

Standard WEEKEND GLITZ

Art & Culture

Friday, August 28, 2020

Clockwise from left: *They Do Not Understand Each Other*; Tsubata Kato; *Earth* by Ho Tzu Nyen; Ming Wong in Hong Kong in 2013; and *In Love for the Mood*.

Moving on, virtually

Crystal Wu

Though Tai Kwun Contemporary has always incorporated online elements into its programs, the pandemic forced it to further explore online arrangements as cities worldwide go into lockdown.

Due to travel restrictions, shows that require international cooperation would not even be possible if not for new media – which is what the center's current show, *They Do Not Understand Each Other*, utilizes.

"The exhibition is a coproduction between the National Museum of Art in Osaka, Japan, and the Singapore Art Museum," said Tai Kwun head of arts Tobias Berger. "Putting that together was very difficult during Covid because normally, if you have to bring in a lot of artwork from overseas, especially with a museum connection, you have the curators, the artists and the conservators coming. This was not possible because nobody could travel, so everything had to be done online."

Due to the pandemic, even the exhibition's press conference had to be held virtually. However, the silver lining was that it brought unexpected interest from overseas, such as the Singaporean and Japanese press, which introduced the exhibition to a wider, international audience.

The show can be viewed via a 360-degree virtual walkthrough gallery on Tai Kwun Contemporary's website until September 13.

The namesake of this exhibition is Tsubata Kato's multimedia piece consisting of a photograph, a video and a QR code. The artist filmed himself and a Korean contributor erecting a QR code signpost on a small island. Scanning the code will reveal its location: Tsushima Island. Located midway between Japan and the Korean peninsula, Tsushima is a hot spot for territorial disputes between the two countries.

The two artists encounter a problem: neither can speak the other's language despite standing in the middle ground between their countries. Nonetheless, they managed to put the sign up in the end.

"What does the word 'they' refer to in the title?" the artist asked rhetorically when explaining the piece. "An upfront answer is that 'they' refers to the Korean man and me, who were involved in the artwork. But if you expand your perspective, they can refer to collective identities such as Japanese or Korean."

The theme of misunderstanding runs throughout the show. In Ming Wong's video piece *In Love for the Mood*, the actress also struggles to understand what she is supposed to say. Hong Kong cinema fans will

surely recognize the iconic scene from which the work was reenacted. "I selected *In the Mood for Love* because it was, and still is, one of the best-known art house films from Asia, and it represents a time when national identities were forming in many new modern societies," said Wong.

In the four-minute looped installation, New Zealand actress Kluane Saunders tries to learn the lines of a scene from Wong Kar-wai's famous 2000 film. Portraying both the male and female lead, she repeats the Cantonese dialogue prompted by the artist's off-screen voice.

The artwork was originally commissioned for the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, where the artist had a solo exhibition at the Singapore Pavilion. "Relooking at it now in the show, it seems

to accumulate new readings and resonances over the past years, with reference to the links between subjective truths and the media, decolonial thinking and cultural memory, as well as Hong Kong and its evolving state of in-betweenness," said Wong.

Other than a 360-degree virtual walkthrough of the show, Tai Kwun has also set up different activities, such as artist-curator talks and online guided tours.

Berger believes that online programs are a good exercise in learning what works and what doesn't.

For example, with its most recent artist-curator talk on Zoom, which reached more than 800 live views, the museum realized that language barriers can be overcome by using translation technology or hiring translators to simultaneously provide live subtitles.

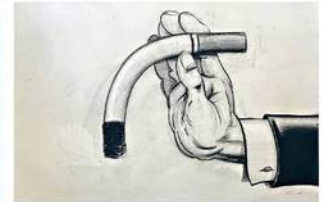
The guided tour led by Berger reached more than 400 people, both local and international. "You would never have that many people if you do a tour. If you do a tour in a space, you cannot handle more than 20 people. But online you can actually do that," he said.

The online format has also made archiving easier. In the past, there would only be a few photos for the archive because everything else was done in person. Now, with the virtual walkthrough, Zoom artist-curator talks and online tours, the exhibition can be better preserved.

"The exhibition basically stays forever. Previously, when the exhibition was closed, it was very difficult to get a grip on it."

Despite all these new-found advantages, Berger believes that physical art shows will not be replaced by their virtual counterparts "because being at an exhibition is a very personal experience."

"For example, I can never see artwork from the angle I want to see it on these 360-degree tours. It drives me nuts," he said, adding that he believes these virtual exhibitions will instead be an add-on, complementing the show.

Physical installation space for *They Do Not Understand Each Other* exhibition.From far left: Tobias Berger; *Memorial Project Nha Trang, Vietnam: Towards the Complex – For the Courageous, the Curious and the Cowards* by Jun Nguyen Hatsuhsiba; *Not Quite A Total Eclipse* by Wit Pimkanchanapong; *Sea State 9: Proclamation* triptych by Charles Lim.

Animal kingdom

Ryan Travis Christian's idiosyncratic style of applying dense graphite pencil layers is influenced by vintage political cartoons and hand-drawn animation. His works comment on politics, drugs and life in suburban America.

For his upcoming exhibition *Here Comes The Rooster*, Christian created a menagerie of characters using anthropomorphism as a humorous route into a dark world view.

When: September 3 to October 3

Where: Over the Influence, 159 Hollywood Road, Central



Second chance at friendship

Founded by former French prime minister Dominique de Villepin and his son Arthur, gallery Villepin is worth a second visit.

Its inaugural exhibition *Friendship & Reconciliation*, featuring rare works by the late Chinese-French artist Zao Wou-ki – a close family friend of the de Villepins – has been extended, with a new painting being put on display. The gallery is open by appointment only.

When: until end-November

Where: 53-55 Hollywood Road, Central



Beat the heat

Acclaimed Argentinian contemporary artist Javier Gonzalez Burgos' *Dulce Melting Art Museum* is designed to provide a joyful antidote to the summer heat.

Insta-friendly installations include a 3.5-meter tall ice cream cake, sweating popsicles, an ice cream bubble bath and a neon light zone. Shoppers who complete an interactive game via phone may win a buy-one-get-one-free ice cream coupon.

When: until September 13

Where: Citygate mall, Tung Chung
CARA CHEN