

[ART JOURNAL]

Talkin' 'bout my generation

MOCA wraps up this year with an exhibition that investigates the work of two generations of artists



Clockwise from top left: Akimbo Lee uses digital techniques to create larger-than-life sculptures; Cola King's *Erotic Bird* is one of the many paintings found in his room installation. *Monster Internet Cafe* by Yan Chung-hsien (顏忠賢) is a multimedia installation that may give you nightmares. Mr Red's paintings hark back to his work as a storybook illustrator.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOCA

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Curators, the art world's taxonomists, love nothing more than lumping together disparate works and unifying them under convenient labels. A close second comes spotting the next big thing, the emerging hot artist.

And so it is with MOCA's SuperGeneration@Taiwan, which features work from Taiwanese artists born after 1980, members of the so-called "Strawberry Generation."

Much has been made about these artists, who grew up in an affluent environment, after the lifting of martial law, and supposedly struggle to find their own individuality.

SuperGeneration@Taiwan, the larger of the MOCA's two current exhibits, brings to a close the museum's examination of this group of artists, who often work in a variety of media.

But more than anything else, this exhibit highlights a trend in Taiwan's contemporary art scene where the work of, for example, storybook and magazine illustrators such as Mr Red (紅膠囊) or Cola King (可樂王), receive museum space before their careers really get off the ground.

Any "creative industry" professional adept at making unusual noises or designing interiors or fashion is worthy of being seen or heard, it seems. Taken together, the works on display are bland reworkings of earlier exhibits, such as *Infantization* (果凍時代), and provide few insights into the minds of Strawberry Generation artists. But perhaps that's the point.

There are, however, some interesting pieces, such as Hsu Tang-wei's (許唐偉) mixed media *A Virtual Shop* (虛幻的貴賓號), which explores contemporary society's interconnectivity.

The second part of the dual exhibit, XFUNS Gala'08, displays works by mainly Generation X artists, although the title itself refers to X-rays, or the exploration of what underlies the surface of objects.

The idea is encapsulated in the work of British X-ray artist Nick Veasey, who photographs objects such as trumpets and buses to reveal the inner beauty of what is unseen.

Taiwanese artist Daniel Lee's (李小鏡) fascinating *Metamorphosing/When & Where, 2008* (演化時空) brings together in one large installation the morphing of humans and animals — ideas that he's been working on for decades.

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: SuperGeneration@Taiwan (一亂變新世代) and XFUNS Gala'08 (放肆大祭)
WHERE: Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (台北當代藝術館), 39 Changan W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Call (02) 2552-3721 for more information
WHEN: Until Jan. 18, 2009
ADMISSION: NTS\$50
ON THE NET: www.mocataipei.org.tw



Celebrity Interview

Countdown

CONTINUED FROM P14

As with *The Full Monty*, *Summer's* backdrop is bleak (even if the story, ultimately, is not), that of a land and people followed out by industrial decline. "We were in the back of this one house filming," says Carlyle. "If you had said it was derelict and no one had lived there for a year I would have believed you. There was a family there. You could not see the fucking floor for rubbish. It was horrific. As a person, it reminds you of the shit that some people have to go through on a daily basis. It's all too common somewhere like Bolsover and well beyond that. There is nothing there for these people any more. You can't escape the politics. It's in the landscape. That's what the film shows, why these guys are here doing fucking nothing because all this was taken away."

"I think it is one of the few locations that would have really, really worked for this film because of that backdrop, that background. Do you know, I used to think they were all fucking hills, these things — didn't realize they were slag heaps. It looks like a lunar fucking landscape. There are very few places like that that show the desolation, the emptiness."

Carlyle grows animated, hands sketching what he witnessed. But that's as overtly political as he gets these days. Last year, it emerged that Carlyle had voted for the Scottish National Party in the Holyrood elections last year and he was dismayed to discover himself painted as something of a poster boy for the nationalists. "I voted SNP because of the war," says Carlyle. "I'm not someone who believes in wasting my vote. I looked at all the parties and thought, 'Fuck it.' At the time, even the Liberal Democrats were not saying enough for me in terms of the anti-war stuff. I was not hearing it. That was why I went that way. I don't know if I would go that way again. I don't like to get pulled into it. It's too easy for people to talk about this; he's this or he's that. I'm apolitical in that sense. I don't take a great deal of interest in party politics. Social politics interests me a great deal more."

Where he is prepared to speak out is about Scotland's film industry, or lack thereof. He'd love to work more north of the border — it would mean he could go home to his kids every night — but the recent *Stone of Destiny* was Carlyle's first film in Scotland for 12 years, and it took a Hollywood director and Canadian money to make it happen.

"We don't have a film industry here. I would argue that vehemently. An industry is something that feeds itself and grows. We make one film every 10 years that gets any kind of notice. You can't call that an industry. Over the past 12 to 15 years I have probably had about five or six scripts that have been Scots films shooting here. Not one of them has fucking happened. I don't know the answer to that. It's got to the stage now with my agent, if something Scottish comes in it has to be financed, otherwise I'm not going to read it because it depresses me."

Part of the frustration comes from Carlyle's involvement in *The Meat Trade*, a darkly comic retelling of the exploits of Edinburgh's notorious grave robbers Burke and Hare. The screenplay was by Irvine Welsh; Carlyle, Samantha Morton and Colin Firth are all on board, and Antonia Bird is directing, but it has still been a struggle, he says, to try to get the film made in Scotland — production has now been postponed until next year.

He's been luckier with another of his projects. A chance remark in a previous interview that he has always wanted to play Leonard Rossiter has led to an approach by a film company considering a biopic of the late comedian. "I love comedy, and he's a fucking genius. I would love to play him. And, would you believe, I get an e-mail from a guy in London saying they were starting to make a biopic of Leonard Rossiter, so I'm going to see the treatment."

After *Summer*, Carlyle will next be seen in a feature-length version of the cult US TV series *24*. He spent part of the summer filming in South Africa with Keifer Sutherland. The two have been friends since appearing together in the 2001 POW movie *To End All Wars*, and Sutherland had been trying for some time to get Carlyle involved in his hit franchise. *24* was everything that *Summer* isn't: big, showy, fast-paced. Carlyle, who plays agent Jack Bauer's best friend, had a ball, even though he is on record as saying the bigger the budget, the less a film is about.

"Something like *24* is enjoyable for an actor for entirely different reasons," he says. "What are you supposed to say? That it's not right to enjoy it? Why is that not right? Something like *24* is incredibly popular. Thirty to 40 million people watched it in the States. You have to take that. I don't have any snobbery about that."

"You know, I have never really approached them in different ways; big or small budget. The same honesty is required whether a film is big budget. I enjoy that. I'm fortunate in my career I'm getting the chance to do that, that I can play across the genres. I have got to be grateful for that."

London nightclubbers get groovy with Tate artist

Carsten Holler wants to challenge the notion that fun is considered to be dumb; art is considered to be smart

BY FARAH NAYERI
BLOOMBERG

Carsten Holler, the artist who sent thousands of visitors spiraling down slides at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall two years ago, is now taking them for a spin on the dance floor.

The 47-year-old German has opened a nightclub in London that offers Western and Congolese art, food, drink and music. His Double Club in a Victorian warehouse in north London will stay open for six months and has a revolving DJ podium.

He has also invited visitors to book a night at New York's Guggenheim Museum (through Jan. 6) in his Revolving Hotel Room — four slow-turning discs on which sleeping and working areas have been placed.

Holler, wearing a banana-yellow scarf and designer frames, joined me in the courtyard bar of his new London installation.

Farah Nayeri: Why have you created this nightclub?
Carsten Holler: I'm interested in the idea of entertainment and fun.

There's something fishy about it, especially if you are coming from the "serious" art side, because fun and art are slightly incompatible. Fun is considered to be dumb; art is considered to be smart. I think that the whole notion of fun is underestimated.

FN: Some people might look at your work and say, "Carsten Holler is a gimmicky artist." What do you

say to that?

CH: I can say that maybe that's half-true, but it's also half-wrong, and that's what I find very interesting.

When I did the slides, in Germany or even in the Nordic countries where I live, it was really seen in a different way. It was all about, how can this be art? Still this old, very strange question: It's fun, but is it art? In England, it was a very different response.

FN: Many people using the slides didn't think of them as art, because to them art is boring. Doesn't this bother you?

CH: Probably it would bother me if I could be there, because I'm not so much a fun seeker. I'm more interested in taking fun out of where it's growing inside.

FN: There's this very big trend in experiential art in the museum world right now.

CH: Yeah, but here we're not in a museum anymore. I'm trying to get away from the representational by doing these kinds of things, because I don't believe in it anymore.

Art — I mean its representational function — is in my opinion very exhausted. Art should be experience more than representation. You make your own representation of it. You don't go through somebody else.

In all this [he points to the Double Club where we are sitting in], we have an art show. I have my own museum in it. I'm not in the museum: The museum is in me, or in the work.



The dining area of artist Carsten Holler's restaurant and bar, the Double Club, in London. Holler's *Test Site*, part of the so-called Unilever Series installations at Tate Modern, consisted of a set of interlocking slides that visitors swooped down. It was open from October 2006 to April of last year.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Berliners succumb to Italian art, both old and new

BY CLIVE FREEMAN
DPA, BERLIN

Nothing remotely links the Florentine Renaissance busts of Baccio Bandinelli with the minimalist paintings and sculptures of present-day Turin artist Gianni Piacentino.

But by an "art coincidence" the work of both men, albeit with a 450-year gap in between, is currently attracting public attention in Berlin.

Since July of last year the Bode Museum has been prominently featuring in its Florentine Renaissance Hall the *Bust of a Young Man* by sculptor Bandinelli (1493-1560).

Art critic Klaus Grimberg, writing in the *German Times*, quotes one visitor as saying: "If Nefertiti is the most beautiful woman in Berlin's museums, then this youth is the most beautiful man."

Critics took another view of Bandinelli's work during his lifetime. His art was often scorned and he was mocked as the "eternal runner-up" to Michelangelo (1475-1564).

His *Hercules and Cacus* on the Piazza della Signorina in Florence was even seen as "symbolizing his inadequacies as a sculptor."

But today it's different. The *Bust of a Young Man* is hailed by art connoisseurs as a heroic portrait of "classical beauty and melancholic tranquility."

German museums liked it so much they bought it for an undisclosed sum from a London art dealer after a weak US dollar and the financial crisis drove its price down.



German historian and specialist of the Renaissance period Maïke Vogt-Luerssen shows the painting called *La Madone de Laroque* (The Madone of Laroque) on Nov. 5 in Montpellier, France.

PHOTO: AFP

Not far from the Bode Museum, the work of Gianni Piacentino, a modern-day artist-sculptor, has also been pulling in the crowds at the unusually named El Sourd dog Hex Gallery.

Located near the Checkpoint Charlie Museum documenting Berlin Wall escapes, the gallery is a brainchild of Reinhard Onnasch, a millionaire property dealer.

Onnasch uses the premises to display his huge private collection of paintings and sculptures assembled over the past 40 years.

Hundreds of works by artists such as George Brecht, Bernd Koberling, Kenneth Noland, Jason Rhodes and Claes Oldenburg have been shown over the past two years. Now it's Piacentino's turn.

Long a prominent figure on the Italian scene, the artist lives and works in Turin. Like others in the "arte povera" group, with whom he exhibited in the late 1960s, Piacentino began his career with a kind of homegrown minimalism that swiftly grew more richly metaphorical and suggestive.

Soon he was integrating his "other career" as a sidecar motorcycle racer and custom motorcycle painter into his art — by creating sleek, semi-abstract and elongated versions of racing cars, airplanes and motorcycles.

It is this element of Piacentino's work that is now being spotlighted in a show titled *Homage to the Wright Brothers*.

Art critics argue that by defying prevailing currents, Piacentino arrived at certain artistic issues ahead of the crowd, and stayed on to "more deeply explore some of them long after the crowd had moved on."

Property dealer Onnasch first began exhibiting "artists of my generation" in Berlin in the late 1960s, and later opened galleries in Cologne and New York.

The Piacentino exhibition, inaugurated on Nov. 10, runs until Dec. 27.