



美術

예술

ART

Convers**ASIAN** in Cayman

An Exhibition of Contemporary Asian Art

September 16 - December 23, 2002

The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands

From The Director

ConversASIAN in Cayman features contemporary works by Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese artists, addressing issues of group or individual identity. These are issues that face all of us in the Cayman Islands as well as the rest of the world. As the Cayman Islands move into a global society we retain our desire to hold on to aspects of our own cultural heritage that make us who we are. These Asian artists demonstrate that the use of these conflicts and contradictions within us can be a vital source of expression.

Today, in their own countries, Asians enjoy and celebrate a vibrant hybrid culture. This exhibition explores the universal ways in which artists can take and utilise the parts of their own cultural heritage which remain as important aspects of their unconscious connection to their past, and incorporate these deep thoughts and ideas into contemporary forms of expression.

Through this Asian-Caribbean cultural interaction, the National Gallery hopes to highlight to our viewers the possibility of incorporating new insights and an innovative process into our own Caymanian cultural development. Our ever-changing culture, like many around the world, CAN find its OWN expression through contemporary art forms while retaining the value and integrity of who and what we were and are and can and will be. Asian artists seem to be able to...wherever they resettle, hold on to this vital connection of who they are. We respect this and wish to emulate their methodology.

It is our writers, dancers, actors, musicians and visual artists who are the recorders of our culture...let us give them all possible stimuli to freely express themselves.

I would like to thank, along with all of the sponsors of **ConversASIAN in Cayman**, Miyako Yoshinaga of M.Y.Art Prospects in NYC, Guest Curator of this exhibition, who introduced me to these exciting exhibiting artists.

Leslie Bigelman, M.B.E.

Director

National Gallery of the Cayman Islands

From the Curator

As a Japanese-born New York gallery director, I have the opportunity to work with contemporary Asian artists on a daily basis. Through these artists I have become acquainted with a burgeoning network of dynamic new art communities throughout Asia. In Asia, as well as in the rest of the world, artists are becoming more and more eager to reach out to the larger audience beyond their local purview.

ConversASIAN in Cayman features seven leading and emerging artists from China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and the U.S. in an exploration of the evolving Asian identity in an increasingly multicultural environment.

Toshihiro Sakuma (Japan) and **Hoang Duong Cam** (Vietnam) share an interest in the relationship between society and the individual. **Yang Zhenzhong** (China) and **Fumiko Nozawa** (Japan/USA) document a sense of displacement in urban life. **Yeong Gill Kim** (Korea/USA) and **Sung-Ah Chang** (Korea) present a new perspective on Asian sensibilities. **Zhang Hongtu** (China/USA) continues his appropriation of cultural icons. No matter how specific the images are, the issues addressed here all deal with universal themes.



Zhang Hongtu
Shitao (Album) - Van Gogh #2
Oil on Canvas
Courtesy of Artist / M.Y.Art
Prospects, New York

Motivated by his genuine interest in the fundamental difference between Eastern and Western traditions, **Zhang Hongtu** "repaints" well-known *shan shui* or classical Chinese landscape paintings in the style and colors of Monet, Cézanne, or Van Gogh. Beautiful, compelling and yet somehow dissonant, Zhang's "*Repainting Chinese Shan Shui Paintings*" (1998-) is a radical crossbreeding of two individual styles (i.e. Shitao - the 17th-18th century Chinese artist-and Van Gogh) as well as their attendant traditions. In "recycling" these artistic icons, Zhang arrives at an exciting and distinct style all his own.

Yeong Gill Kim's *Untitled* tableaux (1998) resembles a loosely-composed landscape incorporating what appear to be human figures engaged in mysterious and ambiguous activities. His images, drawn in a single color of ultramarine blue against an unpainted background are almost subliminal, fading in and out of the painting plane. After spending a decade in New York, Kim returned to his birthplace, the ancient capital of Korea, and the clustered human forms of his earlier works disappeared from his paintings. Since returning to Korea, Kim's style has gained a vital tranquility.



Yeong Gill Kim
Untitled BD #20 (1998)
Acrylic and pencil on muslin
Courtesy of Artist / Art Projects
International, Inc., New York



Sung-Ah Chang
Deep Sleeping (1999)
Charcoal on paper
Courtesy of Artist / M.Y. Art Prospects, New York

The young Korean artist **Sung-Ah Chang's** *Deep Sleeping* (1999) series of drawings are remarkable close-up studies of human hair. They were drawn with charcoal from the photographs of the artist's own head taken as she slept.

This oversized work is reminiscent of Chuck Close's self-portraits - but in Chang's case, we see only eloquently textured waves of hair. According to Chang, strands of hair are both concrete and abstract as they follow their intricate shapes and flow. In some parts of Asia, a woman's hair is believed to have magical power, and, if uncontrolled, can also be seen as an object of fear.



Toshihiro Sakuma
Colony (2000)
Photography and paper card construction
Courtesy of Artist / M.Y. Art Prospects, New York

While Chang explores the human body as a small universe, Japanese artist **Toshihiro Sakuma** deals with a human face in a very different way. In his *Colony* installation (2000), Sakuma accumulated photos of more than a thousand human faces and put them all into a composite picture of seemingly one face. "Is

your face really different from anyone else's?" the artist asks. In Sakuma's view, human society can be compared to bee or ant colonies where individuals are anonymous and easily replaceable by others. Sakuma's beautifully sculpted mound of two thousand interconnected name cards may suggest a new model for a selfless society.

In **Yang Zhenzhong's** provocative video *I Will Die* (2001), he asks ordinary people of different sexes, ages, and status to say "Wo hui si" (I will die). The repetition of this simple line in different voices becomes monotonous and persistent; the formula also used in Sakuma's accumulated single facial portrait. Yang is interested in how people react to being in front of his camera. Stating this apparent but hard-to-admit truth can slip into a mere performance detached from reality. Yang repeats this project cross-culturally in different locations. This results in several juxtapositions of people with widely different religious and social backgrounds (e.g. Chinese and Belgian).



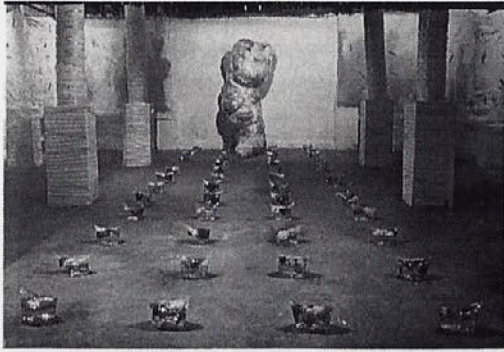
Yang Zhenzhong
I Will Die (2001)
Video
Courtesy of Artist / ShangART,
Shanghai, China



Fumiko Nozawa
126 First Avenue, New York
from the series *For Rent* (1998 to present)
C-print photograph
Courtesy of Artist / M.Y. Art Prospects, New York

our curiosity about past activities. The location of these sites is sometimes hard to identify due to diminishing cultural identity in urban architecture and design.

Vacant rooms waiting for new tenants are the subjects of Japanese photographer **Fumiko Nozawa's** *For Rent* (1998 to present). The series evolved from a single photo of a flat in Paris taken in 1998, to a cross-cultural examination of urban displacement. Consistently shot at eye level, these empty interiors preserve the lingering presence of former occupants. A few pieces of furniture or other items abandoned on-site spur



Hoang Duong Cam

Wedding (1999)

Paper, tape, vinyl bags, silk flowers, water
and plastic sheet

Courtesy of Artist / MAI's Gallery
Hochiminh City, Vietnam

One of a handful of young installation artists active in Vietnam, **Hoang Duong Cam** casts a sarcastic eye on current social dilemmas and conflicts. For his installation, Hoang uses recycled materials such as wrapping paper and biodegradable food or plants - all related to the everyday life of his culture. He typically arranges these materials in a way that reflects society's distortion and manipulation of human nature. His installation, *Wedding* (1999), turns

a supposedly happy occasion upside down, portraying it as a cold, static ritual in which the bridal couple is, as Hoang says, "on display for society's approval."

The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands is to be commended for creating this forum for Asian artists to share their vision with the people of the Cayman Islands. I hope this will open up opportunities for further artistic and cultural dialogue.

Miyako Yoshinaga

Founding Director

M.Y. Art Prospects

M.Y. Art Prospects, is a contemporary art gallery in New York City representing emerging international artists, including artists from Japan, Korea, China and other Asian countries.

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