

Every weekend for the past few years, Sung Yi-chang (宋宜璋) and Hsiao Tsun-hsien (蕭尊賢) have wandered Taiwan's back roads and mountains in search of prey. But they are no ordinary hunters. The duo, known by their sobriquet John&Fish (Sung and Hsiao, respectively), capture images of the country's birds, which they post on photo-sharing Web site Flickr.

They've amassed quite the cult following. The 620 images on their photo stream have received 1.35 million hits since it was set up in the summer of 2007. Each photo elicits an average of 200 consistently eulogistic comments in languages including English, French, Chinese, Spanish and Italian. New photos are usually added twice weekly.

The site can be found at [www.flickr.com/photos/johnfish](http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfish). Be warned, though, because you may end up whiling away a whole afternoon, as I did, viewing the stunning photos that John shoots (Fish works as his assistant).

When Rembrandt Meets Audubon (當林布蘭遇見奧杜本), currently on view at the Taiwan International Visual Arts Center (TIVAC — 台灣國際視覺藝術中心), presents 12 of the photos as medium-sized Lambda prints on canvas in a show that aims to reveal how the pictures possess aesthetic qualities similar to paintings.

"I'm not an artist or a photographer," said John, who prefers to use his online moniker. "I'm just a guy who puts photos on Flickr." When spoken by a man who displays an almost telepathic ability to understand the behavior of birds and capture them at just the right moment, that's an understatement.

Though the mention of Rembrandt in the exhibition's title and the disjointed selection of photos fail to reveal what John&Fish are up to (John said TIVAC chose the title of the show), the show proves its thesis: The images do resemble oil or watercolor paintings.

*Overwhelming Parent* (四驚迎哺, No. 463, 92 comments), which captures a mother egret in a thicket surrounded by her obviously hungry young, suggests a Rembrandt painting in its contrast of light and shadow, as does the balance of light and color in *A Choir!* (唱詩班, No. 310 — 1,261 comments), which shows three baby Malayan night herons craning their necks in anticipation of being fed.



## Bird's-eye view

*Flickr sensations John&Fish have their first solo show of avian images in Taiwan. It's a pity the exhibitor chose a theme that misses the point*

BY NOAH BUCHAN  
STAFF REPORTER

### EXHIBITION NOTES

**WHAT:** When Rembrandt Meets Audubon (當林布蘭遇見奧杜本)

**WHERE:** Taiwan International Visual Arts Center (台灣國際視覺藝術中心), 29, Ln 45, Liaoning St, Taipei City (台北市遼寧街45巷29號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from noon to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2773-3347

**WHEN:** Until Sunday

**ON THE NET:** [www.flickr.com/photos/johnfish](http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfish)

But that observation misses the point. By focusing on the medium of painting rather than the photos' subject matter, we forget that the images embody Nature.

*Just Like a Prayer* (小綠榕鵲, No. 546 — 419 comments) shows a Japanese white-eye perched on a branch, gazing skyward. Red berries partially frame the bird, and the background, a swirl of greens and blues that fades into a disc of white in the center, mirrors the bird's coloration. Does it resemble a watercolor? Sure. But the position of the bird's head and the photo's title point to the importance of Buddhism, which John and Fish practice, more than traditional painting techniques.

With so many Flickr images to choose from, this exhibition seems unnecessarily limited, and its theme is a false analogy that lacks relevance and does John&Fish a disservice.

Perhaps TIVAC compares John&Fish's work with painting because photography is still perceived as a lesser art form in Taiwan. But these images are original and stunning enough to stand on their own.

Something along the lines of how birds and humans share similar life cycles might have been more appropriate.

"These birds are me," said John. "They are my neighbors. They drink the same water as I do."

▲ John&Fish, *Make Way!* (2008).

▼ John&Fish, *Overwhelming Parent* (2009).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN&FISH AND TIVAC

## EXHIBITIONS



Huang Ben-rei, *Best Concert of All* (2010).  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ESUTE GALLERY

Huang Ben-rei (黃本蕊) expresses her inner thoughts, emotions and revelations through Nini, a fictitious bunny. **An Angel on My Table** (桌上的天使), an exhibit of Huang's oil paintings, was named after the biographical film on New Zealand author Janet Frame, which discusses the notion that the meaning of life can only be found through artistic creation. Huang uses this idea to produce dreamy worlds rendered in muted colors.

■ Esute 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

■ Opening reception on Saturday at 3pm. Until Aug. 22

**The Clues** (線索) is an exhibition of new collage works by Wang Tsen (王蓁). Shifting gears from his last show, which comprised semi-erotic acrylic paintings, Wang's new mixed media (acrylic, laser print, cotton string) series explores transitional spaces.

■ Galerie Grand Siecle (新苑藝術), 17, Alley 51, Ln 12, Bade Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段12巷51弄17號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 1pm to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2578-5630

■ Opening reception on Saturday at 6:30pm. Until Aug. 22

**About Painting** (話·畫) is a joint show of installation and digital photography by Cuban Jorge Mayet and Wu Chi-tsung (吳季璿). Mayet's small-scale sculptural installations, made from electrical wire, paper and fabric, depict imaginary trees, plants and other natural objects, while Wu's photos ponder similar environmental themes.

■ Sakshi Gallery (曼可喜當代藝術), 33 Yitong Street, Taipei City (台北市伊通街33號). Open Tuesdays to Saturdays from 1:30pm to 9:30pm and Sundays from 1:30pm to 7:30pm. Tel: (02) 2516-5386

■ Until Aug. 15

**Pulsating Spaces** (PC — 脈動空間) comprises two sets of artwork, an interactive installation and documentary video by Japanese artist Shigarū Morizumi that examine the nature of thermometers. The installation, a collection of large thermometers, undergoes subtle changes as visitors wander in and out of the exhibition space, and the accompanying documentary explains Morizumi's working method and ideas.

■ Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, Taipei), 39 Chang'an 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 Sept. 5

A new series of paintings by **Lin Shu-kai** (林書楷) and **Hua Chien-chiang** (華建強) is currently on display at Der Horng Art Gallery (德鴻畫廊). Both artists create bold and colorful works that juxtapose Buddhist and Taoist iconography, such as temples, pagodas and deities roaming through misty mountains, with emblems of contemporary society such as cars, motorcycles and airplanes.

■ 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 Friday

Anyone wanting to gain a deeper understanding of the tradition of Chinese landscape ink painting should not miss **Fine Places of Forests and Streams: Wen Boren and the Art of Painting** (林泉佳處—文伯仁繪畫展). Deeply influenced by his renowned uncle Wen Zhengming (文徵明), Wen Boren (1502-1575) employed the intricate structure of his relative's luxuriant and serene forest compositions in his work and reached a new level of refinement and precision using fine brushwork and delicate colors.

■ 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). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm and until 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2881-2021. Admission: NT\$250 (free admission for children under 115cm)

■ Until Sept. 25

## In the nude: Chinese ink painting with a twist

*Yu Peng toes the line between tradition and modernity in a new exhibition at Chi-Wen Gallery*

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Acclaimed for his Chinese ink paintings, which feature nude human forms set against scenes of sweeping landscapes, Yu Peng (于彭) is one of Taiwan's most revered contemporary artists.

His latest exhibit, Yu Peng Painting and Calligraphy in Album Leaves: Solitariness in Mountain (于彭/冊頁書畫:獨坐孤山), runs until Aug. 8 at Taipei's Chi-Wen Gallery (其文畫廊).

It features seven new series of notebook-page-size ink paintings, a form known as "album leaves" (冊頁書). Album leaves are separate pages that can be assembled as a book with or without binding.

"I have painted in this format throughout my career, but this is the first exhibition to focus on my album leaves work," Yu said at the show's opening on July 3.

The exhibit is small in scope, but it features a medium rarely explored by other artists. It also showcases works created by an influential artist during some of his most relaxed moments on a portable canvas.

"I did these paintings everywhere, when I was at home and when I was out," Yu said. "They were created at the spur of the moment, when I happened to be in a creative mood."

The album leaves form of ink painting originated during the Tang Dynasty, when the "scroll book" form (捲軸書), a single long page that could be unfurled for viewing or rolled up for storage, was deemed too cumbersome.

Yu started out as a street artist at the age of 22 and taught himself woodblock painting, ceramics, watercolor and shadow puppetry.

When he was 26 he visited Greece.

"I went to Athens to see all the sculptures," he said. "I didn't see myself in those sculptures and decided to turn to China."

He first visited China the same year, and this



Yu Peng says his nudes "are a subjective contemplation of the inner world."

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHI-WEN GALLERY

and subsequent visits influenced his painting style.

From 1997 to 2000, Yu worked in Shanghai, a period that resulted in his acclaimed *Landscape of Desire* (慾望山水) series. Yu calls it "an introspective series that reflects our desires. In contrast to the objective nudes in Western art, my nudes are a subjective contemplation of the inner world."

In Yu's art, what first looks like voyeurism becomes a Zen-like contemplation of basic human desires, a sensibility Yu says was influenced by his decades-long practice of meditation.

Whereas the nude in oil painting tends to celebrate the human body at its peak, Yu's figures often include children and the elderly.

"I do nude paintings because I am, after all, a modern artist. Nudes are in the tradition of *en plein air* (in the open air, 寫生) paintings," he said. "Being naked is a natural part of life. I want to depict humans in their most natural state."

### EXHIBITION NOTES

**WHAT:** Yu Peng/Painting and Calligraphy in Album Leaves: Solitariness in Mountain (于彭/冊頁書畫:獨坐孤山)

**WHERE:** Chi-Wen Gallery (其文畫廊), 3F, 19, Ln 252, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段252巷19號3樓). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 8771-3372

**WHEN:** Until Aug. 8

**ON THE NET:** [www.chiwen-gallery.com](http://www.chiwen-gallery.com)