

## EXHIBITIONS



The Blueprint of Museum of Fine Arts is a large-scale installation by Taiwanese artist Liu Kuo-chang.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIU KUO-CHANG

**Viewpoints & Viewing Points — 2009 Asian Art Biennial (觀點與「觀」點 — 2009亞洲藝術雙年展)** invites 56 artists, filmmakers and production teams from 20 Asian-Pacific countries to present a total of 145 works of painting, installation art, sculpture, digital arts, animation and documentary. The featured creations demonstrate the artists' unique observations of contemporary culture and society. This year's biennial explores how the multiplicity of perspectives enriches contemporary artistic norms. The National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (國立台灣美術館) in Taichung will also host a series of related events to introduce discourses from different cultural backgrounds. These include a Summit Forum on Asian Arts, an International Symposium and guided tours.

■ National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung (國立台灣美術館), 2, Wuchuan W Rd Sec 1, Taichung City (台中市五權西路一段2號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Tel: (04) 2372-3552  
 ■ On the Net: [www.asianartbiennial.org](http://www.asianartbiennial.org)  
 ■ Until Feb. 28

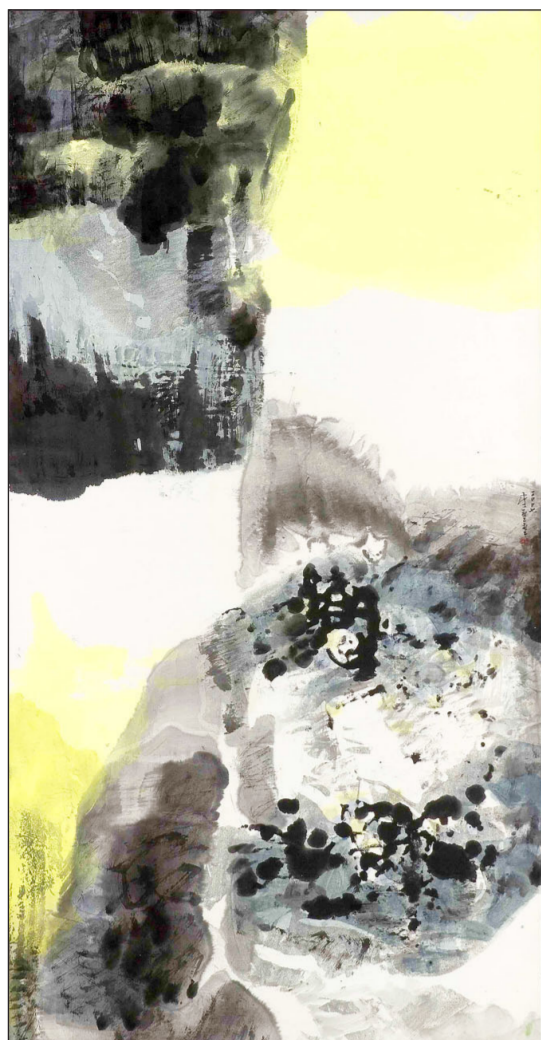
Domesticated felines are the central protagonists in Lin Rong-fan's (林宗範) series of paintings and sculptures in his solo exhibit **In Search of a Happy Utopia (尋找幸福的烏托邦)**. Whether surveying an autumnal landscape from the roof of a temple or watching fireworks discharged off the side of Taipei 101, Lin's cats observe the world's diversity in all its fleeting moments.

■ Fish Art Center (秋刀魚藝術中心), 137 Jihu Rd, Taipei City (台北市基湖路137號). Open Sundays to Fridays from 11am to 10:30pm. Tel: (02) 2532-3800  
 ■ Until Friday

**New Terracotta Warriors (新兵馬俑)** brings together the work of Liu Fenghua (劉鳳華) and Liu Yong (劉勇), two contemporary Chinese artists. The pair employ a pop art sensibility by adorning replica sculptures of terra-cotta warriors with the images of iconic personalities from the East and West, including Albert Einstein, Marilyn Monroe, Mao Zedong (毛澤東) and Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石).  
 ■ Caves Gallery (敦禮畫廊), 18, Ln 70, Xincheng 5 Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市新生南路二段70巷18號). Open Tuesdays to Saturdays from 10:30am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2396-7030  
 ■ Until Saturday

Chinese contemporary artist **Ye Yongqing's (葉永青)** restrained canvases of birds and fishes contemplate nature and rural life. These paintings are complemented by expressionist works that merge Western and Chinese influences.  
 ■ Gallery J. Chen, 3F, 40, Ln 161, Dunhua 5 Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段161巷40號3F). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from noon to 9pm. Tel: (02) 2781-0959  
 ■ Until Nov. 15

**Searching Istanbul (色取依斯坦堡)** is a group exhibit that brings together five artists from Turkey working in paint and mixed media. Although the title mentions only the country's largest city, the exhibition provides a glimpse of some of Turkey's hottest emerging artists: Ergin Inan, Ertugrul Ates, Mehmet Gun, Onay Akbas and Tanju Demirci.  
 ■ Wingrow Art Gallery (萬菓國際藝術公司), 5, Ln 175, Da-an Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市大安路一段175巷5號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2325-8253  
 ■ Until Nov. 22



Lee Chung-chung, *Blending* (2007).

PHOTO COURTESY OF IFAM



## Rebel artists think in ink

**Ink** painting exhibitions have become an annual tradition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. The 2006 show **Ink Transformation: Modern Ink Painting in Taiwan (水墨變相: 現代水墨在台灣)** examined the development of ink painting in Taiwan since the 1950s, while 2004's **Contemporary Ink Painting and the State of the Ink (當代水墨與水墨當代)** took the 1980s as its starting point.

Last year's **Form, Ideas, Essence, Rhythm: Contemporary East Asian Ink Painting (形·意·質·韻 — 東亞當代水墨創作邀請展)** displayed the work of artists from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China as a means of dispelling the popular notion that ink painting is a hidebound art form.

**Open Flexibility: Innovative Contemporary Ink Art (開顯與時變 — 創新水墨藝術展)**, which is currently on display on the museum's third floor, explores the evolution of ink painting in Taiwan since the 1960s and China since the 1980s.

Curator Liu Yung-jen (劉永仁) has assembled 80 works by 27 artists — 15 from Taiwan, 12 from China — as a means of tracing the revolutionary changes in ink painting that occurred in both countries. He dubs the new style "modern" in the Taiwanese context, but "experimental" when it comes to China's ink painting endeavors.

"The professional terms used are different but the concepts are the same. It's just that Taiwan developed ink painting in a different direction 20 years earlier than China," Liu said, adding that China's art fell under the influence of Taiwan's earlier innovators.

Orthodox ink painting techniques developed over centuries had previously dominated the genre. For the past several hundred years, the literary themes such styles depicted as well as adherence to technical form determined the pedigree of the work. Artists were expected to hold the brush in a certain manner and apply paint to rice paper in a particular fashion.

This dogmatic conception of the genre began to lose steam at the end of the 1950s, when Taiwan's ink painters broke with tradition and came under the influence of surrealism, abstract expressionism and pop art. The examples exhibited in **Open Flexibility** demonstrate that modernist experimentation freed Taiwanese artists from the formal constraints of the past and enabled them to employ ink in a revolutionary manner. When China opened up in the early 1980s, ink painters across the country followed in the innovative footsteps of their Taiwanese counterparts.

Liu masterfully sets the stage with three works by Taiwanese painter and art theorist Liu Kuo-sung (劉國松). **Interaction (互動)**, a 1964 painting by Liu, portrays non-representational forms through the use of expressive brush strokes on homemade rice paper.

Yuan Chin-ta (袁金塔) employs the visual language of pop art to chronicle Taiwan's folk culture and temple scenes, as well as other mainstays of local identity. In his 2008 collage **Reading Beauty (書中自有顏如玉)**, he satirizes the decline of moral standards through the repetitive depiction of naked women.

Chinese ink painter Liu Zijian (劉子健), an experimentalist working in the early 1980s, breaks many, if not all, of the technical rules of traditional ink painting. He smudges, rubs and dabs the ink, creating distinct black and white forms that collide on the paper's surface.

In **Untitled (無題)**, Liu Yong (劉勇) freely splashes, drizzles and smears colored ink on his paintings, while Wang Chuan's (王川) lyrical **Static Sensation I (巖世之一)** contains flowing lines reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's expressionist drippings.

In their quest for new forms, some artists have even gone so far as to do away with ink. Using a lit cigarette, Chinese artist Wang Tiande (王天德) burns characters onto thin rice paper, which he then curtains over abstract paintings.

Others work without brushes. In Zhang Yu's (張羽) **Fingerprint** series, the artist dipped his finger in spring water lightly saturated with colored ink and randomly pressed it on rice paper, creating dynamic visual tension.

The juxtaposition of Chinese experimental ventures and Taiwanese modernist undertakings illustrates the flexibility of ink painting, which is able to depict the multiplicity of contemporary society while remaining somewhat grounded in tradition. The exhibit's subtext, of course, makes it perfectly clear that Chinese innovative ink painters lagged 20 years behind their Taiwanese counterparts because of China's tumultuous recent history.

Although the exhibition's catalogue fully explains the remarkable aesthetic transitions taking place in both Taiwan and China, the exhibit fails to help those without a guide understand why the featured ink painters were cutting edge. Viewers raised on a bevy of modern and contemporary art will

*Open Flexibility explores the development of innovative ink painting styles, covering changes in Taiwan since the 1960s and in China since the 1980s*

BY NOAH BUCHAN  
STAFF REPORTER

probably view the works and question the level of innovation present in the paintings. Had the museum provided visitors with a brief explanation of the ink painting tradition — even a traditional painting or two would suffice to elucidate the contrast — even those unversed in the art form would be better equipped to evaluate the truly revolutionary nature of the pieces on display.



Liu Kuo-sung, *Interaction* (1964).

PHOTO COURTESY OF IFAM

### EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** Open Flexibility: Innovative Contemporary Ink Art (開顯與時變 — 創新水墨藝術展)

**WHERE:** Taipei Fine Arts Museum (台北市立美術館), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路3段181號)

**WHEN:** Until Jan. 17. Open daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closes at 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656

**ADMISSION:** Free until Nov. 20

Right: Wang Chuan, *Static Sensation I* (2009).

Below: Liu Yong, *A Mountain Is Not a Mountain* (1989).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF IFAM

