

[ART JOURNAL]



Clockwise from above: A portrait of Andy Warhol taken by Italian photographer Dino Pedriali (1975); Marilyn Monroe screen print on cardboard (1967); Mick Jagger offset screen print on cardboard (1975); *Ladies and Gentlemen*, screen print on Arches paper, 1975.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEDIA SPHERE COMMUNICATION

Half there, yet all there

Campbell's soup cans, Coca-cola bottles and Marilyn Monroe. Welcome to the world of Andy Warhol, currently on display at Taiwan Democracy Hall (formerly known as Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall) through March 29.

For its Taipei show, the touring exhibition has assembled more than 120 pieces made, certified or signed by Warhol, making it almost twice as large as the exhibition's European tours, which ended in Italy last year, according to curator Hsu Fen-land (徐芬蘭).

"We are all too familiar with Warhol's art, but what we see in magazines is nowhere near the original works. I always tell people to appreciate the displays from the side so as to see the layers of prints that convey a remarkable amount of details and refinements," said Hsu, who is also a manager at Timsort, S. L., one of the three European art and cultural agencies that organized the exhibition to commemorate what would have been the artist's 80th birthday.

This is the first large-scale exhibition in Taiwan that systematically introduces Warhol's work to the country. Hsu presents Warhol as an artist known for breaking conventions through his innovative creative ventures.

Warhol took pop art to a new level, from making art out of mass-produced commodities to mass producing art itself — art, moreover, that could be owned and enjoyed by the masses as exemplified in his *Campbell's Soup Dress* (1968) and *Campbell's Soup Can on Shopping Bag* (1966), as well as *Banana* (1966) and the album cover for *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (1967).

The exhibition begins with works from Warhol's lesser-known early period in 1950s, during which time the son of working-class immigrants from Czechoslovakia had already achieved a measure



The most comprehensive show of Andy Warhol's work shown in Taiwan to date is on display at Taiwan Democracy Hall

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

of success in New York City as a commercial illustrator. An important work that contains all the archetypal elements of what would later become Warhol's signature style, *A Golden Book* (1957), comprises 20 hand-bound drawings created using the blotted-line technique that was characteristic of the artist's early works.

The technique, which involved drawing in ink on a non-absorbent surface and then pressing a piece of paper to the surface before the ink dried, gave the resulting work a graphic look and was an early indication of Warhol's interest in duplication and repetition.

Another section of the exhibition is dedicated to Warhol's portraits of famous people that characterized much of his output in the 1970s. These wow-inducing displays include *Mao* (1972), *Jimmy Carter* (1975) and *Liza Minnelli* (1978). A portrait of Mick Jagger (1975) is co-signed by the

artist and his model, another first in art history.

Also on display is the *Space Fruit* series (1978), which was screen-printed on Plexiglas, and *Jose Beuys* (1981), which was screen-printed on a laundry bag, both of which show Warhol's experimentation with new materials.

Meanwhile, *After Munch* (1984) serves as an example of Warhol revisiting the worlds of great figures in the history of Western art, such as Edvard Munch and Leonardo da Vinci.

Because of budgetary restraints, Warhol's films, his work as a music producer, and his interest in religion, as seen in *Last Supper* (1986), are left unexplored. And Hsu's original plan to project Warhol's image of Mao Zedong (毛澤東) onto the vast white walls outside Taiwan Democracy Hall was aborted because it was too "politically sensitive."

"It has never been done ... If Warhol were alive, he would definitely sign the wall, making it a piece of his art," Hsu said.

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: Andy Warhol (普普教父—安迪·沃荷世界巡迴展)

WHERE: Chungcheng Gallery (中正藝廊), 21 Zhongshan 5 Rd, Taipei City (台北市中山南路21號)

WHEN: Until March 29

TICKETS: NT\$250 for adults, NT\$200 for students, NT\$120 for senior citizens aged 65 and up. Free for children shorter than 110cm

ON THE NET: www.mediasphere.com.tw/andy-warhol

New Year, traditional ways

The National Palace Museum's newest exhibition reveals the elaborate symbolism that accompanied the Lunar New Year in premodern Chinese society. Contemporary celebrations pale by comparison

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

Many people are already looking forward to the Lunar New Year holiday at the end of the month, but these days the event is generally a simple affair of the family getting together for a meal. Though there is no shortage of spring couplets and New Year delicacies, the elaborate symbolism that affirmed the natural order of nature and of political power that made the New Year such an important event in the Chinese calendar has gradually faded. As a little reminder, the National Palace Museum has set up a small exhibition entitled New Year Paintings of the Ch'ing (Qing) Capital (京華歲朝圖), which presents 12 works from the Qing Dynasty related in various ways to New Year celebrations.

The center piece of the exhibition, *Synergy of the Sun, Moon and the Five Planets* (日月合璧五星聯珠圖), was painted in 1761 in the 26th year of the Qianlong (乾隆) Emperor's reign. It depicts the cosmic order as represented within the imperial city of Beijing from the purlieus to the center of power, the Forbidden City itself. The scroll, which is more than 13m in length, shows the activities of the city's people, from peasant children playing on a frozen river to high court officials preparing to offer New Year salutations to the emperor.

According to curator Lina Lin (林莉娜), the painting's creator was not only intimately acquainted with the city and the people he depicted,

but was also a skilled cartographer. His representation of the city is accurate, Lin said, in depicting the capital as it was before the famous *hutongs* (胡同), or narrow streets, were flattened. This is the first time this work has been put on public display in Taiwan.

Other exhibits also feature the same focus on detail, such as *Joyous Celebration of the New Year* (歲朝歡慶圖) by Yao Wen-han (姚文翰), which depicts a well-to-do family celebrating the New Year. This is another painting that repays detailed study. It shows the whole household, from the master and mistress of the house at the dining table, to maids in the kitchen and the children at play. Also painted at the zenith of the Qing Dynasty, it is a scene of idealized celebration. Pictorially, it is interesting to note the rudimentary use of perspective and shading, devices imported by the Jesuits residing at the Chinese court, and ironically, harbingers of the dynasty's eventual demise at the hands of Western arms.

Another highlight of this small show is *Nine Goats Opening the New Year* (繡繡九羊啓泰), a silk tapestry ornamented with embroidery. Lin said that the demands of time, money and skill meant that a work like this is extremely rare, even within the imperial collection. "It piles refinement on refinement," Lin said, "as she pointed out the fine detail and the textured effects produced by the overlay of embroidery over the already detailed tapestry. This, as with other works on display,

are all from a period of enormous prosperity and self-confidence, and this gives these celebratory works an exuberance that is manifest to the non-specialist, even if some of the finer detail is missed.

The main points of interest are highlighted in the esoteric language of auspicious symbols explained in an enormously helpful brochure in Chinese and English. Though the exhibition is small, it more than makes up for size in the enormous amount of detail that there is to appreciate.

Right: *Nine Goats Opening the New Year* by an anonymous artist.

Below: A detail from the over 13m-long scroll *Synergy of the Sun, Moon and the Five Planets*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NPM



EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: New Year Paintings of the Ch'ing (Qing) Capital

WHERE: National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院), 221, Zhishan Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市至善路二段221號), Main Building Galleries 202 and 216

WHEN: Sunday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. Closes at 8:30pm on Saturdays. Ends March 25

TICKETS: General entry is NT\$160; admission is free from 5pm onwards on Saturdays

ON THE NET: A detailed English-language introduction to the exhibition can be found at www.npm.gov.tw/exh98/newyear/



Celebrity Interview

Always in

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TT: Many consumers still associate fashion items made in China with lower quality, mass manufacturing and counterfeit goods. Since you think it is important for designers to take advantage of manufacturing resources in China, how do you think consumer perception of the "made in China" label will change?

DG: Consumers will change their minds as fashion designers from China become better known to an international audience. Japan had the worst image in the 1950s and they were supposed to be the worst manufacturers and the fiercest copiers on the planet. But, of course, because of Issey Miyake and Yohji Yamamoto, that image of Japan has changed today and become one of extremely good service and perfect manufacturing. The image of a country changes with the image of its own brands.

The "made in France" label is still extremely important on certain items. If you buy a dress for a special occasion, you might think spending a thousand Euros is fine, because you need the product to be very well made. It is something that you want to spend money on, because it is important for your function, for your special day. But when [a consumer] buys a cotton shirt, the price cannot be what it would be if it were manufactured in France. Cotton shirts can be made in Asia, which also has the best cotton in the world because of the humidity and climate. If you as a designer want to produce a shirt, a cotton shirt, and you want the best cotton that exists, you will produce in China, because China manufacturers do knitwear well. With new technology and the Internet, you can communicate with the world on a screen. You can be in this room right now, for example, and manage a fitting in Sao Paulo. This allows you to conceive your collection in very different ways and to produce all over the world in the same way you would produce in your own country.

TT: Many of the top design houses are now owned by luxury conglomerates like LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton [the parent company of Givenchy and Marc Jacobs, among other labels], which in addition to the demands of fashion must also listen to the demands of shareholders. Is there any concern that the creative independence of designers will be affected by that?

DG: There is no question that groups including LVMH or PPR [whose labels include Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen] are welcome because they permit brands to survive. After all, Chanel is now close to a hundred years old and Lanvin was founded in 1899. Companies like LVMH and PPR have always existed, even in the 1930s and then after the war, when [French entrepreneur] Marcel Boussac financed Christian Dior.

You always have financial groups funding new brands, which is valuable. It is very difficult for new brands to cohabit with venerable design houses. When Christian Dior and Pierre Balmain opened their couture houses in the 1940s, the House of Worth and the House of Paquin were still operating nearby. There is always competition between new brands with new blood and brands which are already in their third or fourth generation, it's part of French fashion tradition.

TT: How can designers like Shiatzy Chen and Yufeng-shawn [the first two Taiwanese designers to show at Paris fashion week] market themselves to a worldwide audience?

DG: It depends on their business model and strategy. I don't think that they have a set model they need to follow. You use your own past to build your future. But it's important to create an international network to carry your collection. What [Shiatzy Chen] brings to Paris are also her strong points here, especially her quality and service, which are exceptional. She may have to adjust to fit the needs of the clientele over there, but I think that she has an advantage, which is that she had a store in Paris before anyone else [from this region] and it gives her an international flavor. She has an opportunity to use her service and her quality, which is really exceptional and a specific advantage, to address a clientele that is not the same as she has here, but one that is complementary.

TT: What kind of special qualities do designers from emerging marketplaces bring to the international fashion scene in their work?

DG: Actually, I think that, especially in light of the global economic crisis, we are all the same. There are no more frontiers. We are in one world. You cannot have nationalism in fashion. But what is a fact is that when a new country comes into the international community, it brings to the world its traditions, its repertory. That was obvious in Japan, where people like Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake changed international fashion and added something that can only have originated from Japan. I am wearing a jacket by Issey and though it's not noticeably Japanese, it can only be Japanese. It is something that comes from each country's culture. With designers in India, who are extraordinary, their work is very colorful and the detailing can only be Indian. It is the same with looks from China, they are influenced by Chinese culture but do not look Chinese. Right now everything is about bringing and melding cultures together.

TT: Luxury brands are usually sheltered from slower consumer spending, but right now even they are being affected by the global economy. For example, LVMH recently cancelled plans to open a flagship store in Tokyo, even though Japan is a major market for luxury goods. If spending on luxury brands decreases, how might that affect fashion designers?

DG: Luxury brands aren't only connected to fashion. There are brands and products like the Kelly bag by Hermes, which is never outdated and is something that is always profitable, always in fashion, even if times are difficult for fashion brands. Many luxury brands until recently weren't involved in fashion, because they did not want to be outdated and of course you take that risk when you show fashion. But there will always be a need for new brands and new designers because people really look for that. They don't want to dress like their mothers did and at the same time they will always look for a new expression, a new way for their personality to evolve along with fashion.