

IN the first period of the New York Rangers game on March 24, Sean Avery, a left wing, repeatedly punched an opponent in the skull. An hour later, Avery stood in a locker room at Madison Square Garden discussing men's fashion.

"I admire well-dressed men no matter where they are — a guy in a police uniform that has it pulled together nicely or a doctor in his scrubs," he said, a nasty scratch bleeding on his chin. "I like that identity of having a presence. I think that's what it is. It states your presence."

Avery is an unusual presence himself. A charmer off the ice with a fashion sense even sharper, perhaps, than David Beckham's, he worked as an intern at *Vogue* last summer, counts the designer Vera Wang and the actor Tim Robbins as friends — and has twice led the National Hockey League in penalty minutes.

He has a reputation as a talented player, but one despised by many others in the league. He has a dangerously unpredictable mouth — and impeccable taste in Dries Van Noten suits.

The NHL suspended Avery in December for crudely insulting two rival players who were dating ex-girlfriends of his, one an actress, the other a supermodel. His own team, the Dallas Stars, refused to take him back. Last

month, he landed with the Rangers, the gang he had left before going to Dallas as a free agent.

Whether his act — on-ice and off — plays better now that he has returned to the lights of Manhattan depends on which Sean Avery emerges: the fashion-fascinated dandy who is wildly popular with fans and is a partner in a restaurant and bar set to open in TriBeCa; or the hothead who has often bitten the hand that pays his US\$4-million-a-year salary.

"It's like that little devil on your shoulder," Avery said during an autograph signing event. "I have to keep him under control."

Note that he did not say he had to keep the devil completely in check. The demon in Sean Avery can be useful. Take his fight last month with Cal Clutterbuck of the Minnesota Wild. It earned each player a five-minute penalty, but Avery said later that he had planned the whole thing, calculating that he could give his team a spark by engaging in his first fight in front of the home crowd. The Rangers won the contest, 2-1.

During his suspension, Avery checked himself into a residential program in Los Angeles for two weeks of anger management therapy. Friends say he emerged calmer and more focused.

"He does meditations," said Lauryn Flynn, the head of VIP services for Burberry. "He has become a little more Zen in his thinking."

Avery has a lot to overcome. During his career, he has called a Los Angeles Kings coach "a clown," a broadcaster "an embarrassment" and an opposing player "an arrogant little midget." In a 2007 *Hockey News* poll of NHL players, he was voted "most hated."

When he was traded by the Kings to the Rangers in 2007, New York seemed just what he had always needed: He thrived under the pressure of playing here. His brawling style fit the mood of New York hockey fans, and his fashion sense began attracting new ones. "He's knowledgeable," said the designer Narciso Rodriguez, who met Avery last summer. "He follows fashion. He knows who the designers are, who are the good ones he likes."

His interest in fashion, both men's and women's, appears to be genuine, not just a bid for attention



or a way to meet models. He reads about fashion voraciously, said Flynn. "He's read biographies of Lagerfeld, every possible thing you can get on Coco Chanel."

At *Vogue*, Avery said, "I did everything from schlepping clothes back and forth from Steven Klein's studio, to trying to get b-roll on a photo shoot in L.A., a little bit of everything."

One summer evening, Flynn said she dropped in to Graydon Carter's Waverly Inn in Greenwich Village and saw Avery. "He was there with Andre Leon Talley and Karl Lagerfeld," she said. "It was one of the most surreal experiences."

Avery says that one day he'd like to create a line of designer athletic wear. "There's a few that do it like Y-3 and obviously Stella McCartney," he said, "but I think there's maybe a gap in there I could get into."

The fashion flock has returned the interest. "He's made me a big fan of hockey now," Rodriguez said.

Clockwise from above: Sean Avery of the New York Rangers, as a *Vogue* intern, makes a statement. Avery, left, and Cal Clutterbuck of the Minnesota Wild settle some on-ice issues during a game at Madison Square Garden in New York last month. Avery signs autographs for fans at Madison Square Garden in New York.

PHOTOS: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE



The demon ON HIS SHOULDER

Hockey's notorious bad boy Sean Avery appears to have a genuine interest in fashion that's not just a bid for attention or a way to meet models. He's even interned for 'Vogue' magazine

BY ALLEN SALKIN
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK



[ART JOURNAL]

You can't judge these books by their covers

Michael Lin's latest exhibits are all about the relationship between art and its audience

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

At the Eslite Bookstore in Xinyi District, tens of thousands of books in the art section have been wrapped in decorated pink sheets of paper that hide any possible indication of their content. A project by Michael Lin (林明宏), *21.2.1972* is the artist's latest exploration of the relationship between art and spectators.

Feb. 21, 1972 is "the date when US president [Richard] Nixon visited Mao Zedong (毛澤東)," explained Lin, who emigrated to the US with his family in 1973. "There is this photograph of Mao sitting in his library. The books on the shelf behind him are all wrapped up. For some reason the image has stuck in my mind."

The prints of phoenixes and peonies that decorate the pink wrapping paper are similar to images Lin used for his huge floor paintings that were exhibited at the 2000 Taipei Biennial. The relationship between the bookstore's customers and its books is altered as browsers have to open books at random to find out what's inside each one. In this way, they invariably come across books they wouldn't ordinarily look at.

"People buy the books and take them home. How long the book remains an artwork in someone's home is a question I can't answer," Lin said.

A similar motif runs through Lin's solo exhibition *I Am the Sun* (我是太陽), currently on display at the Eslite Gallery (誠品畫廊), which has just moved to a space in Eslite's flagship Xinyi store that is three times larger than its old location at Eslite's branch on Dunhua South Road (敦化南路).

Internationally known for his brightly colored murals and enormous, ornate paintings based on traditional Taiwanese floral prints, Lin has relocated to Shanghai and Paris but often visits home to look for new sources of inspiration. The muse for his this show is the sun cake (太陽餅), a pastry that Lin sees as a symbol of Taiwan.

The artist was intrigued by the numerous shops in Taichung that claim to be Tai Yang Tang (太陽堂), the purported inventor of the sun cake, seeing contradiction and ambiguity between claims of originality and the act of duplication. By reproducing Tai Yang Tang's logo and trademark on canvas, he created a pattern that appears both familiar and alien at the same time, and which suggests that the idea of tradition is a playful construct.

"The logo and trademark of Tai Yang Tang can be read as a [symbol] of identity, just like a national flag. Their graphic elements are rearranged to form an empty frame, thus encouraging viewers to fill in the blanks with any name and image they can imagine," Lin said.

Ambiguity is also treated in paintings based on the covers of notebooks used in Taiwan's elementary schools. For Lin, Zhuyin Fuhao (注音符號, Bopomofo), the system used to teach Mandarin phonetics to young Taiwanese students, is a written language that has yet to come into being, a happenstance that echoes a student's quest for identity during adolescence.

Also on display are two oversized tangrams, a kind of Chinese puzzle, painted with images of Bambi. Unlike jigsaw puzzles, the open-form tangram can be arranged into all kinds of shapes and patterns. Lin's Bambi versions are an invitation for audiences to participate in the making of art.

"The distinction between contemporary and modern art is that [the latter] is divorced from everyday life. That my works suggest and think of an audience to converse with is an important aspect of my art," Lin said.

Free sun cakes will be given to those whose purchases total NT\$600 or more at bookstores or NT\$3,000 at other shops at Eslite branches across Taiwan until the end of the month. Lin suggests that people pause before gobbling down the cake.

"You are the one who decides when the art begins and when it ends," he said. "You eat the sun cake. It has a lot of sugar so you get a bit wired. Then you ask, 'Is this sensation also an element of art, an effect that art can achieve?'"



EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: Michael Lin's solo exhibition, *I Am the Sun*, and *21.2.1972*
WHERE: Eslite Xinyi Bookstore (誠品信義店), 11 Songgao Rd., Taipei City (台北市松高路11號)
WHEN: 21.2.1972 is on display through April 12 in the art section on the 4th floor; *I Am the Sun* runs through May 3 at the Eslite Gallery on the 5th floor. The gallery is open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm
TELEPHONE: (02) 8789-3388 X1588
ADMISSION: Free
ON THE NET: www.eslitegallery.com



Top: Shoppers may get more than they bargained for at the Eslite bookstore in Xinyi District. Above: Michael Lin's solo exhibition *I Am the Sun* is currently on display at the Eslite Gallery.

PHOTOS: HO YI, TAIPEI TIMES AND COURTESY OF ESLITE