

The time is right for a

Hung Tung exhibition



Hung's art seemed to polarize people. Those who appreciated his art considered him a genius while those who didn't thought he was a fool.

After becoming famous, Hung received constant requests from strangers and friends alike for paintings. Such requests became a burden and late in life he began to isolate himself. He descended into loneliness, and for while he even stopped painting. In 1987 he passed away, alone in his workshop.

Hung Tung has been dead for thirty years, but looking back on his life we can see that he left behind so much more than the over-300 wonderful paintings he created. During his lifetime he went from being seen as an incomprehensible fool in the eyes of his fellow villagers, to being acknowledged as an accomplished painter by the art world. During the 1990s his paintings represented Taiwan on the world stage, featuring in exhibitions in the US, Germany, France and Belgium. Taken at face value these exhibitions may appear trivial, but if we step out of the confines of the art world and take a closer inspection, we can see that the trajectory of Hung's art is a mirror of the changes to Taiwan society.

Taiwan today is capable of accepting this kind of artist, but the younger generation doesn't seem to know Hung Tung and his paintings. The power of his works travels through time, space and generations, and the paintings connect with every soul that sees them. An elderly person might find representations of traditional culture in Hung Tung's paintings, whereas a young person might discover elements that are already familiar to them from comics.

The goal for the future must be to help youngsters step into the world of Hung Tung's art, to be immersed in its essence and to glorify it. Moreover, many of the paintings in the current exhibition remind us that time passes by in an instant and cannot be preserved.

Whenever he was invited to display his works, Hung would always say "the time is not yet right" but now it seems to be a case of "the time has come."

HUNG MI-JEN HAS CURATED HUNG TUNG'S EXHIBITIONS IN TAIWAN AND ABROAD MANY. SHE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK ENCHANTMENT, FANTASY, HUNG TUNG, PUBLISHED IN 2003 BY LION ART. (TRANSLATED BY TAIJUNG WU)

時機已到！大家快來看洪通

○一〇年四月三十日，桃園縣政府文化局推出「洪通的異想幻境」展，展出洪通的一百一十六件作品，是有史以來，洪通作品數量最多的一次展示，這個展覽，對洪通迷來說是件大事，也是台灣美術界的一個重要事件。

生在台北北門鄉南鯤鯓魚身的洪通，自從一九七二年作畫的故事在報章雜誌上被披露以來，受到許多熱烈的討論，尤其是一九七六年「藝術家」雜誌社在台北美國文化中心為他舉辦展覽所掀起的洪通熱潮，洪通一度成為當時台灣家喻戶曉的鄉野傳奇。

在台灣社會還相對保守的七〇年代，一個鄉下文盲平白無故閉門作畫的行徑引起各界不同的解讀，欣賞的人視之為天才，不解的人譏之為瘋子，洪通成名之後，飽受不論是慕名求畫或人情勢利的各種干擾，以致晚年又把自己關起來，過著相當孤獨的生活，甚至有一段時間還擱下畫筆，一九八七年在畫屋中寂寞地走完人生。

如今，洪通離去已經二十三年，除了給後人留下了三百多件精采的作品之外，回顧洪通的一生，從最早在鄉人眼中是個莫名所以的瘋子，到被藝術界認可是個素人畫家，及至九〇年代，代表台灣藝術的一員參加在美國、德國、法國、比利時的展覽，也已不完全侷限在樸素藝術的範疇，表面上雖只是一些零散的展歷，但深層來看，洪通藝術的定位亦能約略觀探出台灣社會的變化。

現在社會普遍已能接受洪通這類畫家，但年輕世代已經幾乎不知道有洪通這個人與他的畫了。洪通的作品是那麼地超越時空，超越世代，能與各種心靈相通。一個上了年紀的人可以從洪通的畫裡找到許多傳統文化的符號，但一個新世代的年輕人同樣也能在洪通的繪畫裡看到他們熟悉的卡通氛圍。如何讓年輕人走近洪通的藝術世界，並從中獲取養分，發揚光大，是未來可以努力的目標。另外，現場展出的某些作品，也在提醒我們，洪通作品的保存正面臨時間的考驗。洪通生前確實經常以「時機未到」為由推拒展覽邀約，顯然，這一次「時機到了」！

作者：洪米貞——九〇年代中後期與洪通相關的國內外展覽。「靈魅、狂想、洪通」一書作者，二〇〇三年雄獅美術出版。

An exhibition of the paintings of self-taught Taiwanese artist Hung Tung entitled *The Imaginary Dreamland of Hung Tung*, went on display in Taoyuan on April 30. The exhibition has been organized by Taoyuan County Government Cultural Affairs Bureau. With 116 paintings, it's the biggest ever exhibition of Hung's works, making the event a big deal with Hung's fans and the wider Taiwan fine art community.

Hung Tung was born in Kunshen, in Tainan County's Beimen Township in 1920. In 1972 he began receiving extensive coverage in art magazines, and became the subject of heated discussions.

Most significantly, in 1976 *The Artist* magazine organized an exhibition of his works at the American Cultural Center in Taipei. The exhibition propelled him into the spotlight and overnight he became a household name and folk hero in Taiwan.

Taiwan was still very conservative in the 1970s so the notion that an illiterate person could start painting without any formal training was considered quite shocking.