



Follow Me, 120x300cm, 2003

I took the name of my work "**Follow Me**" from the first and most popular English language-teaching program introduced by CCTV (China State Television) in 1982, during the early years of economic reconstruction in China. This English-training series had sixty programs, which were repeatedly broadcast for twelve years. It had 10 million viewers and sold over 30 million textbooks, setting a Guinness record for foreigners learning English. Many Chinese people got a glimpse of the western lifestyle from "Follow Me." Farmers, workers, soldiers and students, even monks at Lama Temple, enjoyed watching the program which provided a window to learn what foreigners eat and wear and how they live. Many people in Mainland China consider "Follow Me" as the Bible for learning oral English. For example, one

young soldier in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, was featured on CCTV Headline News as a national hero because he studied English so well. In the 1980s, “

Follow Me

” helped many Chinese people make real their dreams of going overseas to further their studies. The English teaching TV program’s significance went far beyond learning English. It helped Chinese people to learn about the west and the world, just after China emerged from its closed-door policy.

In the 1980s, I also enjoyed watching “*Follow Me*” while studying in high school. However, I could never keep up with the program. Twenty years later, Chinese economic reform has brought many dramatic changes. China now has a myriad of exchanges with global industries from around the world. China hosted the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai. At least on the surface, China is communicating well with the rest of the world. However, when I look at myself, I see a “backward” guy, still failing to speak English. Such thoughts inspired me to create my photograph “

Follow Me

”. For the shoot, I constructed a huge four-meter wide and eight-meter long blackboard in Beijing Film Studio in 2003, and we scribbled many Chinese and English slogans and terminology referencing changes in Chinese history and culture, words mainly taken from China-based English-training textbooks and manuals. From the early TV series of “*Follow Me*” to my photograph “

Follow Me

”, it has been my dream to see to realize the well-known slogan “China Walks towards the World, and World Learns about China”.