

EXHIBITIONS

Jawshing Arthur Liou, *The Insatiable* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIPEI ARTIST VILLAGE

Taipei Artist Village is holding exhibitions by artists who have spent the past few months in their residency program. First up, Taiwan-born, US-based artist Jawshing Arthur Liou (劉肇興) employs video and animation installation to delve into the culinary practices of different cultures in **Things That Are Edible (食事)**. With titles such as *Round (圓)* and *The Insatiable (未央)*, Liou's videos are also an ironic look at our gluttonous times.

■ Barry Room, Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村白里廳), 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

■ Opening reception on Saturday at 7pm. Until Aug. 29

Meanwhile, out at Grass Mountain Village, a collective of young photographers called Invalidation Brothers (無效兄弟) — Chiu Chih-hua (丘智華), Tien Chi-chuan (田季全), Lee Ming-yu (李明瑜) and Lin Cheng-wei (林正偉) — have snapped images of religious rituals with mountain scenes as a backdrop. Entitled **Penglai Grass Mountain (蓬萊仙山)**, these black-and-white photos point at the ubiquity of the sacred in our mundane lives.

■ 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

■ Opening reception on Saturday at 11am. Until Sept. 5

Tseng Yu-chin (曾御欽) has earned a reputation as a deft narrator of the pain, pleasure and confusion of childhood through video and photography. His solo exhibit at Nou's Gallery (formerly Leisure Art Center — 悠閒藝術中心) continues down this avenue, though these images seem darker and more foreboding than his earlier work.

■ Nou Gallery, 232, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段232號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2700-0239

■ Opening reception on Saturday at 3pm. Until Aug. 29

Tina Keng (耿桂英) demonstrates her playful sense of humor with **Oopject/un/intentional objects (咬呀的物件展)**. The exhibit seeks, through the assemblage of mundane objects haphazardly placed throughout the gallery, to question the nature of art (and by extension the galleries and museums that exhibit it). Avant-garde? Perhaps. But the showing of a burnt lid of a pot or a crumpled ball of paper reminds one of the conceptual experiments embodied in Duchamp's toilet.

■ Tina Keng Gallery (大未來耿畫廊), 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 Aug. 29

Portraying East From Istanbul (墨刻見東方) is a solo show of abstract paintings by

Turkish artist Tanju Demirci.

■ Wingrow Art Gallery (萬果國際藝術公司), 5, Ln 175, Da-an Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市大安路一段175巷5號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2325-8253

■ Until Aug. 26

The Land is Speaking (土地在說話) is a solo exhibit of new works by figurative painter Cheng Chien-chang (鄭見昌).

■ Lee Gallery (黎畫廊), 10, Ln 175, Da-an Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市大安路一段175巷10號). For a viewing call (02) 2325-6688

■ Until Aug. 29

The 99 Degrees Art Center is currently holding a group exhibit by four well-known Taiwanese landscape painters. The paintings of **Chiu Hsien-te (邱顯德)** and **Jan Chin-shui (詹金水)** depict expansive mountain scenes, while **Hsu Ming-hung (許敏雄)** offers her interpretation of Taiwan's landscape through vibrant pastel-colored tableaux. **Wu Ting-hsien (吳丁賢)** stands apart from the other three artists with his minimalist approach to landscape painting and expressionist brushstrokes.

■ 99 Degrees Art Center (99 藝術中心), 5F, 259, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段259號5F). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2700-3099

■ Until Sept. 21

Chinese contemporary artist **Yang Yongliang's (楊詠梁)** solo show draws on the tradition of Chinese landscape painting — though with a twist. Or a bang. Using images he has shot of China's larger cities, which he then manipulates on a computer, Yang invents a post-apocalyptic world of demolished buildings, bombed-out cities and withered vegetation. The evocative landscapes are an overt critique of China's rapidly industrializing society.

■ My Humble House Art Gallery, 81, 12, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路一段12號B1). Open daily from 11am to 8pm. Tel: (02) 3322-3833

■ Until Sept. 5

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush

Researchers unveil the 'holy grail' of Audubon illustration

BY JON HURDLE
REUTERS, PHILADELPHIA

Researchers have found the first published illustration by John James Audubon, America's most famous bird artist, ending decades of searching for the prized but elusive work.

Audubon had made two references to the illustration in his diaries, but it had never been seen until it was found on a sheet of sample images produced in 1824 by a New Jersey engraver who specialized in illustrations for banknotes.

Eric Newman, a numismatic, or currency, historian working with Robert Peck, a senior fellow with Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences who had spent the last decade looking for the long-lost illustration, discovered it.

"It's the holy grail of Audubon scholarship," said Peck. "It's significant

because it was at a significant turning point in his life."

Some researchers doubted its existence and even suggested that Audubon lied when he wrote about it to enhance his reputation before the publication of his masterwork *Birds of America*, starting in 1827.

Although it is unsigned, the image is clearly Audubon's work because its detail — the bird is shown running through its grassy habitat — is characteristic of the artist's ornithological expertise, according to experts.

"This is vintage, quintessential Audubon," said Roberta Olson, curator of drawings at the New York Historical Society, which houses all 435 original watercolors for *Birds of America*.

The discovery, announced by the Academy last week, will be published



The first published illustration, top, by John James Audubon, above, was found on a sheet of images from an engraver who specialized in illustrations for banknotes.

PHOTOS: REUTERS

in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, an historical periodical, this fall.

The choice of subject suggests Audubon had little concept of what bankers might want on their notes, and helps to explain why the illustration had eluded scholars for so long.

"A skittish, shy, running grouse doesn't instill great confidence in the bank," Peck said.

Bankers in the early 19th century were more inclined to opt for images of eagles, or past presidents, to convey strength and stability to their customers, and so showed little interest in the grouse.

If the illustration of the now-extinct Heath Hen found its way on to banknotes in any quantity, it would have been at the New Jersey State Bank, for which the engraver, Gideon Fairman, produced the samples.

The bank's Trenton branch failed

in 1825 and its only other branch, in Camden, later destroyed all small-denomination bills in an effort to stop counterfeiting.

But Fairman, seeking business from the thousands of different bills in US circulation during the first half of the 19th century, also produced the image for a bank in Norwalk, Ohio, which put it on a sample US\$3 bill, and for a bank in Bridgeport, Connecticut, which used the grouse on a US\$5 bill, also just a sample, Peck said.

Two of the Bridgeport notes, and one from the Ohio bank, are now known to exist. All are owned by Newman, who is planning to put them on public display at a numismatic museum in St Louis later this year. The sample sheets and notes will also be exhibited at Princeton University in 2011.

Silent beauty divides experts

The jury is out on the provenance of 'La Bella Principessa,' which may fetch US\$150 million if it turns out to be a Da Vinci

BY MARTIN GAYFORD
BLOOMBERG



La Bella Principessa is attributed by some scholars to Leonardo da Vinci, in which case it would be worth an estimated US\$150 million. The drawing's previous owner, who sold it for about US\$20,000 three years ago, is suing Christie's auction house for "negligent misattribution."

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

For the second time in a century, a high-profile case in the New York courts is set to turn on the question, "How can you tell an authentic Leonardo da Vinci?"

It's a more delicate matter than you might imagine. Jeanne Marchig, the previous owner of a drawing that went under the hammer at Christie's International, New York, in January 1998, is suing the auction house for "negligent misattribution."

"Christie's strongly disagrees with these claims and believes they are without merit," a spokesman for the London-based company said last month. "The continuing debate surrounding this work has seen a significant number of the world's leading academics and critics continue to cast doubt on the alleged attribution to Leonardo." Cataloged as "German, 19th century," the work sold for US\$21,850 and was resold in 2007 for about US\$20,000, according to the suit.

Since 1998, a number of leading authorities — notably Martin Kemp, emeritus professor of art history at Oxford University — have identified it as a hitherto unknown masterpiece by Leonardo. It has been estimated that, as a Leonardo, the work is worth US\$150 million.

That estimate, given by Otto Naumann, a New York dealer in Old Masters, to Milton Esterow in the January issue of the magazine *Art News*, was "contingent upon uncontested attribution." That's hard to achieve in cases like this. Look out for fireworks when expert witnesses take the stand.

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

For example, counts of authentic Michelangelo drawings by renowned scholars vary from a conservative 30 to 40 to more than 700. What makes the difference? Evidence, of course, comes into it — type of pen stroke, methods of shading — but it also comes down in the end to opinion: the "eye" of the expert.

It's the same in the case of the disputed Leonardo, dubbed *La Bella Principessa* by Kemp. There are scientific findings. The vellum — or treated animal skin — on which it's drawn is from 1440 to 1650 according to carbon dating. The drawing is by a left-handed artist, which Leonardo was. A partial fingerprint on it is a match for

another on a more definite Leonardo.

In the end, though, it comes down to judgment of quality and style. That is, whether the work — which has been restored in the past more than once — is drawn in the way that Leonardo drew. And secondly, whether it's good enough to be by him.

Those are both subjective calls. Kemp answers a firm yes to both. He has, he writes in a book on the subject (*La Bella Principessa: The Story of the New Masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci*, Hodder & Stoughton), "not the slightest doubt" that this is "a masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci." Others are not so sure. Off the record, many in the art world express doubt about the Principessa.

HUNG JURY

The last big Leonardo case in New York was in 1929. Then the plaintiffs were Mr and Mrs Harry Hahn, Franco-American owners, they claimed, of the authentic version of Leonardo's portrait known as *La Belle Ferronniere*. Questioned by a New York journalist, the Old Master dealer Joseph Duveen flatly stated that the authentic painting was the one in the Louvre and that this was a copy. The owners sued for US\$500,000.

Duveen marshaled batteries of experts, who fared badly when cross-examined in the witness box. Statements such as "the impression produced on my mind is that it is not by Leonardo" did not impress the court, the jury was hung, and Duveen eventually agreed to pay US\$60,000.

More than 80 years later, there's still no complete agreement about *La Belle Ferronniere*. Most scholars believe the Louvre work is a genuine Leonardo, with perhaps a little help from assistants. Some still have doubts even about that (the Louvre picture will be included in an exhibition of Leonardo paintings at the National Gallery, London, next year).

Meanwhile, the other version, once disdained by Duveen, sold at a Sotheby's New York auction in January for US\$1.5 million — not much for a genuine Leonardo, quite a lot for something that isn't. The case of *La Bella Principessa* could run and run.