

Playing the game

Made in Taiwan — Young Art Discovery, a competition held as part of the country's biggest art fair, offers young artists a chance to gain a deeper understanding of the ins and outs of the country's art market

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Chen I-chun's (陳依純) mother took one look at her painting and concluded that her daughter must be possessed. Fearful that the somber work depicting a ghoulish scene would bring her family bad luck, she burned it.

"She then sent me off to the temple to see ... a spirit medium," said Chen, 31. "[She] didn't really understand my work at the time because it was a little weird."

An extreme example, perhaps, of the difficulties young artists face in Taiwan.

Besides placating parents who want their children to enter stable professions such as teaching or medicine, artists must contend with a competitive market that is difficult to understand, much less penetrate.

Enter *Made in Taiwan — Young Art Discovery*, a competition begun in 2008 and sponsored by the Council of Cultural Affairs and the Art Galleries Association ROC as part of Art Taipei, Taiwan's largest art fair. The five-day fair, which 110 galleries are attending this year, begins Friday.

Winners of *Young Art Discovery* — this year eight were chosen from 202 submissions — are provided with their own booth at Art Taipei as well as a grant of NT\$50,000 each for expenses. Not only does the competition broaden Art Taipei's scope, it draws attention to young talent — entrants have to be Taiwan nationals aged under 35 and cannot be represented by a gallery. The publicity helps, too.

"I have gotten a lot of coverage from magazines and newspapers," said Hsu Wei-hui (徐薇蕙), one of this year's eight winning artists. "People [have] started to know about me and my work."

Chou Chu-wang (周珠旺), another winner, agrees. "It's a huge fair and we artists can get a lot of exposure," he said.

But *Young Art Discovery* isn't just about giving



Chen I-chun, *Behind the House* (2008).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI

talented young artists a taste of the big time. It also exposes them to the inner workings of the art market. To facilitate this, organizers last year drafted in art professionals to act as agents for the artists. The move was also a response to galleries' complaints that artists were selling directly to buyers.

All four agents, each one assigned to two artists, have extensive experience in Taiwan's art market.

Young Art Discovery's organizers cover the agents' fees (they don't take the 50 percent commission typically charged by galleries), though artists are expected to donate 20 percent of sales to the National Culture and Arts Foundation (國家文化藝術基金會) to help support other new artists.

Though some might balk at the level of control galleries exert over the fair, for Hsu the agents are a boon.

"Being an artist is not just making art. There are a lot of detailed things to do, such as pricing and dealing with contracts. [Agents] ... can help with that," Hsu said.

Having just returned from a five-year stint studying in the US, the 31-year-old Hsu said she was unfamiliar with Taiwan's art scene, particularly buyer interest in installation art, the medium she works in.

After a few minutes with the agent, however, she said she understood the market much better.

With pricing, however, artists don't always agree with the agents' recommendations.

"The agent's perspective and the artist's perspective are different," said Shen Bo-cheng (沈柏丞), a 24-year old installation artist.

"Artists believe that their work is superlative," he said with a grin.

When asked if he would stick to his guns, he said, "We'll have to find some compromise."

Though agents provide a dose of reality, the price set remains the discretion of the artists.

In previous editions, *Young Art Discovery* judges were teachers, art critics or journalists. This year, for the first time, gallerists have become part of the adjudication process.

Though some fear that the market is exerting too much of an influence on how artists create and price their work, all six of the participating artists I asked about the process seemed upbeat.

Chen, having resisted pressure to "be content to find a husband," said that little will influence the direction she takes her art.

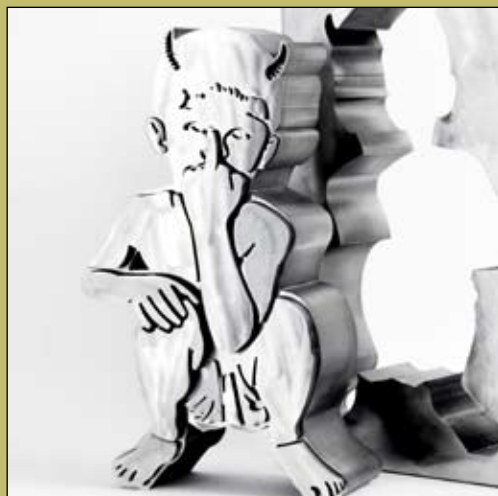
"I don't know what the future holds, but I will still create regardless of what happens," she said.

And her mother now accepts her chosen career. "She even prays at the temple on my behalf," Chen said.

And the winners are ...

Traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture are largely absent in this year's Made in Taiwan — Young Artist Discovery

BY NOAH BUCHAN
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Chou Chu-wang, *Split* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOOKS 2010

Chou Chu-wang.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

With titles such as *Middle Finger* (給你中指), *Fuck Fuck*, *Naughty Elf* (罔仔精) and *Sucking Sucking*, there is at first glance little subtlety in Chou Chu-wang's (周珠旺) stainless steel sculptures and acrylic-on-canvas paintings. But perhaps that's a good thing. Chou's drawings avoid the sentimentality common to depictions of childhood by Taiwanese artists. These psychologically complex works look at the devilish behavior and imagination of children — many of whom clutch weapons and have horns growing from their heads. Chou won the grand prize for the 2007 Taipei Fine Arts awards, and his work has been collected by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts. He has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions over the past decade.



Lin Yu-tin, *Community at Night* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI AND LIN YU-TIN

I don't know whether to admire Lin Yu-tin's (林玉婷) sculptures of Taiwan's buildings erected during the 1950s and 1960s, or dig into them. Lin employs cake-decorating skills to imbue these banal structures with mouth-watering pizzazz, part of a growing body of work by young Taiwanese artists who are re-interpreting Taiwan's recent past in charmingly unique ways. Lin has participated in a few solo and group exhibitions since hitting the art scene back in 2002.



Lin Yu-tin.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI AND LIN YU-TIN

If Lin's sculptures are too saccharine for your taste, Chen I-chun's (陳依純) videos might provide the proper antidote. Employing icy blue tones and earthy browns, they examine the conflict globalization creates within local communities where one increasingly searches in vain for uniqueness. Be sure to spend a few minutes with Chen if you catch a glimpse of her, as she is wonderful raconteur. Like many of the young artists exhibited in MIT this year, Chen has participated in a number of international group exhibits as well as being nominated for awards in the US, Brazil and Taiwan.



Chen I-chun.

NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES



Lin Tai-hsuan, *I Have No Time to Love You* (2009).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI

In an age of 12-hour workdays and high rates of divorce, *I Have No Time to Love You*, a series of photos and sculptures by Lin Tai-hsuan (林岱璇), could well define love in our era. But Lin is more interested in the



Lin Tai-hsuan.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

impermanence of memory and its effect on the individual. Employing scene-setting techniques, Lin's dreamlike images rendered in gentle pastels attempt to reproduce fleeting moments of beauty. Lin has participated in exhibits at Taipei's Museum of Contemporary Art, as well as group shows in China and Macao.



Shen Bo-cheng, *Read - La Chambre Claire* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI

Shen Bo-cheng.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Shen Bo-cheng's (沈柏丞) inventive sculptural installations combine Braille translation with a hand-cranked music box to explore the senses of touch, sight and sound. As the pins on a revolving cylinder pass over the raised dots of the Braille script, the writing system becomes accessible to sighted listeners. In addition to numerous solo shows throughout Taiwan, Shen took first prize in the 8th Taoyuan Art Awards.



Wu Chang-jung (吳長蓉) is obsessed with a weird way. Drawing on her own experiences of working on her family's pig farm, Wu creates kaleidoscopic images of these animals from various positions and perspectives. These works of considerable beauty are also meant to draw attention to the demise of the animal husbandry industry in Taiwan following the world financial crisis. Wu took top honors at the 35th Annual National Award of Calligraphy and Painting in 2008 and more recently received the award of excellence in this year's Kaohsiung Fine Arts Award for new media.

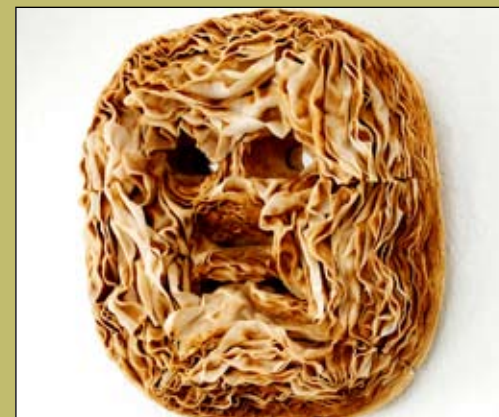


Wu Chang-jung, *Documentary-Pig Five Flower* (2009).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI

Wu Chang-jung.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES



Day by Day ... Day by Day ... Day by Day (2009).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI AND HSU WEI-HUI

Hsu Wei-hui.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI AND HSU WEI-HUI

Hsu Wei-hui (徐薇蕙) studied oil painting while earning a degree at Hsinchu Teachers College but switched to multi-media installation with a focus on fabric in graduate school in the US. Her monotone installations, some of which look like window designs for an up-market fashion house, focuses on the anxieties and contradictions — sometimes hidden, other times overt — women feel about looking beautiful. Hsu has participated in a number of solo shows and group exhibits in Taiwan and the US.



▲ Chang Hui-ming and Liao Chi-yu, *MimiLucy - Still Forward* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI AND CHANG HUI-MING AND LIAO CHI-YU

▼ Chang Hui-ming, top, and Liao Chi-yu

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART TAIPEI AND CHANG HUI-MING AND LIAO CHI-YU

Chang Hui-ming (張暉明) and Liao Chi-yu (廖新羽) are partners in life as well as art. Their videos depict Mimi and Lucy, avatars of the artists, who are placed into fantasy worlds that are meant to serve as projections of real-life situations. As they venture deeper into this fantasy world, the problems they encounter become all too real. They also work on their own: Chang took first prize at the Taipei Arts Awards last year, and Liao was nominated for the 2008 Taipei Arts Awards.

