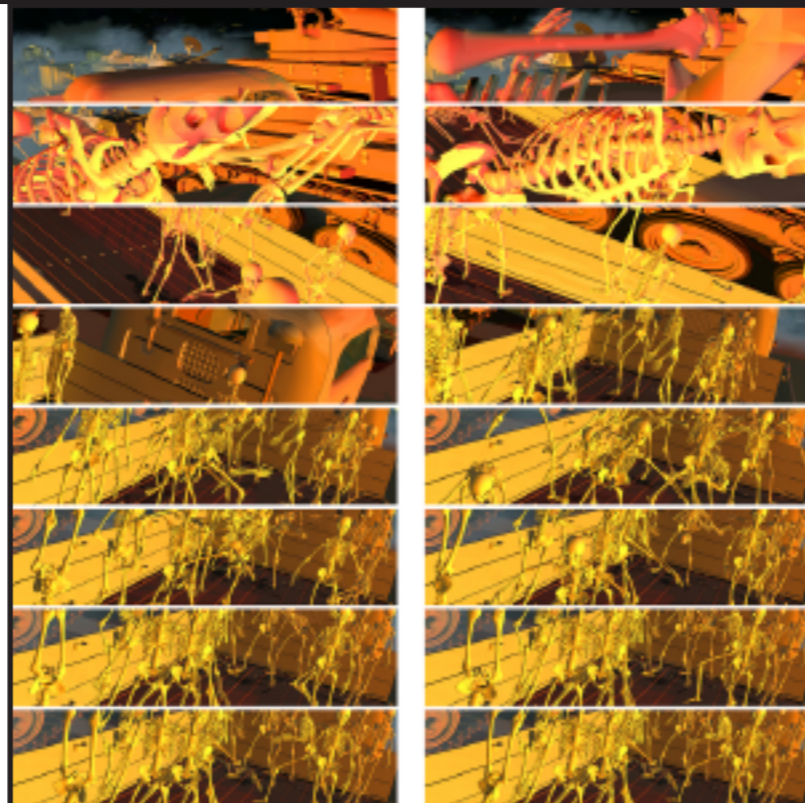


[ART JOURNAL]

The human spectacle

MOCA's group exhibit *Spectacle — To Each His Own* raises questions about how new media affects human subjects

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER



Left: Video grabs from Miao Xiaochun's *Microcosm*.
Below: One-hundred-thousand eggshells were used to build Weng Fen's installation *Ideologies*. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOCA

Grating describes the placement of *Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!* (呼嘯!呼嘯!呼嘯!), a sound installation that echoes throughout much of the first floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA). Sounding more like shrieks of pain than squeals of joy, the work distracts visitors from appreciating the other pieces nearby.

Though the installation by Qin Ga (琴嘎) sets an annoying tone, *Spectacle — To Each His Own* (各搞各的: 歧觀當代), a group exhibit put together by China-based independent curator Gu Zhenqing (顧振清), is for the most part worth a visit. Twenty-eight artists from Asia, North America and Europe working in new and traditional media investigate the individual in society and raise questions about how new media affects human subjects.

Jin Jiangbo's (金江波) *God, Go Ahead With Chatting* (天哪·你去聊吧) enlivens the old theme of information overload in the digital age. The video and sculpture installation shows a man slumped over a flat screen monitor that rests on a table. Above him hang 20 other monitors showing different Web pages. Is the man dreaming of the monitors or are they the cause of his catatonic state, or both?

Located across from Jin's work is Xu Zhongmin's (許仲敏) *Sisyphean Egg Shape #1* (蛋形 No.1). Stainless steel skeletons bound together with string rotate frenetically on an egg-shaped sculpture split while a second group of skeletons continuously scale the egg's yolk, a sequence that evokes the manic activity of contemporary life and the difficulty of following one's own path.

The artist collective 3P = 3 Players (3p小组) — consisting of Xie Rong (謝蓉), Wang Mei (王玫) and Li Hong (李虹) — recruited pairs of volunteers from different walks of life to film their thoughtful video installation *Relativity* (相對論), a meditation on eye contact as a means of communication. The artists had their subjects face each other for three minutes and used three cameras to film their reactions.

A middle-aged woman sheds tears in front of the doctor who cured her cancer; a little girl giggles uncontrollably as a taller, emotionless boy stands in front of her; a diminutive worker shifts uncomfortably, eyes moving back and forth, as he faces his expressionless boss. The cancer patient's tears, the girl's laughter and the worker's nervous expression all reveal a depth of human character that I have rarely seen on film. I found myself transfixed as I wondered how I would react if I had been one of the characters in the videos.

The above works by Jin, Xu and 3P = 3 Players appear at the beginning of *Spectacle* and are rich enough in content to warrant exhibits of their own, though the unsettling noises emitted by *Hurray! Hurray!* push visitors further into the museum.

Less impressive are Timm Ulrichs' *Tears*, a video of an old man crying that seems to represent the sadness people feel in their daily lives, and the clash of good and evil as conceptualized through multiple images of a girl skipping in Tomasz Wenzland's *Angels*. Both reveal little about their subjects and can be passed with a yawn.

More engaging is Tjong Ang's digital short *Models for (the) People*, in which an African man stands in the middle of a street in Shanghai as passers-by gawk at him, a meditation on the superficiality of collective perceptions and cultural stereotypes.

Other notable works include Miao Xiaochun's (繆曉春) film *Microcosm* (坐天觀井), which uses Christian symbols and computer generated graphics of scenes including the Garden of Eden and Armageddon to show how curiosity can lead to both creation and destruction; and Weng Fen's (翁奮) sculpture *Ideologies*, a model city made from 100,000 eggshells that when seen from above looks like US\$100 and 100 renminbi notes.



Left: Stainless steel sculpture called *Eggshape #1* by Xu Zhongmin.
Lower left: Sound installation called *Hurray! Hurray!* by Qin Ga
Lower right: Installation called *God, Go Ahead With Chatting* by Jin Jiangbo. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOCA



EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: *Spectacle — To Each His Own* (各搞各的: 歧觀當代)
WHERE: Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, (台北當代藝術館), 39 Changan W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Call (02) 2552-3721 for more information
WHEN: Until April 12. Open daily 10am to 6pm, closed on Mondays
ADMISSION: NT\$50
ON THE NET: www.mocataipei.org.tw

Let it all hang out

Feeling anomic, stressed out or simply bored? The answer could be found in a 'nightclub'

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER



Tsao Yan-hao collaborated with electronica outfit KbN to bring "audiences" a series of light, sound and image installations that recreate nightlife scenes. PHOTOS COURTESY OF KUANDU MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS



Tsao Yan-hao (曹彥豪) and indie-electronica group KbN (凱比鳥) want to alleviate the stresses of everyday life. Their artistic panacea is a collaborative exhibition that utilizes video projections of nightlife scenes from around the world.

"People go inside and listen to the music and dance on the dance floor," Tsao said in a telephone interview.

The installation is one of roughly 20 on display as part of [Room19] Shake Your Mind!, a group exhibition at the Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (台北藝術大學關渡美術館).

The exhibit's theme is a response to Doris Lessing's short story *To Room Nineteen*, a work about a woman who embarks on a journey of self-discovery after learning that her husband is having an affair. But whereas the story reflects on the dreariness of life, the exhibition is a celebration.

In Lessing's melancholic musings on love, the hotel room is a symbol of oppression, but in [Room19] the nightclub is a space of freedom and individuality where people can express themselves without reservation.

Curated by Wu Dar-kuen (吳達坤), the exhibition brings together some of Taiwan's finest contemporary musicians and visual artists, including Akibo Lee (李明道), New York-based Taiwanese photographer Daniel Lee (李小鏡) and expressionist Lee Ming-chung (李民中), in collaborations that have produced a variety of light, sound and image installations (often a combination of all three) that are designed to lift visitors out of their daily blahs.

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: [Room19] Shake Your Mind!
WHERE: Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (台北藝術大學關渡美術館), 1 Xueyuan Rd, Beitou Dist, Taipei City (台北市北投區學園路1號)
WHEN: Until Sunday. Open Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2893-8871
ON THE NET: kdmofa.tnu.edu.tw/

Celebrity Interview



Clint Eastwood is shown in a scene from *Gran Torino*. PHOTO: AP

Eyes

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One imagines that being the son of Clint Eastwood throws up very particular problems, as being the daughter of some icon of femininity might for a girl. I ask if his sons have had a tougher time of it than his daughters. "Maybe. Maybe not. I don't think so." He pauses. "Maybe." Another long pause. "I don't think they need to get screwed up. The parents have to keep instilling in them the logic of life. Not everyone becomes a known figure. There's disadvantages to it and there's advantages to it. Don't try to make it any more than it is." This isn't, of course, something he can entirely control, the way his fame affects his children. "You're never in total control. But you have to have ambitions to set the agenda and fate does the rest."

Control is a big thing for Eastwood, whose "logic of life" is deeply entwined with his Libertarian politics, which he brings up with a wry smile, taking into account that most people think Libertarianism is at best unrealistic and at worst crackpot. He registered as a Republican in 1951 in support of Eisenhower, whom he admired for his World War II heroism and election promise to end the war in Korea. Eastwood's short tenure as mayor of Carmel, the town south of San Francisco where he lives, was premised, he told the *New Yorker*, on "doing things for people who can't stand up for themselves." Since then, he says, the Republican party has lost its way — he was not in favor of going to war in Iraq, and the evangelical side of the party annoys him. "The only thing John McCain and I really agreed upon was that the Republicans had lost their way because they lost their philosophy." The core of that philosophy, he says, is that "people should be responsible for themselves and fiscal responsibility is very, very important." He says of the current economic crisis: "The great saying that if you don't pay attention to history you're doomed to repeat it is pretty much true. Pretty much true. Now we're repeating it. You get what you deserve."

For the election, his wife registered as an independent, although, he says, they both thought, "Obama seemed like a nice guy." And Eastwood? "I registered," he smiles, "Libertarian. I like the philosophies. The Libertarian party is nothing and they don't have any candidates. But I do believe if we just leave everybody alone, quit trying to think of ways to run everybody else's life, maybe we'd be better off. It may be impractical. It may be obsolete, that kind of thinking." He looks off into the distance: "It's just kinda the way I was raised."

Eastwood's long-term vision about his career was unusual both in its accuracy and the tenacity with which he pursued it. In his early 30s, he could see that if he carried on making westerns they would get worse and he would eventually fall out of fashion. The way to save himself was to diversify. He is a pianist and has written the scores for many of his films, but it was to directing that he turned. He had campaigned to direct episodes of *Rawhide*, the TV series that started his career, the studio refused, but finally, in 1971, he was given *Play Misty for Me*, a low-budget film about a woman stalking a local radio star. *Misty* is still a tense, well-managed thriller today, although there is a self-indulgent bit where the character played by Eastwood and his girlfriend frolic on a beach, in a wood and under a waterfall, that would presage overlong sequences in many of his films. Directing, he says, is the greater joy. "You're the storyteller. As an actor you're just involved with the one component, your component. And your relationship to the ensemble. I prefer directing. I have to. I'm at the age where I should. So."

Eastwood is not a shouter on set; his is a quiet authority. Apart from Spike Lee, no one in the industry seems to have a bad word for him. He is said to be gentlemanly to a fault, professional, deeply engaged. He is also disinclined to censor himself. It is customary when making a film based on a novel not to bad-mouth the source material. In 1995 he made *The Bridges of Madison County*, one of the directing roles that, with *Unforgiven*, raised his profile as a serious director; he called Robert James Waller's novel "fancy, pretentious writing" that he had "fought" to get through. His tiff with Spike Lee last year followed Lee's accusations that Eastwood did not include any black soldiers in his World War II film *Flags of Our Fathers*, the story of the men who raised the US flag after the battle of Iwo Jima. It is a bleak, beautiful film that seems to go on for several days and, amid all the battle scenes, exploits what Eastwood has always done best: stillness. He replied that Lee should "shut his face" — the film was historically accurate. Now he says, "It wasn't really a tiff. I was in Cannes and somebody said that he was quoted saying this and that. Some journalist. And I said, well if he said that ... and I shot my mouth off. But he's a nice guy. I think Spike was just trying to promote his flick. I understand the game." He grins. "I just thought I wasn't going to let him off the hook."

He won't speculate on how he has influenced cinema, or who he considers to be the heirs to Dirty Harry or Josey Wales. Jason Bourne, perhaps, although he gets too weepy over his dead girlfriend. Eastwood never betrayed an interior life beyond the hint of a secret sadness. He never fell for the posse mentality, and even when he was playing a cop, he was as suspicious of the law as of the outlaws — in *Hang 'Em High*, a judge admonishes his Marshal Jedediah Cooper: "You can be the best I've ever had, the best there is, if you remember this: you work for the government. You work for justice." His characters didn't work for anyone, of course, which is why we'll always love them. For his own inspiration, he says, he looked to John Wayne and Gary Cooper, "old-time movie actors. I was influenced by James Cagney a lot. I liked his inner vitality. And he was fearless. Not afraid to do crazy things, take a grapefruit in the face. I've always felt that suited me as well."

What is that, not being afraid to fail? "I think it's just ... not being afraid." He quotes FDR — "The only thing to fear is fear itself" — then repeats it in a silly voice, to show he isn't that pompous. "Anyway, it was like that mentality. Yeah, I'll just barge in, make that commitment, go for it, otherwise you miss great opportunities to enjoy yourself and have fun and create characters that are interesting. Sometimes you have to swing hard and miss the ball. But you have to swing hard."

Given his fame, Eastwood has an unusually sensible attitude. He hasn't burned out, or become an addict, or cast himself against women half his age. There's no great mystery to it, he says. "Just stacking up information. Not forgetting it." He drops his voice even lower than his usual whisper and leans in. "Not forgetting." His eyes really are very green.