



The bigger picture

The recently opened Taiwan Photo Museum aims to inject new prestige into the art of taking pictures

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER



Top: Paris 1975, by Kuo Ying-sheng.
Above: Wu Hsia (1965) by Huang Pai-chi, a medical doctor who is regarded as a significant figure in the early development of photography in Taiwan.

A semi-derelict block located between Zhonghua Road Section 1 and Yanping South Road, is the unlikely home of the hugely ambitious Taiwan Photo Museum.

Taking in the numerous works on display, and their variety, filling every inch of the narrow ground floor display space, the venue could be mistaken for an art dealership.

The photographs, which range from simply framed 5-inch by 7-inch snaps to large, elaborately prepared works, are part of Dou Cheng (門陣), the first exhibition of the museum, which opened on March 10.

Lin Shun-chieh (林順傑), the museum's chief secretary, said the exhibition had been opened to all-comers, and includes the works of hobbyists, practiced amateurs and professionals.

The quality of the photographs on display is uneven, but Dou Cheng makes up for that by providing a glimpse of what the art of capturing images means to people who take an active interest in photography.

When Lin spoke to the *Taipei Times*, the show had already begun. He said new submissions would be accepted, and as of press time, the show comprised 231 items.

The man behind the Taiwan Photo Museum is Chuang Ling (莊靈), a professor at Shih Hsin University (世新大學) and chairman of the V-10 Visual Arts Group (V-10視覺藝術群).

Speaking with the *Taipei Times*, Chuang said that the museum, as it now stands, is a very small first step to building an institution that promotes photography among a new generation and establishing a permanent collection that represents Taiwan's photographic history.

"Photography has never had a high profile in Taiwan," he said. "Even within academic circles, it is always just a skill that you learn as part of something else, whether journalism or the visual arts. It's never really had an independent existence."

The museum's primary goal is to provide a space for that independence to develop.

Chuang said that part of the reason this first exhibition was so diverse, almost chaotic even, in its admission criteria, was that he and the other founders wanted to set the museum apart from commercial galleries, even those specializing in photography, such as TIVAC (台灣國際視覺藝術中心) — which was forced to close after its 10th anniversary last year and only re-opened late last month — by providing a platform that did not focus simply on commercial factors.

Chuang, who first took up a camera in 1953, spoke at length of Taiwan's unique relationship with photography, a foreign technology that has produced some of the most enduring images of traditional Taiwanese life (see photo by Huang Pai-chi).

"Much of the work of the pioneer photographers, some of whom have already passed on, might be held by family members. Sometimes the photographs are in a poor state of preservation. Those works may deteriorate or be lost. That would be a great pity. The original works, especially the negatives, are of great value. Not just for Taiwan's photography community, but also as a record of Taiwanese society," he said.

Chuang, now in his 70s, said the

Taiwan Photo Museum, which is run by photographers, is more likely to elicit the cooperation of the older generation of photographers in preserving, or at least digitizing, their work.

"We are not a commercial gallery, and that's important in regard to what we want to achieve," Chuang said.

While the preservation of old photographs is an important aim, no less meaningful is the need to engage with the wider photographic community.

"Photography has always been in a weak position. The traditional idea of the visual arts was painting. People thought photography was too easy — you just pick up a camera and you can easily get a result. It is a conventional idea, but it is wrong... The government likes the idea of photography as a hobby, and it has never given it the same kind of resources as the other fine arts. The development of photography was largely propelled by the private sector. But the private sector is not focused and its resources are limited," Chuang said.

Promoting serious photography is even more difficult in contemporary society.

"Many people still don't understand the image. Young people can easily make an image, but they don't necessarily have any deep understanding of it. And now it's so cheap to make images. Our aim is to make people think about images, about photography," Chuang said.

Dou Cheng, which ranges from traditional black-and-white film to the latest digital technology, demonstrates Chuang's inclusive approach to photography.

The museum was made possible because of the support of the JUT Foundation for Arts and Architecture (忠泰建築文化藝術基金會), which is allowing various arts groups to occupy the dilapidated block until September next year, after which it will probably be ripped down and developed into luxury apartments.

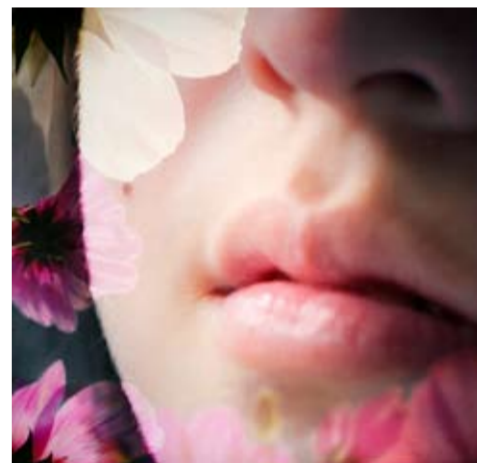
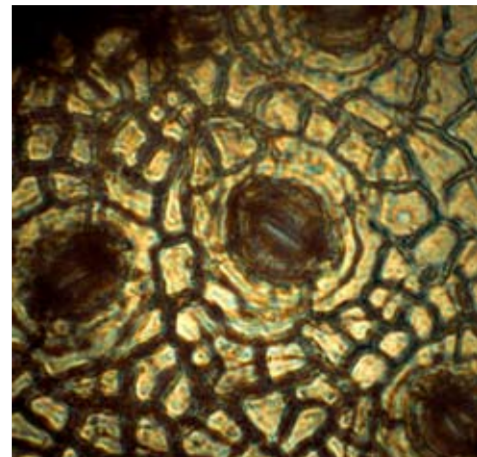
That the building, named the UrbanCore Art Block (城中藝術街區), allowed the Taiwan Photo Museum and a number of other projects a foothold on inner city real estate is preferable to turning the site into a temporary car park. Nevertheless, its present location is ad interim.

"At least we have something for people to look at now," said Chuang, who aims to set up a foundation to provide long-term funding for the museum. "This has been an idea three years in the making, and now there is something concrete. The first step has taken the museum from being just an idea to having an actual physical presence."

What will happen after September 2011, though, depends on the energy that the museum generates during its term at the UrbanCore Art Block.

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: Dou Cheng (門陣)
WHERE: Preparatory Office of the Taiwan Photo Museum (台灣攝影博物館預備館) located at 17, Ln 91, Zhonghua Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市中華路一段91巷17號)
WHEN: Until May 30
OPEN: 11am to 6pm
ADMISSION: Free



An Invitation From the Labium, by Kuo Che-Wei.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KUO CHE-WEI

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS

MARCH 19 TO MARCH 25



1 Show Luo (羅志祥) and Rashomon (羅生門) with **33.06** percent of sales

2 FIR (飛兒樂團) and Let's Smile (讓我們一起微笑吧) with **13.11%**

3 A-Lin Huang (黃麗玲) and Before, After (以前·以後) with **3.79%**

4 Sam Lee (李聖傑) and Forgive Me, I Didn't Say (原諒我沒有說) with **1.94%**

5 Eason Chen (陳奕迅) and Time Flies with **1.41%**

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC (WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW), BASED ON RETAIL SALES

PLANET POP



US actor and director Dennis Hopper and daughter Galen Grier Hopper pose with Hoppers' star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Friday.

PHOTO: EPA

was a positive experience.

The Fox TV network on Friday stopped the clock on its action adventure series *24*, ending one of its most successful dramas as ratings began to slip in its current, eighth season.



"D'oh!"

PHOTO: EPA

The final, two-hour program will air in the US on May 24.

"This has been the role of a lifetime, and I will never be able to fully express my appreciation to everyone who made it possible," the show's star, **Kiefer Sutherland**, said in a statement.

"Looking ahead to the future,

[executive producer] Howard Gordon and I are excited about the opportunity to create the feature film version of *24*," Sutherland added.

Since the show began in 2001, Sutherland has portrayed tough-minded federal agent Jack Bauer, who has fended off assassins and terrorists and saved mankind from devastation.

Simon Cowell will receive the 2010 International Emmy Founders Award for his work in television.

The 50-year-old British recording executive and TV personality is a judge on the popular US singing competition show *American Idol*. He's also known for the *Got Talent* and *X Factor* franchises.

International Academy President **Bruce Paisner** says Cowell "has built an international empire and in so doing has changed the face of television around the world." Cowell will receive the award at a New York gala on Nov. 22. He said in a statement Thursday that he's "delighted," and has been "very lucky to be able to make shows that I love."

"D'oh!" — the grunt of frustration used by Homer Simpson — has had the most influential wordsmith since Shakespeare, an international survey of translators said Thursday.

Other expressions made famous by the US animated series since its launch two decades ago include "craptacular," "eat my shorts" and the dismissive "Meh," according to the survey of 320 linguists.

"Cheese-eating surrender monkeys" — which gained currency as a description of the French by US critics during the 2003 invasion of Iraq — is also among phrases which have entered the global lexicon via the small screen.

The survey on which words from the *The Simpsons* have had an impact on the English language was based on answers from translators working around the world for a London-based translation agency.

The results, in descending order:

- "D'oh!" — a grunt expressing frustration at realizing that things have gone wrong, or that one has just said or done something foolish.

- "Craptacular" — spectacularly crap.
- "Eat my shorts" — a dismissive insult.

- "Learning juice" — beer.
- "Cheese-eating surrender monkeys" — the French.

"Homer Simpson must be the most influential wordsmith since Shakespeare," said Jurga Zilinskiene, head of Today Translations, which carried out the survey. — AGENCIES