapped into a reliable audience and is reaching a level of maturity in Beijing and the country as a whole.

In a backstreet behind Beixinqiao station, HomeShop provides individual studio rooms and one larger co-working space with desks and wireless Internet.

A shared kitchen and eating area encourages a community to build and there are spaces for small events or meetings, a growing library of books, tools and other items that can be borrowed.

HomeShop's founder Elaine W. Ho, from the United States, is enthusiastic about her creation.

"Amid white-collar communities, short-term office rentals have been quite a common phenomenon all over the world and in recent years, it's been common to see co-working spaces develop specifically geared toward creative communities," she said.

Ho describes her target audience as "independent artists, freelancers or *beipiao* (floating population)".

In her experience, collaboration is a crucial aspect to these people's activities.

"On one hand, setting up a formal structure to co-work is a means to share the financial burden," she said. "On the other, it provides the opportunity for different relationships to grow."

Located in the 798 Art Zone, 798 Library was launched by Lu Dahuang in May 2010 following his return to China after studying for a master's degree in digital publishing in Paris.

Lu describes the 798 Library as having connections to the Internet in terms of philosophy.

"Library 2.0 is an extension of the Web 2.0 concept," he said. "It's not only about reading but also about interacting."

With this concept, Lu said his focus is on Chinese contemporary arts media.

"798 Library works with our company WE-ME Inc as a database and a digital publishing platform," he said.

He predicts that in 2011, the Chinese public will increasingly get their digital content published on touch screens and mobile devices, such as tablet PCs or smartphones, and sees his project as a key supporter.

Another creative mind behind the co-working idea is Michael Daugherty, who set up beijingcoworking.com as "a semi-self-organized group of people who like to work together".

"We could all basically do our work online or at our homes, but we've realized we're more productive when we work together," he said. "We have a core group of four to five regulars who come to our co-working sessions and about 45 people on our e-mail list who come every now and again."

Every Sunday night, Daugherty sends out an e-mail to members with the schedule for the coming week.

"We don't charge a fee and we keep to a regular schedule, while also being open to trying new places," he said.

Most of their members are technology- and startup-based, but they also come from fields like graphic design or NGOs.

"We have members who are working on everything from a board game website to services for museums in China," Daugherty said, before adding that his group provides additional services.

"We offer special programs designed to help make progress on startups, such as an accountability group where we help people finish their goals, and an Inspiration Lunch, at which startup founders from around Beijing get together and talk about their experiences and projects," he said.

For HomeShop's Ho, co-working addresses the issue of the "precarious working identities" that are becoming more common in Beijing, paralleling issues of mobility, flexibility and the workers' networked identity.

"Organizing a co-working space, we hope to mobilize these elements in a way that should ideally benefit both us and others," she said. "A nice environment to work in, a supportive community and a sharing of resources, all in a convenient location."

HomeShop is a courtyard house that has individual studio rooms and one larger co-working space with desks and wireless Internet.

The 798 Library is a large space that follows the philosophy of the Internet and Web 2.0 to promote not only reading, but also interacting.

Above-left: Lu Dahuang, founder of the 798 Library, sits in his studio with a cushion on his head. Above-right: Michael Daugherty is the man behind beijingcoworking.com.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A string of inline skaters, both Chinese and foreign, gets some exercise and a touch of the sun.

Falling inline with friends

By LAUREN JOHNSON
FOR CHINA DAILY

With winter coming to a close, many are thinking about the great outdoors and growing eager to shake off their winter haze and start an active and exciting springtime.

Among the many options, Beijing has some inline skating clubs gearing up for an amazing year of activities, providing a fun way to stay fit, meet new friends and learn the city.

There are two main groups within the Beijing area. The most versatile activity is the Friday Night Skate, which is run by the Beijing United Skaters.

This is a group usually consisting of at least 20 people, but there can be as many as 80 depending on the route offered.

"They are from all walks: students, teachers, office workers, professionals, managers, doctors, nurses, painters, government officials, retirees and even migrant workers," said John Xu, who added that members come from all over China and abroad.

Xu, a veteran ice skater and six-year inline skater, believes the experience beats ice skating.

"Imagine a roller rink party on Beijing's lovely wide smooth streets without the rink," he said. "The combination of music, skates and friends creates a truly unique experience."

Member Chen Weiyun explains why she joined the group.

"I was new in Beijing and looking for a fun way to explore the city," she said. "Zooming past Beijing's ancient landmarks, I couldn't wipe the grin off my face. I was hooked."

She said she keeps going back because of the sheer variety of activities.

Beijing United Skaters encourages anyone with the proper safety equipment and inline skates to meet at the weekly rally point highlighted on the member's website: www.0106666.com. There is no registration, enrollment or fees.

"You will automatically become a member of our club upon arrival," said Xu, noting that the night skates are more suited to intermediate and expert skaters.

In addition to Friday Night Skate, Beijing United Skaters also does multi-day skates and long-haul trips, including the annual Beijing to Tianjin skate in September — which is more than 100 kilometers in just half a day — and the third annual 360-km skate around Qinghai Lake in July.

Beijing's second largest inline skating club is called Happy Skaters. As an older group, they are more interested in general health than late-night skating.

Happy Skaters meet most mornings in skin suits with their banners, team chants and team song. With the mighty Bird's Nest looming in the background, these Happy Skaters are staying fit, making friends and getting attention.

As spring approaches, the two skating groups plan to vamp up their activities, luring more members into their clubs.

"Skating presents an energy-saving, environment-friendly, cool and healthy inner city personal transportation system," said Xu.

"The basic principles for our club are freedom, equality and humanity."

what's on

EXHIBITS

Ming to Nirvana

Red Gate Gallery is showing *Ming to Nirvana*, a group sculpture exhibition that celebrates the dynamism and diversity of the plastic arts.

Transforming the interiors of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) watchtower into an eclectic sculpture garden, the exhibit is inspired by a plethora of themes ranging from Han Dynasty burial suits, voyeuristic apartment windows to the transcendental philosophies of Buddhism.

On display are ceramic dresses from artist Li Xiaofeng, resembling delicate armor made of blue and white Ming imperial shards that reference Han-period jade suits.

There are also works by Shi Zhongying that draw references from Giacometti's sinewy forms to create cocoon-like figures in various poses. Like a sleeping Buddha that symbolizes the attainment of Nirvana, the reclining steel and mesh wire figure echoes the setting of a Dunhuang cave Buddha that has laid dormant for centuries.

The sculptures of Island6, an artist collective, reveal an animated narrative using LED technology. The light panels resemble a magnifying lens of a telescope similar to *Rear Window*, the classic Alfred Hitchcock film where the viewer gets a glimpse of the intimate environment of the LED personages.

Completing the post-modern scenario, Laurens Tan's spaceship-like fiberglass sculptures herald the arrival of Beijing as the new metropolis.

Until Feb 28. Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Watchtower, Chongwenmen, 6525-1005.
崇文门东便门角楼

Donations on show

To celebrate the Chinese new year, the National Art Museum of China is holding an exhibition of donations provided over the past five decades.

The exhibition comprises more than 800 artworks with a wide range of categories donated by about 88 representative artists.

Included are traditional Chinese ink paintings, oil paintings, printmaking, sculptures, sketches, caricatures and folk art.

Over the past 50 years, the National Art Museum of China has accepted donations in different ways and has collected a number of artistic treasures. The exhibition will provide an opportunity for the public to appreciate this cultural fortune.

Until Feb 26, 9 am-5 pm. National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng district, 6400-1476.
东城区五四大街一号中国美术馆

EVENTS

Shinichi Osawa live show

Shinichi Osawa is a singer, musician, producer and DJ.

He first hit the scene as leader of a band called Mondo Grosso in 1993, of which he has released works internationally. His album *The One* was released in Japan, Europe and the United States.

As a producer, his works include Japanese artists Namie Amuro. As a remixer, Osawa has worked for Digitalism and Felix da Housecat.

Part of his appearance at Yugong Yishan will be as DJ. His skills are evident from being highlighted as a key DJ in Japan over the last two years.

Osawa will be joined by Japanese friend and touring buddy, Masa. Also featuring at the event will be R3 and Liman.

Feb 25, 10 pm. Yugong Yishan, west courtyard of the site of former Duan Qirui government, Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng district, 6404-2711.
东城区张自忠路3-2号,段祺瑞执政府旧址西院,愚公移山

Drama: *Out of Order*

This is a comedy that tells the tale of what happens inside a hotel suite one night.

The play was created by Ray Cooney, a British comedy writer. His works have been staged on the West End and Broadway, and in 1991, *Out of Order* won the UK's Laurence Olivier award for Best New Comedy.

Founded in 1995, the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center was established by the former Shanghai People's Art Theater (initially founded in 1950) and Shanghai Youth Drama Troupe (founded in 1957).

Since the establishment of the center, it has promoted a range of new dramas, including on tour throughout China. The center was awarded the Plum Blossom Award, Gold Lion Award and the Magnolia Award.

Feb 19 to 21, 7:30 pm. National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 West Chang'an Avenue, Xicheng district, 6655-0000.
国家大剧院

Ballet: *The Nutcracker*

The National Ballet of China has adapted this classic for the Chinese stage.

The new story is set in China and the dance styles and costumes are inspired by Chinese culture.

Founded in 1959, National Ballet of China (NBC) is the only Chinese national ballet company.

Pyotr Gusev, the celebrated Russian ballet master, laid a solid foundation of classical ballet for the company. Today, in its repertoires, there are dozens of full length ballets, including *Swan Lake, Giselle, Don Quixote, Le Corsaire, La Sylphide, Sylvia* and many others.

Over the past 20 years, the company has also staged numerous contemporary works such as *Serenade, Etude, Four Last Songs* and *Rite of Spring*.

The NBC has successfully used ballet to depict the lives of Chinese people.

The Red Detachment of Women, Lin Daiyu and *Raise the Red Lantern* have been highly-acclaimed domestically and internationally. These outstanding ballets established a foundation for creating a style that was uniquely Chinese.

The NBC has successfully toured over 30 countries and regions such as Britain, the United States, Russia, France, Denmark and Italy.

Feb 24 to 26, 7:30 pm. National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 West Chang'an Avenue, Xicheng district, 6655-0000.
国家大剧院