

Curatorial Statement

Curator / Wang Pin-hua

Then located in a basement, the Spring Gallery displayed two experimental spatial works in 1984 and 1985, the August 1984 *Play of Space*, which was acclaimed by the contemporary media as a "spatial revolution" and "spatial atomic blast," and the May 1985 *Play of Space II*. Later, in view of the influence of *Play of Space*, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, which was established in 1983, held the August 1985 special exhibition *Colors and Shapes—Avant-garde, Installations, Spaces*, which featured the foregoing work as a model. However, interim museum director Su Jui-ping unexpectedly criticized participating artists Chang Chien-fu, Hsu Yang-cong, and Chen Chieh-jen during the course of setting up the exhibition, and a lawsuit even occurred when the director kicked and damaged a work. Afterwards, in April 1986, the "anti-establishment" and "anti-museum of fine arts" spatial exhibition *Living Clay* was displayed for the first time in an empty apartment in Taipei's Eastern District... .

On one hand, the historical significance of some events depends on our current perspective, which allows us to rediscover things that occurred in the past, but could not be interpreted at the time. On the other hand, the passage of time allows the importance of the point in time at which the event occurred, and an overall historical picture, to finally emerge as the event's historical trajectory becomes clear. These two aspects allow us to construct a new perspective as we trace the course of past events. This exhibition, which attempts to review history, contains the four subtopics of "intervention in society through art", "gender images space", "forgotten persons", and "local resistance fronts", and reconstructs a local outlook that was inspired by Western modern art, but emerged and took root in the soil of Taiwanese society during the 1980s.

This exhibition attempts to trace, based on media research, the foregoing historical trajectory, present the rapid development of art under Western influence from the early to the middle 1980s, and examine the strong collective resonance between art and society around the time of the lifting of martial law in 1987. However, apart from collective phenomena, this exhibition also looks at the subtle yet important omens revealed by individual historical events, and proposes that not only did Taiwan embrace the "multi-modernities" of the Western modernist style during the 1980s — a period in which modern

institutions were established in Taiwan—but also used this multi-modernities to construct the unique "spatial politics" that characterized the era.

The modern characteristics that emerged from Taiwan's society and soil took the form of local cultural tendencies that were nonlinear, non-evolutionary, and driven by fortuitous developmental conditions. These characteristics are the starting point of the account of historical manifestations in this exhibition, which seeks to probe the special conditions that nurtured the era's multi-modernities and spatial politics, and examine whether a puzzle of different living political energies imbued with different types of existential value lurked beneath the conflict and fractures of the times. The contexts of the various potential differential energies that were released during this period continue to exert their influence to this day, and 21st century disputes concerning public spaces and the value of art originated during the upheaval in social spaces that occurred during the 1980s.

Using Art to Intervene in Society

Taiwan during the 1980s inherited martial law and conservative restrictions on free speech from the 1970s. As a result, the establishment of contemporary art spaces such as the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and National Institute of the Arts represented a step forward toward globalization and modernization. This exhibition seeks to showcase a number of artists who returned from abroad around that time and influenced the development of modern art in Taiwan, and highlights the role of the Spring Gallery in encouraging acceptance of modern art. The exhibition invites the artists to re-create their old works, and allows viewers to see the historical scenes of the works *Play of Space* (1984) and *Play of Space II* (1985) from a modern perspective. Viewers can also appreciate the scene of a "spatial atomic blast", which was publicized by the media at that time. The exhibition underscores the fact that Taiwan was already experimentally groping toward a local practice and was producing local cultural spaces even as it learned Western modern art concepts.

Gender Images Spaces

Gender image spaces subtopic curation, text: Chen Yi-chun

The new movies that appeared in Taiwan in 1982 narrate in detail from many

angles the transformation and chaos experienced by the people of Taiwan in the process of modernization and urbanization, and use an experimental cinematic vocabulary that mounts a challenge to traditional local movie language. Among these movies, Edward Yang's "*Second Episode in Our Time*", "*That Day on the Beach*", "*The Terrorizers*", and "*Taipei Story*" perform a surgical analysis of the urban middle class elite, and portray urban women pursuing autonomous control over their own bodies and souls. In addition, a women's movement gradually arose after the establishment of *Awakening Magazine* in 1982, and talented gender consciousness-raisers in such areas as literature, photography, music, and theater emerged and joined forces, creating a distinctive cultural facet of the 1980s. This exhibition space employs Edward Yang's "*The Terrorizers*" as an introduction, and juxtaposes the texts of the six artists and artist groups Huang Yu-shan, Li Ang, Chien Fu-yu, Yang Tzu-chun, and Alphonse Perroquet/Parrot Caille/Quail Youth-Leigh, and the Green Team, all of whom make seminal contributions to gender thinking or bore witness to important gender/image culture movements. The new dialogue in time and space that arises among these individuals is extended to reveal even more possibilities for thought/feelings.

Forgotten Persons

When the magazine "*Ren Jian*" (1985-1989) used photojournalism to explore neglected and forgotten strata of society, portray people's living and working places, and present images of resistance movements taken by the green Group that had never appeared in the official media, these images of marginalized groups and suppressed social strata shocked society. We saw the dilemmas of urban indigenous life in Kuan Hsiao-jung's "*Eight-foot Door*" images, viewed the blank expressions of shut-ins in Taiwanese photographer Hou Tsung-hui's Kaohsiung "*Lung Fa Tang*," and sensed the search for oblivion through the crack of light in Pan Hsiao-hsia's "*Drunken Tour*" set on Snake Alley. Looking back from today, without the Green Group's revolutionary assault journalism, and without images of the Anti-Fifth Naphtha Cracker movement at Houjin, the Anti-Dupont movement at Lugang, and the anti-reservoir movement at Meinong, wouldn't our history have been pallid indeed?

Local Resistance Fronts

In 1983, Chen Chieh-jen and colleagues caught the martial law police forces

unprepared with their performances on the streets of Hsimenting. Lee Ming-sheng initiated the 40-day round-island people's life spirit purification walk activity in 1983, the *Living Clay* anti-art museum spatial exhibition was created in 1986, Hou Chun-ming performed construction worksite shows in 1987, the first Lanyu anti-nuclear mobile theater was conducted by Wang Mo-lin in 1988, Chen Ming-tsai initiated the U Theater unauthorized touring theater movement in 1990, and Wu Ma-li, Lee Ming-sheng, Hou Chun-ming, and Lien Teh-cheng established the Taiwan Archives in 1990. The 1980s was not only a time of brilliant individual attacks on the system, but saw the emergence of numerous painting societies. The "*Taipei Art Group*" was established in 1983, the "*The Southern Taiwan New Painting Society*" manifesto was issued in Tainan in 1986, and Kaohsiung's "*Modern Painting Association of Kaohsiung*" emerged in 1987 from the 1978 *Wuma Painting Society* and the 1982 *Kui Art*. When we recall the development of local art in the 1980s, we should not overlook the self-awareness of the local groups that appeared during those years, and should also not forget interdisciplinary undertakings involving the visual arts, theater, direct action, and film. That era was a historical moment in which an intense resonance existed between art and society, and pluralistic cultural subjects made their voices heard.