

# Madoff painting is good — as a dartboard



A visitor walks past a watercolor of Bernard Madoff by Yan Peiming at the Armory Show in Manhattan on Sunday.

PHOTO: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Sales were slow at this year's Armory Show in New York, and nobody wanted to pay six figures for a portrait of the man who has become a symbol of the global financial meltdown

BY CARA BUCKLEY  
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK

None was willing to buy what was quite likely the most inflammatory piece of art at this year's Armory Show — a 150cm-by-239cm watercolor of Bernard Madoff — but plenty of people had interesting ideas on what to do with the painting, and its infamous subject, who stands accused of operating a US\$50 billion worldwide Ponzi scheme.

"They should charge a buck a dart to toss at that thing," said Brian Tepper, 39, an artist and art therapist, as he stared at Madoff's outsized visage, which gazed back with a faint smile and almost wistful eyes. The portrait, rendered in gray, black and white by the China-born artist Yan Peiming (嚴培明), was priced at US\$100,000.

Tepper was with two artist friends, Chris Cozel, 52, who remarked that she would like to see Madoff "crucified," and Virginia Dutton, also 52, who proposed doing a portrait of Madoff, in one of her favorite media: blood.

Given the economic crash, it was hardly surprising that no one wanted to pay six figures for a portrait of one of the most vilified figures in the world. Writing by e-mail from Paris, Yan said he had finished the painting in one day, and chose Madoff because he was "a kind of symbol of the economic crisis, a kind of personalization of the savage speculation, without control."

Asked who might buy such a painting, Yan, whose work is being exhibited in the Louvre, wrote "everything

can be sold in this world." Yet not, it seemed, at the Armory Show. David Zwirner, the gallery owner who displayed the Madoff painting, said that he was unprepared for the slowness of sales at this year's show, which ran for five days and ended on Sunday.

"I went there with low expectations," said Zwirner, "and they were not met."

Regulars at the fair along the Hudson River at 55th Street, said the energy was far lower this year. People who waited in long lines in years past were surprised when they waltzed right in. One visitor, Thomas Warnke, 41, an architect, said he liked the thinner crowds. "There's better air," he said.

In the first few hours after the fair opened at noon on Sunday, the hallways between booths seemed ghostly, though the place grew more crowded — and merrier — as the day wore on and more wine was dispensed.

Giovanni Garcia-Fenech, the show's spokesman, said the turnout was bigger than the 52,000 who attended last year. Compared to previous years, the fair was also bigger: it had expanded from one Hudson pier to two. This meant that more galleries exhibited, though Garcia-Fenech said that the applications for spots were due in August (booth rental runs between US\$9,700 and US\$57,500), before the economic crisis had fully hit.

Privately, gallery owners said they usually were prepared to knock 10 percent off asking prices, but this

year were accepting offers of up to 30 percent off.

One booth that was consistently hopping was that of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, where an artist, Christine Hill, had set up a faux apothecary and was listening to people's woes and dispensing "prescriptions" and advice, for US\$20 and up. Hill was hearing it all, from insomniacs, regretful lovers, discontented children and infertile couples. Surprisingly few people expressed panic over financial worries, she said.

Several gallery owners said they would most likely not take part in next year's show, among them Isabella Bortolozzi, who runs a gallery in Berlin. This year was her first at the Armory, but as of midday Sunday she was deeply disappointed — she had yet to sell anything.

Yet Frank Elbaz, the gallery owner showing at the booth across from Bortolozzi, was ebullient. He had brought seven pieces by Gyan Panchal over from his gallery in Paris, including a torn ink cartridge package with a stick of charcoal resting inside, each priced between US\$3,000 and US\$7,000. On Saturday, he sold all seven to someone he would describe only as a top Democratic lobbyist from Washington.

Another decidedly pleased exhibitor was Vladimir Oycharenko of the Regina Gallery in Moscow. On Saturday, he sold a neon sign by a French artist, Claire Fontaine, for US\$20,000.

It read: "Capitalism Kills."

## Color and outline

Todd Hackwelder's paintings employ solid colors, simple layout and strong topography — all informed by a designer's sensibility

BY NOAH BUCHAN  
STAFF REPORTER

Some artists choose to exhibit their work once every few years. Todd Hackwelder, however, takes the opposite approach. The US expat hones in on a particular idea and finds as many different ways as possible to present it. A sampling of his prolific output, titled A Collection of Different Series, is currently on display at Wendel's German Bakery and Bistro in Tienmu.

"My philosophy is to have as many shows as possible. I'd have a show in a bathroom if it was nice and my paintings didn't get damaged," joked the 34-year-old, who has lived in Taiwan for seven years. "Each show creates a new idea and it gets me to think differently."

The 50 or so works on display at the spacious German restaurant were chosen from five previous series — Blues, Numbers, Drum, Experimental and Secondary Language, Secondary Color — as well as a sixth series called One-Eyed Clowns that he is in the process of finishing.

Hackwelder received a BFA in graphic design from the State University of New York at Fredonia and studied design at a Yale summer program in Brissago, Switzerland. He says he has worked in design for 18 years. In Taiwan, where he is currently an English teacher, his projects have included the menu for Forkers and the business cards for Coda, two expat-run restaurants in Taipei. He picked up the paintbrush two years ago after gallery-

owner and painter Timothy Nathan Joel encouraged him to do a show.

"I didn't know what I was going to do. I was going to maybe show design. I'm also a photographer — I've taken like 50,000 photos since I've been here [Taiwan] — so I wasn't sure," he recalled. "And then I said: Maybe I'll do painting."

Right: Todd Hackwelder sits below one of his paintings from the series One-Eyed Clown. Below: Todd Hackwelder's Hack-Drum-Mirror.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES  
PHOTO COURTESY OF TODD HACKWELDER



### EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** A Collection of Different Series by painter Todd Hackwelder  
**WHERE:** Wendel's German Bakery and Bistro, 5, Dexing W Rd, Taipei City (台北市德行西路5號)  
**WHEN:** From Friday until April 20, Wendel's is open daily from 7:30am to 11pm  
**ON THE NET:** www.haikaha.com

What emerged was a show called Blues, a series of paintings that takes the music genre as its theme and features black stick figures in various poses and actions on backgrounds of many shades of blue.

The series *Secondary Language*, *Secondary Color* sees Hackwelder filling out the stick figures with outlined characters. The liberal use of numbers and languages also feature prominently in this series. The five-panel *Orange*, for example, uses a visual language similar to graffiti to meditate on his travels through Southeast Asia. The picture's narratives are punctuated by words and phrases culled from a particular country's language.

"There is a lot of outline in my work. I paint my canvas in a solid color and then I draw on it. I get it to where I like it and then I paint it almost as if like a coloring book," he said.

The paintings in *One-Eyed Clowns*, his most recent series, are all signed using his Chinese name Hai Ke-ha (海克哈) — an indication, perhaps, of his increased confidence as an artist.

Hackwelder said he sees a lot of himself in the clowns he created.

"It's me as what I do," he said of the colorful figures. "It gives me a genre of what I do. How many other people have painted clowns? A lot. How many people have done a series on one-eyed clowns? Probably nobody," he said.

## Celebrity Interview



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEMIEUX PLOIN 40 ART

### Lemieux

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**TT:** How did the idea of the performance of *Norman* come about?

**ML:** Norman McLaren has been part of our life since as long as we can remember. When I was young — 5 or 6 years old — he was very popular in Canada and even around the world. We forget about him today and it's a pity.

About 10 years ago, the National Film Board of Canada [NFB] — which has all the movies of Norman McLaren because he founded the animation studio there and worked there for 40 years — called and [asked if] we would create a short show on McLaren. Of course we jumped at the opportunity. Norman was dead at that point so we never met. We didn't end up doing it because [the NFB] didn't get the funding.

So we did [Shakespeare's] *The Tempest* with a big theater here and it went on tour (and is still on tour actually) and a show for Cirque du Soleil which was called *Delirium*, an arena show attracting 10,000 people every night that went to London, the US and Europe. And we said to ourselves that we have to come back to this project for Norman McLaren.

The day we decided to call the NFB, they actually called us an hour before. We hadn't communicated with them for five years and here they were asking us if we were still interested. So we said of course. When we came to do *Norman*, we had all the movies, we knew which films we wanted to show. We had an embryo of the show.

**TT:** Why did you choose Peter Troszter as the solo performer? What was the collaborative process?

**ML:** We were looking for a dancer because Norman McLaren always said if he weren't a filmmaker he would have been a dancer because he loved to dance. We wanted a very strong performer with presence. If the performer is not strong — especially when you have the movies of Norman appear in 3D on stage with our virtual projection techniques — he's going to be totally crushed by the technology. Peter had a solo show at that point. In that show he talks to the audience and presents himself as Peter — he was really with us. It totally convinced us that he could carry a solo show ... You don't see the work he's doing. You see his moves and the expression out of his moves. His interface, which is his body, just disappears and it is just expression. It is the human first and from the human the images emerge.

Every day we proposed a film to Peter and he would improvise and we would shoot everything on video. And we started to work with Peter's wife [Thea Patterson] ... to rehearse. We are not choreographers, Victor and me. We can say this is a great choreographic moment but we [can't] create it. We knew what kinds of things Peter wanted to say to the audience but we didn't have the words, so Thea crafted the words. She became like the fourth creator of the show ...

When Victor and me cannot go on tour, like Taipei, she takes care of the quality of the show.

**TT:** How did McLaren's experiments with film and your interviews with his colleagues from the NFB influence your creation of *Norman*?

**ML:** In the late '30s Norman went to the Guggenheim museum [in New York] and he saw abstract paintings and he thought, "Could we make abstract film." So he took some film and a needle and he scratched every frame ... Some films were scratched like that, some films were painted and some were done with real people but using the stop-motion technique. The stuff you see today in rock videos you think they invented it now but he did this stuff in 1939. It's really frenetic. It's really fast. In the show we are taking that beat and looping it to techno music and saying, hey, this guy was very innovative. Every film was a totally new recipe. He didn't repeat himself.

The producer brought us to the [NFB] studio and there was this big, old wooden door, like a refrigerator door for butchers. It was really weird. There was a big lock for it and the producer went away to get the key for the lock and eventually we opened this very cramped place full of objects belonging to Norman or objects from the movies of Norman — it was a real treasury.

So we based the show on this story, this real-life story. So the idea is that Peter is a choreographer, a dancer, wanting to eventually do a show on Norman McLaren. He's doing this research and he's going to the NFB and waiting for the key to open the door of the vault. In the show, however, it is Norman himself because Norman, when he was doing tests for his films, he was shooting himself. So we make [McLaren] appear and he comes back to life. And he is given the key to open the vault. And there are a lot of different clips of people that he met, that talked to him, that knew him because they worked with him, people influenced by him. And when he is listening to one testimony, for example, one very short testimony, we see the character appear — the real person that we actually interviewed ourselves. It is interesting because those people are real people talking not with a text but talking with hesitation in a documentary sort of way. But with the virtual projection they appear as ghosts — so we have this documentary element into a fiction and dance show.

**TT:** *Norman* contrasts with *Delirium*, your collaboration with Cirque du Soleil, in the sense that it's a solo performance. Why do you and Victor switch back and forth from large to small productions?

**ML:** It's intentional, actually. When we were working on *Delirium*, during the production there were 300 people around and I had to direct with a megaphone. So it's like being a captain of a big ship: if you want to turn left, it takes three weeks. The reaction time is very slow. We knew that *Norman* would be just me, Peter and Victor. This is a very small boat and we can go in any direction any time. And that's creation.