

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Taiwanese Artist in Residence



Asialink Arts was delighted to announce this year's reciprocal artist in residence from Taipei Artist Village: Ms Su-chen Hsu, from Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. Hsu was hosted by the National Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne from mid-September to mid-December 2008. Her work was developed in collaboration with scientific researchers at the Herbarium and is centred on themes of migration, change, cultural relationships and environmental sustainability.

For Domain House in Melbourne Hsu conceived a multi-layered exhibition that looked at the intersection of these themes. *Plant Matter NeoEden, Melbourne* developed from recent work shown in Taiwan that highlighted the natural greening of Taipei City which occurs when plants grow in adverse urban environments – with little water, light or human encouragement. Her Melbourne exhibition also looked at plants in relation to their environment and the idea of survival under harsh conditions, which resonated strongly with Australia's continuing drought situation. Hsu presented three categories of such plants, each shown in digital print format from specimens she had collected and pressed: plants found in Taipei City's urban environments; rare coastal plants from Northern Taiwan and crops grown by Ami subsistence farmers, one of the indigenous tribal groups in Taiwan who have been displaced from their traditional homelands.

Viewers at her November exhibition were intrigued by the raised effect of her plant samples and the effect of the bi-lingual written history in the digital prints.

Hsu devised a system of exchange to overcome the border restrictions placed on such plants and to draw attention to the global nature of the environmental and cultural issues raised. Prompted by the recent food contamination scare in China, Hsu invited members of the general public and in particular, inner Melbourne's community gardeners, to trade their produce for one of her prints, an exchange that points to the relative safety of these home-grown plants – produced in the urban environment with due consideration to Melbourne's ongoing water restrictions. Each of the vegetable/print swaps was documented with an agreement between the trading partners. Visitors to the exhibition were also invited to contribute anecdotes and information about the new specimens Hsu

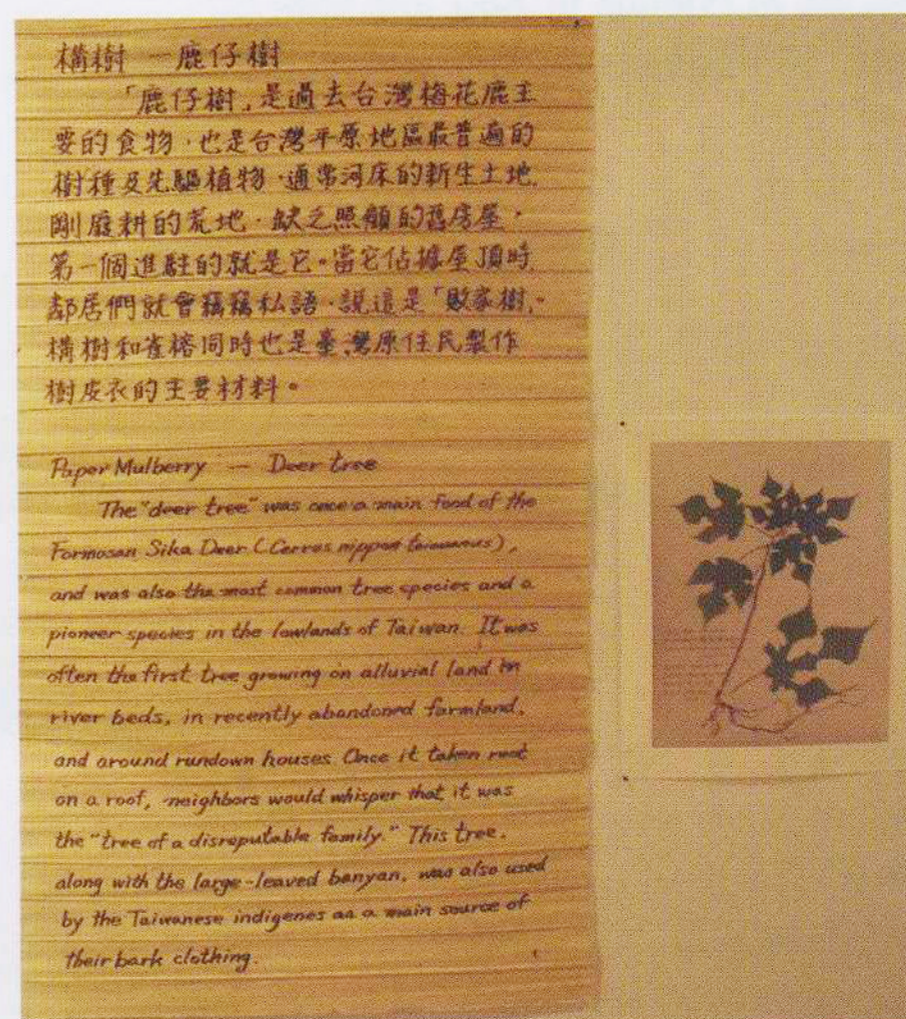
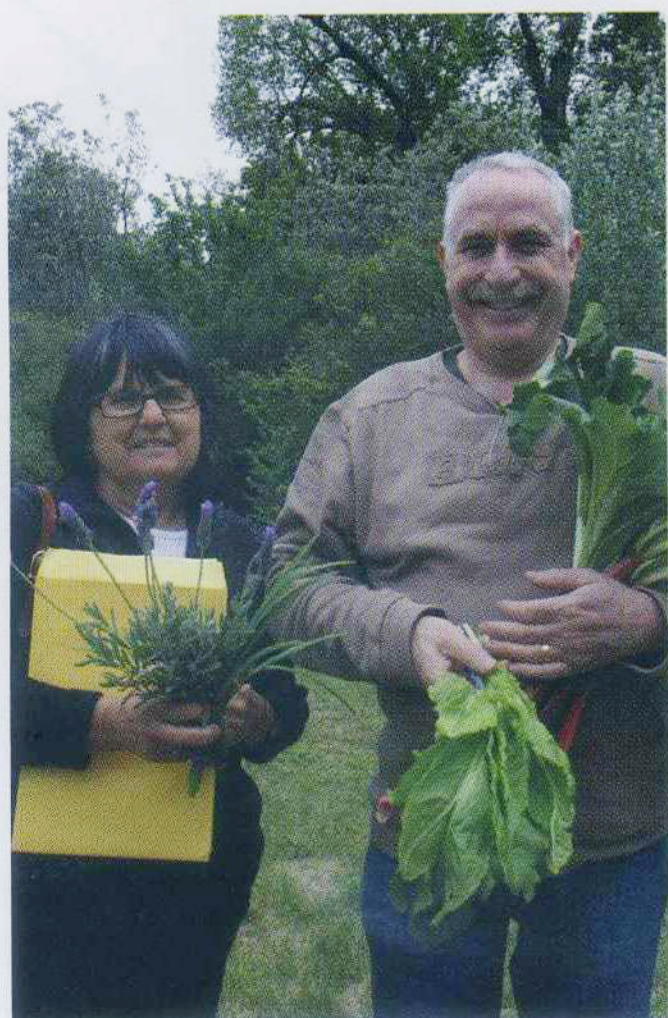
collected during her Melbourne residency – these include plant usage, cultural and historical significance, recipes and other stories.

This was an Asialink/Taipei Artist Village project supported by Taipei Culture Foundation and the Department of Cultural Affairs, Taipei City Government.

Sara Robins



Chives specimen, from Happy New Life Community Garden, North Richmond



From left to right:

Hawthorn Community Members arrived with their vegetables to trade.

Su-chen was in North Richmond's Community Garden

Deer Tree - Paper Mulberry display by Su-chen Hsu

Photos by Su-chen Hsu.