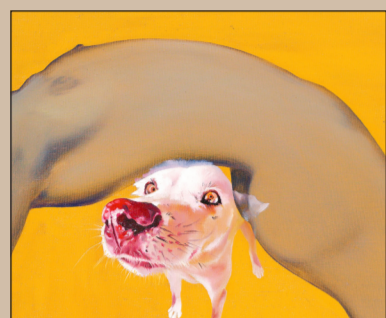


[ART JOURNAL]

Below: Wang Cheng-en, *Playing*.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIWAN CONTEMPORARY ART LINK
 Right: Hua Chien-chiang, *Cheap Distance*.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIWAN CONTEMPORARY ART LINK
 Far right: Makato Aida, *Girls Don't Cry*.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIWAN CONTEMPORARY ART LINK
 Bottom: Kiriko Iida, *The Day of Snow*.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIWAN CONTEMPORARY ART LINK



Art that won't break the bank

Young Art Taipei distinguishes itself from established art fairs with its focus on contemporary and affordable works by young artists

BY HO YI
 STAFF REPORTER

Collecting art may seem like an unaffordable luxury for the average office worker. But for the organizers of Young Art Taipei 2009, buying a piece of art should and can be made as easy as purchasing a laptop computer. Billed as the first contemporary art fair held at a hotel in Taiwan, Young Art Taipei aims to position itself as a venue where novice collectors and art dilettantes meet emerging artists whose work they can afford.

Organized by Taiwan Contemporary Art Link (台灣當代藝術連線), a group consisting of local galleries including Dynasty Art Gallery (朝代藝術) and Aki Gallery (也趣畫廊), the three-day event starts today at Sunworld Dynasty Hotel Taipei (台北王朝大酒店) with 42 participating galleries from Taiwan, China, Japan and South Korea. As implied by the name, a hotel art fair showcases art in hotel rooms, where the space best accommodates small- to medium-sized pieces.

"This particular form of exhibition space encourages creative and unconventional approaches to arranging art works. One can be laid on a bed, hung on the wall or put in the bathroom. Small pieces like toy figurines can easily stand out as visitors inspect each part of the room," the event's chief organizer, Natasha Lo (羅維維), explained.

The low cost for participating galleries — a mere NT\$65,000 — also makes it easier for them to promote young and relatively unknown artists.

"To attend an art fair like Art Taipei, a gallery needs to throw in at least NT\$500,000 to NT\$600,000," said Dynasty Art Gallery owner Frank Liu (劉忠河). "It is not economical for galleries to bring works

that are priced at only NT\$20,000. But if you lower the fee, young artists have a better chance to come to the front."

At the hotel art fair, the key words are contemporary and young, and the focus is on art ranging from video and sculpture to installation and multi-media works by artists aged 45 and under. Prices are NT\$8,000 to NT\$100,000.

Though Taiwan's contemporary artists have gained recognition on the international art scene, the market for their art didn't take off here until three years ago. According to Liu and Galerie Grand Siecle owner Richard Chang (張學孔), the local art market traditionally has been dominated by oil paintings. Contemporary art works accounted for only a fraction of art on display as gallery owners and curators saw them more as museum pieces than works with commercial value. The rise of the Chinese contemporary art market over the past half-decade changed that, and made local collectors interested in contemporary Taiwanese art.

Many collectors turned to Taiwanese art because they believe the market for contemporary Chinese art is already saturated, Chang said.

"The market for Taiwanese art started to skyrocket about two years ago, but because of the global financial crisis, the bubble appears to have burst," he said.

According to Chang, though most artists under the age of 45 have not had their work sold at auction houses, or on the so-called secondary market, which means their works are relatively affordable, these are the artists who are competitive when it

comes to the international market.

"Figures like Chen Chieh-jen (陳界仁) and Michael Lin (林明弘) are always at top of the list when international art publications evaluate Taiwanese artists. Clearly, our strength lies in contemporary art," Chang said.

Both Liu and Chang agree that local galleries need to join forces with young artists to become a force on the global stage, and Young Art Taipei is a platform for achieving this goal. With a jury comprised of artists and scholars, the art fair aspires to become a professional, touring event that gives local galleries and artists exposure in other countries.

There is no shortage of A-listers on the relatively small and cozy stage of Young Art Taipei. Most noticeable is the presence of Mizuma Art Gallery, a leading Japanese gallery, and its top artist Makato Aida, who has already gained a measure of recognition at auction houses worldwide. Osaka-based Gallery IDF will bring the works of Kiriko Iida, and Gallery Tsubaki will send a few by Mayuka Yamamoto. Both artists are favorites of local collectors. For urban vinyl enthusiasts, Art-U Room will present designer/artist team Tokyo Kanmen's latest collection, which was inspired by Noh theater.

Platform China Contemporary Art Institute (站台中國) will showcase works by young emerging Chinese artists. Triumph Art Space (藝凱旋) makes an interesting contrast by presenting pieces by more established figures in China such as Zhang Kai (張凱).

There are 20 local galleries participating in the fair. In addition to established artists like Tseng Yu-chin (曾御欽), Hua Chien-chiang (華建強), Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中), Su Meng-hung (蘇孟鴻) and Kuo I-chen (郭奕臣), emerging artists from different parts of Taiwan will gain exposure through galleries such as Quan Artist Agency (有寬藝術), Arthis Fine Art (金禧美術) and Da Xiang Art Space (大象藝術空間館) from Taichung, and Tainan's Inart Space (加力畫廊).

Many artists, gallery owners and curators will attend, as will delegations from art fairs including Japan's Art Osaka, Tokyo 101 and Art @ Agnes, and South Korea's Asia Top Gallery Hotel Art Fair.

Artist and jury member Wang Jun-jieh (王俊傑) says Japanese galleries excelled during the review process because they seemed to best understand the strengths and limitations of a hotel art fair.

"One of our [the five jury members'] suggestions is to include curated sections in future editions [of Young Art Taipei]," Wang said. "All well-known art fairs around the world have curated sections that define what [the organizers] want to encourage and emphasize."

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: Young Art Taipei 2009 — Contemporary Hotel Art Fair (台北國際當代藝術博覽會)

WHEN: Today to Sunday from 11am to 8pm

WHERE: Sunworld Dynasty Hotel Taipei (台北王朝大酒店), 100 Dunhua N Rd, Taipei City (台北市敦化北路100號)

ADMISSION: NT\$120 at the door

ON THE NET: www.youngarttaipei.com/en/index.html

Celebrity Interview



The team behind the new *Star Trek* movie: From the left, Bryan Burk, Damon Lindelof, J.J. Abrams, Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci.

Spock

CONTINUED FROM P14

Under the stewardship of Roddenberry and his appointed successor, Rick Berman, a creator of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the franchise had yielded four live-action television spinoffs and 10 feature films. But the 2002 movie *Star Trek: Nemesis* was a box-office disappointment, bringing in just US\$43 million (less than every other film in the series), and by 2005 the UPN show *Star Trek: Enterprise* was about to be canceled. Any heat left in the *Trek* universe had dissipated, and many of its talented writers (like Ronald D. Moore, who rejuvenated the television series *Battlestar Galactica*) had moved on.

That year, the corporate behemoth Viacom, which owned *Star Trek*, was splitting itself in two, divorcing its CBS studio (which made the *Trek* shows) from its Paramount studio (which made the films). *Trek* was likely to go to CBS, where another television show might eventually be developed. Gail Berman, then the president of Paramount, convinced Leslie Moonves, the chief executive of CBS, to allow her one more chance at a *Trek* film; he gave her 18 months to get the cameras rolling or lose the property. (Under the arrangement CBS retained the *Star Trek* merchandising rights.)

Kurtzman and Orci were among the first to learn that *Star Trek* was seeking new management. Then, they were former *Alias* producers writing the screenplay for *Mission: Impossible III*, (which Abrams directed). Paramount executives began quizzing them about *Trek*.

The studio wanted "a very specific kind of thinking," Kurtzman said.

"You had to love the genre at your core in every possible way," he said. "And yet you had to separate it from what *Trek* had been, to make it feel fresh."

In postproduction on *Mission: Impossible III* Abrams was approached by Berman to produce the new *Trek*. He did not immediately jump at the opportunity, but the more he thought about a project that could involve Orci and Kurtzman, as well as Lindelof and Burk, the more enthusiastic he became.

"Our references were all the same," Abrams said. He added, "There's this crazy sense of having all grown up together."

Outwardly this particular Hollywood entourage is no different from any other group of guys who bust one another's chops. (When Burk noted that he'd worked as a pool boy at the hotel where this interview was conducted, Abrams replied, "You'll be pool boy here again.")

But deep down they are children of the pre-Internet era, the last generation whose members could not instantaneously connect to like-minded fans and had to seek them out at swap meets and video stores and in the pages of magazines with names like *Starlog* and *Fangoria*.

"When we come into contact with each other, there's an 'Oh, it's you' quality," Lindelof said. "It's like bumping into someone at a Dungeons and Dragons convention." Even though this *Star Trek* has been reworked to resemble contemporary summer blockbusters like *The Dark Knight* and *Iron Man* (as well as *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* and *Terminator Salvation*), it is also set apart by a tone that is more hopeful — and even utopian — than its competitors.

What ultimately inspired him about *Star Trek*, Abrams said, was that in contrast to a science-fiction saga like *Star Wars* — whose images of youthful swashbucklers traversing the cosmos in beat-up vehicles clearly influenced his movie — *Trek* was not set a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away; it was a hopeful vision of what this planet's future could be.

"We've become so familiar with the idea of space travel because of so many movies and TV shows that it's lost its adventure and its possibility, its sense of wonder," Abrams said. "Forty-three years ago it was not a boring idea."

What remains to be seen is whether the patient, thoughtful and deeply philosophical tradition of *Star Trek* is compatible with a *Star Trek* movie that is variously flashy, frenetic, dirty, slapsticky and sufficiently steeped in popular culture to accommodate both the Beastie Boys song *Sabotage* and a cameo by Tyler Perry.

Abrams said that throughout the production process Orci and Lindelof, both acolytes of *Trek* history, were there to keep an eye on him. The filmmakers also received the blessing of Leonard Nimoy, who created the role of Spock and agreed to reprise the character in the film as a wizened old man.

"Any fan who would think that it's not *Trek* has to say that to Leonard Nimoy's face," Orci said. "Don't talk to me, talk to Spock."

But Abrams has a mixed history when it comes to reinventing film franchises. Around 2002 he wrote a script for a possible new *Superman* movie that was criticized for the extensive revisions it made to that comic-book hero's history. (In Abrams' story, for example, the villain Lex Luthor turned out to be from Superman's home planet of Krypton.)

Today, Abrams said, he understands the mistakes he made with his *Superman* screenplay. "It's tantamount to doing a story about Santa Claus and saying that he's from Kansas," he said.

Nonetheless Abrams said his responsibility was not to the *Trek* loyalists, but "to create a movie that would be for moviegoers who love an adventure, and movies that are funny and scary and exciting — not *Star Trek* fans, necessarily, but not to exclude them either."

But after immersing himself in the rich characters and boundless universe of a once unfamiliar space epic (and having committed himself to producing, with Burk, a *Star Trek* sequel that Kurtzman, Orci and Lindelof will write), Abrams was ready to make another confession to his team.

"I now consider myself a Trekkie," he declared, "which I literally could not have ever imagined saying to anyone."

Burk feigned a cough and, under his breath, said a single word. It sounded like "nerd."

