

## **Intertidal Zone Art Monitoring Station – Annual Project for 2005**

Exhibition Dates : 2005.4.16~5.29

Location: Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts

Curators: Lu Ming-Te, Hsu Su-Chen, Jung Sin-Pi

Supervisors: Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Kaohsiung City Government ,  
Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts

Organizer: A Mi Artist Communities

Sponsor: National Culture and Arts Foundation

Co-organizer: The British Council Taipei, a.a.s.- art Group in England

Science and Technical Collaborators: Pingtung Rescue Center for Endangered  
Wild Animals, Pingtung University; Chishan Fault monitoring Lab of National  
Kaohsiung Normal University

Artists:

Anti-evolution Monitoring Team: Jung Sin-pi, Pei Kurtis Jai-Chyi

Ecological Tropism Monitoring Team: Lu Ming-Te, Hsueh Ava, Hung Su-Chen,  
Kuo I-Fen, Lin Hong-wen, Sung Quo-Cheng

Eurasian Plate Monitoring Team: Hsu Su-Chen, Hsiao Sheng-Chien, Lee Feng-  
Ru, Stuart Tait, Ana Benloch, David Miller

The project is funded by The National Culture And Arts Foundation (Taiwan)

Production Grants to Independent Curators in Visual Arts

### **Curatorial discourse**

By Hsu Su-Chen

Contemporary art, especially the contemporary art that likes to flaunt avant garde slogans, is often felt to be in collision with the art favored by the existing control system. The criteria for contemporary art are seemingly a rebellious attitude, innovation in style and media, distance from convention, and a sense of freshness. As a result, contemporary art is characterized by strongly artist-centered approaches to thinking. We have long been familiar with this description of contemporary art. We can thus see in Taiwan that the core of artistic creation has always stopped at the artist's self-expression. Although starting from a state of confrontation, the contemporary artist gradually understands how to obtain recognition, and recognition may take the form of entering authoritative museums of fine art, participation in art festivals, and acceptance by the mainstream art system. This framework is like a

contemporary art manufacturing machine: The conveyor belt of exhibition, critical analysis, publication, and certification delivers work after work of contemporary art.

Taiwan's contemporary art has never been particularly good at reaching out beyond artistic circles and achieving universal appeal. Contemporary art tends to be insufficiently special and cannot easily make full use of the artist's unique point of view. In addition, artists have generally failed to take advantage of alliances and collaborations as means of refining their artistic methods. This is mainly because they have been unwilling to give up their individual styles and approach different logic and categories of thought, and also don't want the focus to shift away from the artist's self. But what is the essential nature of contemporary art? What kind of person and what kinds of values can define contemporary art? When the times are ceaselessly changing, what transformations and shifts must an artist's art try to confront? Are there universal rules described above? Or should the artist try to develop artistic possibilities in keeping with the times by following society's trends?

### **Intertidal Zone: An Alternating, Impermanent Environment**

How can we let the art scene develop when contemporary art clearly needs rethinking? Will the redefinition of art and the artist bring back the vitality of this isolated art ecosystem? Can changes in exhibition planning and artistic creation generate a new artistic phenomenon? How can the dialectical relationship between all these changes be made to transform into a creative crossroads? A group of contemporary artists, wildlife conservationists, and geologists from Taiwan and England are working together to realize the exhibition/ performance activity "Intertidal Zone Art Monitoring Station – Annual Project for 2005." This project seeks to discover ways of restructuring "transcendence of viewpoints," "transcendence of roles," and "partnership" in the intertidal zone of art, while attempting to bring together cross-cultural and interdisciplinary art events for the purpose of enriching Taiwan's relatively ingrown art scene.

The ecological term "intertidal zone" plays a very important role in this exhibition process. The "intertidal zone" refers to the area between the land and the sea where fresh water and salt water mingle with each other, and also alludes to the tiny island of Taiwan rising almost 4,000 meters above the sea. A collision between the Eurasian and Philippines plates five million years ago formed this piece of land, which is thus rather young from a geological point of view. Taiwan is blessed with many climate zones and highly diverse ecosystems. Both Taiwan and the intertidal zone are places of extreme fluctuations, and both harbor amazingly rich biodiversity. Taiwan's tremendous diversity is also reflected in its colorful culture and history.

### **Quasi-Biological Assembly Steps and the Strength of Weak Ties**

We will attempt to use natural phenomena metaphorically, and draw on some concepts and topics from the natural world. First, the makeup of the participating artists is achieved through "assembly steps" and the strength of weak ties. Adopted from new biological research methods, assembly steps are the way that the project was assembled. In contrast to the decomposition method used in conventional biological analysis, the assembly steps method refers to an artificial approach to assembling living phenomena. The main between this approach and traditional biology is that it examines the mutual relationships generated by different biological elements. It can clarify how the characteristics of various elements change in accordance with other elements nearby and holistic interactions, showing how characteristics are not innate. An exhibition planned using this approach does not rely

on the observation, classification, and abstraction of artistic phenomena; instead it allows creative ferment after assembly to infuse displays and activities. We have therefore adopted a strategy of combining art with cross-cultural and interdisciplinary aspects in a cooperative relationship.

Apart from incorporating different interdisciplinary thinking, this art project concerning science, society, the environment, and culture also emphasizes participation via partnership and places a premium on interchange and responsiveness. It attempts to use the strength of “weak” ties (ties outside of Taiwan’s artistic circles avoid too great an overlap between members of the different groups) to connect an even broader network of relationships and expand interpretive categories. The characteristics highlighted by this structural interaction will form a new and richer system. As complex system science<sup>1</sup> teaches us, quasi-biological phenomena that are structured yet difficult to predict appear at the edge of systems, in between order and chaos. The unknown state developing through the fermentation of communication and cooperation is an important nexus for the proliferation of art (organisms), and is also an important concept of the process of this exhibition.

### **Artistic Practice Cleverly Playing the Role of Scientists**

Contemporary artists (who of course include the scientists among artists) must combine different areas of science and art. Regardless of their point of view or way of doing things, the way they make art is often like the process of discovery in scientific research, but is entirely different from the scientific method and its concept of repeatability. Contemporary artists make slightly “capricious” and “arbitrary” use of scientific methodology, and incorporate their own artistic vocabularies, for the exclusive purpose of strengthening decrepit values systems. The repair and reconstruction of this process and its results makes them into providers of “science-art –Utopia” hybrids.

Among contemporary artists’ many forms of artistic practice, their somewhat scientific yet unscientific approaches nevertheless seek to accurately target the cracks in our society. An art is an argument in society’s discourse; like being in a museum of fine art, it will evoke a sanctuary of high culture. These artists are attempting to cause people to discover an inescapable problem that is connected between humanity and animals, the environment, and culture. Their focus is no longer on what is art, but on this extremely homogenized and sanctified space. They are like amateur scientists trying to make artistic declarations of concern for life in the face of the real world environment.

### **Science in the Art Museum and Its Fictitiousness**

When a work of this sort enters an art museum, unlike when a work of environmental art was placed in a natural setting in the past, these projects change scientific research and change artistic exhibition. Regardless of what kinds of media are used, the projects change an art museum into an experimental site, or art museums with analytical overtones, and the works contain science and its fictitiousness.

With regard to the manipulation of these characteristics, the assimilation of scientific concepts and the incorporation of different subjects allow us to see the

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<sup>1</sup> Complex system science is the study of complex systems. The complexity in our project includes both “complex diversity” and “organic connections.” Complex systems have certain common characteristics in that their endless fluctuations are manifestations of unpredictable order.

artist's extraordinary artistic form. The artists' artistic practice constitutes a way of expanding on weak ties. This kind of attempt to recreate new artistic experiences is reflected in the fatigue of science after being marginalized by art history for so long a time, and will awaken our many forgotten diverse experiences of art.

While this kind of art work is laden with the artist's own vocabulary, it emanates a more diverse language. This is like dealing contemporary environmental issues: Some examples include attempting to portray non-human species thoughts and imaginings concerning their coexistence with humans, collecting geological fault monitoring data, recording the digital resonance of the sounds and images of a mud volcano, recording the experience of studying the brain, and exploring the differences and interactive relationship between people and technology. It is easy to see from these efforts that artists lament the loss and destruction that has accompanied mankind's extreme exploration and colonization of the environment and ecology, and wonder how the invisible digital ecology is influencing our perceptions of the world. This art is deeply imbued with multiauthored eclecticism, and it is collection of many compound dualities, including the individual and the group, art and science, imperialism and naturalism, and nature and culture. In fact, and inevitably, this art manifests this state, and there is an inescapable link. These artistic hybrids reveal questions, and allow the possibility of finding answers in different circumstances and milieus.

### **Artistic Transposition in Development Determined by the Social Ecological Environment**

The intrinsic focus of this exhibition is not on the standards of the aesthetic system, but on accessing artists' ingredients, viewers' ingredients, and the change in attitude toward art. This change serves to remind us of art's autonomy, the supremacy of works of art, the fact that viewers are merely bystanders, and other habitual views of art, but these are certainly not the only ways of viewing art. Concepts and an attitude of thought can strike up creative sparks in a collaboration, and this is our invisible strategy for this exhibition. Collaborative art can uncover questions and avoid habitual ways of solving problems. We must insist on exploring along the boundary of life and art, obtaining feedback from the predicament resulting after problems occur, and then map out the next way to make progress.

Of course we are discovering many spaces that can be developed further and many angles that can be adjusted in the process of this exhibition. For instance, we are finding out how to make the shift from cooperating with a single scientist or single foreign art group to bringing about the shared practice of a community, how to use work, and not art intervention, to discover problems within society, the environment, the ecology, or a community, and how to enter the complexity and unstable state of social trends via more dialog, mutual interaction, and common research. Artists can employ this thoroughgoing concern to grasp their creativity and imagination, and strive to advance to strategies for expanding their vision in the midst of life and their existential problems.

With regard to boundless creativity and limitless art, the process mentioned here depends on the dynamic development of the community, culture, society, and the ecology, which manifests as a mutual infiltration and state of not being influenced by time. From an open attitude to vibrant experience, this non-utilitarian behavior is leading us towards a new ecological aesthetic of art. And the process eternally needs...but welcomes communication and participation of "the other."

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