ISSUE 11: REVIEWS
ASIA, LONDON, AND THE OLYMPIC SUMMER

ANISH KAPOOR
AI WEI WEI
SONG DONG
LIVING IN SILK
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SUPERFLAT
Our annual reviews issue presents a variety of reviews and reports on Asian art events and exhibitions throughout Europe and Asia.

We open with a commentary by Majella Munro on recent events in London, including a visit to Anish Kapoor's Olympic installation, the ArcleorMittal Orbit, and a screening of Ai Wei Wei documentary Never Sorry at the Barbican, alongside a number of symposia and conferences presenting new research in the field.

Editor Amy Jane Barnes reviews Song Dong's Waste Not, also at the Barbican, and his first major exhibition in the UK. Waste Not is a staggering installation of 10,000 household items hoarded by his mother in fear of economic hardship during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Linda Da Kong continues the Olympic theme issue with a visit to Living in Silk at Nottingham Castle Museum, an exhibit of textiles from the Chinese National Silk Museum and local collections that forms part of the Cultural Olympiad.

Cy Cheng-Yi Shih reviews Taiwanese artist Chien-Wei Chang's Don’t Look Back - I Told You So exhibit held in Leicester earlier this year, which continued the theme of storing and preserving by drawing on the idea of the cellar as a receptacle for memories and experiences, rather than physical commodities.

Namiko Kunimoto discusses the ongoing Gutai retrospective at the National Museum for Modern Art, Tokyo. The history of this important group, primarily concerned to produce ephemeral, irreproducible, performance art, is evoked through the presentation of documentary photographs, archival footage, and even reconstructions of some lost pieces.

We are pleased to include in-depth accounts of the work of two contemporary artists from East Asia. Jiyoung Kang offers an analysis of her artistic process and intentions in creating the Perdu-e series, digitally-manipulated photographs of nanofibres that encourage viewer interactivity in order to experiment with the boundaries of the gallery setting. MinChih Sun discusses Taiwan-based artist Bridget O’Leary’s Monkey Queen in connection to both Western art practices and Chinese aesthetics, interrogating what ‘hybridity’, that term proliferant in discourse on ‘globalisation’ and ‘the contemporary’, might mean in practice, and reminding us of the range of potential manifestations of the diaspora.

The issue concludes with three book reviews: on Laura Hein and Rebecca Jennison’s Imagination Without Borders, a monograph on Japanese feminist and activist Tomi-yama Taeko; Adrian Favell’s Superflat: A Short History of Japanese Contemporary Art; and a survey catalogue of Cheong Soo Pieng’s work issued by the National Art Gallery, Singapore.
ASIAN ART IN LONDON: RECENT CONFERENCES AND EVENTS
Majella Munro

Including an account of Anish Kapoor’s *Arcelor Mittal Orbit*, *I am Terayama Shuji* at Tate Modern, East Asian Visual Culture at Tate Modern, *Modernism Beyond the West* at the Association of Art Historians Annual Conference and Ai Wei Wei’s *Never Sorry*.

THE SPIRIT OF STRIVING FOR HAPPINESS IN HARD TIMES:
SONG DONG *WASTE NOT*, BARBICAN, LONDON.
Amy Janes Barnes

*Waste Not* is an extraordinary assemblage of everyday objects, ordered and arranged by type. It is, as the curator Wu Hung has described it, ‘monumental, but ordinary’, to which I would add emotionally intense without resort to sentimentality; comfortably familiar and accessible, yet overwhelming in its sheer scale. Viewing *Waste Not* and picking one’s way through piles of books, clothes, old garden pots, towers of soap bars, broken chairs, patched quilts, bags, shoes, toys, wash basins, bottle tops…is a thoroughly immersive and moving experience.

LIVING IN SILK:
CHINESE TEXTILES THROUGH 5000 YEARS
Linda Da Kong

*Living in Silk* has been co-organised by Nottingham City Council and China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou. It aims to show a complete history of Chinese silk from 5000 BC until the present day using outstanding and exquisite silk garments, accessories and textiles on loan from China National Silk Museum, the first time that this nationally important collection has been shown in the UK, here in celebration of the 2012 London Olympics, even though the 5000 years in the title is a little overstated, considering the oldest object on show is from the Warring States period (475-221 BC).
CHIEN-WEI CHANG, DON’T LOOK BACK! I TOLD YOU SO
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Chien-Wei Chang’s exhibition formed part of The Shape of Things, a project which aims to encourage diverse practices and audiences for contemporary crafts and is initiated by Arts Council England South West. A group of selected artists have created artworks to represent how cultural identities and authorship interact with artists’ practices in today’s intercultural British society.

GUTAI: THE SPIRIT OF AN ERA
Namiko Kunimoto 23

Gutai: The Spirit of an Era charts the period from 1954 to 1972, during which the group functioned together, with special attention paid to the influence of Yoshihara. Yoshihara was keenly aware of developments among the avant-garde in France and the United States and actively sought international connections for Gutai by staging media spectacles and producing a series of journals in English and Japanese which included photographs of the group’s work. This current exhibition marks the degree of recognition Gutai has finally achieved both at home and abroad.

ARTIST’S PORTFOLIO
REVEALING THE NANOSCALE WORLD:
THE DIGITAL RECREATION OF NANOFIBER IMAGES
Jiyoung Kang 27

The Perdu(e) series are digital paintings of nanofiber images that produce integrated, convergent, formative images by breaking down the boundaries between art and science, macroscopic and microscopic worlds, and abstraction and representation. I have added the emotional interaction between the paintings of nanofibers and their viewers to extend the experience of creating their own supermicroscopic world. These modified, transformed images become living beings that can directly communicate with the spectator through emotional interaction.
To Western eyes, the Chinese Monkey King is fun and mysterious, but an innovative and quirky manifestation of this mythic figure as a female with a unique stern look surprises its viewers. Proudly revealing herself in a pinkish aura, this female monkey boldly stares at whoever walks into her field of view, whether a connoisseur who is informed by complex ideologies regarding the function and meaning of art, or simply a passer-by with a curious quick glimpse. It is clear to the viewer that the materials, techniques, and form of the painting are all Western. But for those who know about Chinese aesthetics, whether brought up in Chinese culture, or taking a personal interest in it, a puzzle appears: that look is an exemplar of *chuanshen* (delivering the spirit of the subject) and *yijing* (exhibiting the artistic mood), two classical Chinese notions on art, presented through Western techniques. Is it intended, or is it simply an accident because of the Chinese subject matter?
CHEONG SOO PIENG: VISIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Yeo Wei Wei
Since our last issue, there has been a seeming explosion of interest in Asian art in London and the UK, with a series of exhibitions and symposia on the topic taking place in recent months. I suspect this new-found fervour is Olympics related, and in our last issue we included an announcement of the Suits and Saris exhibition, curated by Editor Amy Jane Barnes, as part of the Cultural Olympiad. But perhaps the most visible and lasting legacy of the Olympic’s cultural project is Anish Kapoor’s installation, the ArcelorMittal Orbit, which looms over the park in Stratford, and is now the UK’s largest piece of public art.

I must confess to being a little sceptical about the fruits of Kapoor’s labours at first glance. Though Kapoor is a great favourite of mine, the bare steel skeleton gives the structure an unfinished appearance. It has, no doubt, been left exposed as tribute to the sponsors, the ArcelorMittal steel company, and I wondered whether the economics of the commission had been allowed to determine the aesthetic (indeed, that the monument would be executed in the company’s steel was decided before the commission was even awarded to Kapoor). Then I saw the Orbit at night. By day it is unassuming, ungainly even, but at night it glows a siren red; Kapoor’s signature red, the red of his Marsyas, a red deliberately chosen to mimic the internal spaces of the body in an attempt to transcend ethnicity, race, skin: this is the central project of Kapoor’s oeuvre, and an ideal compliment to Olympic aspirations. The sculpture speaks to one of the major ideological assumptions of the Olympic movement: that the body is the paramount site of experience, and that this experience is universal. Kapoor makes this point much more subtly than Gormely’s rival bid – an enormous human statue comprised of smaller human statues – ever could have.

The Orbit is the overarching monument that forges the rather disparate and even ugly buildings of the Olympic park into a whole. The design and materials consciously recall the Eiffel Tower, which was also constructed as the centrepiece of a temporary event, but went on to form the main attraction for post-event visitors to the site, this being the acknowledged ambition of the Orbit. Critics have likened the Orbit to a number of towers and monuments,
including those associated with totalitarian architecture, which is an unjustified comparison: of course, there’s an ideology behind the commission, but Kapoor has nonetheless succeeded in rendering the work consistent with his own artistic concerns. To my mind the Orbit is closest in spirit to Okamoto Taro’s Tower of the Sun, a sculpture informed by a number of ethnographic traditions, which permitted the ingress of visitors, and has outlasted the Osaka World’s Fair, for which it was constructed, by over four decades. From many angles, the Orbit is similarly obscured by event buildings that it seems destined to outlast.

Above, the Olympic Park, Stratford, and right, Okamoto’s Tower of the Sun within the Expo’ Park in Osaka. While the Tower is extant, the surrounding buildings have been demolished.
Kapoor has been the most prominent Asian diaspora artist in Britain for some time, a status cemented by his award of the aforementioned Marsyas Unilever commission at Tate Modern. The Tate continues to champion non-European contributions to modernism, hosting a belated but much welcomed series of research seminars on Asian art. In March they mounted a series of films and discussions connected to the output of Terayama Shuji, an innovative and provocative post-war Japanese director connected to the influential Art Theatre Guild. Highlights included the screening of Americans who are you? (1967), a short film of vox-pop interviews to camera conducted by a young Japanese woman asking increasingly personal questions about sex and politics in deliberately contorted English, executed in the wake of American Occupation and the looming renewal of the ANPO treaty.

This was followed in June by a symposium showcasing research on the visual arts from across East Asia in an ambitious program of twelve papers presented in a single day, in a format that is promised to become annual event, and I hope this will not, like previous attempts in this line, prove abortive. Most remarkable was the quantity and variety of research presented on Korean contemporary art, including a on paper of the activities.
of Korean-diaspora artists in the UK, making this a genuinely pan-regional event. That research on ‘Asia’ is now understood to express more than ‘Japan and China’ is encouraging, as is evidence of the emergence of a lively research culture in this area.

Earlier this year, in March, I curated a session at the Association of Art Historian’s Annual Conference on ‘Modernism Beyond the West’, interrogating whether our interest in pan-East Asian and even pan-Asian production can be expanded to include the contributions of all non-Western regions to the modernist project. The addition of papers on South America to a series on East and South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East gave greater insight into the common methodological assumptions underlying modernist discourse: namely, the problems of a belated modernity; the perception of a relationship between cultural and economic; and geographic distance, language and race as putative obstacles to engagement.

The final, and possibly most interesting, recent Asian art event in London that I wish to note was the screening of Alison Klayman’s documentary on Ai Wei Wei, *Never Sorry*. The film unflinchingly acknowledges that international interest in Ai is more dependent on his activism than his art, juxtaposing the process of preparing his artworks and his family life –
elements we never usually get to see – against his highly-visible public clashes with Chinese authorities, which are coming to form the dominant narrative of his praxis. The film continues to screen at a handful of smaller cinemas in London and will open at Princeton, alongside a major exhibition of sculptural works, in September.

This local interest in Asian art looks set to continue with the forthcoming openings of the Frieze Art Fair and Asian Art in London, both of which will be covered in our next issue.

Majella Munro is Executive Editor of Modern Art Asia.

Further information

Call for Papers on the Art Theatre Guild: http://enzoarts.com/commissioning.html#Call for Papers

Full program of the Tate East Asia seminar:

More information on Modernism Beyond the West can be found at enzoarts.com/Modernism_Beyond_the_West.html

AMY JANE BARNES

The Spirit Of Striving For Happiness In Hard Times

Song Dong: Waste Not
The Curve, Barbican Art Gallery, London, Uk
15th February - 12th June 2012

Waste Not is an extraordinary assemblage of everyday objects, ordered and arranged by type. It is, as the curator Wu Hung has described it, ‘monumental, but ordinary’, to which I would add emotionally intense without resort to sentimentality; comfortably familiar and accessible, yet overwhelming in its sheer scale. Viewing Waste Not and picking one’s way through piles of books, clothes, old garden pots, towers of soap bars, broken chairs, patched quilts, bags, shoes, toys, wash basins, bottle tops...is a thoroughly immersive and moving experience.

The installation, which was first shown in Beijing in 2005, and has since been re-created in Korea, North America, Germany and Britain, features over 10,000 objects that had belonged to the late mother, Zhao Xiangyuan,
of the conceptual artist Song Dong (b.1966, Beijing). It comprises a material record of over fifty years of tumultuous political, social and economic change in China. Every item in the installation had been bought, salvaged, reused and saved in order to ease the privations of rationing, material shortages and the ‘curse’ of being born into the wrong class background. The objects are arranged typographically – by material and function - around a wooden structure, which had been an old extension on the family home. It encompasses themes that have shaped Song Dong’s artistic practice: ‘My artwork can be roughly divided into two types. One concerns larger social and cultural issues. The other concerns the personal experience of survival’. Waste Not brings these strands together.

Xiangyuan was born in Hunan province in 1938. Her father, an officer in the Republican Army, was arrested as a ‘counter-revolutionary’ in 1953. Until his release from imprisonment in 1960, Xiangyuan and her mother struggled to make ends meet, eventually sinking into poverty. Her husband Shiping shared a similar background. They began their married life in the years following the disastrous Great Leap Forward. During the early 1960s, the Chinese people experienced immense hardship. Food and materials were scarce, and rationing was introduced to mitigate the shortages. Xiangyuan took the adage wu jin qu yong (waste not) to heart. ‘The reason was simple: when life was so difficult and might become even harder, she forbade herself from throwing away anything carelessly; she also wanted to save things for her children’, Song Dong and his older sister. This behaviour was to intensify even after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and improvements in the family’s living conditions and prospects. Xiangyuan continued to fear that one day there would again be shortages. These objects and materials ‘were the most precious things in the world to save her family’.

Song Dong conceived of the project that was to become ‘Waste Not’ following the sudden death of his father in 2002. Xiangyuan had slipped into a deep depression and her long-standing propensity to collect and salvage reached crisis point. Although he feared at the time that her behaviour was becoming pathological, Song Dong has said, ‘I understand her need to fill the space with those daily life objects more as a need to fill the emptiness after my father’s death’. The development of Waste Not was designed to give Xiangyuan a renewed purpose in life, to create art from her possessions and her thrift. Says Song Dong, ‘It gave my mother a space to put her memories
and history in order’, xv and would finally put to use those carefully collected objects and materials. xvi

In the initial iterations of the installation, Xiangyuan became part of the performance. She chatted to visitors, showing them around the exhibition and sharing her memories. xvii With prompting from Song Dong and his sister Hui, between 2005 and 2008 she wrote a narrative to accompany the exhibition - a memoir of sorts - a small part of which was presented in the gallery as interpretation (the story behind the piled-up soap bars, for example). The complete work, organised into four categories (‘clothes’, ‘eat’, ‘live’, ‘use’), along with commentaries by Song Dong, are reproduced in Wu Hung’s extended catalogue (2009), providing a moving, compelling and intimately personal account of a period of history that remains a troubling and largely repressed subject in China. The exhibition guidebook is ingeniously designed to resemble a PRC Household Register, which, as Wu reminds us, ‘connects the exhibition hall with a private home’. xviii It also reminds one of the omnipotence of the Party in the events that shaped Xiangyuan’s life and catalysed her collecting habit.
The exhibition invites us to ‘discover’ Xiangyuan through her material possessions, and we might look at this vast assemblage of objects and label Xiangyuan a ‘hoarder’. The therapeutic definition of a hoarder is someone who would typically ‘acquire excessively in the form of compulsive buying... and acquiring free things...and discarded items from street trash or dumpsters’ and occasionally ‘stealing and kleptomania’ in exchange for a sense of euphoria and well-being. Instead, there seems to have been a genuine justification (however skewed) for Xiangyuan’s compulsion to collect. It was an expression of love for her children – she stockpiled soap, for example, so that they would not go without in the future - and a means of honouring family members by extending the life of the precious things they had made, bought and used in their lifetimes. Preserving these objects was an effort to save them for posterity, as well as an attempt at anchoring her own history in fast moving times. In her narrative, Xiangyuan frequently reflects on the changing face of China; material wealth and the throw-away culture of younger generations, so at odds with her own life experiences and philosophy of thrift.

One of her key justifications for saving materials was their perceived quality, an attribute that Xiangyuan clearly felt was lacking in contemporary products. In her narrative ‘Cotton-Floss Quilt and Cotton’, she predicts a time when it will not be possible to buy the genuine stuff in China. Quality things need to be saved, mended and reused, because, in the future, you will not be able to get the like again. Some things are too precious to use; they might have been made and mended by loved ones who have since passed away. Sometimes they embody painful or bittersweet memories, so they are hidden away from view. The trauma of the Cultural Revolution and having the ‘wrong’ family background is another recurring theme. You fixed shoes because materials and money were scarce. You couldn’t use (and often had to destroy) items then considered bourgeois, feudal and Western.

While one might assume that material deprivation experienced in childhood might lead to hoarding behaviours in adulthood, this is not necessarily borne out by empirical evidence. But the act of acquiring and saving useful materials (albeit materials which soon became obsolete in China’s rapid post-Mao economic development) may be explained as a means of instilling a sense of personal control in circumstances where Xiangyuan and other members of her generation had very little: a subtle but significant difference.
Xiangyuan recognised that her behaviour was sometimes irrational and problematic: she chastises herself in the final chapter of her narrative, ‘Two Wooden Trunks’, for the burden she feels she placed on the young people who helped to install the exhibition at its showing in Gwangju, for their ‘unnecessary labour’, asking herself ‘why did I need to keep all these useless things, only adding to everyone’s inconvenience? I felt such guilt, such guilt’.xxx But, in ‘Chairs’ she comments that people have been very tolerant (presumably her family): ‘…nobody has tried to stop me’.xxxi As a ‘filial son’xxxii Song Dong just wanted to make his mother happy. The exhibition helped her achieve her ultimate goal, to make junk useful.

What can we extrapolate from the exhibition about the impact of Maoism on material culture and the social life of things in China? It should be clear that Xiangyuan’s particular relationship with her possessions was rooted in the times through which she lived and raised a family. But was her response – a compulsion to collect, save and keep ‘just in case’, along with a heightened sense of the intrinsic value and potential of materials - a trait shared by her peers? Her approach to material things has certainly resonated with many Chinese visitors. Several responses to the exhibition collated by Wu Hung make reference to the writers’ own family members who, being of a similar age and having experienced the same privations and unsettling loss of self and place during the upheavals visited upon China in the twentieth century, have similarly collected ‘junk’. An anonymous blogger wrote: ‘Every time we tidied up, cleaning out a pile of rubbish we wanted to throw away, Mother would go and fish things out again: “You can patch clothes with these bits of fabric;” “Steel wire can be made into clothes hangers.” Broken bowls, screws, ceramic pots, tin cans, plastic bags, could all be used one day, so she couldn’t bear to throw anything away. Our home turned into a big storehouse full of old garbage’.xxxiii More than exposing his mother’s unique ‘collection’ to the public gaze, Song Dong seems to have revealed the anxieties and coping mechanisms of a larger generation of Chinese who lived through war, revolution, communism and capitalism (albeit with ‘Chinese characteristics’). The exhibition also provides a possibly unintentional commentary on globalisation. Brand names familiar to a British audience were conspicuous among the carefully arranged groups of objects: a box prominently featuring the Playboy logo, empty tubes of Crest and Colgate toothpaste, Pepsi bottle caps. I was particularly intrigued by a pair of 1970s soup bowls transfer printed with quintessentially British recipes – kitsch mainstays of charity shops in
every town, up and down the British Isles. I later found, by turning a similar example over in an ‘Extra Care’ shop in Leicester, that they were, in fact, ‘Made in China’.

Ultimately, and especially when accompanied by Xiangyuan’s narrative (more of which could have been made in the physical exhibition as it was presented at the Barbican), Waste Not makes a powerful statement about contemporary Chinese society and the pursuit of material wealth and rapid social change. But, for me, the lasting impression, the very real emotional impact of the exhibition, was its genesis as a therapeutic project. This is only emphasised with the knowledge that in 2009 Xiangyuan died in a tragic accident. That Song Dong and his sister Hui have continued to show the exhibition is testament to their love and respect for their extraordinary mother. It stands as a memorial to her and her generation.

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i Zhao Xiangyuan, in Wu Hung (2009), Waste Not: Zhao Xiangyuan and Song Dong, Tokyo: Tokyo Gallery + BTAP, 161.
ii Wu Hung worked closely with Song Dong, his sister and mother in the development of the installation.
iii Wu (2009), 5.
vi The biographical details given in this section are taken from Wu (2009).
vii A concept not unfamiliar to a British audience, particularly the generation of ‘Make Do and Mend’, roughly Xiangyuan’s temporal contemporaries.
viii Wu (2009), 10.
ix Ibid, 12.
xi Wu (2009), 13.
xii Ibid, 14.
xiii Quoted by Anon (2012) [press release].
xiv Ibid.
xv Ibid.
xvi See Wu (2009), 17.
xvii See ibid, 19.
xviii Ibid, 27.
xxi Wu (2009), 10.
xxii In ibid, 105.
xxiii See ibid, 77.
xiv  In ibid, 100.
xv   See ibid, 86—7.
xvi  Ibid, 97.
xvii Ibid.
xix  Ibid., 367.
xxx Wu (2009), 174.
xxxii Ibid., 137.
xxxii See ibid., 17.
xxxiii Anon, quoted by Wu (2011), 29.
The current exhibition, *Living in Silk: Chinese Textiles Through 5000 Years* at Nottingham Castle Museum is part of *Dress the World*, a collaborative programme of exhibitions by three museums in the East Midlands, the others being *Suits and Saris* at New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester and *The World at Your Feet* at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery. Together they are part of the Stories of the World project for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

*Living in Silk* has been co-organised by Nottingham City Council and China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou. It aims to show a complete history of Chinese silk from 5000 BC until the present day using outstanding and exquisite silk garments, accessories and textiles on loan from China National Silk Museum, the first time that this nationally important collection has been shown in the UK, here in celebration of the 2012 London Olympics, even though the 5000 years in the title is a little overstated, considering the oldest object on show is from the Warring States period (475-221 BC).
In contrast with other exhibitions that deal with traditional Chinese silk or costume - which often stress the uniqueness and advancement of Chinese culture through highlighting the exquisite craftsmanship in the silk, such as the Imperial Chinese Robes from the Forbidden City exhibition at V&A in 2010-2011, this exhibition puts more emphasis on the symbolic meaning of silk and decorative motifs for the Chinese nation, as well as the techniques. No matter that different colours represent different seasons or official ranks, or that certain birds represent certain relationships in traditional Confucianism. Instead the show reflects Chinese people’s values and philosophies in silk, which would be an unusual approach in China. Confucianism is rooted in the daily life of Chinese people from their manners, to their accessories and garments. Exhibitions inside China which target local audiences do not need to make an effort to clarify them. But here, explaining the representative meaning of these symbols is absolutely helpful for a local British audience to better understand China; an approach which is, without a doubt, effective in promoting cultural communication between the two nations.

Since Chinese people began to use silk, it has been a luxury exclusive to the wealthy. Even today, top quality silk is still not affordable for ordinary people. The exhibition points this out, but it is good to see many silk garments and accessories that did not belong to the imperial court. The dragon robes, as well as the woman’s jacket with opera scene motifs, qipao dress and others, show the use of silk by different people in China. Silk items made for the imperial court display exquisite craftsmanship, but other, more everyday garments are helpful in understanding Chinese society and the pursuit of a better life. Together, these objects create a vivid picture of Chinese society and culture.

Showing silk objects from 5000 BC until today gives an impression of the continuity of Chinese culture. However, it does not sufficiently show how the past impacts on modern Chinese textiles. For example, the digital woven picture Herding Maid reminds me of one of the most well-known paintings in Chinese art history, Lady Guoguo on a Spring Outing created by Tang-dynasty artist Zhang Xuan in 752 AD. But there is no interpretation for Herding Maid at all. Another example is the blue and white ceremony hostess dress designed for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Its design is inspired by blue and white porcelain, one of the most popular types of ceramic in China since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The interpretation does not mention this explicitly. The continuity of Chinese culture in silk is clearly shown, but...
the inheritance of Chinese culture in the present day needs to be explored further. Then visitors will know how the past is connected to modern China, rather than only seeing the longevity and advancement of Chinese culture.
Silk dress for medal ceremony at the 29th Olympic Summer Games, Beijing 2008. Silk, embroidery, 150 x45cm. Image courtesy Chinese National Silk Museum.
At a time when museums use interactive techniques to engage visitors, this exhibition seems too conservative and a little dull, except for a pair of approximately twenty minute videos. There are many points that could be made more engaging with interactive techniques. Being able to feel different textures of silk, using touchable models to highlight symbolic motifs are all appropriate and would be affordable. Showing objects in a chronological order is the most traditional and typical method of exhibition in Chinese museums. However, for visitors who do not know Chinese culture and its symbolism very well, interpreting outstanding objects by way of a booklet might not be attractive enough for ‘impatient’ visitors. If they do not bother to read the interpretation, then the show presents nothing but exquisite craftsmanship. The outstanding silk on display is enough to show off China’s advanced techniques and exquisite craftsmanship, and high level of art taste. However, if the exhibition aims to achieve more than this, extra tools and techniques are necessary.

Worth mentioning as well is the Unravelled exhibition, which has been designed and curated by a volunteer group of young people. Inspired by Living in Silk, they spent months exploring and choosing a selection of the stunning silk textiles in Nottingham City Museums and Galleries’ permanent collection. It is organised around three themes, ‘Symbols and Stories’, ‘New Owners, New Users’, and ‘Style and Status’. Using many interactive techniques, such as touchable objects, animation cartoons and so on, it is really a good complement and extension to the main exhibition.

Living in Silk makes a breakthrough, in moving away from craftsmanship to symbolism and technique, which is a good example of how Chinese silk can be shown abroad. Instead of highlighting the exquisite decoration and concentrating on silk exclusively used by the Imperial Court, it goes some way towards exploring Chinese culture and philosophy more deeply, and presenting a more complete picture of China. However, introducing a non-Chinese audience to Chinese silk in an effective and engaging way needs further exploration.

Linda Da Kong is a PhD candidate in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester.
Chien-Wei Chang’s Don’t Look Back! I Told You So formed part of The Shape of Things, a project which aims to encourage diverse practices and audiences for contemporary crafts and is initiated by Arts Council England South West. A group of selected artists have created artworks to represent how cultural identities and authorship interact with artists’ practices in the intercultural British society of today.

Chang was born in Taiwan and moved to the UK in 2000, where he completed his professional training in silversmithing. His journey, from an overseas artist to ultimately being granted UK citizenship, has significantly influenced his creations. Various identities appear woven together in this exhibition, including ‘big identities’ - such as his cultural background, nationality, and the political ambiguity between China and Taiwan - and personal identities (‘small identities’) related to his transformation and lived experiences in a new territory.

The exhibition space could be viewed as two parts. Displayed in the first part, near the entrance of the exhibition, were several installations overtly revealing the artist’s Taiwanese and Chinese descent. A series of cast metal bamboo stems formed connections to a cultural symbol widely accepted by western societies as emblematic of Chinese identity. These metallic bamboos had an unusual visual attraction and created new meanings out of a familiar material used to make common house-wares in Taiwanese and Chinese culture before modern industrialization. Furthermore, Split Bamboos metaphorically represented Chinese ancient books made of slices of bamboo on which people inscribed words. The texts on these gilded metal bamboos were selected sentences from the Confucian political manifesto - Stateless World of Great Harmony – which presents a utopian idea of human society. These works reveal Chang’s strong awareness of symbols of different periods of Chinese culture and his attempts to make conversation with contemporary relationships between the West, China and Taiwan. The artist’s self-narrating of ‘big identities’ can be read through the juxtaposing of these works.¹
Split Bamboos (2011), gilded metal, brass, silver and acrylic paint, H:8-60cm; D:6-15.5cm. Photographed by Andra Nelki.
The second part of the exhibition was a U-shaped pathway with a defined entrance called Cellar. Cellars, providing space for the storage of containers and bottles, guard ‘against times of scarcity’.² Chien-Wei Chang interprets the cellar as a cultural and memorial store-house, a diary room, by preserving personal belongings and traces associated with his private and domestic life in a variety of found bottles, jugs, pots, and containers normally used for keeping ingredients and food for daily life. There are various little objects referring to unique moments from the artist’s own life, such as keys, a piece of material, a coconut shell, matches, and a rusty nail, in different series of glass containers. The objects here triggered the related senses of the body and provided an intimate insight into the artist’s life. Furthermore, Chang paid special attention to different parts of each container: the cap, the body and the shape; the stored items and the interior space. He played with different forms of caps and with multiple relationships between the item and the body of containers, with, for example, items penetrating the glass vessels or flattened glass bottles. Every piece showed a different type of fragmented ‘memory space’. Walking through the cellar was a journey accompanied by an absent and silent tour guide, as audiences could sense the artist behind the scenes through his selection of objects and installations.

*Found & Broken* (2011), Broken glass bottle, found objects, H: 13—27cm; W: 5.5-13cm; D: 5.5.-9cm. Photographed by Andra Nelki.
Chang’s practice deals with the transformation of materials and the hybridity of cultural meaning. In *Bamboo and Cutting Tools* he makes the contours of an axe or a knife, rather than the body of the cutting tools. The action of cutting bamboo into halves might symbolize ‘the break’ referred to in the name of exhibition – ‘don’t look back’. He uses experimental material replacements to re-interpret old symbols and to communicate the re-invention of his own past—whether of its ancient descent or the modern cultural-historic context. Another delicate installation near the entrance of Cellar features an electronic translator, a very common, useful appliance for any Taiwanese student living in the UK. On one side, the translator is connected to several glass jars by a set of threads. On the other side is a broken connection between the translator and threads going to many jars in each of which a person’s name is written in Chinese calligraphy. The whole work strongly metaphorizes the disconnection to family and mother culture, and the incapability of communication in new contexts. Chang’s everyday objects have become more than domestic functional items in this scene, and now convey new messages.

The exhibition is the embodiment of the artist encountering another culture and his transformation through the careful re-examination of his personal everyday life. By way of the articulation of fragments of memory and significant events in his life and elements symbolizing cultural or national identities, we can review the diverse facets of Chien-Wei Chang from the explicit cultural, ethnic, and political approaches to his personal and inner world. An emerging sense of the self of the artist could be located in the exhibition. The transforming ‘self’ was the core underpinning idea; a concept which was more than the totality of the diverse identities that the artist intended to express and communicate via the exhibition. Audiences witnessed and also engaged in the celebratory journey of new experiments expressed through both the fusion of abundant cultural heritages and contemporary craft practices.

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In 1954, the Gutai Art Association was formed under the direction of Yoshihara Jiro (1905-1972), a productive painter and art-world impresario active in the pre and postwar years. The organization was unusual for a number of reasons: it was one of the earliest groups to be formed after World War II and was the first group to produce performance art in Japan (and arguably the first group anywhere to do so). In addition, the group remained based throughout its eighteen-year existence in the Kansai region, an area that includes such cities as Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe. Having worked outside Tokyo, the country’s undisputed epicenter for contemporary art, a fuller appreciation of Gutai has lagged. This may soon change, however, with a recent resurgence in interest in the group confirmed by this large-scale exhibition and a second retrospective planned for February 2013 at the Guggenheim in New York.

*Gutai: The Spirit of an Era* charts the period from 1954 to 1972, during which the group functioned together, with special attention paid to the influence of Yoshihara. Yoshihara was keenly aware of developments among the avant-garde in France and the United States and actively sought international connections for Gutai by staging media spectacles and producing a series of journals in English and Japanese which included photographs of the group’s work. By initiating correspondence with artists such as Allan Kaprow and securing exhibitions at places including the Martha Jackson Gallery, as well as by fostering collaborations with Michel Tapié and Art Informel, Yoshihara was instrumental in helping Gutai to achieve modest fame. This current exhibition marks the degree of recognition Gutai has finally achieved both at home and abroad.

The much-anticipated retrospective opened, appropriately enough, with a media spectacle. Following the usual speeches, curator Hirai Shoichi
stepped aside as Murakami Tomohiko, channeling his late father Murakami Saburo, broke through a giant piece of paper, re-enacting the original performance of *Breaking Through Paper* at Ohara Hall in 1956.


Hirai aimed to recreate the spirit of Gutai by giving priority to artworks that had been selected by Yoshihara for inclusion in the original Gutai exhibitions. This strategy still allows for a diverse array of works, including reproductions of Tanaka Atsuko’s *Bell* (1955), as well as abstract paintings by lesser-known Gutai artists Uemura Chiyu and Ohara Kimiko. The first gallery attempted to recreate the playful atmosphere of Gutai’s early expositions, such as the *Outdoor Exhibition to Challenge the Midsummer Sun*, by decorating the space with ceiling-to-floor banner photographs of Ashiya Park, where the show was held in 1955, and by including smaller, wall-mounted photographs of no-longer extant installations alongside reconstructions.

Still, the stale air of the museum clung to many of the works. This was notable in the presentation of Shiraga Kazuo’s *Red Logs* (a 1986 reconstruction of his 1955 performance piece). The piece, in its current form, is composed of ten red poles erected in a teepee-like structure. When Shiraga built the
piece in Ashiya Park in 1955 he invited visitors to walk into the center of the structure. He later entered the space himself, shirtless and wielding an axe, and began to violently hack at the logs almost bringing the structure down upon himself. The performance was named *Dozo o Hairi Kudasai*, or *Please Come In*. Despite their inviting title, in their current form the logs stand somewhat lifeless against the gallery’s white walls with a sign posted at its base: “please do not enter this piece.” In another bit of irony – and not the kind Gutai members, who enjoyed the ludic and unexpected, would appreciate – museum staff repeatedly rushed to explain to visitors that, no, they certainly could not step on Shimamoto’s *Please Walk on Here* (1955), an
artwork that was intended to be interactive when it was first made.

Film footage of early performance works from the 1957 exhibition “Gutai on the Stage” is a highlight of the current show, though it is marred somewhat by the aged quality of the film and the lack of sound. As shown, the footage fails to capture the adventurousness of the early productions. Perhaps a greater organizational shortcoming of the show was the lack of signage to direct gallery-goers to the rare segment of news footage from Mainichi Hoso that captured Shiraga performing Challenging Mud. Inexplicably, the footage was on display in an adjacent hallway marked off as a rest area; most viewers walk past unaware of the inclusion of this archival gem in the show.

True to its stated aim, “Gutai: Spirit of an Era” displays the range and depth of Yoshihara’s vision and provides a sense of his tremendous ambitions and energies. Yet, in doing so, it reifies Yoshihara’s preeminent role in the group, glossing over tensions and aesthetic differences amongst the group’s many artists. For example, it leaves aside pieces like Shiraga’s Wild Boar Hunting (1963) that plunged further into the depths of action and vulgarity, which Yoshihara deemed too distasteful to be included in Gutai exhibitions. Nonetheless, the exhibit as a whole offered a satisfying, long-awaited victory for the Gutai Art Association. As Hirai noted in the catalog and wall text, Tokyoites have been late to acknowledge Gutai’s importance. This comprehensive show will go a long way toward redressing that neglect.

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ARTIST'S PORTFOLIO

JIYOU NG KANG

Revealing The Nanoscale World:
The Digital Recreation Of Nanofiber Images

Abstract

The *Perdu(e)* series are digital paintings of nanofiber images that produce integrated, convergent, formative images by breaking down the boundaries between art and science, macroscopic and microscopic worlds, and abstraction and representation. I have added the emotional interaction between the paintings of nanofibers and their viewers to extend the experience of creating their own creative supermicroscopic world. By passing the images through a computer, scientific technology, and my hand, this series is a point of disembarkation for art production. These modified, transformed images become living beings that can directly communicate with the spectator through emotional interaction.

Viewers can create new visual effects through their direct physical interaction with the paintings. This new emotional interaction method is about shifting our perception of reality from a purely visual culture to one based on sensing and connectivity. Recent studies in neurophysiology and psychology are illuminating the ways in which perception is modified by touch; separate streams of sensory information have been identified that are fed to the brain from visual stimulation.\(^1\) These separate streams have been shown to enable both physical, manipulative action and also the perception of objects. Prytherch\(^2\) links the sense of touch with sight and perception and asserts that both provide information to the brain in different ways. The connections between vision, touch, and cognition inevitably impact on our perception of the physical experience and influence imaginative thought.\(^3\) While appreciating and touching the works, the viewers, expecting their own results and participating, are creating a new art world of their own imagination.

Introduction - Images for the contemporary age

In contemporary science and technology, the visual representation or image is crucial. Visual images are essential, not only for theoretical development in science, but also for the application of science to new
technology and industry. Steven Wilson argued that all areas of science can be grafted into art and that there are few sciences and technologies that cannot be converted into art.\(^4\) In this, scientists, engineers, technologists, and artists have been cooperating with one another. The *Perdu(e)* Series is an attempt to confirm originality in the merger of photography and painting. Specifically, this series tries to reveal the fabrication of reproducibility from our eyes or cameras by painting on the motif from scanning electron microscope (SEM) images of nanofibers. It offers a new vision and confidence about reproducibility in painting. This is a process to verify that photographic images, regarded as the truth, are ultimately the creation of our own imagination and are therefore fictitious. Furthermore, the objective of this work is to represent art works that recreate and give life to nanofibers at the microscale. By revealing photography as media and reproducing the image as photography and painting, the creative originality that only comes from paintings is confirmed.
Since W. H. F. Talbot named photography as “the pencil of nature,” photography has worked as an index of reality. Visualization of the invisible (microscopic) world has contributed to the development of natural science since the late nineteenth century, and the visualization of this world has been made believable through the help of sophisticated optical techniques. On the other hand, the dissolution of objectivity, since science has emphasized the gap between reality and visual reality, has illustrated the ignoramus et ignorabimus maxim again. It is well known that observation methods determine the perceived image of the object in the quantum world (as in the phenomenon of wave-particle duality). The microscopic nanoscale world can be observed by artificial means such as SEM images through to data managing. Therefore, the difference between visual reality and the existence of the microscale object has been one of the causes historically invoking suspicion in science. Because existing models of the atom produced via technology are not the result of optical imaging, but processed from data to allow people to experience through their senses, the veracity of this “artifact” is open to debate. Now, we can see images of objects that are invisible to the naked eye and unimaginable, however, are these images true?

When you look at the amazing pictures captured in micrographs, do you ever wonder: is that what you would really see with your own eyes? For me, I would say, “Probably not.” Maybe the amazing colors that you are seeing are false colors that the scientist has introduced. In some cases, such as with the Mars rovers, scientists attempted to calibrate the rovers to see in “true color”. However, colors are mostly chosen to yield the most informative scientific results. When false color is used in micrographs, scientists use computer technology to change or add color to the cell structure in order to make certain areas stand out. Images taken by telescopes that rely on wavelengths outside the visible spectrum are also called false-color images, as the colors used to produce them are not “real” but are chosen to bring out important details. The color choice is usually a matter of personal taste and is used to associate colors with an intensity or brightness scale related to the incident radiation in different regions of the image or with the energy of emission. False color is also used to help with comprehensibility and to make images more engaging for non-expert audiences. For my art work, I extend and rebuild the use of false color for new creations. I give new life to microscopic spaces, where color has disappeared, by coating them with various colors. I use digital technology in order to visualize the vitality of submicroscopic spaces and the beauty of textures that exist beyond naked
sight in nanofibers. Using Photoshop, I preserve the essential beauty inherent in the image itself as much as possible and create a new world by adding the beauty of color, a mixture of light, and brush strokes in paintings. Adding colors by using digital techniques for my works preserves the beauty of the original structure but also creates a whole new art. The colors chosen by the artist help to create very distinctive paintings from the original micrographs, which lose their meaning after recreation.

Method: Exploration Through Emotional Interaction

The method I am exploring in my art work is hands-on interaction based on emotional storytelling. There have been a few examples in the past that have explored hands-on interaction. One such project is “NanoArt”, a website run by the scientist and artist Cris Orfescu, where STM scans can be downloaded and transformed into artworks. The transformations can occur on the computer, from a printed image, or in the form of “large-scale” nano-themed sculptures. Sound has also been explored: the scientist-artist team of James Gimzewski and Victoria Vesna put together an art installation called “Blue Morph” through which visitors could see, listen, and interact with a butterfly. The sounds they hear as well as the nanoscale patterns on the butterfly’s wings were derived from “feeling” the pupa surface with the help of an atomic force microscope. A few years earlier, the same team initiated the “NANO” exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum during which visitors had the chance to explore nanotechnology at a human scale through a variety of interactive installations. In the installation “Atomic Manipulation” for instance, visitors could “move, manipulate, and reorient individual ‘atoms’ in actions that emulate the operations of the Scanning Tunneling Microscope”. In my previous work “AR Window”, participants also received emotional impressions through various interactions that were based on emotional storytelling rather than simple push-button interaction. It would be interesting to hear the reflections of people who participated in all these projects discussed, especially as most of the featured installations were explicitly devised for playful exploration and not for rendering authoritative answers. In my own work, I am therefore combining a simple touch interaction with visual effects to engage in this research process with viewers. The difference between the touch interaction and other types of interactions is that touch has its own emotional value. I presented the viewers with a story that by touching the art pieces they become part of the art itself and the sensor will detect your emotional state and express it
using various colors. Although the sensor was only a simple touch sensor, I compelled the viewers to believe the story and react emotionally. According to the circumstances of the gallery space, which is very public, I chose the touch interaction as it can be most effective and novices feel comfortable with it in public spaces.\textsuperscript{14} By adding the emotional interaction to the framed art work that is usually approached without any storytelling, I want to give the viewers more opportunity to participate and imagine being an artist and being part of the art.

Material

The \textit{Perdu(e)} Series is a set of images that are not only built as processed artifacts for visual experience but are also recreated images. The beautiful shapes in the images remind us of abstract works painted with a brush. However, the shapes originate from scanning electron microscope (SEM) micrographs of an electrospinning process used for fabricating PVDF (polyvinylidene fluoride) nanofibers. Nanofibers are ultrafine fibers that have a diameter less than one thousand nanometers. Using nanowires, the thickness of which is 1/500 of that of hair, we can reduce the thickness of the nanofiber to around 1/1,000,000. To make nanofibers this thick requires an electrospinning process. A high voltage is applied to a polymer material PVDF
and electric repulsion occurring inside the material causes the molecule to form into nanowires. The irregular lines seen in the Perdu(e) Series are nanowires that are only a few nanometers thick. The globes, called beads, are characteristic of PVDF polymer. As meant by “Perdu(e)”, the series exposes the tip of a mysterious microscopic space through nanofiber tissues created in this space. Even in the SEM micrographs of the nanofibers, the structure of the freely entangled tissues and their beauty arrest our attention. In the unprocessed micrographs, the complex structure of the beads and wires seem to show human life interlaced and pushing and pulling one another in a complicated manner in the nanofiber world.

By capturing the extremely small microscopic world in the visible macroscopic world, I have opened up significant possibilities. Here, the boundaries between inside and outside, construction and destruction, and mind and matter become meaningless; spotlighted objects have an indeterminate identity and, thus, various possibilities. In Nanobeads 2 and 6, scratches and rough touches made by the entanglement of the nanofibers create illusions and float as countless vibrations on the vast background of tempting colors like the universe. In addition, in Nanobeads 3, the nanofibers wave, dreaming of their potential as various substances. Works reborn through digital technology bear a velocity and rhythm that allure the viewers.
The sensuous movements and gorgeous gestures of color invite the viewers to see infinite possibilities and unexpected meetings before the boundaries.

The fixed paintings in the exhibition cause possibility and transformability to regress and they cannot persuade people who come into contact with the images. The art has to follow the trend of contemporaries because the method for recognizing images has undergone immense change. In this research, media that can reflect the characteristics of movement and transformability well and that can enable interaction with the spectator were selected. These are called “touchable paintings” which utilize LEDs and a touch sensor. The spectators can see illuminated art pieces in a dark exhibition space. In opposition to traditional art pieces labeled “Do not touch,” spectators can experience infinite transformability through touch. Each time they touch the art, three colored LEDs radiate different colors at different intensities according to the frequency and time of the touch. That is to say, the spectators are able to be the principal agents. In addition, images of nanofibers that consist of two or three layered OHP films radiate harmonious light rays following the spectator’s instruction. Iridescent colors from the different layers express infinite flexibility and energy. These colors represent the different races living in modern society; they live and exist independently but they are in harmony with each other. Furthermore, the lights show how individual spectators, individuals living in a modern era, contribute to society and how society changes with the individual’s participation.

Exhibition of Perdu(e)

I first planned to exhibit the Perdu(e) Series because of a SEM picture I saw: the irregular and free structure containing ball-shaped beads seemed like
dewdrops on tree branches. The fact that this picture was electrospun nanofibers made from PVDF was surprising because I had never heard of nanofibers. The fact that there are beautiful structures inside the microscopic world aroused in me the desire of creation. However, there was suspicion about whether the beauty of this picture was real or not, which lead to me deciding to make abstract art by adding modifications and undertaking re-creation. In addition, I wanted to research the effects of emotional interaction, which will give viewers new stories about the art pieces. The Perdu(e) Series was exhibited from 11th May 2011 to 18th May 2011 at the Seoul Art Center. During the exhibition, the responses of the spectators were observed by video recorders, and five hundred spectators took part in a survey and interview after the exhibition.

The Significance of Perdu(e)

The Perdu(e) Series is based on imaging mechanisms and photography, however, the details are completely closed. Therefore, spectators could not decide exactly what the forms mean and could not determine whether it was a photograph or a painting without any additional information. By this series, I attempt to demolish the relationship to the nanoscale world and emphasize the blurriness of photography as a reproduced machinery. I removed the date and magnification from the bottom of the photos to prevent spectators from obtaining clues about the image. In addition, there were several different layer ratios for each painting that represent variety in our society, which are combined either naturally or forcibly. By doing this, the art piece blocks the direct approaches of spectators to the original photos of the nanoscale world. Digital painting of the photos of the cut nanofibers makes the monotone photos more like colorful paintings so that they would be more vivid.

I also produced nanofiber paintings featuring famous actors, actresses and great men in history. They are Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Malon Brando, Albert Einstein, Nam June Paik and others. By recreating their
In the interaction between the images and scientific curiosity, the relationship between physical reality and the image becomes blurred, and the image in the nanoscale world enters our consciousness. Therefore, what the spectators see in these art pieces is the world of the nanofibers that is not physically real but the result of the intervention of the real world. In this art, the traditional meaning of reproducibility, as a platonic term, creates an abstraction in Deluzian terms. The new world created by the imagination sometimes looks cold, warm, colorful, or calm in the monotonic computer images. These recreated images acquire new power as images themselves, even though they lose the meaning of recreated PVDF images. The SEM photos are reborn through my selection and re-creation, are reconnected by my eyes, and are modified and evolve for exhibition in the gallery. Abstraction of the nanoscale world in the imagination connects to new media and visualization by movement. In addition, by replaying these processes, the images become alive. Deleuze described these types of images as “inorganic, embryonic, impressive and more alive, that is to say, all things that can pass all organisms”.

Gerhard Richter said that making the invisible visible, the unknown
known, and the unthinkable thinkable are irrational requests or suggestions. Actually, people never experience the nanoscale world in routine life. They believe they can only approach the nanoscale world in a scientific context. Therefore, the recreated images are meaningful when these images come into contact with spectators in the exhibition space of the real world.

**Observation, Survey, and Interview**

The following results come from a survey and interviews conducted with a sample of the approximately one hundred and fifty spectators per day who visited during the eight day exhibition. Observation involved an analysis of video recordings located in a room with ten touchable paintings. The survey and interview was given to five hundred spectators. Some factors, such as age, gender, and so on, are ignored. I wanted to see the emotional interaction effects. I divided the viewers into two groups: Group A (two hundred and fifty spectators) consisted of viewers who were told about the emotion detection sensor, and Group B (two hundred and fifty spectators) consisted of viewers who were not told about the sensor but performed the same touch interaction.

The viewers were asked the following five questions:
1. Did you enjoy being part of the art pieces?
2. Which do you prefer: touchable art pieces or no interaction pieces?
3. Were you satisfied by the touch interaction?
4. Did the touch interaction help you to participate and concentrate on the art pieces more?
5. Are you willing to visit this kind of exhibition again?

Through the emotional storytelling-based interaction, the spectators can experience and concentrate more on art. As a result, from the video analysis, it was noted that Group A spent more time with the touchable art pieces. On average, Group A spent twenty-three minutes and Group B spent seventeen minutes in participating with the work.

From the survey, eighty-six percent of Group A replied that they preferred touchable art pieces, and eighty percent of Group B viewers also indicated a preference for touchable art pieces. For the satisfaction question, seventy-eight percent of Group A answered yes, and seventy-two percent
from Group B answered yes. For question four, eighty-nine percent of Group A answered yes, and eighty-one percent of Group B answered yes. For the last question, ninety-one percent of Group A answered yes, and eighty-eight percent of Group B answered yes. The results reveal the effects of storytelling-based emotional interaction. By being given the story that the art piece will react to the viewers emotional state, spectators had elevated interest in the work. In addition, the emotional interaction assists the viewer to participate and concentrate on the art pieces in more depth.

Conclusion

The Perdu(e) images seek new ways of visualizing nanoscale images and finding new approaches to reality. The images radiate toward the real world from the internal nanoscale world. The image series moves with diverse possibilities and communicates with the spectators. SEM micrographs of nanofibers show the structure of freely entangled wires and their beauty arrests our attention. In the unprocessed SEM micrographs, the complex structure of the beads and wires seem to show how human life is interlaced in a complicated manner in this world as they push and pull one another. Based on the results of Group A, those who were given the emotional interaction
narrative had more interest, participated more, and concentrated on the art pieces more than Group B who were not given any story. This means that emotional interaction compels the viewer to have more expectations and a willingness to be part of art. I intend to continue studying other emotional interactions by adding more variety to the storytelling and interaction in the future. By touching art pieces that come into contact with our reality, the images do not reproduce other meanings that are hidden behind other materials. The images are real and alive as themselves; they are connected to our real world and sensibly encounter the world.18

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Notes

5 H. Blumenberg, Die Genesis der koperikanischen Welt, Bd. 3: Der koperkanische komperativ; die koperikanische Optik (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996) p. 745-747.
12 Ibid.
Human Interactions, 125-131 (2011).
16 Ibid, p. 691.

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H. Blumenberg, Die Genesis der koperikanischen Welt, Bd. 3: Der koperkanische komperativ; die kopernikanische Optik (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996).
To Western eyes, the Chinese Monkey King is fun and mysterious, but an innovative and quirky manifestation of this mythic figure as a female with a unique stern look surprises its viewers. Proudly revealing herself in a pinkish aura, this female monkey boldly stares at whoever walks into her field of view, whether a connoisseur who is informed by complex ideologies regarding the function and meaning of art, or simply a passer-by with a curious quick glimpse.

She is named the *Monkey Queen* (2010) by her creator Bridget O’Leary, a young Australian artist who has lived in Taiwan for almost a decade.\(^1\) Obviously this personified monkey figure alludes to the famous Monkey King in *Journey to the West*, but that look, in contrast with the harmonious hue in the background, adds something different, something that famous naughty male monkey lacks. It is this difference that leads her appreciators to look deeper into her proud image.

It is clear to the viewer that the materials, techniques, and form of the painting are all Western. But for those who know about Chinese aesthetics, whether brought up in Chinese culture, or taking a personal interest in it, a puzzle appears: that look is an exemplar of *chuanshen* 傳神 (delivering the spirit of the subject) and *yijing* 意境 (exhibiting the artistic mood),\(^2\) two classical Chinese notions on art, presented through Western techniques. Is it intended, or it is simply an accident because of the Chinese subject matter? If it is unconscious, then the allusion to Chinese aesthetics implies the influence of contemporary hybrid culture, “an ideology” and also “an existential experience” of “international communication,”\(^3\) with which the encountered cultures are fused rather than distinct in the artistic practice of the artist, who might not be even aware of this mental activity in the process of creation.

After several talks with the artist about her work,\(^4\) I find her innocent of this intention. She has never received any training in Chinese art, and her reception of Chinese art primarily comes from her experience of Taiwan.
With only an informal experience of Chinese art, she states her creation of this figure comes from her childhood fascination with the Monkey King, and acknowledges that looking at her collection of hand puppets of this character guides her creation imperceptibly. It becomes quite obvious that the Chinese aesthetic quality of this painting is an unexpected surprise, one that reflects an overwhelming hybrid trend in contemporary artistic practice.

One could argue that the described Chinese influences are the perception of the (Chinese) viewer, and that the powerful gaze of the *Monkey Queen* is an artistic expression beyond any established aesthetic principles. This certainly makes sense, as one’s value judgement can never be independent of one’s cultural background and social influence, and, therefore, the perception of art is subjected to sociocultural values. But contemplating further in terms of this point of view, would it not be interesting to reconsider whether classical Chinese aesthetics provides a different means of art appreciation? Since hybridization seems to be the norm for everyday practice, the artwork necessarily demands traces of other cultures to be seen in terms of the concept of a synthetic mixture that celebrates the fusion of cultures, rather than a domination/resistance opposition. Would this not also revive the archaic aesthetic tradition, which was seen by the ancient literati as a way of life, but is now commonly regarded as only suitable for the appreciation and study of ancient Chinese art?

The gaze of the Monkey Queen motivates this investigation of modern art in terms of classical Chinese aesthetics, but this investigation does not eschew contemporary Western views on art. Instead, an engagement of Chinese and Western thoughts is intended so that a broader, cross-cultural understanding may emerge. Comparing this old tradition with modern Western thoughts on art establishes a dialogue concerning the exploration of the essence of art, and by means of this dialogue it might demystify modern art of the now globalized culture, making it less enigmatic, and possibly rescuing it from some harsh cultural critique of being meaningless and disposable. This cannot be achieved without first analyzing the formal structure of the painting, a threshold of varied and limited established aesthetic concepts.

First of all, this new female representation of the Monkey King is created without exclusive conformation to either Chinese or Western techniques. Instead of using traditional oil paint and square or horizontal rectangular canvas, the figure is presented by acrylic paint without varnish.
on a long vertical scroll, a form favored by ancient Chinese painters since the Tang Dynasty, which O’Leary describes as influenced by her visit to the Palace Museum in Taipei. Secondly, acrylic paint is a modern and easy-to-use invention with a fast-drying and precise pigmentary effect, and thus the utilization of this material reflects her absorption of modern techniques. Regarding her brushwork and techniques; at first glance these seem messy without any perceivable order, but once we look deeper into the detail, there are traces of Western painting traditions: the twisted lines of expressionism intending to bring about emotional suffering in the subconscious; the bright multi-colors of abstract art aiming at an ideal spiritual interaction; the fast brushwork of impressionism focusing on the depiction of the immediate image captured by the eyes; layers of colours with obscure contours producing volume and depth for imagination; the distinct sfumato technique of Leonardo da Vinci; and of course perspective, chiaroscuro, and portraiture.

The painting also corresponds to the comeback of Chinoiserie, which is particularly popular in fashion and pop art. However, unlike the dreamy, exotic atmosphere in Rococo decoration or in contemporary pop art, the Monkey King is transformed by means of the artist’s unique brushwork and textural arrangement into a dignified Queen whose eyes and posture manifest her own self-awareness that not only captivates the viewer, but also makes them think. Her disdainful stare is no different from Diego Velázquez’s subtle self-portrayal in Las Meninas (1656), or the ambiguous look of the bar maid in Edouard Manet’s Bar at the Follies Bergères (1881-1882).

Obviously, these different stares all have one thing in common: the expression of emotions, an achievement of “artistic intuition” in Croce’s view. Subjecting to this private feeling and understanding at that specific moment, the artist freely chooses the most immediate and appropriate means for expression from the treasury of knowledge, a criterion that distinguishes the creativity of the artist from that of the general public. To a viewer lacking that technical and cognitive training, creation appears “mysterious,” as Gombrich concludes, “a legacy of [a] myth” that praises artists as an “alter duces” who can not only copy nature, but also surpass it to realize an ideal beauty, in Kris and Kurz’s terms. The “artistic intuition” praised by Croce and the “mysterious” asserted by Gombrich are viewed as distinct features of art, taken for granted without any attempt to understand the ideology in both theories; however, no existing philosophical reasoning can account for it perfectly. Classical Chinese literati seemed to comprehend such a
phenomenon quite well, and scholars who dwelled in the world of aesthetics deliberately left analysis to others with a keen interest in annotation and hermeneutics. Equipped with the status of scholar and artist, most literati directly lived an aesthetic life: through their articulation of life experience, the concept of yijing slowly emerged to generalize an ideal beauty, while chuanshen is used to mean things that bring about the sense of beauty. Yijing is similar to the concept of the “mysterious,” while “artistic intuition” can be grasped through chuanshen. Chinese aesthetics are difficult to understand, even for a modern Chinese reader, because of the difficulty and a lack of interest in reading classical texts. Chinese aesthetics is a fusion of Confucian, Taoist, and Zen influences. It is possible to tease out the origin of certain concepts, but it is impossible to conclude that this concept belongs to that school alone. The mysterious quality of the Monkey Queen’s proud attitude is conceived by Chinese viewers as having achieved yijing, and as the visual representation intertwines with the mental image, chuanshen is evoked. Both concepts reflect a strong interest in human experience in classical Chinese thought. They are widely and freely used by Chinese literati, mostly without their semantic content being fully understood: hence their actual meanings are multifarious and even overlapping.

The earliest documentation of Chuanshen was recorded in Shishuo xinyu (A New Account of Tales of the World) written in the fifth century:

When Gu Changkang [Gu Kaizhi] painted a human figure, he would leave the eyes untouched for couple years. People asked him why. He answered “the beauty or ugliness of the torso is unrelated to the subtlety of painting; delivering the spirit [chuanshen] and portraying the true human figure depend on this expression of the eyes.”

The last line of this short recording exposes the artistic ideal of the greatest painter in Chinese history: delivering the true spirit of a person depends on a truthful depiction of the gaze. Here Gu talked about the art of portraiture and demanded a careful observation of the human spirit, but in the next recording Weijin shengliu huazan (Glorification of Famous Paintings of Wei and Jin Dynasties), compiled by a Tang connoisseur of paintings a hundred years later, he expanded this concern to other forms of painting, revealing a shift in focus from the object of attention to the artist himself:

No living human beings could raise their hands for salutation, or see
anything, without facing an object of attention in front of them. Portraying the spirit through the form without having an actual object of attention is not only a misuse of painting techniques, but also the loss of the tendency to deliver the spirit (chuanshen). The clarity or obscurity of a figure cannot be compared with the achievement of expressing the spirit through the communication with the object of attention. This emphasis on capturing the spirit and the artist’s direct communication with the object of attention, be it an actual interaction or one conducted in the artist’s mind, marks the interest in human psychology within the Chinese painting tradition.

This interest comes from the Confucian evaluation of a person according to their appearance, personality, knowledge, abilities, and manners. Qian argues the Confucianism “teaches an individual to be a good human being”14 and serves as the principle for “the tradition of the politics of literati.”15 Personality was an important criterion for the selection of officials in the pre-Song imperial bureaucracy. However, in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, a corrupt political environment, accompanied with a trend for fame-seeking, put this ideology in jeopardy.16 Later in Gu’s time, classical Confucianism was criticized as formal and detached from everyday life,17 while the constant wars resulted in social turmoil. Under such mental stress, literati renounced hypocritical Confucianism for Taoism and newly-introduced Buddhism, which they considered more suitable for their free spiritual expression.18 Qian and Xu both mention that the attitude of the literati from the third to the seventh century revealed a distinct disposition to artistic life due to a deep frustration with the social reality, demanding a private and free lifestyle.19 Artistic creation becomes the means for literati to lament or cherish their own life, and this is exposed in the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi,20 full of emotions bewailing his own suffering and that of the people of his time.

This demand for a free spiritual state and artistic life had become an embedded trait amongst later Chinese literati. In the Song dynasty, this attitude was reinforced when the ruling class raised the political status of the literati by expanding the scale of the imperial examination.21 The flourishing economy and dynamic social life furthered fostered that concept of artistic life in the mind of the general public.22 The literati-official Su Shi created Hantie (Calligraphy of Cold Food Observance)23 after his demotion to Huangzhou (the city of Huang) in 1079. He expressed true emotions about life through an artistic observation of the views outside his window in that cold and small village house. Through clear and simple diction, the poem laments strongly
not only the loss of time, but also his regret at political reality. This triggered ambience is reinforced through the expressive form of the calligraphy. The form of the words represents his flow of emotions, and that lamentation and regret are injected into the lingering brushwork and the changing sizes of words.

Su transformed himself from a politician into an artist whose artistic intuition allowed a vivid manifestation of a unique concern over his own life. In his *Chuanshen ji* (A Note on Delivering the Spirit of the Subject) Su reinterpreted Gu’s concept:

The difficulty of delivering the spirit of the subject is on the expression of eyes. Gu Hutou [nickname of Gu Kaizhi] said, “conveying the form and portraying the image all depend on this.” [...] Delivering the spirit of the subject is the same as physiognomy which adopts the method of a private and extensive observation in order to know about the inborn nature of a person. [...] All human beings have their own mood and thought that might be shown through eyebrows and eyes, or nose and mouth. Hutou said, “Adding three hairs on the cheeks makes [the painting] more brilliant and uniquely wonderful.” So [at this moment] the mood and thought of that depicted person is shown on his beard and cheeks. You Meng24 mimicked Sun Shuao’s25 cheerful mood in his chatting and laughing, and this [performance] resulted in a saying of the resurrection of the dead. How can this be a resemblance of the overall body [of the dead]? It is simply to capture the whereabouts of the mood and thought.26

In Su’s eyes, *chuanshen* is taken as not only a principle for artistic practice, but also a standard for aesthetic experience. Ming scholar Yang Shen commented on Su: “know precisely the principle of *chuanshen*, [and also] know precisely the subtlety of *chuanshen* beyond the [depicted] subject matter.”27 The second line draws our attention because it refers to the unexplained artistic mood, the “mysterious.” Unfortunately, Su and Yang never elaborated on this mysterious artistic mood. In fact, this mysterious artistic mood is yijing, seen as the highest achievement in poems and painting, and until the Qing Dynasty this concept had been freely used in artistic and literary discourses,28 but not until Wang Guowei presented his analysis of the Song poems did we have a panorama of this spiritual realm.

Wang points out two different levels of artistic mood: *zaojing* (a created
imaginary mood) and *xiejing* (a portrayed realistic mood). Xiejing reflects Gu’s concept of painting, and the communication with the depicted object is the key to spiritual expression. *Zaojing* goes beyond this communication, and as Su understood the performance of You Meng, delivering the spirit requires the artist’s competence in subjective imagination and interpretation. Hence, *zaojing* is given a higher status than *xiejing*, but Wang argues that artistic mood can never be achieved if what is portrayed is not sincere and lacks true emotions. He asserts “everyone can feel, but only the poet can write.” According to him, artistic creation is not only “an expression of the poet’s inner emotional state,” but also “an inspiration” to whoever has the chance to experience the work, and therefore he concludes that “a work with artistic mood is a work that can be observed.”

This concept of an artwork worthy of observation is in close relation to both Taoist and Confucian thoughts. Ye argues that *yijing* was already touched on in the Tang Dynasty, and its root can be traced back to Laozi and Zhuangzi. According to Ye, Tang literatus Sikong Tu had revealed the nature of *yijing* in his *Ershisi shipin* (Twenty-four Comments on Poetry). These comments see artistic imagination as a creation of *yijing* that at the same time embodies both the creator and reader’s ideal life. The unity of subjective mind and objective world allow embedded emotions and thoughts to transcend the simple representation of an image. This artistic expression emancipates one’s spirit from all sorts of restrictions, which is the core of the thought of Zhuangzi. Xu argues that this thought represents an ideal and vibrant artistic life that in fact overturns the intention of Laozi to maintain a stable human mind. Therefore, aesthetic consciousness is demanded as a means to reach Nature so as to liberate and expand the self. This aesthetic consciousness is also an artistic intuition allowing one to take objects as beautiful and worthy of observation. Only with aesthetic consciousness could objects be personified so that one can identify with them through one’s intuitive imagination.

This aesthetic thought revolves around human nature. It is different from the Western interest in formal beauty and the opposition between subject and object, or individual and community. Xu elaborates that Chinese aesthetics have never strayed from human beings, and thus Zhuangzi still resembles the Confucian notion of art for life’s sake, particularly Mencius’s proposition that only the human mind can realize true human nature. However, the goal of the latter is to relieve suffering and save the self from
decadence. It looks at the objective world with moral demands producing practical art filled with high moral awareness, while Taoist thought demands natural freedom and emancipation, resulting in a tendency to express artistically the true spirit of the self.\footnote{38}

Xu also notices that the concepts of art transformed again in the Song Dynasty, especially after Su Shi’s discourse on \textit{chuanshen}.\footnote{39} This transformation was heavily influenced by contemporary Neo-Confucianism, which appropriated the concept of mind from Zen.\footnote{40} Master Hui Neng, the sixth successor of Zen Buddhism in the Tang, said:

\begin{quote}
The inwardness of Bodhi [enlightenment] is invariable and infinite. That is essentially clean and pure. As long as our mind is well taken care of, We could all achieve Buddhahood.\footnote{41}
\end{quote}

This poem teaches all to seek true inwardness, namely, the spiritual state of the self. Tang annotated that Zen is a state that recognizes the reality of the mind.\footnote{42} Thus this recognized reality is never a pure spiritual state. Zong maintains that the Zen mental state is a harmonious unity, which serves as the principle for aesthetic experience, so beauty is “the reflection of mind”\footnote{43} and “the rhythm of mind”,\footnote{44} allowing one to comprehend the creative force of Nature. This mode of thinking reflects the “sinicization” of Buddhism that Qian observes.\footnote{45} Yu elaborates that the characteristic of “inward transcendence” in classical Chinese thought marks the unique quality of Chinese intellectual culture whose focus is always on the interrelationship between human behavior, mental state, and actual life experience.\footnote{46} It is easier now to understand that yijing is a product of the human mind.

For Chinese literati, corresponding with Croce, a painting is a channel for both the artist and viewers to share the pleasure of imagination that comes from internal spiritual expression; however, Chinese tradition has offered nothing other than abstract discourses on artistic life, and even though these discourses indicate reflections and comments on social reality, they are so interspersed that none of them establish a systematic method to look at the social functions of art. In order to confirm the sociocultural implications in \textit{Monkey Queen}, attention must be shifted to contemporary Western thoughts on art. Engaging archaic Chinese with contemporary Western thoughts would not only offer a deeper interpretation of this work, but also in return expose
the validity of these two classical aesthetic concepts.

The strong expressive effect of this *Monkey Queen* produces the desired stimulus to inspire viewers to reflect on their life experience. Looking at this figure in terms of feminism, attention is centered on the transformation of a dominant and powerful male body into a soft but firm female figure with high self-awareness. This female representation empowers women to release themselves from a suppressive social environment, thus achieving the effect of *chuanshen*. According to Simone de Beauvoir, the portrayal of breasts can be discerned as a re-identification of the body in female consciousness, through which the body is transformed into a weapon for resistance to male domination. This explains perfectly the representation of a female warrior who indistinctly shows her breasts, but would also indicate the desire and perceived impossibility of directly confronting overpowering male dominance. The impact of the female monkey figure on its viewers comes from the emergence of *yijing*.

“The closure of representation” as argued by Derrida conceives art as “a play of life” which always and continuously produces “presence.” This presence is an “original representation” surrounded with different layers of representations whose difference allows the “autopresentation” of “pure visibility” and “pure sensibility.” This pure visibility and sensibility stops any possible reconstruction of a scene by master-narrative. Isn’t this “presence” from “a play of life” somehow similar to chuanshen, and that “pure visibility” and “pure sensibility” another expression for *yijing*? Doesn’t this concept of art as playing correspond to the archaic notion of “artistic life”? Of course equating ancient Chinese aesthetics with such a poststructuralist thought is far-fetched, but they both expose the tendency to see aesthetic appreciation as part of a life praxis. According to this reasoning, the messy effect of the brushwork is the real “presence” born from techniques. This effect prohibits the revelation of the symbolic meaning embedded in the adopted means for expression, and the overall presentation is an “autopresentation” of a pure visible and sensible female monkey figure. The Monkey Queen is no longer connecting with the legendary Monkey King in the famous *Journey to the West*, nor do her attitude and personality relate to the creator of the figure. The painting itself is only an action of playing, and the stare of the figure invites viewers to participate in this play so that they can also experience that immediate force of life and perception of reality. Everyone can be this Monkey Queen because she offers an instant but ephemeral mental image
that in return affords herself infinite meanings.

Artistic life is a game to play, and thus that gaze of a strong female identity derides male onlookers, reflecting a contemporary cultural phenomenon in which the distinction between male and female slowly disappears, the emergence of an androgynous look is no longer a taboo, and homosexuality has become an indicator of metropolitan progressiveness. This interpretation can be sustained in terms of Bourdieu’s theory of practice in cultural production, as seen in his analysis of Gustave Flaubert. Based on the discussion of social hierarchy, Bourdieu expands this theoretical construction to include literary and artistic production. According to him, the creation of art is a social and cultural practice achieved through the actual functioning of the creator’s habitus and capital in the chosen field for practice. For artists, the chosen field is the world of artistic production, and their capital depends on their family, educational, economic, and even symbolic background: the last is the most important since it indicates fame, the key in contemporary consumer society. Habitus is not simply a free will, but one whose disposition has taken in varied influences from the experienced objective world. Hence, creation no longer simply relates to the creator’s feelings and emotions (because such feelings or emotions are never the free will of the subject) but is the product of dispositions that are inseparable from the actual conditions of the social structure. This theoretical paradigm helps us trace a possible relationship between the creator, artwork, and the sociocultural environment: Monkey Queen as a human product could never have been achieved without her creator’s experience of living in a foreign land for more than a decade; it is a finished cultural product reflecting the contemporary trend of thoughts to break down cultural barriers and taboos, reject master-narrative, and bring art closer to life; an economic product whose commercial quality would increase the symbolic capital of the creator, allowing her more wager to participate in the game of artistic production; and a political product rejecting male dominance and male artistic discourses.

These analyses are all semiotic, taking each perceivable element in the artwork as a process of signification in which the signified is constantly inferred and reasoned according to the actual use of the signifier in both the artwork and the objective world. This social interaction with the artwork allows signs to emerge and in return fills individual consciousness with signs. Obviously this method seeks the connotative values of art and naturally diverts the focus of aesthetic appreciation from feelings to embedded sociocultural factors. Revealing Chinese flavor by means of Western techniques reflects
the creator’s attitude to and comments on multicultural Taiwanese society, that is, possibly a subtle glorification of multiculturalism. This unique flavor also becomes an effective weapon to fight against dominant classical Western aesthetic traditions, and it allows new meanings that derive from everyday practice to be injected into this fantastic female figure, bringing art closer to life. Feminists would agree with the above mentioned interpretations, but they would argue that this Chinese flavor is a critique of the repression of women in Chinese culture. This comes with a demand for her artistic legitimacy: as a recognized foreign female artist in Taiwan.

Looking carefully at modern philosophical arguments, imagination and feelings are not discarded at all; instead, they still serve as the origin of elaborate sociocultural interpretations. They intend to break with established aesthetic traditions, through semiotic interpretations, to bring attention to the presence, but radical artistic practice born from these discourses insists on the negative influence of the technical development of modern society. Its negligence of imagination and feelings in fact distorts the concept of beauty and the ideal. Interestingly, without adopting radical approaches in her artistic practice, the artist of this female monkey figure paints with her feelings and imagines new possibilities for female existence. It is possible that she might have created according to these theories with the intention of challenging tradition, or that her radicalism does not come from a theorized practice, but her free feelings and imagination.

Clunas argues that the Chinese way of looking at art represents a “culture of visuality” that sees artworks as “the self-referentiality back to the moment of production of the work of art, a moment somehow re-produced in the moment of viewing”\(^5\). His remark identifies artistic intuition as the most basic criterion for both artistic creation and appreciation. Chinese aesthetics focuses more on the inward nature of both the artist and viewers, and asks for a true deliverance of such inward nature by means of ink, brushwork, and other means for presentation. When we adopt this approach to look at this Monkey Queen, she seems to speak for Chinese aesthetics more than their Western counterpart.

This Monkey Queen’s attitude corresponds to that demand for sincere human emotions in classical Chinese aesthetics. Its artistic value resides in the successful portrayal of the subject matter’s spirit, that is, Chuanshen. Communicating with the painting’s emotional flows activates
our own imagination to create a mental state for a deeper reflection on life. This aesthetic appreciation is the creation of *yijing*. Our contemplation on her attitude in terms of sociocultural concepts illuminates certain social phenomena that await our attention. Hence, the artwork becomes a comment on our lifestyle. Here, modern and classical Chinese thoughts are quite complementary to each other. The combination of the two would not only indicate the intrinsic nature of art, which speaks for artistic values, but also interpret the sociocultural functions of art, which confirm art's social values.

Notes

1. This painting was exhibited first from September to October in 2010 in *Blossom Spirit – A Group Exhibition of Taiwanese and Australian Artists* at Fo Guan Yuan Art Gallery in Kaohsiung Taiwan. Later in 2011 it was exhibited from July 17th to 20th in Dayangfeng meishu zuopin jiaoliuzhan at Xiamen Art Gallery in Xiemen China. The artist confirms that this painting will be exhibited at Fo Guan Yuan Art Gallery in Melbourne Australia from July to August in 2012.

2. These are the literal translations of chuanshen and yijing. The following text provides further discussions of the connotative meanings of these terms. Translations of classical Chinese texts are mine, unless otherwise noted.


4. My friendship with the artist allows discussions of her work in varied occasions, and serving as the interpreter of talks held by the gallery gives me chances to observe how the viewers perceive the work, as well as how the artist reacts to their immediate response.


192. Ibid., 108.
194. Yu, ibid., 303.
195. Ibid., 322, 401-2.
197. Wang lived in the fourth century and is considered the most important calligrapher in Chinese history. His importance is the creation of a new style of cursive writing reflecting his true emotions and personality.
199. Official translation used by the National Palace Museum in Taipei where the calligraphy is now kept.
200. You Meng was a famous court performer in the state of Chu during the Spring and Autumn period. The incident Su quoted was recorded by Sima Qian in *Shiji* [Records of the Grand Historian].
201. Sun Shuao was the prime minister in the imperial court of Chu. Sima Qian in Shiji spoke highly of him.
206. Ibid., 3.
207. Ibid., 72.
208. Ibid., 77.
210. Ibid., 271-3.
211. Xu, *Zhongguo yishu*, 60-1.
212. Ibid., 80.
213. Ibid., 69-70.
214. Ibid., 132-6.
215. Ibid., 360.
216. Although the artistic discourse of this era tends to see Zen concepts as the principle for artistic creation and appreciation, Xu argues that they had not gone beyond the Taoist concept, and therefore it simply demands a Taoist artistic life in the name of Zen, ibid., 374.
218. Ibid., 9.
220. Ibid., 16.
221. Qian, *Guoshi*, 111.
225. Ibid., 238.
53 Note that the original argument is on value judgment as an intrinsic nature in utterance and speech. According to which, the expression of value judgment is intrinsic in art since artistic activity is also a form of communication, ibid., 105.
This new volume on Tomiyama Taeko (b.1921) focuses on her response to Japan’s post-war context and its pre-war interventions in Asia. As a Japanese woman raised in Manchuria as part of Japan’s colonial expansion, Tomiyama was ideally placed to articulate Japanese anxieties and culpability in the newly-critical discourse of post-war Japan. Laura Hein in her introduction describes Tomiyama as attentive to the fact that “people can be simultaneously victims and perpetrators, sometimes with the same act”, reflective of Japan’s double status as both victim and aggressor in WWII. Tomiyama is particularly attentive to the exploitation of colonial peoples by occupying powers, and the use of Korean slave labour by the Japanese in 1930s and 1940s. Though the relationship between feminism and social activism that the volume argues for is not immediately apparent, it is within the theme of exploitation that these political concerns coalesce into a cohesive nexus. The use of forced Korean sexual labour by the Japanese military remains one of the most controversial aspects of Japan’s conduct during the Second World War, a crime made more poignant by the fact that their victimhood continues to be unatoned for and even unacknowledged. Hein makes the interesting observation that it was American foreign policy, which sought to strengthen ties between those Asian nations not engaged in Communism, that forced an uneasy truce between Japan and Korea and absolved – or perhaps prevented – Japan from expression of wartime guilt. Her historical analysis is nuanced and sensitive and ably succeeds in the ambitious task of giving a lengthy overview of
political and social dynamics across two continents and over several decades. The introduction in itself should be essential reading for scholars of post-war Japanese art.

The stated purpose of this volume is to address the fact that viewers in the West require much commentary and context to understand works of Asian art. The volume is intended to accompany collections of Tomiyama’s works on display at Northwestern University and on a dedicated website (curiously, this website, where colour illustrations are hosted, is intended to be accessed in tandem with the book and vice versa, though the text does not appear to be available online). The need for commentary to accompany the display of art is very important to note: discourse on ‘the contemporary’ too often divorces works from the non-West from their proper cultural contexts, doing nothing to support the viewer from outside in their understanding of artefacts from an unknown culture.

The chapters of the volume, each contributed by a different author, each deal with a single thematic issue, but are organised so as to present a chronological overview of Tomiyama’s sixty-year career. Like Yayoi Kusama, Tomiyama became active during 1950s, and the emergence of a new generation of Japanese female artists at this time can be read as an index of social change during an era in which a nexus of left-wing and feminist interests allowed greater participation. During the earlier twentieth century women were massively outnumbered and outranked amongst the Japanese avant-garde, to a much more pronounced degree than in Europe.

The volume opens with Ann Sherif’s discussion of Tomiyama’s relationship to the Marukis, a husband and wife team who resisted pressure from authorities to produce propaganda paintings during the Pacific war and suffered greatly from wartime privations as a result. Understandably, post-war the Marukis became increasingly reactionary, condemning artists who did not have the resolve to follow their path. This was symptomatic of a decisive agitation in the post-war art world for the ostracisation of any artist complicit or seemingly complicit with state powers (such as Fujita Tsuguhara, forced to leave Japan for a new life in the West), irrespective of the extent of coercion that artist may have faced. Post-war Japan was, therefore, an extremely tense political climate: it was important to be in the correct camp, no less so than under the interventionist pre-war government. What was new, however, was that artists now had unprecedented opportunity to make
real contributions to political debate, thanks to a perceived relationship between representative government and free expression.

Yuki Miyamoto’s chapter attends to Tomiyama’s formative exposure to Manchurian and Japanese cultures. In Harbin Tomiyama attended an elite girls’ school, and Miyamoto notes the artist’s burgeoning awareness that she was a “pseudo-Westerner”, again signalling Japan’s ambiguous identity. This ambiguity is taken up in Tomiyama’s repeated recourse to the fox motif, the fox being associated with militarism and the imperial family in Japanese mythology, but also a trickster, able to shapeshift and to possess human being, becoming in Tomiyama’s oeuvre a metaphor for the dangerous fervour of expansionism.

Indeed, the motivation behind Tomiyama’s critique seems to be a lingering fear that these elements of the national psyche are not excised, but merely dormant. Rebecca Copeland, in her chapter on Japanese Women Artists and feminism, recounts Tomiyama’s belief that Japanese expansionism and aggression were symptomatic of “Japanese chauvinism”,3 which undeniably remains a latent force, continuing to exert palpable social influence despite the end of the war.

The volume also includes a discussion with Tomiyama about her work an enlightening first-person account. As a whole it is a body of research useful not only to students of Tomiyama herself, but also to anyone concerned with feminism, political activism, or the post-war Japanese context.

Notes

The accompanying website can be found at http://imaginationwithoutborders.northwestern.edu

1 Laura Hein and Rebecca Jennison, eds, Imagination without Borders: Feminist Artist Tomiyama Taeko and Social Responsibility, University of Michigan, 2010, p1.
2 Ibid, p7.
3 Ibid, p53.
Favell’s text poses the question: how did Murakami’s Superflat become synonymous with Japanese contemporary art? While the mechanics of Takashi’s programmatic conquest of the international art world in the pursuit of financial gain are well documented and understood, what Favell contributes is a comparative analysis of the artist’s reception by international and domestic audiences, assessing differences in Takashi’s writings and self-presentation in the two contexts, and revealing some intriguing paradoxes in the process. He explains that contemporary art is seen by the Japanese state as integral to managing international perceptions of the country, in recognition that the large international art fairs have now replaced the world’s fair as the forum where countries meet and compete. Within these fora, Takashi has promoted a self-conscious vision of Japan that is, Favell argues, largely fictitious. His Superflat is stereotypically Japanese, a play on the idea that Westerners perceive Japanese art as characterised by the reduction or absence of pictorial space. As Favell notes, Takashi is internationally successful precisely because he panders to uninformed Western expectations. Revealingly, Favell also describes Takashi’s art as consciously ‘adolescent’, implying that there is, once again, a relationship between cultural production and the trope of a belated modernity.
It is fitting, then, that Favell locates the origin of contemporary fetishisation of ‘otaku culture’ in the West in Japonisme, both exposing Western interest as superficial and as determined by geopolitical assumptions extant since the nineteenth century. However, throughout the book Favell discusses Western interest in the otaku/Takashi vision of Japan – what he terms “cool Japan” - as a phenomenon firmly located in the past, now destroyed by economic crises, earthquakes, and the emergence of China as the Asian superpower par excellence. There are two points to make in answer to this: the first being that the passing of a superficial interest in Japan does not have to be expressive of a cultural decline, but could instead be a positive development, giving space for the emergence of some genuine and self-generated discourse. But, unfortunately, if Favell can trace “cool Japan” back to Japonisme, it seems unlikely to be a narrative that will decline, irrespective of the geopolitical or natural forces that may attempt to disrupt it.

Despite this, Favell does an excellent job of exposing the knowing self-consciousness and financial motivations of the most successful players in the Japanese art world, as embodied in institutions such as the Mori Art Museum in regeneration-focused Roppongi. In addition to Takashi, his volume focuses on Yoshitomo Nara, Mariko Mori, and Makoto Aida: the self styled “group 1965”, a cohort of Gedai graduates looking to exploit commercial opportunities in the 1990s art world. Beyond this shared educational background, what the artists he discusses also have in common is that they had to move abroad to further their careers. It is implied that this is because the Japanese work-a-day mentality was inhospitable to these creative free spirits, but, of course, there is also no domestic market for the pastiches of Japan that they purvey. Their success depends on exploiting the naivety of Western viewers, an approach made explicit by Murakami’s *Little Boy* project – a name that sound innocuous and infantile (as Westerners perceive Japan) but which in fact recalls American nicknames for the atomic bomb (standing for Japanese anger against the West).

Favell’s accessible, conversational style is well suited to an account based on his personal exposure to and recollections of Japanese culture. It’s an enthralling, gossip-y book, full of observed detail about the internal politics of the Japanese art world that should be mandatory reading for scholars of contemporary Japanese art, lest they fall into the trap of legitimating practices designed to exploit their ignorance, as Favell cautions early on in the text.
This monograph on prominent Malayan artist Cheong Soo Pieng (1917-83) accompanied a major exhibition of his works at the National Art Gallery, Singapore. Cheong was a pioneer of the Nanyang style, creating a new aesthetic for this ethnically and culturally diverse region in the post-war era. Born and educated in China, Cheong travelled extensively through Southeast Asia, most notably in Bali, and throughout Europe, synthesising these diverse precedents into an idiom appropriate to Singapore’s cosmopolitan society. In China, he was exposed not only to indigenous art historical precedent, but also to the experiments of the May 4th movement, which marked the advent of the avant-garde in China, and looked not only to Western post-impressionist art, but also to Japanese modernist exempla.

However, in 1945 he was forced to leave China after the impact of first war with Japan and then civil war made his position there untenable. He settled in Singapore and became part of a cohort of artists, also including Chen Chong Swee, Lim Hak Tai, and several others, who travelled to Bali together in 1952. This trip would mark a decisive change of direction, not only within the development of each artist, but within Singaporean modern art. It was here that Cheong developed his stylised depictions of human figures with elongated limbs and slanted eyes, an idiom that was intended to articulate
the Southeast Asian identity of Singapore in the wake of British, Chinese and Japanese colonialism and immigration.

In 1961 Cheong made the brave decision to give up his teaching post to concentrate on art making full time, a gamble that paid off as he quickly emerged as Singapore’s most prominent artist, both domestically and internationally. In 1980 his painting *Mother and Daughter* was selected as a UNESCO first day cover, making him the first Singaporean artist to receive this honour. Immediately after leaving his post he travelled throughout Europe, holding a solo show in London in 1962. This volume catalogue traces the influence of contemporary European art on both Cheong’s painterly and sculpturally output, juxtaposing his small abstract figural sculptural works to those of Henry Moore, but is less forthcoming about the Chinese precedents he responded to.

Cheong was to be honoured with a major retrospective at the National Museum Art Gallery in 1983, but sadly died before seeing it mounted. The introduction to this catalogue notes that Cheong’s contribution remains in need of further scholarship, and this comprehensively illustrated volume, filled with useful chronological and biographical detail, provides an excellent foundational resource for scholars embarking on this study.