

Taipei Fine Arts Museum Press Release

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眾妙生鋒—東方思維之情愫

The Wondrous All: Leading Edge of Eastern Thought

Exhibition date: 2015.01.31 ~ 2015.05.03

Venue: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Galleries 2A and 2B

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Sunday 9:30 – 17:30; extended hours to 20:30 on Saturday.

Closed on 02.18 and 02.19 (Chinese new year) and open at regular hours since 02.20

Curator: Liu Yung-Jen

Participating Artists (in the order of birth year): Lee Yi-Hong, Li Hua-Yi, Lu I-Chung, Jun T. Lai, Huang I-Ming, Zhan Wang, Lee Chen-Cheng, Zhang Huan, and Cai Zhisong

The Wondrous All: Leading Edge of Eastern Thought is a themed exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum showcasing the works of 9 artists from Taiwan and China –Lee Yi-Hong, Li Hua-Yi, Lu I-Chung, Jun T. Lai, Huang I-Ming, Zhan Wang, Lee Chen-Cheng, Zhang Huan, and Cai Zhisong – to explore the influence of the oriental art on the new contemporary images and symbols. The works of these 9 artists have been deeply infused and implied with eastern thoughts and sentiments in the calligraphy, landscape painting, sculpture, and installation media; wherein the visual forms and symbols originate from the traditional eastern culture to reassure the essence of innovation and traditions of the arts. This exhibition attempts to read into the longstanding oriental art history and to reconstruct the vivid vitality of such contemporary artworks. The heritage and diversification of oriental art are not only a demonstration of the historic intellectual pulsation, but also a subject of study on the timelessness of its artistic sensibility. Themes of this exhibition include: Natural landscape gardens, Artistic faith and religious sentiment, Calligraphy, and National temperament with image symbols.

Natural Landscape Garden of Contemporary Visual Art

The highest state of oriental art is to objectively embrace the artist's vision of nature to incredibly emit a vivid atmosphere that wanders between the likeness and unlikeness of its morphology and spirit. Oriental artists carry their thoughts and feelings into the landscape to become "harmonious with nature" while also yearning to edge closer to the mountains and rivers. **Lee Yi-Hong's** artistic perspective emphasizes the deep insight into the natural wonders of the landscape. His article *Nature and Painting* offers an insightful analysis and control of the comprehensive study on the natural sceneries supplemented with photography

from all possible angles of the mountains, rivers, trees, and stones. In recent years, his subjects of focus are on the river stones and rocks that are impressionistically layered and stacked in a magnificent manner. The bold and dark ink strokes fall in contrast with the white background in a manner of light and shadows to subtly reflect the practical contemporary landscape art of Taiwan. Chinese-American artist **Li Hua-Yi's** landscape art takes inspiration from the Northern Song Dynasty for the artist to reflect the core values of traditional oriental art through a layered process of artistic trends. It is no more a traditional landscape painting than a delicate form featuring Chinese landscape painting techniques as a “smoothing spirit” distilled from the true essence of the landscape painting. Switching between the traditional and contemporary perspectives, the artist has developed a unique style of landscape painting pursuing of the sublime grandeur and magnificent bearings of the art.

The landscape garden is an epitome of the natural landscape and also the artistic conception of literati and hermits throughout. It guides us to “clear the mind and heart to realize the highest truth of the universe” within the garden, while also being closely correlated with the thoughts of Chinese philosophers Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Artificial rocks are one of the key elements in the oriental garden and **Zhan Wang** has made his artificial rock sculpture out of stainless steel as inspired by the rocks and mountain formation in the garden. Therefore, natural rocks are oddly-shaped with significant texturing randomly put together to cast shadows in a never-repeating pattern. The bright texture on the artificial rocks is an extension of his work *Chinese Tunic Suit* that features an empty shell of clothing with symbolic materials to explore the relationship between natural civilization and industrial civilization, thus revealing a unique sculpture that was built in the east.

Artistic Faith and Religious Sentiment

The relationship between nature, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism is another key topic of study for the contemporary artists. **Jun T. Lai's** works have always kept an eye on the subject of existence and change, simplistic forms and natural phenomena, and the organic relationship between complex light and shadows. She has skillfully incorporated her caring sentimental and attitude into energy condensed in her working spaces. Since 1990, her large-scale installation series titled *Among Minds* has shown exuberant artistic vitality and her *Impermeable* features a clear heart being penetrated by a stainless nail with no worries. Light and shadow is cast upon the installation on the exhibition floor to imply the impermanent mortal beings in this wide world.

Zhang Huan's rose to prominence in the Chinese art world with performance art early on in his career. He later moved to New York in 1998 and became actively involved on the international art stage with exhibitions all around the western nations. He then setup his workshop in Shanghai after returning to China in 2005, and transitioned to art production from behavioral art using a wide variety of media including incense ashes, copper sculpture, cow hide, and antique door panels. The artist's incense ash paintings and sculpture installations have echoed the general public's faint of heart and infinite blessings with intense resemblance to the eastern culture.

Calligraphy of Different Strokes

Calligraphy strokes have spatial qualities akin to permeation and continuity that are also the core of oriental aesthetics. If one were to read between the strokes and characters, calligraphy then becomes an abstract painting in itself. Calligraphic art and abstract art share two common traits, one of which is where the artist tries to express their subjective thoughts using strokes, shapes, colors, and textures; the other is when the artist no longer attempts to depict and recreate objects and events. **Huang I-Ming** came to prominence in the Taiwanese art world for his calligraphy – from traditional to innovative – with passion and ideas in his creative attitude. He is not only a calligrapher and theorist, but also a studious and innovative contemporary landscape artist. His works primarily incorporate calligraphy structures and landscape painting techniques in the composition. **Lee Chen-Cheng** integrates calligraphy with sculpturing to explore the possibilities of Chinese calligraphy within 2D and 3D spaces. He has developed a series of works featuring characters in calligraphy, seal carving, and sculpturing as well as several public art installations in Taiwan and China.

Shaping the National Temperament and Image Symbols

Lu I-Chung's paintings feature thick luxuriant textures in an attempt to interpret historical sentiments through art. The vivid and yet implicit symbolic art is seemingly unveiled within the artist's deep ethnic soul. The works of Lu I-Chung has once derived from the special national status of "Republic of China in Taiwan" which is inherited the excellent cultural heritage of the ancient Chinese to highlight the sense of compassion through symbolic heritages and the value and meaning of humanitarian spirit. **Cai Zhisong's** sculpture *Ode to Homeland* series feature sophisticated techniques, simple forms, and precision aesthetics to recreate modern versions of the strong and power sculptures from the Qing and Hang Dynasties into serene classical conceptions. His Terracotta Warriors are distinctively lifelike with vivid posture and demeanor to skillfully demonstrate the character's fortitude as seen in the temperament of the Chinese nation as the oldest standing civilization. As such, solid foundation in the artist's sculptures could further bring out the inner aesthetics of the characters itself.

There has never been a lack of oriental works of art, whether in traditional, modern or contemporary art, along the Chinese heritage and the reality is that it is up to the artists to properly apply these wisdoms for their own creation. The 9 participating artists were able to take from the endless fountain of creative materials in the historical past for their own creations and subjects. They have demonstrated wide variety of techniques and content creations to further add to the extensive artistic heritage of the contemporary eastern culture.