

Plus ça change ...

Didier Ottinger is curator of Arcadie, which makes a controversial argument about the continuity of Western art. He spoke with the 'Taipei Times' about his theories and how they might raise eyebrows at home in France

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Didier Ottinger doesn't fit the stereotype of the stodgy art historian one might associate with a man who's the deputy director and chief curator of Paris' Centre Georges Pompidou. With droves of reporters and photographers waiting outside the Taipei Fine Art Museum's (TFAM) VIP room where I interviewed him, Ottinger arrived dressed in a casual navy blue suit. Speaking fluent English with a thick French accent, he is an expansive interlocutor, delivering anecdotes and theories about modern art without using the jargon beloved of most curators. Ottinger was in Taipei this month to organize and open Arcadie, a

joint exhibit by the Pompidou Center and the TFAM that features works by major modernist artists such as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, Georges Braques and Henri Matisse.

Arcadie (Arcadia) is on display at TFAM, galleries 1A and 1B. The museum is located at 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號) until July 12. The museum is open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, with extended hours on Saturdays until 8:30pm. Admission is NT\$250. For more information call (02) 2595-7656. For more information, go to www.tfam.museum.



Didier Ottinger



Didier Ottinger discusses Raoul Dufy's 'Le Depiquage'.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TFAM

Taipei Times: You originally developed the idea for Arcadie after the Seoul Museum of Art invited you to create an exhibit of modern art based on the Pompidou's permanent collection.

Didier Ottinger: Yes, they asked us to make a show that is a representation of the collection. So it had to cover all the periods ... and of course they were expecting to have the big names and so I was thinking of what it could be.

And then I thought, on a different level, to make a choice in the pieces of the collection that could be meaningful for people who are not familiar with Occidental modern art — to have a narrative. So what could be this narrative? And I thought Arcadie could be a way.

The other idea is more personal. It is the fruits of my reflection on modern art. We used to say that modern art starts with this famous painting by Manet — *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe (Luncheon on the Grass)* — and we used to say this is the beginning of modern art because this is the destruction of the subject in painting, the narrative and so on. And I said, "Why can't we consider the other side, that this particular painting introduced in modern times a kind of nostalgia for what we have lost in modern times, which is contact

with nature." So this is the narrative that is told in the exhibition itself and you can see that it makes sense to understand that many of these artists have a kind of wish to reconsider their relation to the cosmos.

(Arcadie consists of 83 objects by 42 masters. Its main theme investigates Arcadia — a region in central Greece that has taken on mythological resonance as a utopian land of abundance. Each of the exhibit's 10 sub-themes addresses a detail of *The Arcadian Shepherds* by Renaissance painter Nicolas Poussin. Taken together the themes suggest aesthetic continuity between French classicism and European modernism as informed by artistic concerns that date back to antiquity.)

TT: Nicolas Poussin is a Renaissance painter who is generally considered by art historians to be working in a tradition different than the modern artists represented in the exhibit Arcadie.

DO: This is another point. I said making a narrative with the exhibition could be a way for people unfamiliar with this period of time in modern art [to access it]. The other point is to ask a question to the idea of modern art and say, "Why, after all, is this notion of willing to have a new relationship with nature not the key question for the time?" Especially now because it has become a big question for society everywhere: It's the ecology, the green power — all these things. It could be the major

question of the 20th century.

And the third element is Poussin. People living in another cultural area like Asia are not familiar with Occidental culture and I think that the reference to Poussin is a key element to introduce a wider spectrum in the culture, to say, "Most of the questions asked by the modern painters could be rooted in a very old tradition and this tradition of course is the French painting and the classicism of Poussin and before that all the Latin and Greek tradition which is the basis of our culture." It could give people who are curious about Poussin or Arcadia an opportunity to discover, for example, Dante and Virgil. So for teachers it could be a good introduction.

TT: Have you had any feedback about the exhibition in Seoul?

DO: This is another point. The goal was also to focus on a particular topic — Arcadia, of lost paradise and lost contact with nature and so on — but with the intention that this question could be understood in different cultures. This idea of a lost paradise, of a golden age, of a time in space where the people were in perfect harmony with the cosmos is something that is shared by all the civilizations everywhere on Earth.

Didier Ottinger stands in front of Joan Miro's *Blue II*. PHOTO COURTESY OF TFAM

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

[TECHNOLOGY REVIEWS]



SnapDat creates virtual business cards for iPhones.

PHOTO: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

APP OF THE WEEK: SNAPDAT LETS THE BUSINESS CARDS FLY

One of the coolest features of the old Palm organizers was that you could beam business cards to other Palms. The iPhone will soon add a similar feature, but in the meantime there's SnapDat, a free application that lets iPhone users send virtual business cards to other people.

SnapDat has roughly 40 card designs as templates. Users can maintain any number of designs, making sure there are

different cards for different occasions. To send a card to another SnapDat user, simply look up their username on the app. Cards sent between SnapDat members are automatically transcribed into your iPhone's address book. People who aren't members can also receive cards, which are e-mailed as a standard vCard attachment.

On the virtual card are one-touch buttons to dial, text or e-mail the person. There is also a link to any Web pages they have specified and a button to map the card's address. You can mark on a map where you met ("Denver sales conference '08"), and you can "flip" the card over to make a note on the back. ("Bob likes margaritas, but watch out after his third.")

COMING TO SAVE THE DAY: A MIGHTY MOUSE, INDEED

Talk about the mouse that roared.

It's not for the casual gamer — or the casual anyone — but the US\$500 SpacePilot Pro, arriving courtesy of the Logitech subsidiary 3Dconnexion, is full of wow for designers and engineers who work in three-dimensional computerized environments.

SpacePilot has a built-in color LCD screen, which can display e-mail, messages and other customizable visual information, but the substance of the mouse is to expedite workflow and navigation through 3-D spaces like Autodesk Inventor, Microsoft Virtual Earth and SolidWorks.

Of course, mouse fans will have to have one, if only to gaze at sexy blue lights and the Darth Vader form factor — the buttons on SpacePilot make BMW's confusing iDrive simple by comparison. The big knob in the center twirls six ways, and it tilts and rolls as well. In Logitech-speak, the device has "six-degrees-of-freedom sensor technology ... by lifting, pressing and turning the controller cap,

design engineers can easily pan, zoom and rotate without stopping to select commands."

It adds up to a virtual nirvana for fingers.

HOW TO CAMOUFLAGE YOUR TWEETING AT THE OFFICE

Twitter fans face a hurdle: Can you use it at work without being caught? A British Web developer, Elliott Kember, has solved the problem with Spreadtweet, an easy-to-use Twitter client that looks like a boring Excel spreadsheet.

Each version of the program displays a fake Excel toolbar atop its window. But those buttons don't work. The real controls are hiding just below as fake column headers: Home, Replies, Direct Messages, etc. On my Apple desktop, Spreadtweet mimics Excel to the point of placing an Excel icon into my iMac's Dock, so anyone watching from farther away than a cubicle wall will be fooled.

The very existence of Spreadtweet suggests Twitter is headed for the same workplace showdown as Web browsers in 1993, or Facebook in 2006: Is it better to let employees play a bit with the latest Internet fad, or have early adopters found yet another way to goof off on the job? I think the answer is yes.

CAN'T WAIT FOR 3-D TELEVISION? NEITHER CAN PANASONIC

How important is the development of 3-D television? As far as Panasonic is concerned, it's critical.

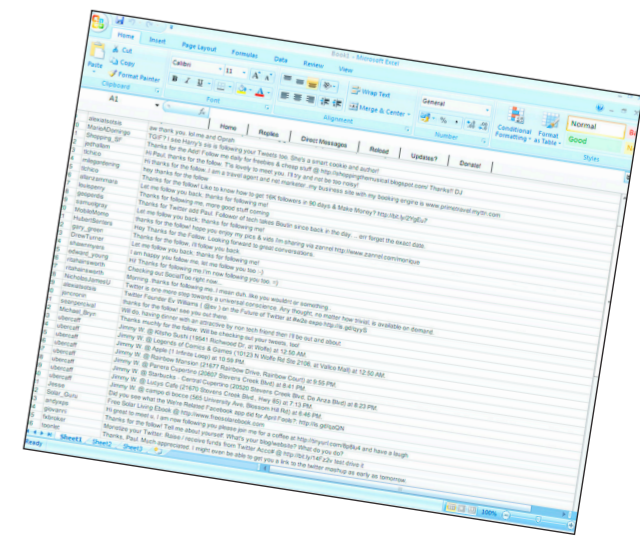
According to Eisuke Tsuyuzaki, Panasonic's general manager for its Blu-ray Disc Group, 3-D television "could be as significant as the transformation from standard- to high-definition TV."

If 3-D television takes off, it could fall right into the sweet spot for Panasonic's products: large plasma displays that have received high marks for their picture quality. TV in 3-D looks best on large screens, and Panasonic thinks the technology could significantly increase sales of its sets, as well as a new generation of 3-D Blu-ray players (current Blu-ray players cannot be used to show 3-D content).

Panasonic has been lobbying hard for the adoption of 3-D TV standards by the end of this year, so that it can get 3-D ready TVs and Blu-ray players into the market by 2010. The company is concerned that if the technology doesn't become available soon — within a year — the industry will miss an opportunity to sell the next generation of large-screen displays.

How big could the market be? Panasonic thinks 3-D could represent 10 percent of TV industry sales within two to three years.

— NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE



Left: The SpacePilot Pro mouse speeds navigation in 3-D spaces. Above: Spreadtweet is Twitter disguised as an Excel spreadsheet.

PHOTOS: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE