Local Artist Honored by the Chinese

"Food Chain," Pacific Grove sculptor Peter Hiers' artistic depiction of the modern food system, was one of 13 American works selected for this year's Beijing International Art Biennale exhibition.

The event, founded to showcase the diversity and richness of world culture, opened in September at the National Art Museum of China. Artists from 85 countries applied to participate. Hiers was also one of five exhibitors invited to discuss his work at a symposium, "Environmental Concern and Human Existence," held in conjunction with the Beijing Biennale.

Like much of his art, "Food Chain" was inspired by what Hiers sees as unsustainable human behavior. To create the piece, he walked area roadways and collected rubber-coated wires from exploded truck tires. He then laced silverware into a rectangular mat made from the wires. In this way, "Food Chain" speaks to the many miles food is transported, the fossil fuels consumed in the process and the commercial powers involved in satisfying society's most basic needs.

"It's about the web of interconnectivity that is our modern food chain," Hiers says. "We depend on all these external links between us and our original source of food... We follow a cycle of earning money doing something unrelated to food, taking the money from that, and depending on all the layers of transportation — thousands of miles, countless gallons of fuel — to get food to our table."

By creating pieces like this, Hiers aims to start a larger conversation.

"I hope that what I'm trying to say with my artwork will reach a wider, multicultural audience, because I feel like the fate of humanity is a daily issue for all of us to deal with," he says. "Ultimately, I believe that we need to replace our ideology with a new ideology that includes the concept of balance and the concept of "enough.'"

Hiers has exhibited in 10 states and 15 California cities over the past 25 years. His work is currently represented by the Carmel Art Association Gallery and the Ernesto Mayans Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. For more information, visit www.peterhiers.com.