

An inside job

Kuo Shi-da's paintings explore the inner dynamics of his ceramic sculptures, but aren't as impressive

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER



After a 20-year hiatus, New York-based Taiwanese artist Kuo Shi-da (郭旭達), 51, returns to painting with 15 abstract acrylic-on-canvas works that are currently on display, along with 11 of his sculptures, one of which dates back to 1999, at Esite Gallery. The show runs until June 27.

Known as a ceramicist and sculptor, Kuo originally studied painting at university, but later switched mediums because he had "always liked structures" and "three-dimensional objects."

But three years ago he wandered into an art shop and discovered "all these new kinds of acrylic paint that contain different kinds of materials: mica flecks in them or sand. As a sculptor, I want something with texture and weight. Not just paint," Kuo said.

The works in Kuo's show are the products of the artist's attempt to find ideal or archetypal forms. The sculptures are formalist compositions, balancing geometrical shapes with organic curved lines. The paintings are an extension of the ceramic works and explore their interior spaces. He calls them "flat sculptures."

Kuo's sculptures tap into a legacy of human creativity that dates back to antiquity. Architecture, archeology, ritual vessels, nature and household ornaments are all subsumed into three-dimensional objects of simple and visceral beauty, which are rendered in glazes of gray, white and charcoal that draw attention to the outlines.

Untitled/No. 04-06 (無題/No. 04-06), with its elongated tube sticking out of an igloo-like base, looks

like an ancient kiln or a pipe, while *Untitled/No. 09-02* (無題/No. 09-02) resembles bunny ears emerging from a top hat. On further reflection, however, the

latter piece could reference the World Trade Center's twin towers. The desiccated trunk of a tree that protrudes from a pot in *Untitled/No. 09-01* (無題/No. 09-01) evokes environmental forms.

Other sculptures reference modern knick-knacks. With its matrix of nine holes, the egg-shaped *Untitled/No. 02-03* (無題/No. 02-03) brings to mind a saltshaker, while *Untitled/No. 06-06* (無題/No. 06-06) resembles a cookie jar.

Though Kuo's ceramic works possess a shapely originality, the paintings come off as repetitive case studies of his sculptures. He said that these "wall pieces," the canvases of which were painted on the ground using a palette knife, are meant to draw attention to the interior of three-dimensional forms.

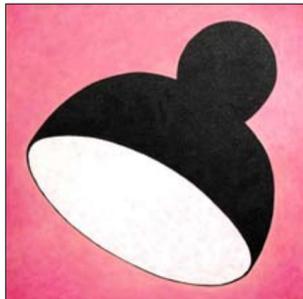
"Ceramics have drawn my attention to the fact that the interior space is important," Kuo said.

True, but perhaps that revelation should stay in the three-dimensional field. The paintings, though bold in their coloring and shapes, too often resemble the outlines of cartoon characters.

Untitled/P-101 (無題/P-101), for example, is almost a facsimile of Mickey Mouse's ears and hat. The crimson background doesn't help as Disney hats are labeled with red tags. I couldn't stop thinking of South Park's Kenny while looking at the hooded shape of *Untitled/P-109* (無題/P-109).

Though those comments are the product of a particular set of cultural references, it's hard not to think that *Untitled/P-110* (無題/P-110), its protuberances and goblin colors, came straight out of an episode of *Ren and Stimpy*.

Though some of Kuo's paintings do successfully evoke (albeit somewhat amateurishly) the universal forms he seeks to distill and represent, all too often they come across as preliminary sketches for his more significant ceramic sculptures.



Top: Kuo Shi-da, *Untitled/No. 09-03* (2009).
Left: Kuo Shi-da, *Untitled/P-104* (2008).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ESITE GALLERY

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: Kuo Shi-da (郭旭達)

WHEN: Until June 27

WHERE: Esite Xinyi Bookstore (誠品信義店), 11 Songgao Rd, Taipei City (台北市松高路11號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm

TEL: (02) 8789-3388 X1588

ON THE NET: www.esitegallery.com

Guggenheim and YouTube seek budding video artists

Collaborative project invites anyone with access to a camera to enter work for exhibition selection process

BY CAROL VOGEL
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK

For artists, being included in a museum exhibition generally means first having to penetrate the well-guarded gates of a prestigious art gallery. But now the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and YouTube are aiming to short-circuit that exclusionary art-world system, at least briefly, in much the same way that other hierarchical systems have been blown apart in the Internet age.

Beginning two days ago, anyone with access to a video camera and a computer has an opportunity to catch the eye of a Guggenheim curator and vie for a place in a video-art exhibition in October at all of the foundation's museums: the Solomon R. Guggenheim in New York, the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin, the Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.

The project, called YouTube Play and conceived as a biennial event, is intended to discover innovative work from unexpected sources. It is open even to entrants who don't consider themselves artists, and actively encourages the participation of people with little or no experience in video. "People who may not have access to the art world will have a chance to have their work recognized," said Nancy Spector, deputy director and chief curator of the Guggenheim Foundation. "We're looking for things we haven't seen before."

For YouTube the project is one in a series of experiments in tradition busting. In late 2008 it created the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, which allowed any musician to audition for a concert at Carnegie Hall conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas; the previous year it helped create the CNN/YouTube debates, giving everyone with a Web cam a chance to ask a question of a presidential candidate.

"What we're doing is removing the middle man," said Hunter Walk, director of product management for YouTube. "Whether it be Carnegie Hall or the Guggenheim, we're giving people a way to see the aspirational light on the hill. And not just online but in the physical world too."

While the company does not publicly discuss it, some of its officials say it is also hoping that collaborations with august institutions like Carnegie Hall and the Guggenheim Foundation will attract high-end advertisers.

Applicants can submit their videos (only one entry per person) by uploading them on a channel created for the initiative, also called YouTube Play (youtube.com/play). The works must have been created within the past two years and cannot be longer than 10 minutes, made for commercial use or excerpted from longer videos. The deadline for submissions is July 31.

A team of Guggenheim curators will look at all the submissions — the foundation is expecting many thousands, Spector said — and narrow them down to 200, which will be seen by a jury of nine professionals in disciplines like the visual arts, filmmaking and animation, graphic design and music. (Spector, who will be a juror herself, is putting the group together.) Although the jurors will know the names of entrants, Spector said, the makeup of the jury should be diverse enough to prevent art-world or other biases from infecting the process.

Then, in October, the jurors' final selection of 20 videos will be on simultaneous view at all the Guggenheim museums. And the 200 that made it through the first round will be available on the YouTube Play channel.

There will be no first prizes or runners-up among the 20, Spector said, "because this is not about finding

the best, but making a selection that represents the most captivating and surprising work."

That work could come, the foundation and YouTube say, from any quarter. "Within the last few years you can get a camera and for a few hundred [US] dollars get the tools to create Hollywood magic," Walk said. And Hewlett-Packard, which is collaborating on the project, is not only providing hardware to all the Guggenheim museums for displaying the videos, it is also offering online tutorials on YouTube Play to teach skills like editing, animation and lighting to the video-naïve. While Spector and YouTube say they created the project as a way of breaking down traditional art-world boundaries, some in that world question how meaningful it really is.

"Hit-and-run, no-fault encounters between curators and artists, works and the public, will never give useful shape to the art of the present nor define the viewpoint of institutions," said Robert Storr, dean of the Yale University School of Art, the organizer of the 2007 Venice Biennale and a former senior curator at the Museum of Modern Art, in an e-mail message from Europe.

"It's time to stop kidding ourselves," Storr added. "The museum as revolving door for new talent is the enemy of art and of talent, not their friend — and the enemy of the public as well, since it refuses to actually serve that public but serves up art as if it was quick-to-spoil produce from a Fresh Direct warehouse."

But those involved in the project, naturally, see it differently. "If this is all the Guggenheim did, it would be a problem," Spector said. "There are many layers to our programming. And we can't say at this point that this won't spawn ongoing relationships with people we discover through this process. One can only hope that it will."



Twenty submissions will be chosen by a jury and put on simultaneous view at all the Guggenheim museums.

PHOTO: AFP

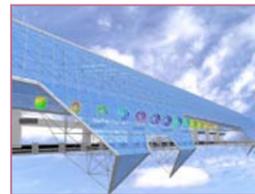
EXHIBITIONS

American artist Ray King uses light and glass to great effect in **Adventures of Light and Color** (以光之名).

The three glass-and-metal sculptural installations on display at Taipei Artist Village combine visual elements drawn from Chinese history and philosophy and recreate them using contemporary materials.

■ Barry Room, Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村百里廳), 7 Beijing E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號). Open Tuesdays to Fridays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 3393-7377

■ Opening on Friday from 7pm to 9:30pm. Until July 18



Ray King, *Adventures of Light and Color* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAV



Yen Liang-an, *The Second Contact: Landing Mbatene Hospital* (2010)

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOCA, TAIPEI

Back to Love (回到愛的星球), a group exhibition of photography, video and installation, examines the lives of people living in African countries. The show puts a positive spin on the lives of these people, offering a compassionate perspective on an underdeveloped continent.

■ 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

■ Begins on Friday. Until July 25

Hierophany Consciousness (顯聖·意識) is a group exhibition of video and photo installation by six of Taiwan's top artists. The show explores the country's history, politics, culture and art. The artists are Huang Ming-che (黃銘哲), J.C. Kuo (郭振昌), Wu Tien-chang (吳天章), Kuo Shu-li (郭淑莉), Pai Tsung-chin (白宗晉) and Lai Hsin-lung (賴新龍).

■ La Chambre Art Gallery (小室藝廊), 31, Ln 52, Siwei Rd, Taipei City (台北市四維路52巷31號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from noon to 9pm. Tel: (02) 2700-3689

■ Until July 11

A new series of wooden sculptures by **Hsiao Yi** (蕭一) is currently on display at Lin & Lin Gallery. Hsiao's kitschy representational sculptures of figures praying or riding motorcycles bear an uncanny resemblance to the works of Ju Ming (朱銘) — though without the latter's depth of vision.

■ Lin & Lin Gallery (大未來林舍畫廊), 13, Ln 252, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段252巷13號). Open Tuesdays to Fridays from 10am to 7pm, Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2721-8488

■ Until July 4

A Decade of Reverie, Tales of Contemplation (繞夢十年 靜思物語) is a solo exhibit of 12 oil paintings and eight pastels by Chinese artist Li Lan (朱禮銀). Li Lan's nostalgic and exotic compositions of insects, women, clothing and architecture are fragments drawn from her daily life and imagination, rendered in rich colors that bring to life multiple worlds.

■ Tina Keng Gallery (大未來畫廊), 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 June 26

Nature God is a solo exhibition by