

A still from Kao Chung-li's *Film Gravitation* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF TINA KENG GALLERY

# A SLICE OF REALITY

Kao Chung-li examines the tension between the image and time in *Watch Time Watching*

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STAFF REPORTER

Going to an exhibit involves a kind of contract between viewer and artist. The viewer agrees to spend an hour or two wandering through the space in the hope of some aesthetic, political or satirical payoff, which the artist (as well as gallery) should in theory provide. The best exhibits bring together all three and more. Art historians and critics have lamented, somewhat cynically, that today's gallery and museumgoers spend an average of five seconds looking at a work of art — for them far too little time to understand and appreciate it. Viewers could be defended for thinking that much art is only worthy of five seconds viewing, if at all.

A few seconds into *10 Digital Short Films* (10段低極透短片), a half-hour video on a flat-screen television that forms part of Kao Chung-li's (高重黎) *Watch Time Watching* (看時間看), I was thinking: Oh great, here is another highly abstract work that is going to test the bounds of my patience. Was it time to cut my losses?

Not wanting to appear a philistine and quit the show altogether, I moved away from the video over to another part of the exhibition space, held in the cavernous

A still from Kao Chung-li's *Film Gravitation* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF TINA KENG GALLERY

basement of Tina Keng Gallery. I'm glad I did because it is where the exhibit seems to begin (there is nothing to indicate that this is the case) and creates the necessary context to approach the other, harder to penetrate, works.

On display in this section are several sculptural installations constructed by the artist that take the form of basic animation devices. That many are placed on the kind of desks found in a nursery school suggests we are in the infancy of the motion picture.

*Liangzhou Word* (涼州詞) features picture slides placed into a kind of Rolodex. On the side of the contraption is a crank that, when rotated, flips the still images into motion. *Palm-Sized Physical Mobile Imaging Device, 2005, Mold Version* (掌中型物理性活動影像裝置2005模具版) plays on the same theme whereby a series of simply drawn images on cardboard are affixed to six frames that rest on a rotating device mounted to the center of a plastic pot. Turning the gadget on rotates the frame in a circular motion. Another contraption, *Palm-Sized Physical Mobile Imaging Device, 2008, Readymade Version* (掌中型物理性活動影像裝置2008現成物版), replaces the pot with a cassette tape player. Pressing the play button moves the frames to the sound of music.

Kao Chung-li, *Liangzhou Word* (2007).

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

The amateur pictorial style employed by Kao — a horse jumping over a hurdle, for example, or a skull shifting at the feet of a human body — underscores the illusive nature of moving pictures. The sluggish speed in which the images move, and the fact that the viewer is not bombarded by sound, draw our attention to their manufactured unreality.

This is re-affirmed with *Camera Lucida Cinema's Long Winding Road* (明箱電影院之路漫漫). Three 8mm projectors are mounted on to a wooden box and project silent images — animation, home videos — on to a plank below. The films look rather quaint, the color saturated and dulled, as though a rekindled memory

from three decades ago, when it appears the films were shot. As with the amateur animation devices, the images projected aren't as important as the technology that does the projecting, the medium rather than the message.

I recalled the first time I watched an 8mm film. At the time, I felt the realism to be uncanny, the details so lifelike that I became completely lost in the action I was witnessing. But this is no longer the case: They just look like old films — a message that Kao brings into focus with *10 Digital Short Films*.

The endless stream of talking heads selling bras, reading the news or commenting on a sports game on the flat-screen monitor masks the fact that this is also a kind of illusion, though one viewed through the hyper-realism of digital imagery.

A bench is conveniently placed in front of the screen (a couch might have been more appropriate), a hint that we are passive viewers of this media, instead of knowing participants as with the simpler animated devices. It's almost as though the visual complexity of digital media blinds us: We're unable to see that the television monitor, unlike the 8mm projectors and animation devices, represents only a slice of reality, not reality itself.

*Watch Time Watching* reminds us that, with the ubiquity of the digital image, it is becoming increasingly difficult to suspend our disbelief with older (dare I write "anachronistic") technologies. Inevitably, another more "realistic" technology will come along, relegating digital images, like 8mm film and animation, to the dustbin of visual curiosities.

## EXHIBITION NOTES

**WHAT:** *Watch Time Watching* (看時間看)  
**WHERE:** Tina Keng Gallery (大未來歌畫廊), B1, 15, Ln 548, Ruiguang Rd, Taipei City (台北市瑞光路548巷15號B1)  
**WHEN:** Until Sunday. Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2659-0798  
**ON THE NET:** www.tinakenggallery.com

## EXHIBITIONS

**LV Forest (LV森林)** is a solo exhibition by Chinese video artist Bu Hua (卜樺). The animated video of the exhibit's title employs a surreal and intentionally artificial visual language meant to underscore the rampant materialism gripping China's urban inhabitants. The LV in the title is an unambiguous reference to the fashion label and here serves as a symbol for what the artist perceives as the increasingly superficial standards that people expect in relationships, an ideal whereby a woman exchanges her body for symbols of wealth. The exhibition also features other animated videos by Bu, as well as digital prints.

- Chi-Wen Gallery (其致畫廊), 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 to Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 8771-3372
- Opening reception on Saturday at 3pm. Until Oct. 31

Wang Chi-sui (王綺穗) plays with perspective in her series of new landscape paintings **Condensed Matter (凝態)**. The paintings

suggest that regardless of how close we move towards the works, their intrinsic meaning is always beyond our grasp — an emblem, perhaps, of the self.

- Jia Art Gallery (家畫廊), 1F-1, 30, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段30號1樓之1). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2591-4302
- Until Oct. 10

National flags, maps and music form **Universes in Universe (世界中的世界)**, a solo exhibit by installation and video artist Yu Cheng-ta (余政達). Yu, who sees himself as a kind of artistic anthropologist, accumulates and then arranges geographical and historical detritus throughout the gallery space to examine the nature of individuals and the countries within which they live.

- \* 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). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 1pm to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2578-5630
- Until Sunday

A scene grab from Bu Hua's animated video *LV Forest*, (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHI WEN GALLERY

Juin Shieh (謝鴻均) has decorated Sakshi Gallery's walls with hundreds of various sized circular and oval-shaped tissue paper in decorative patterns that resemble vines. The on-site installation, **Immanence (圓)**, purports to examine the nature of women, where each work peels away the surface beauty to expose the trauma underneath. "[L]osing oneself in the creative

process," Shieh writes in the exhibition blurb, "all negative burdens that come with being a woman fade away; only the repetitive processes of creating and pondering about curtains and wallpaper remain."

- Sakshi Gallery (夏可喜當代藝術), 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 Oct. 3

**Dance of Knife and Stone (刀舞石飛)** is a solo exhibit of seal carvings by Kao Lian-yong (高連永). The show is organized around four major themes, which include the styles of carving, for example low relief, and the content, such as poems, found therein. Kao's more than 40 years of dedication to seal engraving is evident in his bold, firm and intense carving style in which the knife seems to move freely of its own volition, while the individual characters retain the refinement, dignity and power of calligraphy.

- National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館),

49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270. General admission is NT\$30

- Until Nov. 14

The debate over whether computer games are an art form is revisited in **Fights, Flights, & Frights — Inside the Storm (大玩·特玩 — 遊戲美學)**, an exhibition of paintings, sketches and models culled from three popular games: *StarCraft*, *Diablo* and *Warcraft*. Each of the three games exhibit different aspects of a genre — science fiction, horror and fantasy — and the museum space has been arranged to transport viewers to the fantasy worlds depicted in these games. Are computer games art? Who knows, but the setup of this exhibition makes it worthwhile — especially for gamers.

- 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
- Until Oct. 10