

# Media Release

Friday 31 January 2020

## Golden rats light up Sydney's lunar lanterns

To celebrate the Year of the Rat and launch the spectacular Lunar Lanterns exhibition, nine giant golden robotic rats on a rotating tower of industrial cogs have been lit up at Circular Quay.

Over 10 nights, more than 600,000 people are expected to marvel at the outdoor display and interact with 12 illuminated sculptures representing the animals of the lunar zodiac.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the Lunar Lanterns celebrate Sydney's unique artistic flair.

"This year's Lunar Lanterns will impress with their scale and artistic innovation," the Lord Mayor said.

"These artworks showcase Sydney's talented Asian-Australian artists, and are one of the highlights of our Lunar Festival."

"I look forward to seeing our local residents and visitors alike being delighted by this fantastic display, and wish everyone a prosperous and fortunate new year."

Designer of the new hero Rat Lantern, Claudia Chan Shaw, said the golden rats welcomed 2020 as the year of the Metal Rat, with gold signifying good luck and prosperity.

"Gold is a very auspicious colour in Chinese culture. It's the colour of heroism – and these are golden, glowing hero rats," Ms Chan Shaw said.

"When I think about rats, I imagine they're busy, industrious and gregarious. They're always running from one thing to another, a bit like wind-up toys. These robot rats each have a spinning key in their back and a rotating symbol for good luck on their chests."

The Rat is the first animal in the lunar zodiac, making it a symbol of new beginnings, as well as an emblem of wealth and surplus.

Each animal has been designed by an Asian-Australian artist as a contemporary interpretation of the centuries-old tradition of lighting lanterns for the Lunar New Year. In 2020 four new zodiacs have been unveiled by the City:

- **Rat** – Claudia Chan Shaw's golden glowing rats in a Busby Berkley inspired formation resembling wind-up toys, reflecting their busy, industrious nature. Visitors can walk amongst the rats and copy their poses, making it the perfect photo opportunity.
- **Rooster** – Sydney Lunar Festival curator Valerie Khoo's new design celebrates the diversity of Sydney with hundreds of small, ovoid shaped lights representing many parts creating a unique whole. The juxtaposition of brushed steel that forms the frame of the Rooster, against the elegance of the soft lights, symbolises the concept of yin and yang.

- **Rabbit** – Nancy Liang and Fiona Lu collaborated to create a five-metre-tall Rabbit in the style of Chinese paper-folding. The drawings on the ‘paper’ evoke the wrappers of traditional candy, harking back to the artists’ childhoods and New Year treats.
- **Horse** – the first Korean-Australian artist to participate in the exhibition, Min-Woo Bang’s six-metre-tall twin Horses are inspired by traditional village guardian sculptures that ward off demons. They are covered in vibrant Korean floral patterns and feature a glowing heart.

The new animals are joined by crowd favourites:

- **Pig** – Qian Jian Hua’s impressive pink Pig features a deconstructed three-dimensional grid carved into an abstract silhouette of a pig.
- **Dragon** – created by artist Guan Wei, the Loong (Dragon) tells the story of a little boy retrieving a jewel from Loong’s mouth, enabling it to spit water and bring rain to the land.
- **Ox** – Laurens Tan’s Ox brings together two symbols in Chinese culture, the Ox and the Scholar Rock, representing strength and knowledge.
- **Snake** – designed by amigo and amigo, the Snake will slither over visitors, suspended below the Cahill Expressway at East Circular Quay.
- **Dog** – Song Ling’s friendly Dog embodies the canine characteristics of loyalty, intelligence and sociability.
- **Tiger** – Malaysian-born artist and graphic designer Kevin Bathman’s majestic Tiger represents happiness, wealth, peace and prosperity.
- **Monkey** – designed by Louise Zhang, the Monkey features an impressive eight metre tower of colourful, playful monkeys juggling small glowing peaches representing long life.
- **Sheep** – Pamela Mei-Leng See’s electric Sheep are inspired by cut-paper lanterns of the Song Dynasty with the round horns of Australian merino sheep.

The Lunar Lanterns exhibition lines the Circular Quay foreshore until 9 February.

On 3 and 4 February audiences who are blind or have low vision can experience the Lunar Lanterns exhibition in a meaningful way when Fran Mathey hosts audio described tours. Fran delivered popular audio described tours at Lunar Lanterns in 2019, and has provided the audio description of Sydney New Year’s Eve fireworks for the last two years. To register, please phone 02 9265 9333 or email [SLFaccessinclusion@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SLFaccessinclusion@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au).

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For Sydney Lunar Festival event details, visit [whatson.cityofsydney](http://whatson.cityofsydney)

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