



Above: A reconstruction shows how nude funerary figures were discovered in the mausoleum of the Emperor Jing of Han.  
Top left: A bust of a painted terracotta warrior figure.  
Top right, center left and center right: Painted terracotta figures with molded clothes were also discovered in the mausoleum.

PHOTOS: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES, AND COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

# Voices from the grave

*The Smiling Kingdom illustrates changes in ancient Chinese society through funerary objects*

BY NOAH BUCHAN  
STAFF REPORTER

Building on the success of Terra-Cotta Army (兵马俑) of Qin Shihuangdi (秦始皇帝), an exhibit that attracted over 1.5 million visitors during the summer of 2007, the National Museum of History returns with a new exhibition of ancient Chinese funerary objects, The Smiling Kingdom: The Terra-Cotta Warriors of Han Yang Ling (微笑彩俑—漢景帝的地下王國), which displays figurines excavated from the mausoleum of the Emperor Jing of Han, dating from the early Han Dynasty (180BC to 141BC).

Though less than a century separates the figurines of the Han Dynasty exhibit and the preceding Qin Dynasty (221BC to 206BC) show, their style and stature differs significantly, with the latter favoring life-sized terra-cotta warriors and martial animals and the former miniature figures.

The Smiling Kingdom examines two aspects of the Emperor Jing's imperial tomb to illustrate the concept that changes in society can be examined through funeral practices. The main part focuses on the clay figurines that were buried with the emperor, while a smaller section is devoted to the building materials that were employed to construct his mausoleum. Small replica burial sites, illustrations detailing the excavation area and a documentary of the archeological dig complement the 200 display objects, which include bronze utensils and jade decorations.

Two model excavation sites enable visitors to view the animal and human figurines as they were found in situ. The first, at the entrance, is approximately

a 2m-by-10m glass case sunk 1m below ground and lined with rows of miniature terra-cotta dogs, pigs, goats and roosters, a display that would have been difficult to employ with the larger horses found in Qin Shihuang's (秦始皇) mausoleum.

Immediately beyond this display is a replica burial mound strewn with armless, smiling and nude terra-cotta figures — all 60cm in height — with the originals located in an adjoining room displayed behind glass, accompanied by diagrams illustrating how they were created.

The figures were first modeled as nude bodies complete with male or female sexual organs (or none for eunuchs). The craftsmen then painted on hair and skin, fitted the torsos with movable wooden arms and hands and covered them with clothing. With the passage of time, however, the paint has faded and the arms and clothing have disintegrated. Several examples with limbs made of clay survived intact.

The building materials on display offer unique insights into the design of the emperor's mausoleum: paving bricks inscribed with horizontal and vertical lines and roof tiles and bricks embossed with dragon designs show that the construction of the mausoleum's buildings was as detailed and important as the figures inside.

Although not as wide ranging as Terra-Cotta Army of Qin Shihuangdi, the current exhibit of early Han Dynasty terra-cotta objects provides a solid introduction to the period and draws connections between societal changes and funeral practices.

## EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** The Smiling Kingdom: The Terra-Cotta Warriors of Han Yang Ling (微笑彩俑—漢景帝的地下王國)  
**WHERE:** National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號)  
**WHEN:** Until Sept. 27. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays, from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270  
**ADMISSION:** NT\$250  
**ON THE NET:** www.nmh.gov.tw

# Chinese ink and wash brought up to date

*Zhang Yu challenges perceptions of Chinese ink and wash painting as an antiquated art form by using his fingers instead of a brush*

BY HO YI  
STAFF REPORTER

Zhang Yu (張羽) wants to take Chinese ink and wash painting in new directions. Throughout the 1980s, he attempted to fuse the ancient art form with Western abstractionism and expressionism. In 1991, he put down his brushes and started to paint with his fingers.

Since then, the Chinese artist's works of experimental wash and ink have been exhibited in cities such as Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Moscow, London and New York City. Many can be found in permanent collections at the Shanghai Art Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Louisiana Modern Art Museum in Copenhagen and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp, to name just a few.

By freeing brush painting from its traditional *modus operandi*, Zhang, 50, reinvents Chinese ink and wash painting as a form of contemporary expression. Several examples of his innovative works are on display at the Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (關渡美術館) in Fingerprints — the Trace of Zhang Yu's Practice (指印—張羽修行的痕跡), Zhang's first solo exhibition in Taiwan.

The exhibition includes three 7m-long scrolls hung from ceiling to floor, covered not with brushstrokes, but tens of thousands of Zhang's fingerprints, which took him one year to complete. An accompanying video shows Zhang, in meditative concentration, repeatedly dipping his finger into water and ink and pressing it onto the paper.

Beyond the finger-painted scrolls are nearly a hundred of what Zhang calls "wordless books" (無字書)

— tomes filled with his fingerprints.

"My *Fingerprints* series has a certain degree of affinity with Chinese ink and wash painting, but at the same time, goes beyond existing ideas and concepts about the art form," said Zhang. "My art is, above all, a performance. The traces of my performing are the result and the second form of my expression."

Zhang says he strives to produce a form of art that is rooted in Chinese culture and transcends Western genres yet is also contemporary. "To me, to be contemporary is to construct your own approach to perceiving the world. It is both culturally informed and personal, and has never before appeared in the history of art. Such is an artist's task," Zhang said. "We can't always follow the West. To break traditions is to create something new and pass it down."

The artist said the exhibits are meant to be appreciated as a whole, as an integrated space, rather than viewed separately.

Zhang draws inspiration from the Chinese belief in communion between humans and nature. "To me, the ultimate state of art — or life, for that matter — is nature. My art represents nature through nature," he said, referring to the materials he employs, such as highly regarded Xuan paper (宣紙).

Other works from Zhang's *Fingerprints* series are currently on display at Da Xiang Art Space (大象藝術空間館) in Taichung City. Entitled Zhang Yu's One-Finger Zen (張羽的一指禪), the exhibition runs through Aug. 9. For more information, visit [www.daxiang.com.tw](http://www.daxiang.com.tw), or call (04) 2208-4288.



With Fingerprints — the Trace of Zhang Yu's Practice, Chinese artist Zhang Yu, above left, who has mounted solo exhibitions in China, Europe and the US, introduces local museumgoers to his boundary-breaking contemporary ink and wash art.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KUANDU MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

## Celebrity Interview



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIPEI FILM FESTIVAL

## Me

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**TT:** How did you come to know Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1969?

**HS:** There were two European countries that made beautiful films at that time: France and Italy. In Italy, there were two successful kinds of films. On one side of the spectrum, there is art-house cinema and Pasolini. On the other side, there are spaghetti westerns.

I went down to Italy to conduct interviews for the television show. I met Pasolini, and he immediately told me, "You are going to make films." I didn't know why and how, but he saw that in me and offered me a place on the set of *Medea*.

I also worked with the spaghetti western people. I was a handyperson. I learned and helped wherever I could, and the crew called me "the German spy" [laughs]. It was my film school — and an extremely good one.

Sergio Corbucci [an Italian director best known for his spaghetti westerns] was a very nice guy and a friend of Pasolini. It was kind of like a big family back then. Pasolini was a dark, gloomy guy. Corbucci was sensual and happy. It was a nice balance to me.

**TT:** What was it like to be a female director in 1970s Germany?

**HS:** I was quite an attractive woman back then, and I earned my living partially on that [as a model]. In the world of filmmaking, you need to learn to bite in order to survive.

**TT:** Why was that? Were you criticized for your feminist and Marxist-informed points of view?

**HS:** No, I wasn't a feminist. I find feminism of that time, and all the "isms" for that matter, quite limited in the sense that they only have a certain way of thinking, seeing and judging people. Back then in Germany, movies were seen as either political or aesthetic. But I would not go either or. Of course films have political influences and they will always be political. But if a film is made to exert political influences on people, it is violating them.

I was attacked for not having a clear political point of view. What I was interested in was the situation of foreign workers in Germany. *Shirin's Wedding* was strongly received in Germany. On the one hand, I got thousands of letters from all over the country telling me how deeply they were affected by the story. On the other hand, right-wing supporters demonstrated against the film, [shouting] "long live Germany" in the streets.

**TT:** You are the narrator of both *Shirin's Wedding* and *Germany, Pale Mother*. Can you talk a bit more about those two films?

**HS:** It [*Shirin's Wedding*] started with the Turkish woman saying, "Now I am dead." So it is the dead Turkish woman telling me how she lived in Germany. It feels like a dialogue between her and myself.

*Germany, Pale Mother* is another film where I use the commentator approach to speak directly to the audience. I speak about my mother, my parents, myself and the war with my voice explaining how I feel about the story.

(Sanders-Brahms was raised by her mother while her father fought in World War II. *Germany, Pale Mother* is said to be her own story and that of her mother in devastated postwar Germany. The film is narrated by Sanders-Brahms, and the role of the daughter was played by her own daughter.)

**TT:** How was *Germany, Pale Mother* first received in Germany?

**HS:** My situation in Germany has been difficult. I have been much more successful in other parts of the world. You can tell that I have problems in Germany from the fact that I had to fight for 12 years to get *Clara* done. I have had many difficulties finding money. Maybe it's because I touch on the themes that somehow Germans don't want to talk about. Maybe that's why. I simply don't know.

It [*Germany, Pale Mother*] has been re-released three times in France, whereas in Germany there is not even a DVD version available, and people virtually don't know about it.

**TT:** Is that part of the reason why you have made fewer films since 1990s?

**HS:** Yes, it has been a fight. I re-wrote the script [for *Beloved Clara*] 22 times. The final draft used to shoot the film is the second one I finished in 1996. The script was given to television stations, but refused by all. I simply don't understand why it had to be such a long battle. Anyway, the film is doing fine in Paris and here [in Taiwan]. It looks like it will do fine in Japan and the US.

**TT:** Do you feel close to Clara?

**HS:** I feel particularly close to Johannes. The reason being, first of all, he was my great-great-uncle, and I love this guy [laughs]. I hated his music when I was young. Born in a family like that, you had to hate the music in order to find yourself.

I suddenly fell in love with his music in my mid-40s. It was in the French countryside in 1988. There was no traffic, no noise. It was quiet, and beautiful landscape surrounded me. All of sudden, I heard his music. It brought such beauty as if it came from within.

**TT:** If you have any new projects coming can you tell me about them?

**HS:** No, I don't talk about ... [Pauses.] I would like to have a project in Taiwan. I have a distinct childhood memory that relates to the place. When I was little, there was a Taiwanese man invited by my grandparents to stay with us. He taught me how to use chopsticks and lots of things about Chinese and Japanese culture. My first visit here felt like a childhood memory coming to life, and I liked this place very much. I still like it.