

TAIWAN

exhibition
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APPLE CORE Contemporary Art Exhibition

蘋果核

What associations does an apple bring forth: a forbidden fruit in Genesis, the story about peeling an apple at midnight, or the brand logo with a bite? An apple core is a symbol commonly used for non-recyclable or food waste but it has become an analogy in this exhibition. An apple represents the fetish of technology in our world whilst the core stands for the point of origin in nature. Is it too devouring to have a mouthful of goodies but hope that nothing changes?

Over the long weekend in June, a.m. post headed to a gallery in Neihu District, Taipei, also known as Technology Park. Liang Gallery is a three-storey free-standing architecture with its sun-lit and high-ceiling exhibition space surrounded by the commercial complexes. From oil painting in the very beginning to new media art in recent years, the gallery has a strong local clientele for 22 years and an ambition to grow its global presence.

Claudia Chen, the gallery director, assures, "Liang Gallery has a solid track record in promoting Taiwanese artists. We have works by top-notch classic artists as well as award-winning up-and-coming artists. We have focused on growing Taiwan market in the past two decades and documenting the contemporary art history; it's time for our artists to shine in Asian and international platforms." Chen revealed her confidence in delivering this goal in two years when we were chatting in the cafeteria inside the gallery.

At the time of printing, the gallery is holding a group exhibition of nine Taiwanese artists. There are predominantly video works with a few installations, paintings and sculptures. Chen explains, "It's our intention to introduce digital and video art to our audience. Taiwan is advanced in computing and electronic parts and we are at the technology hub. There is definitely a synergy."

The exhibition entitled *Apple Core* was curated by Luo He-lin, a young new media artist pursuing his doctorate degree in electrical engineering and computer science at National Taiwan University. When he first came up with the theme a year ago, Taiwan was amid discussions and protests against building

the country's fourth nuclear power plant. Extending the nuke threat to safety of mankind, Luo aims to examine a fetish of technology by using an analogy of apples. Having the apple pulp eaten, would one be left with the core which is said to be poisonous? "The core is like the origin to explore the relationship of science and nature. There are two subjects in the exhibition: the idealism of science and the materialism of nature. We intend to identify the divinity in a post-technology age as we oppose technology while trying to explore the rationality of nature when we return to it," explains Luo.

In this regard, the curator finds both sides of the forbidden fruit from the works by Hsu Chia-wei. He is no stranger to many for his participation in Venice Biennale and Hugo Boss Asia Art Award last year. Interested in digging out forgotten histories encircling Taiwan, Hsu tries to construct the discovery through his visual language.

Marshal Tie Jia (2012-ongoing) is an attempt to connect the conjunction of modernity and the mythical frog god Marshal Tie Jia who was born in Jiangxi, China but his temple was exiled on Turtle Island, an islet under Taiwan's jurisdiction during Chiang Kai-Shek's retreat to Taiwan. Hsu discovered Turtle Island on a family trip to Matsu Island when he decided to do something about it. He met the villagers and was told that he should inform not the county government but Marshal Tie Jia Himself. He communicated his wish to rebuild the temple on the island at the ritual of inquiry but the Marshal declined. Following this direction, the artist remade the temple in a studio and made videos at two sites – the Marshal's favourite Min opera on Turtle Island and Nuo dance, an exorcism ritual sharing roots of the frog belief in Jiangxi. In the exhibition, the videos and their imageries are the key element of Hsu's visual language. The documentation of correspondence between the Marshal and the artist, including an altar table with a poem written by the Marshal – you hear me alright, there are indistinct Chinese characters written on the white square table by Marshal Tie Jia during an inquiry ritual – is also on display.

When I was totally absorbed into this celestial art-making journey, *Huai Mo Village* (2012-ongoing) pulled me down to the ground. The village lives with a lesser-known history of Taiwan: after the defeat of the Kuomintang at the Chinese civil war, soldiers from Yunnan ended up settling at the Thai-Myanmar border. The troop being instructed to retreat to Taiwan remained undercover for a counterattack which never came. Later on, many people grew poppies and assisted in drug trafficking to sustain their living in a foreign land. The video made by Hsu was taken by the orphans whose parents were sentenced to death for the trade or had died for drug-related disputes. In the video, the artist stood back to observe and let the orphans be the interviewer, the crew

and the crowd listening to the stories from their “father”, the director of the orphanage who was once an intelligence officer. The exhibition also includes a collaborative project with the veterans – they reconstructed an architectural model of the former intelligence bureau the exact same way as they did forty years ago.

People love stories; Hsu creates intriguing visual narratives about the historical, geographical and cultural regimes in Asia that end up envining the identity of Taiwan. These two projects happen to fall along the invisible line of defense during the Cold War. To the artist, his intention is not merely to preserve, “I attempt to unfold the past but it won’t or can’t be its original form. I want to make new happenings.” Recently, Hsu has been enquired about building museums for Marshal Tie Jia and for the intelligence site at Thai-Myanmar border respectively by both communities. In Hsu’s case, art gets the community into participation and provokes new thoughts.

Chang Li-ren creates video installations concerning hyperreality between reality and its simulation. *Model Community* (2008-2009) simulates 5-channel news footage of a shooting rampage in a neighbourhood. Led by the shooter’s point of view in the middle channel, viewers are pulled into witnessing the killing across the road. Wide-angle views as seen on television news and surveillance cameras inside the buildings offer passive viewing yet help construct the full picture. Submerging in the adrenaline rush, the work confuses fact and fiction caused by the deadly weapon and the electronic media.

Graffiti artist Candy Bird also reminds us the dark side of technology in everyday life. On one side of the painting, a character is holding a pistol ready to get somebody killed. At the flip side, the character phubbing over his phone got stabbed at the back without noticing it. Do you see yourself in it? “I do art for a better world. It would be more interesting to graffiti in public spaces, leave them there, and to let people interact with it,” Candy Bird hopefully remarks.

Tsai Chieh-hsin has her hopes expressed through colours of nature. The rainbow on the white paper-pulp sculpture represents hopes and eureka moments brought to viewers. In the exhibition space, the fairy’s hair at one end of the arch is pointing to the birds’ tail on the other. “Such way of presentation enables imaginations of the unseen bridge. I want to leave space for viewers to interpret and associate with their experiences. I want my work to be simple and easy to approach,” explains Tsai. This bite of the apple is so sweet that I wish so much it would be real.

The exhibition also featuring video works by Chou Yu-cheng and Chen I-chun, paintings by Lin Wen-tsoo and Lin Wei-hsiang as well as installation and sculptural work by Lu Chih-yun, runs till July 27.



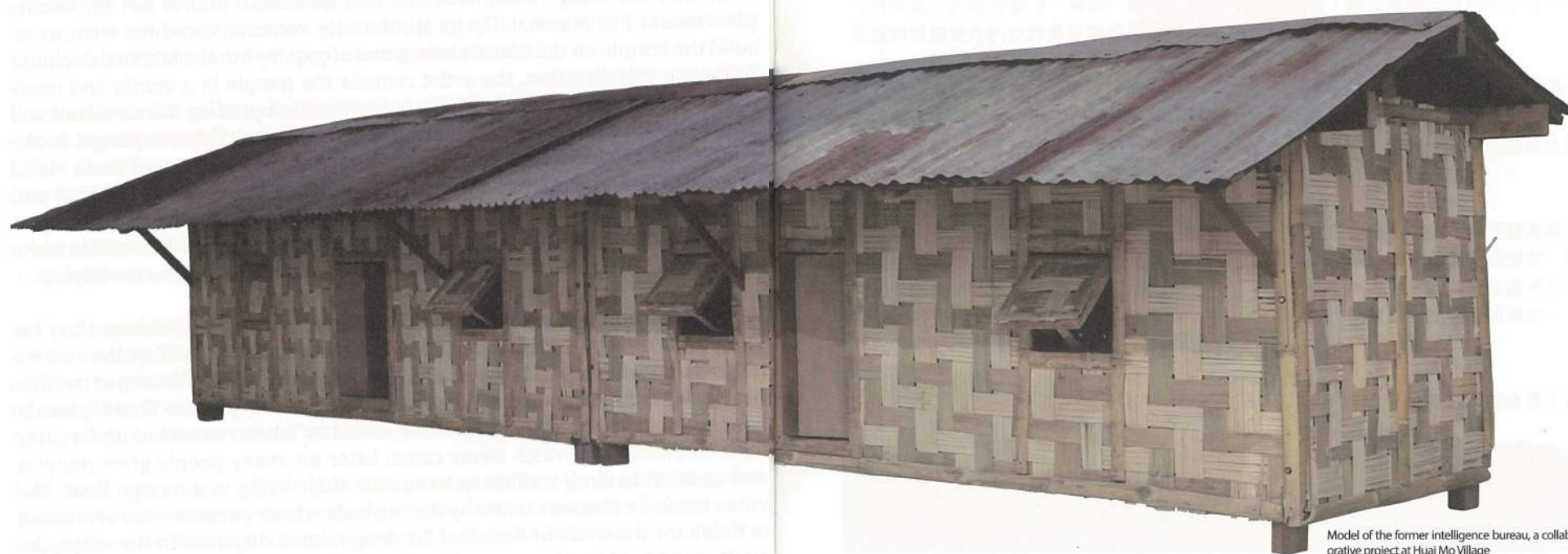
Chang Li-ren's Model Community

Have you watched an online video of a person eating an apple from the bottom? In such a way you won't have the core. The mystically poisonous core is gone! If “Apple Core” is the destination of this journey, the works of art are apple pulp – some sweet some sour. You can choose how to start biting and how to take care of the core.

蘋果，能帶來甚麼想像？創世紀中的禁果、凌晨十二時削果皮的鬼故事、吃一口後的品標誌？還是你我認識的第一個圖像和英文詞語、水果的直接聯繫？有時蘋果核代表不可回收垃圾或廚餘的符號，在這個展覽範疇上，蘋果成了一個比喻。人們對科技的迷戀就如果肉一口一口被吞噬，沉溺其中，當核心逐漸形成，又讓思考反回原點，希望還可重來是否過於貪心？

六月的一個長週末，a.m. post 仿如旅人，前往台北市內湖區科技園，周邊是商業大廈，而這家畫廊是一幢三層高的獨立建築，天花滲進日光，展覽空間顯得偌大。尊彩藝術中心成立已有二十二年，由早期的油畫到近年的新媒體作品，可謂見證着台灣當代藝術的發展，其當地收藏家的數量亦很穩定，令他們有拓展海外的打算。

畫廊總經理陳菁螢語帶堅定的說：「尊彩對推廣和提拔台灣藝術家很有經驗，我們有全台灣最有名的，也有新晉獲獎的。過去二十多年都集中在台灣市場，為當代藝術作文獻記錄，看來現在是把他們帶在亞洲及國際平台的時候。」和她在畫廊的餐飲間談及她對尊彩和台灣當代藝術的視野。



Model of the former intelligence bureau, a collaborative project at Huai Mo Village

此文刊登時，畫廊正舉行一個九人聯展，作品以錄像為主，並有裝置藝術、繪畫和雕塑。陳菁螢解釋這也是策略之一，他們除了視野向外，同時亦要為當地藏家介紹數位和錄像媒體：「台灣在製造電腦和電子部件都有很名，這裏亦是科技園，應該要把握一些協同作用。」

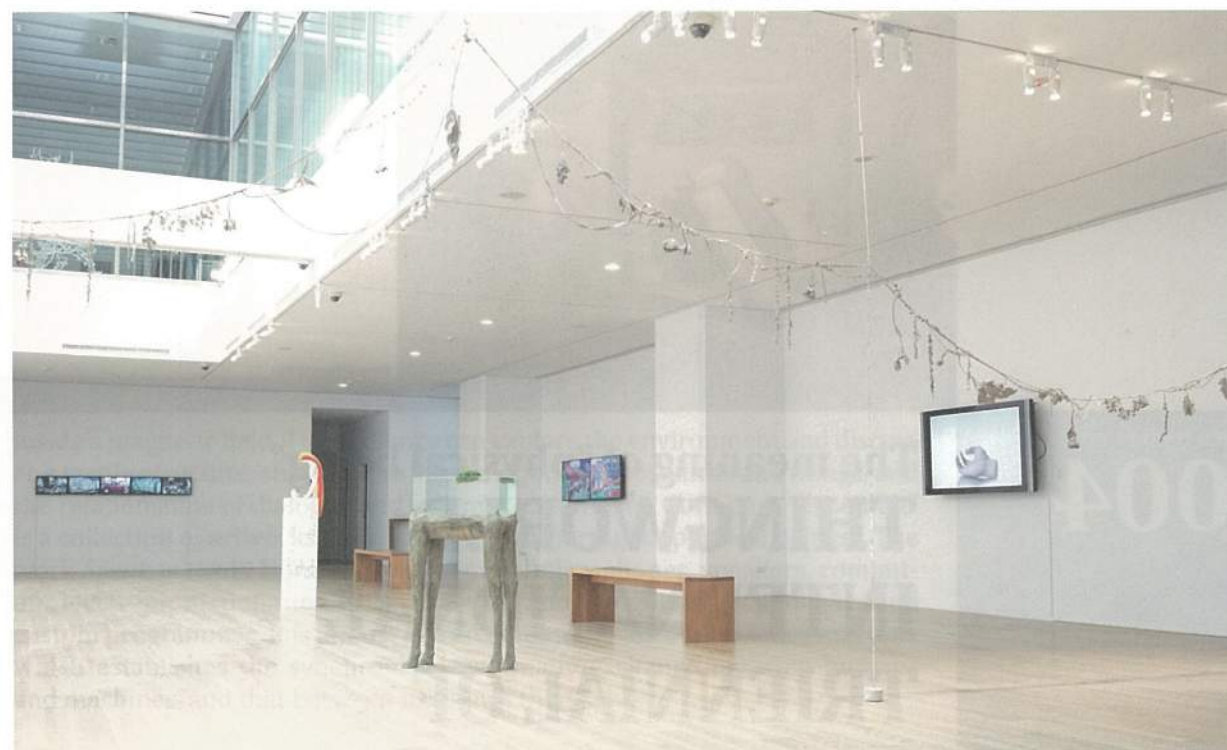
展覽題為《蘋果核》，策展人為新媒體年輕藝術家羅禾淋，他現就讀國立台灣大學資訊網路與多媒體研究所博士班。一年前當他在籌劃是次展覽，台灣民眾正熱烈討論並抗議全台灣第四個核能發電站，羅氏便由此議題申延至探索科技對人類的影響。他以蘋果比喻人們對科技的迷戀，我們逐口把蘋果肉吞下，最終剩下謠言中有毒的蘋果核。羅氏解釋：「這作為一個原點去思考科學與自然的關係，我整理成兩個子命題——『科學唯心』與『自然唯物』，在反科技的同時找尋科技時代的神性，也在回歸自然的同時探索自然的理性。」

在展出作品中，羅氏認為許家維的兩個項目表達了這個禁果的兩面。對許家維這名字並不陌生的原因，是他去年參與了威尼斯雙年展及獲取Hugo Boss亞洲藝術大獎，他的作品圍繞着台灣被遺忘的歷史，以當代視覺語言呈現他的研究成果。

《鐵甲元帥》(2012-)嘗試以現代性的脈絡與青蛙神鐵甲元帥連繫。鐵甲元帥一千多年前出生於中國江西，其廟宇後隨蔣介石退守台灣而流落到台灣管轄的龜島上。許氏與家人到馬祖旅行，知道有龜島一事後，決定做有關它的作品。他找村民了解，卻發現他要找的不是當地政府，而是要請示鐵甲元帥。透過村民協助的一種請示方式，許氏跟神明表達想在龜島重建廟宇，元帥不允，藝術家唯有跟隨祂的意願，另找工作室重建廟宇、在兩個地方開展拍攝——一為江西與青蛙神信仰同根源的「儺舞」驅魔儀式，一為在龜島上拍攝元帥最喜愛的閩劇戲曲。展出除了此兩段錄像和影像，許氏還



Tsai Chieh-hsin's Seeing Rainbow series



Apple Core contemporary art exhibition at Liang Gallery, Taipei

把他與元帥的書信展示，包括元帥寫下一首詩的四方桌——沒錯，在白色四方桌上隱約見得一些文字，是元帥聽罷藝術家敘述整個過程之後留下的。

聽着這個出世的創作過程，許氏的另一作品卻入世得多。《回莫村》(2012-)從台灣一段不為人知曉的歷史開始：國共內戰期間，原屬國民黨的正規軍戰敗後由雲南撤退到泰緬邊境。在「明撤暗留」的指令下，部隊仍駐守當地以圖反攻，可是一待無期。身於異地為圖生計，許多人種起罌粟花並參與運毒。許氏的錄像作品攝於當地一家孤兒院，孤兒的父母都因販毒或涉及交易爭端而死去，院長則是當時的情報員。在錄像中，藝術家退得更後，由孤兒們擔當訪問員、拍攝組員和觀眾，聆聽他們「爸爸」述說的往事。展覽作品還有與村民的協作項目，就是由他們依照過去的工法、材料與式樣搭建四十多年前回莫村情報局的模型。

我們都愛「聽」故事，許家維卻在亞洲的歷史、文化和地域上取材，以其視覺方式述說故事。做完此兩個項目，藝術家才發現兩點均沿着冷戰時期的防禦線，但問及他的初衷，許為志不在保育。「我試着揭開鮮為人知的歷史，以新事情作為創作方式。」最近，兩個項目的村民分別想為鐵甲元帥和情報局辦博物館；在許氏的作品中看來，藝術是關乎社區參與，並引發新思維。

另一位參展藝術家張立人喜歡透過錄像裝置探討現實與模擬之間的過度真實。《模型社區》(2008-2009)模擬報導一宗社區射殺事件的新聞片段，觀眾因而被扯進模擬社區目擊一切。作品是五條頻道播放以重構實際狀況，中間為身處對面馬路的殺手主觀角度，兩個猶如電視新聞的全景鏡頭，另兩條頻道是大廈室內的閉路電視，可以近距離目睹受害人的被殺情況。經過一輪令人屏住呼吸的畫面，觀者可能已分別不了這個由武器和媒體運作的世界是現實或是虛擬。

塗鴉藝術家Candy Bird亦是探討科技的陰暗面。其中一幅作品，一面向畫廊外，是一個持槍人物，反過來向畫廊的一面那人持着的是手機，而他因為太專注低頭，沒留意背已受了箭。要觀眾反思自己的行為嗎？「做藝術是為了世界變好一點。我還是比較喜歡塗鴉在公共空間出現、由它們與人對話。」Candy Bird一面盼望的說。

蔡潔莘同樣是充滿正能量的藝術家，她把彩虹七色染上白色紙漿雕塑，希望藉着看見彩虹，把期盼和喜悅帶給觀眾。展場中，與藝術家身高相若的仙子留着長長頭髮，指向另一對鳥兒的尾色，彷彿彩虹的兩岸。「我是刻意這樣佈展的，因為觀者就可以想像他們看到的是頭髮尾巴，還是看不到的彩虹。我想作品簡單點，比較容易親近。」蔡氏的作品是一口清新的蘋果肉，假如是真實的該有多好。

展覽還有周育正、陳依純的錄像作品，林文藻、林煒翔的繪畫和盧之筠的裝置和雕塑，展期至七月廿七日。

不知你有沒有看過一則網上片段，有人從底部開始吃蘋果，就不會吃剩蘋果核，那個謠言中有毒的東西會不見了！如果《蘋果核》是這次旅程的目的地，藝術作品就如果肉有酸有甜，觀眾可選擇如何吃這個蘋果，如何看待這個果核。