

Chinglish as a cultural heritage

By Zhang Dongya

Travelers in China have gotten used to seeing signs or labels in bad English, which has come to be known all over the world as "Chinglish." Like many visitors, Oliver Lutz Radtke, from Germany, used to take pictures of Chinglish signs to share with family and friends. But he decided to go a step farther – he collected thousands of Chinglish examples, some from other foreigners, and published them last year in a book called *Chinglish*, to preserve what he considers a cultural heritage.

Online museum for Chinglish

Radtke, 31, who majored in Modern Chinese at his country's Heidelberg University, went to Shanghai in 2000 to continue his studies. On the day he arrived, he saw a sign in a cab that said, "Don't Forget to Carry Your Thing." This aroused his interest and started his love affair with Chinglish.

At the beginning, he merely took pictures of Chinglish signs for fun and posted them on his German Web site. But it became a habit and he eventually took his digital camera everywhere to record the misuse of English he encountered.

In 2005, Radtke had collected more than 300 pictures and put up

the Web site Chinglish.de to exhibit the photos, as well as to receive contributions. He received photos from all over the world. "When I found out that more and more signs had been corrected, I realized Chinglish on signboards would disappear one day," Radtke said. "Therefore, I want my site to become a kind of online museum for disappearing Chinglish expressions."

More than a hilarious photo album

Last year, Radtke published *Chinglish: Found in Translation*, which contains 100 Chinglish examples. "This is about passion, not mockery," Radtke said on his Web site.

"I think readers should look at them with a sense of humour, so they can better understand its meaning," he said. "People may be taken by the hilarity of it, but what I tried to express was more than that – Chinglish is a reflection of Chinese humor and wisdom, also a window into Chinese culture and the Chinese way of thinking."

His new book *More Chinglish: Speaking in Tongues*, published under Gibbs Smith in Utah, is due to come out in January. Besides showcasing 100 new Chinglish photographs, Radtke shares more dis-

coveries, such as the factors that lead to the misuse of English in China. The book also includes an interview with a US professor who has done research and taught classes on Chinglish, which discusses the linguistic phenomenon.

Preservation of beauty

Radtke uses the word "complex" to describe his relationship with China. His grandfather, who was an engineer and worked in China in the 1970s, told him many stories about the country as a child. In 1992, Radtke took a Chinese elective while in middle school. "Only five students took the class, so I was one of the first people to learn Chinese," he said. Coincidentally, his father's job partly involved making signboards in Chinese.

Radtke describes Chinglish as "the wonderful result of an English dictionary meeting Chinese grammar." He said it is amazing to understand the Chinese way of thinking through Chinglish signs.

In Radtke's opinion, Chinglish signs in government offices and hospitals should be fixed, but those in public parks should stay the way they are. "Chinese people should be confident enough to keep them. They are beautiful," he said.



Oliver Lutz Radtke

Photo provided by Oliver Lutz Radtke



Wharton Tiers Photo by Wang Yu

Noise maker comes to town

By Wang Yu

The three members of the local rock band Carsick Cars must have been nervous Thursday night. Wharton Tiers, who took part in producing many of Sonic Youth's music, will supervise the recording of the local band's second album. And the group found out that Tiers was not only a "guitar noise maker," but a musician with an eclectic taste.

"I don't think there is a line between being a recording engineer and a producer," the 55-years old Tiers said, sitting beside a grand piano in the studio. Tiers, who taught himself music, is a composer, producer and engineer at his Fun City Recording Studio in New

York City. "I first became a lead vocalist when I was in high school, then our drummer left so I filled in the gap. After I moved to New York, the room I rented was too cramped for my drums, so I switched to guitars and keyboards," he said.

Tiers' job at a radio station put him on the path to recording music. "I got a job in radio and learned the basic skills there," he said. "I still keep some of these tape machines with me. Unlike the computers we're using now, music recorded by tape sounds warmer. It also requires you to play well, because you cannot edit samples on a screen."

Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr, White Zombie – the names that

dot Tiers's client list are famous for their experimental guitar sound. "I grew up in the late-1960s to the early 1970s. That age of hard rock had a great impact on me and my guitar sound," Tiers said. Since 1982, when he worked with Sonic Youth on their first album, he has created many masterpieces of alternative music.

But not everyone can get used to the noise he makes. "It's understandable. To find the beauty inside fuzz guitar playing, you should open your ears, catch creative moments and be aware of the excitement which your body feels," Tiers said.

But the loud music maker has quieter times too. "Some of my classical music pieces are played

on keyboard. I also learned how to play violin. Classical music is more complex as there are many musical instruments that take part in a symphony," Tiers said. He has put some of his classical music ideas into the Wharton Tiers Ensemble, a band formed in 1997 and which has already released two CDs.

"We have five guitars, a sax, bass and drum in the band, so we have been called a symphonic-surf-ambient-tribal instrumental band for a long time," Tiers said with a smile. "As a musician, I think one should have an open heart and play in front of as many people as possible. You can always learn something new from different people and different music," he added.

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