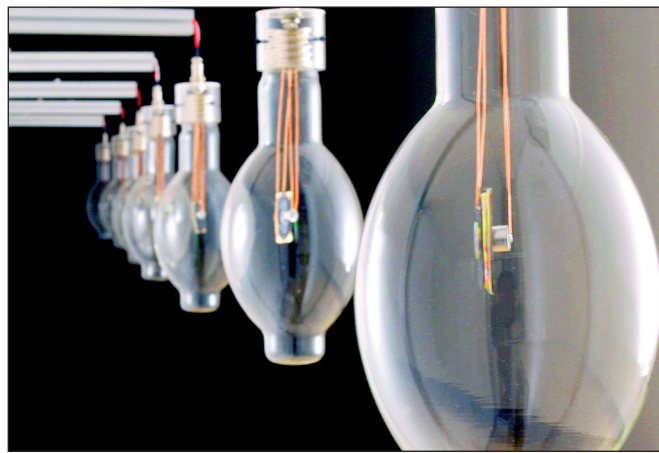
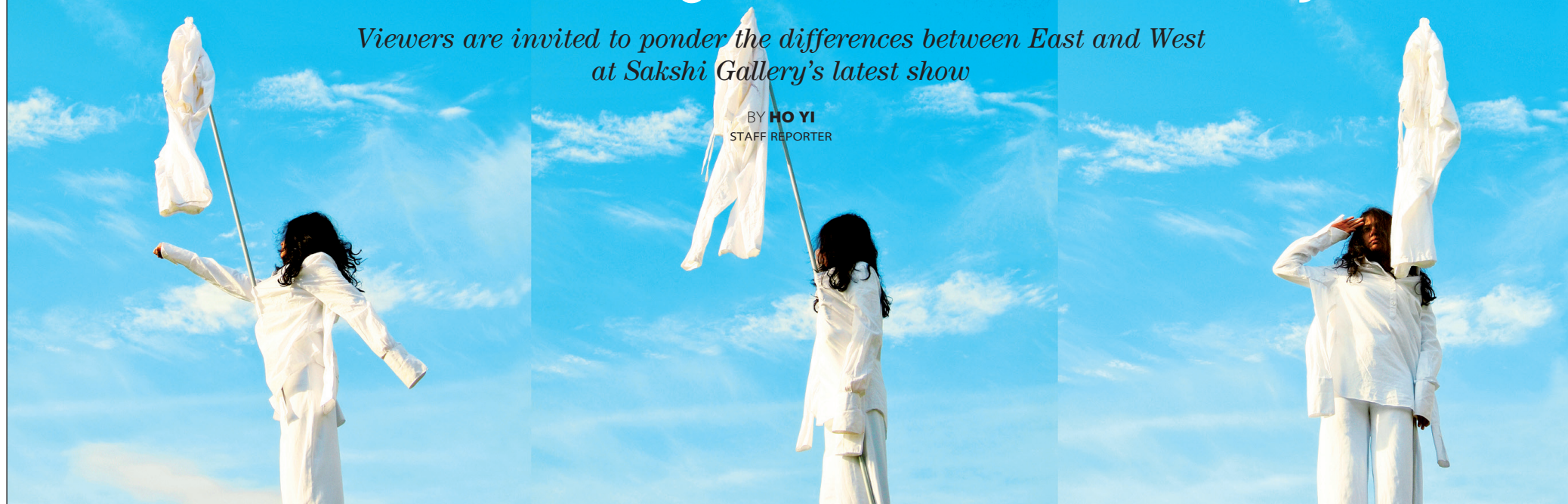


Manufacturing an Asian sensibility

Viewers are invited to ponder the differences between East and West at Sakshi Gallery's latest show

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER



Conflicts and war, the sacred and the profane, the self and family. These universal themes are examined by four artists from three Asian countries in the group photography exhibition *Between History and Tale: Contemporary Photography* (歷史與寓言之間：當代攝影展) currently on display at Sakshi Gallery Taipei.

In Indian artist Nandini Valli Muthiah's *The Definite Reincarnate*, an actor plays Vishnu, the preserver of life in the Hindu pantheon of deities. Wearing a luxurious dhoti, golden crown and jewels, the blue god enters the material world in this series of photographs. One shows him sitting on a bed in a hotel room with a hint of melancholy on his face, as if he were a traveling salesman relaxing after a long day. Another, a close-up shot of his sweaty, well-toned abdomen adorned with a jewel-encrusted belt, contrasts religious faith and material obsessions.

The conflict in Kashmir is seen through a feminine lens in *Half Widows* by Shilpa Gupta, a well-known Indian new-media artist whose work has been shown in Asia, Europe and the US. The triptych of photographic images shows the artist in men's white clothing holding a flag made from the same material, and hints at the bitter experience of women in the war-torn region who can never be sure whether their husbands are alive or dead.

For her portion of the exhibit, Istanbul-based Lale Tara photographed a life-size doll modeled after the artist herself in various deserted locations to question the boundaries between



Top: Shilpa Gupta, *Half Widows*.

Above from left: Wang Fu-jui, *Sound Bulb*; Lale Tara, *Mother Mary With the Baby*; Nandini Valli Muthiah, *The Arrival II*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAKSHI GALLERY TAIPEI

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: *Between History and Tale: Contemporary Photography* (歷史與寓言之間：當代攝影展) and *Whispering in Chiang Mai Forest* (清邁聲林)

WHERE: Sakshi Gallery (夏可喜當代藝術), 33 Yitong Street, Taipei City (台北市伊通街33號). Tel: (02) 2516-5386

WHEN: *Between History and Tale* runs until May 2. *Whispering in Chiang Mai Forest* runs until April 24. Open Tuesdays to Saturdays from 1:30pm to 9:30pm and Sundays from 1:30pm to 7:30pm

ON THE NET: www.sakshigallery.com.tw



what is real and what is not. In *The Mother Mary With the Baby*, her scantily clad double holds an infant inside a dilapidated church in a pose that brings to mind representations of the Virgin Mary in Christian art. The image plays with stereotypes of women as sex objects and mothers.

Representing Taiwan is Penghu-born artist Chen Shun-chu (陳順榮), whose latest series *Distance in Memory* (記憶的距離) uses blurred, out-of-focus images to meditate on the ambiguous, deceitful and constantly changing nature of memory.

Curator Gladys Lin (林瑛希) says she scheduled *Between History and Tale* to run after an exhibit of work by American photographer Gregory Crewdson (who is known for his surreal and ghostly scenes of American homes) so that gallerygoers could make comparisons between the East and the West.

Lin, who is the Mumbai-based Sakshi's East Asia regional director, says the works in *Between History and Tale* all have an "Asian aura," though it is up to the viewer to work out exactly what that means.

Visitors may also want to check out a smaller exhibition titled *Whispering in Chiang Mai Forest* (清邁聲林) at Sakshi Taipei's informal salon, a three-minute walk from the main exhibition space. The show pairs delicate charcoal paintings of women in Chiang Mai by Thai painter Natthawut Singthong with *Sound Bulb* (聲泡), a sound installation by pioneering Taiwanese sound artist Wang Fu-jui (王福瑞).

EXHIBITIONS

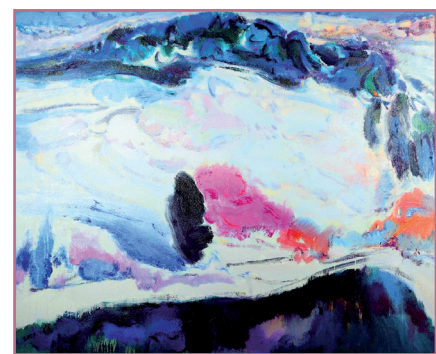


Hung Tung-lu, *Svara* (2007). PHOTO COURTESY OF GALLERY 100

Taiwanese contemporary painters Hung Tung-lu (洪東祿) and Red Capsule (紅膠囊) personify their inner experiences with **The Universe in Mind** (一念萬象). Employing a visual style reminiscent of Japanese manga, the two artists explore the "tragedies and comedies" in their lives through the fictitious characters Little Red (小紅) and Dog Face Man (狗臉男).

■ Gallery 100 (百藝畫廊), 6, Ln 30, Changan E Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市長安東路一段30巷6號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2536-2120

■ Until May 16



Zhao Jiujie, *Blooming Flowers* (2009).

PHOTO COURTESY OF TFAM

The Moment of Landscape — Paintings by Contemporary Chinese Masters (此景此情：大陸油畫名家寫生展) features 66 representational landscape oil paintings by 10 artists from China. In addition to displaying 56 of their earlier works, TFAM invited the participating artists to paint Taiwan's landscapes and cityscapes, the results of which are also on view.

■ Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closes at 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656

■ Until May 9

Taiwanese digital photographer Chen Wan-ling (陳宛伶) ponders the experience of travel in **A Little Factory of Life** (小生活工場). Chen's images of people driving in cars or airplanes flying out of a vortex examine larger questions of human migration and the difference between the movement of the human body and that of the vehicles they create.

■ Der Horng Art Gallery (德鴻畫廊), 1 Jhongshan Rd, Tainan City (台南市中山路1號). Call (06) 227-1125 for a viewing

■ Until Sunday

The buildings and spaces of his native Xian preoccupy Chinese painter **Wang Fenghua** (王鳳華) in his solo exhibit at Gallery J. Chen. Instead of nostalgically resurrecting Xian's rich archeological history, he depicts structures — apartment blocks, airports, train stations — that serve as symbols of modern life. Feng's visual style — both in terms of its subtle shading and his emphasis on rectangles and squares rendered in a subdued palette — evokes David Hockney's early Pop Art works.

■ Gallery J. Chen, 3F, 40, Ln 161, Dunhua S 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 May 9

Existential Emptiness (真空妙有) is a solo exhibit by Chinese conceptual photographer and video artist Cui Xiuwen (崔曉聞). Cui's photographs, which have been collected by the Tate Modern Art Gallery and Pompidou Center, focus on the struggles of young women growing up in a rapidly modernizing China and the changing roles and relationships between women and men.

■ Tina Keng Gallery (德來歌畫廊), 15, Ln 548, Ruiguang Rd, Taipei City (台北市瑞光路548巷15號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2659-0798

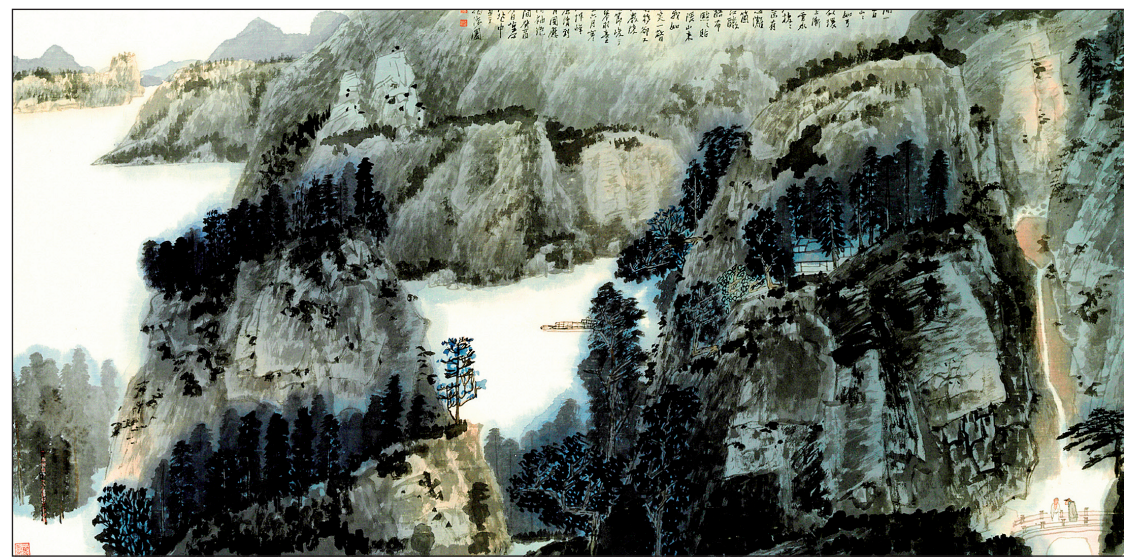
■ Until April 25

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, presents an exhaustive retrospective of the work of world-renowned American photographer **David LaChapelle**. LaChapelle, who hit New York's art scene in the early 1980s as a protégé of Andy Warhol, has photographed many of America's top celebrities — from Hillary Clinton and Angelina Jolie to Gene Simmons and Hugh Hefner — covering themes such as religion, war, celebrity and the environment. His peculiar and unmistakable style of staged photography is characterized by glamorous aesthetics and dramatic tension that some have called kitsch and others high art.

■ Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, Taipei), 39 Changan W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2552-3720. Admission: NT\$50

■ Until May 30

Chiang Chao-shen: a scholar and a gentleman



Chiang Chao-shen, *Blue-green Peaks Above a River*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NPM

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: The Art of Chiang Chao-shen: Paintings, Calligraphy and Seals Donated by Mrs Chiang Chang Kuei-na (殷原翰墨 — 江兆申夫人章桂娜女士捐贈書畫篆刻展)

WHEN: Until June 25 (with a partial display change May 14)

WHERE: Galleries 210, 212, National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院), 221 Zhishan Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市至善路二段221號)

ADMISSION: NT\$160

The Art of Chiang Chao-shen: Paintings, Calligraphy and Seals Donated by Mrs Chiang Chang Kuei-na (殷原翰墨 — 江兆申夫人章桂娜女士捐贈書畫篆刻展) is an unusual exhibition for the National Palace Museum: The works on display were produced by Chiang Chao-shen (江兆申), a former deputy director of the museum, and not some long-dead artist whose life is shrouded in the mysteries of antiquity.

Chiang, who worked at the museum for 27 years and was held in very high regard as an expert on Chinese art, approached art as a gentleman scholar of the traditional stamp, for whom its appreciation and creation was a simple fact of life and not the preserve of academia or technocrats.

The exhibition's subtitle — paintings, calligraphy and seals — highlights Chiang's command of old world artistic skills, while other display items, such as handwritten labels for museum exhibits and airmail letters, show that he lived very much in the modern world.

Chiang represented the continuity of thousands of years of tradition, and though this exhibition showcases an important new acquisition by the museum — 110 works in all — it is also

The National Palace Museum is giving star treatment to the oeuvre of its former deputy director in an exhibition of his paintings, calligraphy and seals

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

an exhibition of a life.

Born in China's Anhui Province in 1925 to a family from the literati class, Chiang received a well-rounded education in the traditional scholastic arts, ranging from poetry composition to painting. After relocating to Taiwan in 1949, he received instruction from the literati master and imperial descendant Pu Hsin-yu (蔣心齋), exhibited works privately, was noticed for his command of the Chinese artistic tradition and subsequently drafted onto the staff of the National Palace Museum. He retired as a deputy director in 1991 and died in 1996.

The works on show include a large number of paintings, mostly from his stylistically mature years following retirement, when he dedicated himself to his creative output. The paintings are categorized to show off the features of the style he had developed through years of studying the works of the great masters that are stored in the museum's vaults.

Highly regarded for his diligence in mastering all aspects of the tradition that he had inherited, Chiang was no mere imitator. His paintings, while essentially classical in form, have a freshness and modernity about them.

The impression is not so much of an artist trying to innovate, but of a man devoted to his art and absorbing contemporary influences from the world around him.

Many of the paintings were inspired by Chiang's travels through China. In *Illustration of the Latter Red Cliff* (後赤壁圖), he follows on a long-standing tradition of commenting on one of Chinese literature's seminal works. But that tradition is gradually fading, and

Chiang is probably from one of the last generations to have received such a rigorously traditional Chinese education. *Illustration of the Latter Red Cliff*, however, exudes a boldness that defies viewers to see it as anything other than part of a dynamic and robust heritage.

Apart from the paintings, which form the main part of the exhibition, other works, such as carved seals, calligraphy (both formal and informal) and letters create a sense of personal intimacy with the artist that is rarely experienced in other National Palace Museum exhibitions.

The key to Chiang's achievement was his diligence in mastering the traditional arts. *Panels in Four Script Types*, undertaken when he was 70, is the result of a complete immersion in the calligraphic traditions. In *Fengguidou* (風櫃斗), a painting inspired by the plum blossoms of Taiwan's Nantou County, he applied his artistic perception to his new home, while linking the work back almost 1,000 years by writing a Song Dynasty poem towards the top of the work.

It is rare to see such a concentration of artifacts from an individual artist of such importance brought together in a single show, and this is largely because of the close relationship that Chiang had with the museum, even after his retirement. The care with which the museum has presented the exhibition is also evident, rivaling that of some of its most high-profile exhibitions. The introductory notes to many of Chiang's works are more detailed than usual.

For a glimpse into the life of a modern-day traditional Chinese scholar, The Art of Chiang Chao-shen is a show that should not be missed.