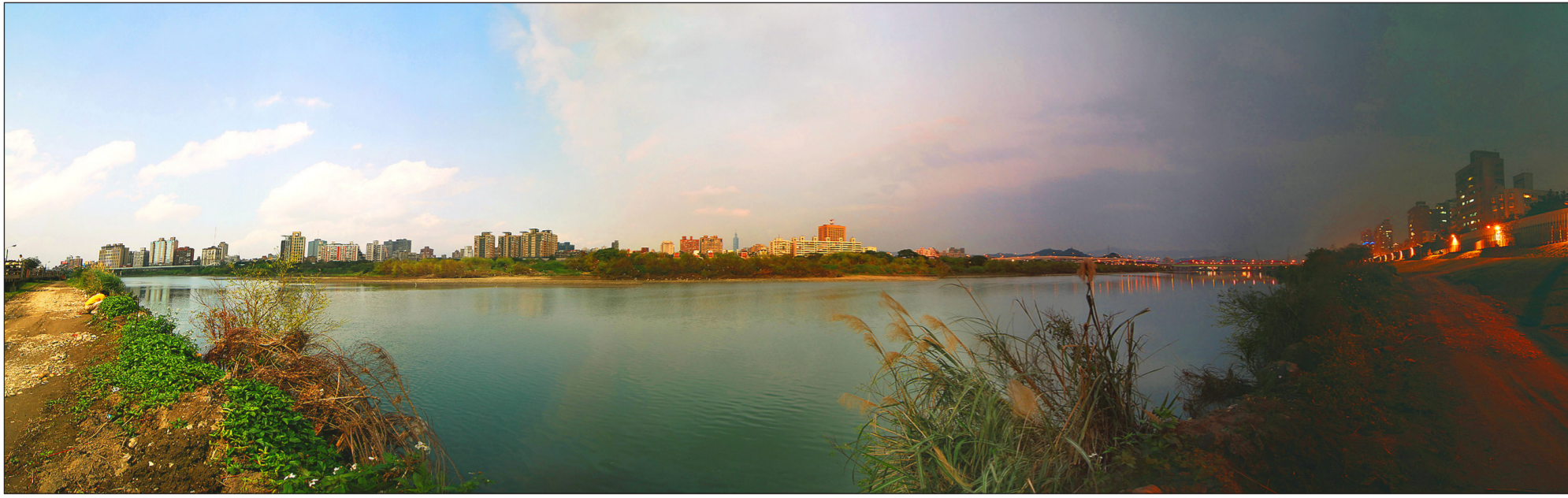


## [ ART JOURNAL ]



## Two spaces and in between

Canadian photographer Joe Russo always finds something cool at the end of the road. His photographs can be seen at Beat Studio until Oct. 19

BY NOAH BUCHAN  
STAFF REPORTER

Joe Russo often needs to lose his way to find the right photograph.

"What I like to do is get on my scooter ... drive on a road outside the city and try to get lost. I follow a big road until I find a small road and follow the small road until the end and see what's there, and if nothing is there I turn around," he said. "But [I] always find something really cool at the end of the road."

What could be a rough guide on how to travel for some, is for Russo, 24, an approach to photography. An exhibition of his work featuring cityscapes and landscapes and everything in between is on view at Beat Studio, located across the street from Mingchuan Park (民權公園) close to Songshan Airport (松山機場), until Oct. 19.

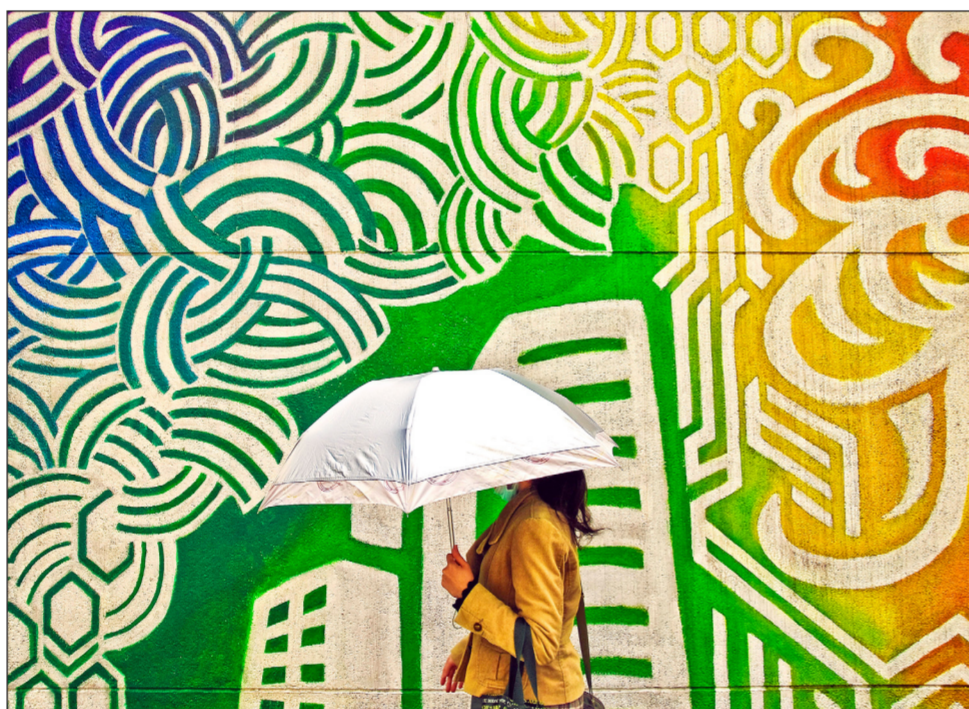
## ROCKY ROADS

Russo, a native of Toronto, Canada, was immediately struck by Taiwan's beauty when he moved here three years ago to learn Chinese.

"Taiwan's mountains really got to me because there are none in Toronto," he said. Beat Studio's walls are hung with images of Russo's back road adventures and the mountainous regions he visits and photographs.

Russo's method for many of his landscapes is to snap hundreds of photographs and then merge them together into one image that can often take up hundreds of megabytes of memory (images, he said, that are large enough to "fit on the side of a bus," although due to printing costs the pictures on display are significantly smaller — many the size of a magazine page).

Happy New Year employs this technique. Photographed on New Years Day, the



From the top: Joe Russo's Happy New Year, Just Woke Up and Looks Like Rain.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOE RUSSO

rectangular image consists of mountains in the middle ground. Taipei 101 forms the focal point on the horizon. An explosion of sunshine bursts from the sky, which turns the iconic building into an obelisk of shadow. The manner in which the multiple images were merged creates an expansive perspective.

More interesting still is his *Experimental*. Russo merged hundreds of images taken over a six-hour period to create a cityscape that encompasses day and night along a river. The black shadows of buildings reflected on the water by day are, as the viewer's eyes move from left to right, replaced by flickering lights on the water at night.

## ONTO THE STREETS

The freelance work Russo has done for magazines such as the now defunct +886 involved hitting Taipei's streets and snapping people and differs significantly with his expansive landscape images. A quartet of photos taken in Ximending (西門町), *A-bei loss 1-4*, shows a chewing gum hawk dancing with an actress who was there to promote her theater work.

Another image shows Bounce, a graffiti artist whose images of a rabbit with a speaker behind his ears can be found across Taipei City. The image was exposed in a way to obscure Bounce's identity and itself resembles graffiti.

Taipei's urban nightlife interests Russo. He has spent much time at Taipei's nightclubs photographing DJs, such as Marcus Aurelius, and clubbers; Luxy habitués might find their images hanging on the wall.

Though somewhat thematically scattered — Russo can't seem to decide if he is a landscape photographer or a social commentator of street culture — the exhibition reveals an avid interest in the country's culture and manages to capture some of the vibrancy of Taipei.

## EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** The Photography of Joe Russo  
**WHERE:** Beat Studio, 4F, 14, Alley 2, Ln 359, Fujin St, Taipei City (台北市富錦街359巷2弄14號4樓)  
**WHEN:** Until Oct. 19  
**DETAILS:** Call to make appointment: (02) 2765-9470  
**ON THE NET:** www.gogo7188.ca/jrphoto

## 3002: A galactic odyssey

Wang Jun-jieh's two solo exhibitions project museumgoers forward into the future and back into their own minds

BY HO YI  
STAFF REPORTER

July 1, 3002. The first wave of space migrants arrives on planet Cullinan+ via the starship *Argo Type V*, four-and-a-half years after blasting off from a dying Earth.

Though similar in appearance to the colonists' home planet as seen from millions of light years away, the new world turns out to be bleak, desert-like and frozen. Facing perpetual darkness and solitude, the immigrants document their struggles to survive with paintings, diaries, photographs and video images.

Later, at an unspecified time in the even more distant future, these records are unearthed, studied and exhibited by archeologists as the records of humankind's first migration to outer space.

This is the theme of an exhibit currently on display at the IT Park (伊通公園).

The Final: Cullinan+ is the last installment of the Microbiology Association (MA) series first developed by Wang Jun-jieh (王俊傑) in 2000. Noted for his playful parodies on consumerism during the 1990s in his FOCL (For Our Consumer Loving) series, in which he adopted gimmicks used by real advertisers to sell fictitious products, the artist has now turned to generic sci-fi literature for his latest ambitious project.

"I feel that in the cyber era, the challenges human beings face are no longer related to the mechanisms that perpetually generate and multiply desires, but something completely

different," Wang said.

Accordingly, Wang's virtual reality has expanded from the commercial company in FOCL to the multinational research institute in Cullinan+ led by the fictitious Dr Z, who tries to save Earth from destruction but fails miserably. The future of humankind is bleak in Wang's myth, as we, highly dependent on technology, are condemned to existential uncertainty and regress to a primitive state of living.

Possibly more intriguing than the post-apocalyptic setting is Wang's skill in making his imaginary institute appear real through a series of artifacts such as logos, Web sites, graphic designs, architectural models, advertisements, brochures, consumer products and even its own history and archaeology, which have already been shown at more than five exhibitions.

"The subject I have tackled with my works since 1990s is about a state ... in between illusion and reality. I think the biggest problem [contemporary humans] face is that we can't tell what is real and unreal in the environment we live in," Wang said.

Taking a more inward and philosophical look into this quandary is another solo exhibition by Wang titled David Project III: David's Paradise, currently on display at Taipei Fine Arts Museum (台北市立美術館). David Project III presents the artist's musings on people's ambiguous relations with other people and environments after a



Left: The Final: Cullinan+ documents humankind's first migration to outer space. Above: David Project III: David's Paradise challenges our notions of what is real and unreal.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WANG JUN-JIEH

friend has passed away.

Composed of five screens showing synchronous video images played in a loop, the video installation shows a man, sometimes real and other times semi-transparent like a phantom, walking across a lawn, into a living room, then a study, a bathroom and a bedroom, and out to the lawn again. Among these everyday settings, a floating vase, television and chair exude an illusionary quality, expressing the artist's idea that our lives are fragmented by reality, memories, fantasies, desires and fear.

A 12-second time lapse between each image further disrupts the visitor's perception of the projected space, with the aim of allowing the visitors themselves to project their own memories, experiences and meditations into the experience of the installation and so enter a mental state similar to that of a trance.

The emphasis on the relationship with the spectator is reflected in the design of the exhibition space itself. Painting the room blue instead of the customary black, Wang wants neither the traditional "white box," where art works hang on spotless, white walls, or the "black box" favored by new media artists, which eliminates unwanted interruptions such as noises and forces visitors to concentrate on

only one or two senses.

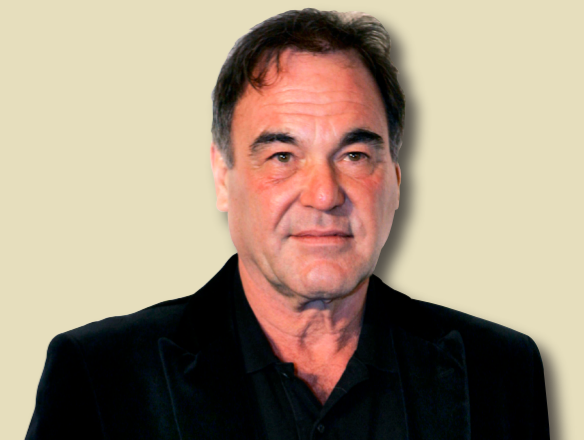
"Rather than enclosed in a pitch-black room, visitors can have a sense of the space they are in ... [They] can form a relationship with the space and create meanings," Wang said.

## EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** Microbiology Association's The Final: Cullinan+ (微生物學協會之《終局: 克里南特星》)  
**WHERE:** IT Park (伊通公園), 2F and 3F, 41 Yitong St, Taipei City (台北市伊通街41號2,3樓)  
**WHEN:** Until Oct. 25  
**DETAILS:** Open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 1pm to 10pm. Tel: (02) 2507-7243

## EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** David Project III: David's Paradise (大衛計畫第三部: 大衛天堂)  
**WHERE:** Taipei Fine Arts Museum (台北市立美術館), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號)  
**WHEN:** Until Nov. 16  
**DETAILS:** Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm; Saturdays until 8:30pm. Tel: (02) 2595-7656.  
**ON THE NET:** www.tfam.museum



## Celebrity Interview

## Least

CONTINUED FROM P14

They never met at Yale, and didn't cross paths until 1999, when the two-term Texas governor was plotting his bid for the presidency. Bush was speaking at a fundraiser in Beverly Hills when Stone staggered in late. "It was 8.30 in the morning — Republicans always have these breakfasts! — and here I am, completely dressed in black, and I think I'd been up having a couple the night before, so I looked like some version of Dylan Thomas, I think. I walked into the room and you could hear the silverware stop for a moment." After Bush had delivered a speech about "tough love" in the Texas penal system ("It was all about the people he'd executed, and why."), the two were introduced. "He surprised me," Stone recalls. "He said, 'We were at Yale together!' I never knew that. And then he told me a bunch of stuff about his buddies in Vietnam ... He had power, man. He had charisma that day. You could tell he was going to be president."

One wonders what Bush made of Stone. Back then, the director was at the height of his notoriety, midway through a five-year legal battle in which his film *Natural Born Killers* was blamed for a spate of copycat crimes. His personal reputation for bad behavior was at its height, too. He and his production team reportedly scouted locations for the movie while high on psilocybin mushrooms; the year he met Bush, he pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of drugs. That kind of thing seems to belong to the past now.

"It's a function of age," Stone says. "Once you've done certain things, you get them out of your system. Blake was right: better to kill an infant in its cradle than to repress an unacted desire. I've done a lot of things, no questions. I'm sure I've been an asshole at times. I'm sure I've been stupid, ignorant, dumb, fucked myself up, shot myself in the foot, everything. But I had a lot of learning to do in my life." He lives somewhat more quietly now in Los Angeles with his third wife and their teenage daughter, Stone's third child.

He also claims, these days, to be tired of defending his movies. When *Alexander* received a critical drubbing in 2004, he didn't fight back; in a sequence of newspaper interviews, he gave elaborate mea culpas, saying he felt he'd failed Alexander the Great. But he remains full of contempt for the "complete morons" who took *Natural Born Killers* to be glorifying violence, and the "literalists" who objected to the liberties *JFK* took with the truth. (Its details are indeed shaky. But as a speculative exploration of the theory that Kennedy was killed by an alliance of military men, CIA agents and anti-Castro nationalists, upset at the president's growing independence of mind on Vietnam and Cuba, it remains enormously powerful; many of the attacks on Stone accused him of making allegations that aren't contained in it at all.)

And don't get him started on the label "conspiracy theorist," which is an "ugly and ominous" term used, he says, to tarnish the reputations of anyone who thinks conspiracies ever occur, as clearly they do: his movie *Nixon* is all about one conspiracy that nobody now disputes. Contrastingly, Stone says, he examined the conspiracy claims surrounding 9/11 and found them unconvincing; accordingly, his 2006 film *World Trade Center* was a human drama about two police officers trapped under the rubble. Right-wing critics, taken aback, praised it as one of the most patriotic films they'd ever seen. Unsurprisingly, they've been less impressed by his documentaries on Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez, and a project — now apparently abandoned — involving Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran.

Stone showed *W* to "a very senior American journalist," he says, who warned him to expect a new deluge of hostility. "There are lines in the movie from Bush that are out of context, but I think you used them in the correct spirit," the journalist told him. "You didn't cross the line. But there are those simpletons who will go after it — they'll say, 'Well, he didn't actually say that in his pajamas at that time.'" Good historians, Stone says, "understand that dramatists who deal with history have a license they don't have. It's so ridiculous for me, in the 21st century, to be defending a position taken by Shakespeare. By Aeschylus. Sophocles. And yet here you are, years later, and you get *USA Today* or someone asking, 'Are you a historian or a dramatist?' What's wrong with our education system that we can't get past that?"

Being Oliver Stone seems like an exhausting undertaking, necessitating constant combat. But Stone appears not to feel as if he has any choice in the matter. "I am destined to do what I do, and ultimately I'll do it at any price, if it needs doing," he says, with a what-can-you-do-about-it? shrug. And then there are the internal battles. I meet Stone the day after his 62nd birthday, and can't resist mentioning that my own is the following day. "You're an Oliver Virgo? You're very lucky, you know that? Unfortunately, though, we're cursed with too much insecurity and doubt. Well, at least I am. My biggest harm I do to myself is I put all this pressure on myself." He describes himself as a Buddhist, and says daily meditation has helped calm him down: "But even at my age, I feel the need to accomplish a certain thing every day, or things, and I go through that process of torturing myself, and then often put it off till the end of the day, or not at all, which is worse. So, of course, I suffer the consequences of procrastination: delay, doubt. General worthlessness." He laughs, tiredly. "But apart from that ..."