

Updating convention

Lo Ching infuses his canvases with industrial and post-industrial elements while adhering to the compositional structures of conventional Chinese ink painting

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Televisions, cell phones and airplanes are not the stuff of conventional Chinese ink painting. Equally uncommon are nocturnal scenes of paved roads and tall buildings illuminated by electric lighting. But these are some of the elements outside the tradition of ink painting that Taiwanese artist Lo Ching (羅青) intentionally incorporates into his canvases — often in striking ways.

His solo show of new and old works, One "Man" Cultural Revolution (一“人”文化大革命), is currently on display at 99 Degree Art Center (99 藝術中心), which is located along Renai Circle (仁愛圓環).

"The purpose or ambition of an artist is to try to capture the imagination of his time. And I think this is my responsibility to create a graphic pattern or image that is deeply rooted in Chinese tradition but at the same time show the future of this culture. My duty is to enrich the vocabularies of this painting language," he told the *Taipei Times*.

Lo does just that with elements reflective of "industrial and post-industrial" society while maintaining the compositional perspective of traditional ink painting. He applies frenetic and furious brushstrokes to his scrolls, which summon thoughts fundamentally different from the traditional contemplative aspects evocative of the Confucian gentleman.

Poet, painter, art theorist and linguist: Lo relishes the fluent English he employs to drop the names of Chinese artists and ink painting traditions stretching back to antiquity. He's equally well-versed in Western humanist and aesthetic traditions, spicing up his sentences with names of Western theorists (he said he translated Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* into Chinese back in the early 1980s) and quoting John Donne's poetry.

Lo embarked on the study of ink painting and calligraphy under the tutelage of the "hermit of the West," Pu Ru (溥儒), pen name of Pu Hsin-yu (溥心畬), a cousin of China's last emperor and master of the Northern School of painting. He later deconstructed the impressionist "splashing ink" style of the Southern School, ingesting its eccentric aesthetic language.

But Lo's intellectual curiosity, influenced perhaps by his experiences studying and traveling abroad, led him down different paths — ones that became paved roads taking him from rustic mountainsides to post-industrial cities.

This is evident in *Ten Thousand Towers With Red Clouds* (萬樓風雲紅). Black buildings replace tungsten mountains and are connected here and there by freeways that streak across the canvas. The nocturnal *Ten Thousand Buildings With Winds and Clouds* (萬樓風雲) shows illuminated modern structures rising up towards mountains in the background, on top of which is Lo's seal radiating out like the Hollywood sign in California.

Like many of the paintings on display, these two scrolls are viewed from above and are punctuated throughout with clouds that wouldn't look out of place in *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* (芥子園畫傳), a work detailing the general principles of landscape painting.

Lo's paintings offer another, more personal, reflection. They symbolize the "great migration of Chinese culture moving outward," since 1949. As a member of this diaspora, Lo has spent considerable time reflecting on what it means to be a Chinese living outside of China (he is "a believer in cultural China, not the political China").

Love the Green Mountains for the Generations to Come (為愛子孫護青山) depicts a mountain scene with a swirl of betel nut trees in the center that both frames and inundates suburbs which flow down to the bottom of the canvas.

By substituting pines (a traditional symbol of the Confucian intellectual) with palms, the painting suggests that the genre of ink painting can adapt to the times while celebrating its traditions.

"Before the 20th century, Chinese culture was an integrated whole with only one voice. But now we can really claim multiple cultural directions and they are equally strong," he said.

EXHIBITION NOTES

WHAT: One "Man" Cultural Revolution: Lo Ching's Ink Paintings (羅青書畫展 — “人”文化大革命)

WHERE: 99 Degrees Art Center (99 藝術中心) 5F, 259, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段259號5F). Tel: (02) 2700-3099

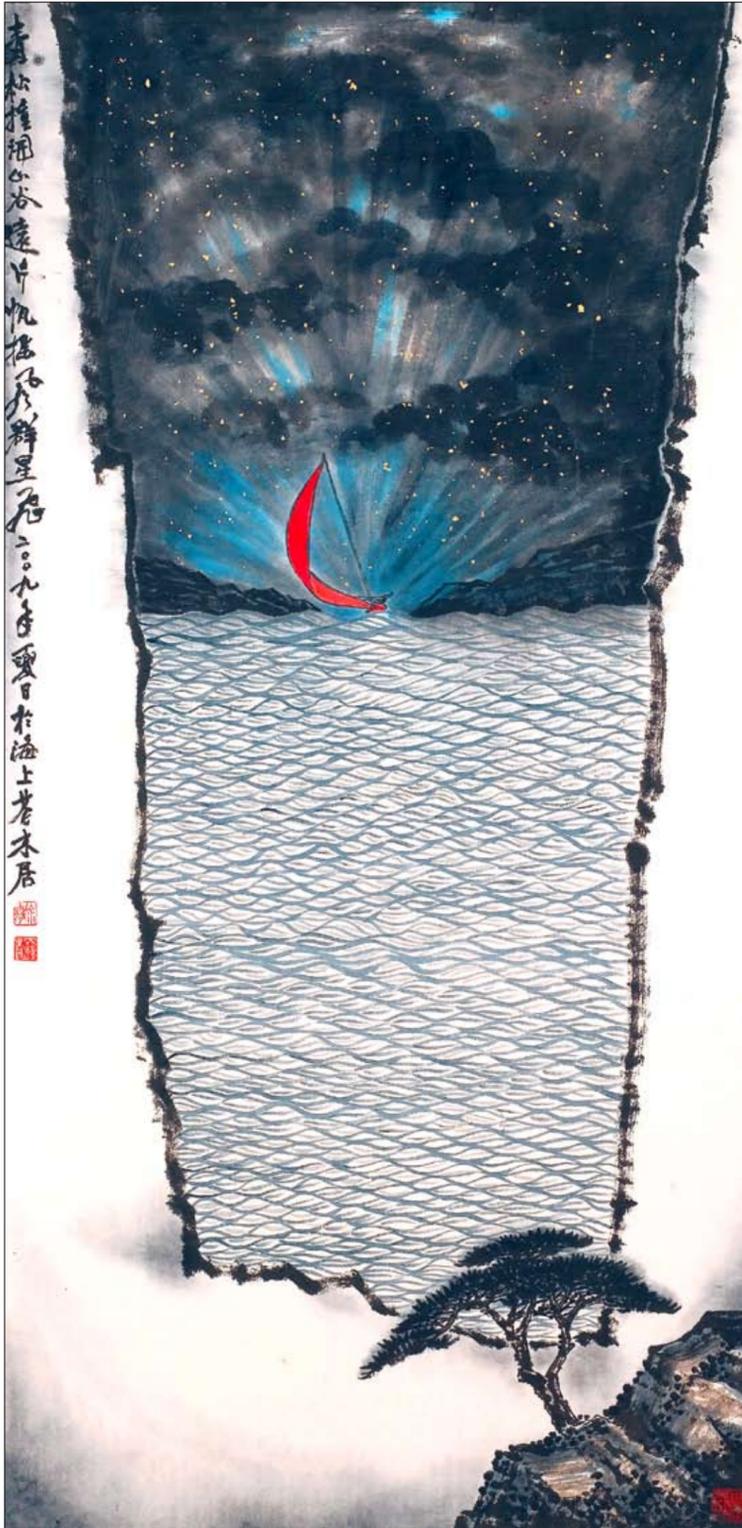
WHEN: Until Sunday. Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6pm

ON THE NET: www.99dac.com



▲ Lo Ching, *Four Sails Transforming Into Three Birds*.
▶ Lo Ching, *Good Sailing Followed by the Bright Stars*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF 99 DEGREES ART CENTER



Sex it up

A group exhibition on display at Aki Gallery examines eroticism in contemporary art

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

An exhibit with the word "sexy" in its title is bound to attract attention, but *It Must Be Your Sexy Way* isn't just a tease.

The group show at Aki Gallery examines sexiness in its various guises as seen from the perspectives of 11 artists from Taiwan, China, Japan and, of all places, Austria.

Not surprisingly, photographs by three of the Japanese artists are the most provocative pieces. Nobuyoshi Araki, one of Japan's best-known and most prolific shutterbugs, is infamous for his erotically charged images of women. Words like "pornographic" and "risque" are often used to describe his works, which nevertheless can be found in museums throughout the world.

Ten photographs have been selected to illustrate several of Araki's artistic phases and include images of his favorite model Shino bound by rope, a couple of photographs from his *Shojo Sekai* (World of Girls) series, as well as a 1985 portrait of his wife Yoko Araki, who died in 1990.

The female body has been worshipped and fantasized about in different ways at different times, and the images taken by Kishin Shinoyama over the span of 40 years indicate how much things can change. Four elegant black-and-white photographs from 1970 see models in sculpture-like poses. A photo from the artist's 2009 photo book *No Nude by Kishin 2* shows porn star Akarui Kirara flashing her buttocks in a convenience store. The 69-year-old Shinoyama has been charged with indecency because many nudes from his *No Nude* series were shot in public locations around Tokyo.

Eroticism is varnished with a glaze of intimacy in the hands of 51-year-old Yasumasa Yonehara, an influential fashion magazine editor and celebrity photographer who takes seductive shots of young female models with his Fujifilm cheki instant camera. The women in his Polaroid-style images strike luscious poses in what

appear to be private locations such as bedrooms, conveying an in-your-face attitude about sex and the female body.

In contrast to the explicit eroticism and emotional poignancy of the Japanese pieces, the artists from Taiwan and China offer an aesthetic of restraint. In *Synthetic Apparatus 2* (綜合儀器2), 28-year-old Chinese painter Wang Mengfei (王孟飛) uses a palette of soft, subdued colors to render a young woman's delicate nude body to which is affixed a mechanical device.

Taiwanese artist Hsi Shih-pin (席時斌), a trained architect, finds inspiration in algae to represent sexual organs and sexuality in his abstract paintings. On the other end of the spectrum is 23-year-old female artist Wang Wan-yu's (王琬瑜) black-and-white documentary photography that captures real-life scenes from the private lives of 20-something Taiwanese with a poetic tincture.

Last, but by no means least, is Peter Tscherkassky's experimental film *Outer Space*, a definite must-see. The Austrian avant-garde filmmaker's 1999 tour de force deconstructs and reassembles Sidney Furie's 1981 horror flick *The Entity*.

EXHIBITION NOTES

WHAT: *It Must Be Your Sexy Way*

WHERE: Aki Gallery (也趣), 141 Minzu W Rd, Taipei City (台北市民族西路141號). Tel: (02) 2599-1171

WHEN: Until April 4. Open Tuesdays to Sundays from noon to 6:30pm

ON THE NET: www.akigallery.com.tw



Kishin Shinoyama, *Akarui Kirara*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AKI GALLERY

EXHIBITIONS



Kuo Wei-kuo, *Calling Under the Purple Colorful Umbrella*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIN & LIN GALLERY

Taiwan Art Raise shows off work by some of the country's top contemporary artists. The group exhibit features new pieces by digital photographer Wu Tien-chang (吳天章), surrealist painter Kuo Wei-kuo (郭維國), sculptor Yang Mao-lin (楊茂林) and paper-cutting artist Liu Shih-tung (劉時棟). It also displays a video installation by Chen Chieh-jen (陳界仁) and a number of Tu Wei-cheng's (涂維政) sculptures, to name a few of 15 artists represented.

Anyone interested in an overview of Taiwan's established artists and the variegated themes they explore should not miss this show.

■ Lin & Lin Gallery (大未來林杏畫廊), 13, Ln 252, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段252巷13號). Open Tuesdays to Fridays from 10am to 7pm, Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2721-8488

■ Until April 14

Cute takes on a sinister aspect in **Eddie Kang's** *Eddie Kang's Life Play*, a new series of acrylic paintings and handmade dolls by South Korean artist Eddie Kang. Working in the Asian pop art tradition known in Taiwan as animamix, a portmanteau of "animation" and "comics," Kang's current show uses his trademark teddy bears to reflect on the oppressive nature of overpopulated urban environments that appear at times spooky and at times benign, though always rendered with a touch of the adorable.

■ Metaphysical Art Gallery (形而上畫廊), 7F, 219, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段219號7樓). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6:30pm. Tel: (02) 2711-0055

■ Until April 18

After months of studio work, four artists will present their creations as part of **AIR**, an acronym meaning "artists in residence." The two Japanese artists, Shimura Nobuhiro and Kenji Ide, create installations that reflect on different aspects of Taiwan. New Zealand artist Mary-Louise Browne examines memory and space with her "memory objects," while compatriot Andy Leleisua'o's psychologically rich representational paintings offer his own take on sentimental issues.

■ Barry Room, Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村百里廳), 7 Beiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號). Open Tuesdays to Fridays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 3393-7377

■ Until April 25

Surplus Enjoyment combines six recent projects by Bulgaria-born, Paris-based artists Nina Kovacheva and Valentin Stefanoff. They explore through video installation the excess of desire they see in contemporary society and its effects on human relationships.

■ Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, Taipei), 39 Changan W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2552-3720. Admission: NT\$50

■ Until April 25

Five photographers come together in **Between History and Tale: Contemporary Photography** (歷史與寓言之間：當代攝影展). Japan's Miwa Yanagi creates elaborate staged photographs of women at various stages of life, while Turkish photographer Lale Tara photographs women in rundown buildings. Chen Shun-chu's (陳順柔) achromatic images tackle the themes of life and death, and Shilpa Gupta examines desire within the context of global capitalism. Nandini Valli Muthiah's heavily saturated photographs offer both a sentimental and kitschy look at Indian mythology and religion.

■ Sakshi Gallery (夏可喜當代藝術), 33 Yitong Street, Taipei City (台北市伊通街33號). Open Tuesdays to Saturdays from 1:30pm to 9:30pm, Sundays from 1:30pm to 7:30pm. Tel: (02) 2516-5386

■ Until May 2

Wang Chung-kun's (王仲堃) solo exhibit, **+ * /** at the Digital Art Center is a sound installation that through aural repetition is meant to transport the listener into a state of mind-numbing contemplation.

■ Digital Arts Center (台北數位藝術中心), 180 Fuhua Rd, Taipei City (台北市福華路180號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 7736-0708

■ Until April 11

Eddie Kang, Confrontation III.

PHOTO COURTESY OF METAPHYSICAL ART GALLERY

