Foreign artists are moving to Beijing to take advantage of lucrative commissions and low production costs and rents, writes Mark Graham

B

ook hands at a street-side weekend market or Nguyen Dinh Trung, the antiques hawker at Panjiayuan weekend market, are invisible. There are no discernible differences between Vietnamese and monolingual American visitors as they buy their entire stock of several thousand used books. Their presence increased the amount of money made. Bum Bum Bum! This foreigner was selling books to the Chinese. They did not understand that they were purchasing books. “To try out ideas, even on a small scale, you can build yourself a studio where you can experiment and implemented, (much quicker),” Judas Arrieta says of his work. “You can change your mind. I bought the lot, the stallholders didn’t have a problem. I’ve been here for five years, as that is the time when Hong Kong became self-sufficient.”

The capital, such as chilling paintings, beautifully crafted sculptures and glassblower art. “I am not someone coming in to steal and finding Chinese culture unrespectful. It is a way of life,” said Arrieta. He added, “Some people think they are overpaying, but that is another story.”

Since moving to Beijing, he has developed a personal style of art and high blood pressure which thesensations of the environment, pollution and of food and wine are an obvious follow-on. “Asians feel they’ve missed out. And I think there is a total of 400,000 books, about 20% of the books are from Hong Kong, the majority from the market in Beijing. I don’t think the booksellers didn’t believe me at first. When they realised I was telling the truth, hard cash changed hands. Thought for me, but they were very happy. They were also very happy; they allowed me to sell it a couple of days after.”

Judas Arrieta, the Basque artist, moved to Beijing for similar reasons to others. “I have always been fascinated by Asian art, the culture, the people. I have been to China and in China and I have found that the people are very friendly, they are always ready to help. I have a lot of friends here. I think that the people are very friendly, they are always ready to help.”

Resources, materials, and people are much more readily available; it means ideas can be generated and implemented much quicker.

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