



Taipei City Hall has some front

Eight artists were invited to blanket the building in their vision of the Year of the Ox

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER

Stencil and graffiti artist Kea couldn't have imagined that one day he'd be working on the walls of Taipei City Hall. Routinely nabbed for spraying less famous buildings around the capital, he sometimes found himself spending the night in detention at a police station.

"[The police] were usually curious and didn't lecture me too much about what I was doing," Kea, 29, told the Taipei Times on Tuesday night in the plaza across from the entrance of Taipei City Hall where he was checking out his latest handiwork. "Besides, I was trying to beautify not disfigure the [urban] scenery."

Beautify is exactly what Kea has done. But rather than sneaking around in the dead of night graffitiing walls, Kea, along with seven other artists, was invited by the city to project his art on to the front of Taipei City Hall in celebration of this year's Lantern Festival. The building will undergo a makeover of sorts — though only daily from 7pm to 11pm from today until Feb. 15.

The other artists, who work in a broad range of styles such as calligraphy and Aboriginal art, are Dong Yang Zi (董陽孜), Wu Keng-chen (吳耿禎), Qui Ruo-long (邱若龍), Yan Shui-long (顏水龍), Wu Sheng (吳晟), Qui Xi-xun (邱錫勳) and Xiao Qing-yang (蕭青陽).

"[City Hall's facade] is like a huge canvas," said Chris Huang (黃茂嘉), one of the event's organizers who picked the eight artists. "Some artists had difficulty adjusting to such a large size."

Huang is the Taiwan representative of

Pani Projection and Lighting, the company that operates the 24 large-scale projectors that beam the artists' images onto City Hall and which has done work for the Rolling Stones, Chemical Brothers and U2. He said the artists were chosen for their diverse ages and skills in their respective fields.

The projections complement the other more traditional festivities that feature various small and large-scale lanterns designed in the shape of the ox.

Lantern Festival celebrations in Taipei

will also be held in the Xinyi (信義) business district, including at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and several parks and plazas in the area.

The Taiwan Lantern festival began in 1990 when the Tourism Bureau instituted an annual national show to coincide with the traditional custom of carrying lanterns on the 15th day of the first lunar month of the New Year.

Ilan County was chosen to host this year's festival, the centerpiece of which is an 18.3m-tall display of a water buffalo tilling a verdant rice paddy, an image that symbolizes prosperity. The opening ceremony begins at the Yilan Sports Park (宜蘭運動公園) on Monday with a fireworks display and runs until Feb. 22.

Taipei City Hall's caretaker can rest easy as the building will not be plastered with the work of eight graffiti artists as was suggested in yesterday's edition. The 'Taipei Times' regrets the error.

ON THE NET:

ILAN LANTERN FESTIVAL INFORMATION (in Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean):
taiwan.net.tw/2009TaiwanLantern

TAIPEI LANTERN FESTIVAL INFORMATION (in Chinese, English and Japanese):
www.taipei-festival.com

[BOOKS]

Read your way from Taipei to Frankfurt

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

Looking across the floor of Exhibition Hall One of the Taipei World Trade Center today, you cannot help but believe that reports about the death of the book at the hands of the Internet have been very greatly exaggerated. In this hall alone, 789 publishers from 41 countries are displaying their wares. Exhibition Hall Two is devoted to the comic book, with 39 publishers, and Exhibition Hall Three to children's books, with a total of 78 publishers. An ocean of books is laid out before your eyes.

The scale of the Taipei International Book Exhibition (台北國際書展) makes it Asia's largest, and this year the presence of a high-powered delegation from Germany, including Juergen Boos, president of the Frankfurter Buchmesse, acknowledged as the world's biggest and most important book fair, underscores what is at stake. While the exhibition will be a chance for Taiwan's readers to learn about the wide world of books being published overseas, this is also a chance for Taiwan to promote its own literary talent to overseas publishers. International exchange has always been the name of the game at book fairs, but this year, with China being invited as the guest of honor at the Frankfurter Buchmesse, Chinese-language literature has been brought to the fore and opportunities for Taiwan are greater than ever.

PREPARING FOR FRANKFURT

For Boos, the reason for inviting China at this time is largely a response to international trends within the publishing industry.

"We have different criteria when we choose a guest of honor, and the most important is the interest of the publishing industry worldwide. If somebody wants to make business with this country or this country wants to become internationally more involved, that is the first reason why we have chosen China," Boos said in an interview on Tuesday.

Political issues were also a factor. Boos said that Western readers were familiar with some Chinese authors, but these were mostly dissident authors living outside China. He felt that the situation had now changed. "There is a new openness, a going out policy which started about three years ago. So it is now more writers in China who get published and get translated. It is now the first time you can get information about writers writing in China," Boos said. (Lin Tsai-chueh (林載爵), chairman of the Taipei Book Fair Foundation (財團法人台北書展基金會), said five Taiwanese writers would also be attending Frankfurter Buchmesse in an effort to promote their work, and Taiwanese literature as a whole.)

Speaking about the relevance of book fairs in the age of the Internet, Boos was upbeat, pointing to the continued strength of events such as the Taipei Book Exhibition and Frankfurter Buchmesse. "It is about the content, it's not really about the medium. [Book fairs] are about selling rights. In the past three years there has been a major change. Rights business has usually been about selling from a hardcover to a softcover or selling a regional right. What are being sold now are rights for the audio book, for TV, for movie business, for the digital world, for the mobile world. So it is a lot more rights that are sold ... It is still a book fair if you think of the book as content, if you think away from the medium."

Casting a quick glance around the Taipei event, the vast array of flat screens and audio content seems to back this up. Books don't just come between two pasteboard covers anymore. Taipei Book Fair Foundation Executive Director Lin Wen-chi (林文祺) said that this year's fair had an overwhelming focus on events, with an unprecedented number of foreign guests participating in readings, panel discussions and lectures. A detailed list of these can be found on the exhibition's Web site at www.tibe.com.tw.

TRANSLATION TO NEW WORLDS

As books, or as Boos might prefer it, content, spreads across the globe, a crucial factor is language. The ability to interpret cultures across sometimes chasmal gulfs is the job of translators, a group of often aggrieved cultural mediators. Boos confirmed that the Frankfurter Buchmesse was currently at the center of a pay dispute between translators and publishers in Germany, but said that significant emphasis was placed on fostering translation as a means of making foreign works accessible to a German public.

"Part of the invitation as guest of honor [at Frankfurt Buchmesse] is a translation program that the guest nation has to finance. They need to translate around 30 titles. But also publishers worldwide will have this focus as well if a guest of honor is showing their culture in Frankfurt. European publishers at least will also translate more Chinese titles than they have done in the past," Boos said.

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Artists' renditions of the Year of the Ox will be projected on to Taipei City Hall's facade as part of the city's Lantern Festival celebrations.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAIPEI CITY GOVERNMENT