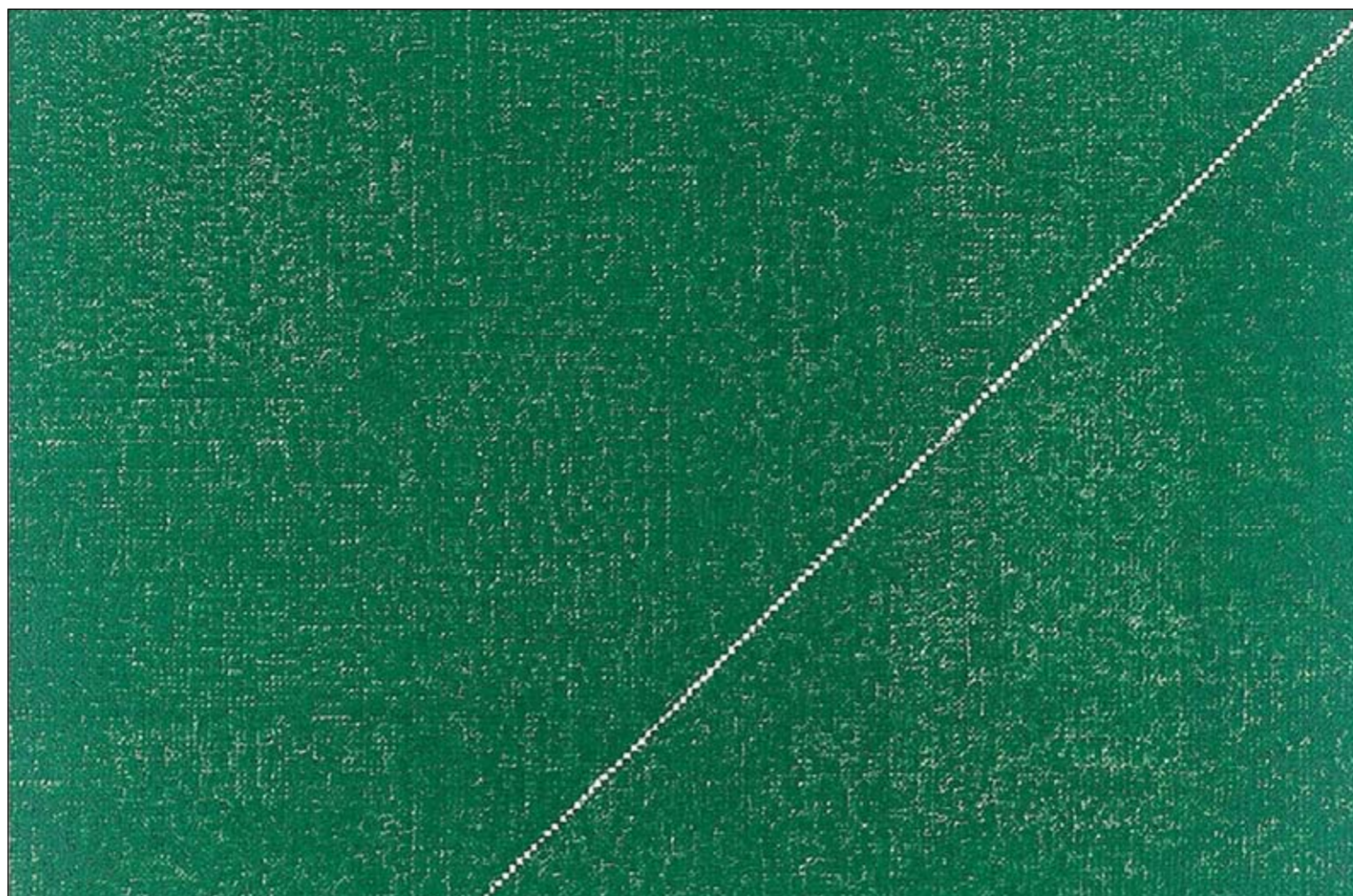


► Tsong Pu, *Transition* (1999). PHOTO COURTESY OF TFAM



► Taiwanese artist Tsong Pu stands in front his installation, *You Are the Beautiful Flower* (1997/2010), at Art From the Underground, his latest show at TFAM. PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES



▼ Students at the opening of Art From the Underground wear T-shirts that read "I hate Cai Guo-qiang," left, and "I detest Takashi Murakami" and "I don't like Yoshitomo Nara," right. The T-shirts were worn to protest TFAM's habit of consigning most exhibitions of work by Taiwanese artists to the museum's basement, while foreign artists tend to exhibit in the more prominent galleries on the first floor. PHOTOS: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES



EXHIBITION NOTES

WHAT: Art From the Underground (地下藝術)
WHERE: Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM — 台北市立美術館), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號)
WHEN: Until Aug. 8. Open daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closes at 9:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656
ADMISSION: Free
ON THE NET: www.tfam.museum

A genial atmosphere permeated the crowded basement galleries of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) on Saturday for the opening of Art From the Underground (地下藝術), a retrospective exhibit on the work of Taiwanese artist Tsong Pu (莊普). The exhibit's title, an unambiguous reference to the subterranean placement of the show, suggested that Tsong, 63, was going to use the launch as a platform to criticize the museum's perceived policy of relegating Taiwanese artists to "the underground." The protest, however, was mostly muted.

As university-aged art students wandered the space wearing white T-shirts emblazoned with phrases such as "I don't like Yoshitomo Nara," "I detest Takashi Murakami" and "I hate Cai Guo-qiang (蔡國強)," Tsong, sporting his trademark goatee and dressed casually in jeans and an un-tucked dress shirt, commented on his relationship with TFAM.

"My first exhibit was held in this space 20 years ago. It seems that I haven't improved much over that time because 20 years later I'm still ... underground," Tsong said.

"Hopefully my work will improve in the future so that I can be elevated to the first floor," he quipped.

Tsong's concerns, ironically expressed, about Taiwanese artists being relegated to the basement follow increasingly vocal complaints from the arts community and media that TFAM is marginalizing Taiwanese artists in favor of international ones. (Cai Guo-qiang is Chinese, Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara are Japanese.)

Galleries D, E, F and G, or the basement venue, typically house group or solo exhibits by nascent or established Taiwanese artists. Prominent artists grumble (usually in private) that they are rarely given the opportunity to exhibit on the first floor, missing out on the big budgets and press that this entails.

Art From the Underground displays more than 100 of Tsong's sketches, paintings and installations

dating from 1978, complete with a documentary on his artistic development over the past 30 years.

"At least there's one picture of Tsong's hanging on the first floor," said Yang Shun-wen (楊舜雯) of TFAM's promotional department when asked about the exhibit's location. She giggled a little sheepishly, as if aware of how lame this sounded.

To be fair, TFAM seems to be heeding its critics because it's completely altered the basement space. The four galleries have become one large showroom (where the installations are given prominent display) and two anterooms (for the paintings).

Gone is the maze of walls that caused museumgoers to feel as if they were part of a psychology experiment. Removed are the boards that covered the floor-to-ceiling French windows, transforming what had been a gloomy space into one with considerable natural lighting and unobstructed views of the outside courtyard.

According to the press release, Tsong's abstract art is "richly poetic and replete with utopian ideals." Perhaps, but there is the sense when looking at his work that not all is well in the artist's imagination.

We sense this with *The Sound With No Name* (無名的聲音), a 1982 sketch that hints at the style and themes Tsong would develop in his later paintings and installations. A matrix of penciled lines is interspersed here and there with scribbles and patches of ultramarine, magenta and yellow. Tsong's obsession with uniformity and perfection — a utopian gesture on paper — is obvious. And yet, the addition of color, randomly placed throughout the work, suggests fallibility in the grand design.

With the acrylic paintings, Tsong abandons graphite for chop-like grids of color or black and white. In one part of the

exhibit's 15-minute documentary, Tsong is shown carefully affixing these chops to a matrix of pre-drawn lines, a style evident in all his paintings.

In *Chasing the Horizontal Across Space* (橫向憑空追追追), each of the squares is stamped with these colored chops and overlaid with dabs of white paint. At certain points on the canvas, however, the vertical, horizontal and diagonal rows are disrupted by elements that resemble pixelation on a monitor.

Whereas many of the paintings reveal slight disjunctions in an overall geometrically cohesive framework, the installations emphasize the opposite by showing that fractured parts can make up a perfect whole.

Backyard in June (六月裡的後花園), for example, is a large installation on the gallery floor arranged in the shape of a disc. Within the circle, shards of terracotta brick are concentrically positioned around several points, each of which is topped with a hammer. From a distance, it resembles a perfect form. Up close, the viewer perceives the fragmented nature of the construction.

Tsong's canvases and installations, with their struggle between perfection and imperfection, could serve as an emblem for the current controversy at TFAM. A target for the many interest groups it's perceived to serve — government, artists, critics, galleries — each party assumes that the museum should live up to a different ideal of what a museum is supposed to be. And though TFAM has yet to "elevate" Tsong to the first floor, Art From the Underground offers an exemplary look at one of Taiwan's top artists.

Taiwanese artist Tsong Pu's exhibit, *Art From the Underground*, presents more than 100 works of installation, painting and drawing spanning his 30-year career

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER

stirring it up

EXHIBITIONS



Lin Jun-liang, *Microevolution-Heery* (2010). PHOTO COURTESY OF PROJECT HUIYUAN ART SPACE

Video installation artist Lin Jun-liang (林俊良) looks at the space in between the real and the unreal, the distinct and the indistinct in *Smash and Revive the Profile of the Time* (時間輪廓之粉碎與再重製). Lin's blurry, highly abstract videos examine the transitory nature of time and suggest the impossibility of fixing oneself at any particular point along a temporal axis.

■ Project Fulfill Art Space (就在藝術中心), 2, Alley 45, Ln 147, Xinyi Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市信義路三段147巷45弄2號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 1pm to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2707-6942
 ■ Until Saturday



Tseng Yu-chuan, *Where are You?* (2010). PHOTO COURTESY OF SHIN LEH YUAN ART SPACE

Tseng Yu-chuan (曾鈺涓) trawled the Internet in search of individual photos of people, which he downloaded and combined to create a digital portrait of society in *Where Are You?* (你在那裡). For Tseng, the digital camera differs from the film camera in that it has the potential to turn the subject into a kind of information code that can be manipulated to transform individuals with their own personalities and characteristics into an indistinguishable mass product.

■ Shin Leh Yuan Art Space (新樂園藝術空間), 15-2, Ln 11, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市中山北路二段11巷15-2號). Open Wednesdays to Sundays from 1pm to 8pm. Tel: (02) 256-1548
 ■ Until June 13

SU-CITY II brings together eight photographers who offer their own slant on Taipei. Each of the artists endeavors to humanize one aspect of the city — whether economic, cultural or political — in an attempt to undermine the stereotype of the metropolis as a monolithic urban jungle.

■ Barry Room, Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村百里廳), 7 Beiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號). Open daily from 10am to 7:30pm. Tel: (02) 3393-7377
 ■ Until June 13

Chilean photographer and Taipei Artist Village resident artist Soledad Pinto documents buildings in various states of decay and dissolution in **No Longer, No Yet — Print, Fold, and Pop It Up! (Taipei)**. The translation of these images into digital prints provides the material she uses to perform "the 'reterritorialization' of those spaces in tension with the physical features of the exhibition space." In other words, she hangs photos of buildings in varying states of decay to illustrate how they can live on as memories in the mind of the viewer.

■ Grass Mountain Artist Village (草山國際藝術村), 92 Hudi Rd, Taipei City (台北市湖底路92號). Open Wednesdays to Sundays from 10am to 4pm. Tel: (02) 2862-2404
 ■ Until June 6

The Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (高雄市立美術館) is currently holding a retrospective exhibit on Taiwan-born, London-based artist Richard Lin (一即一切) called **One Is Everything: 50 Years of Work by Richard Lin** (林壽宇50年創作展). The 100 works on display cover Lin's entire career, from his early abstract paintings to his later installations.

■ Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (高雄市立美術館), 20 Meishuguan Rd, Kaohsiung City (高雄市鼓山區美術館路20號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Tel: (07) 555 0331
 ■ Until Sept. 26

Tsui Hui-yu (崔惠宇) digs deep into the depths of her unconscious to create intuitive works that combine colorful ink sketching with bold wool forms in **An Amazing Genesis** (驚麗創世紀). The contemporary artist's highly original sculptural installations of organic forms mimic and celebrate the randomness and diversity of nature.

■ VT Art Salon (非常藝術空間), B1, 47 Yitong St, Taipei City (台北市中山區伊通街47號地下一樓). Open Tuesdays to Thursdays from 2pm to 11pm and Fridays and Saturdays from 2pm to 1am. Tel: (02) 2516-1060
 ■ Until June 5