



crossing art 日新月藝

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For Immediate Release

Back to the Garden: Daily Life to Spiritual Vision

Press Preview: Thursday March 6, 2008 1:00 p.m. to 4:00p.m.

Opening Reception: Saturday March 8, 2008 3:00 to 6:00pm

(NEW YORK, NY- March 6, 2008)-On view at the Crossing Art Gallery from March 8 to April 26, 2008. *Back to the Garden: Daily Life to spiritual Vision* is Crossing Art's largest exhibition to date, featuring eight artists who address Utopian aspirations.

Artists: Eun Yung Choi, Ming Fay, Lin Peychwen, Shannon Plumb, Jeremiah Teipen, YoYo Xiao, Zhang Hongtu, Chee Wang Ng.

Back to the Garden gives free rein to the imagination and chooses an interpretation that reverses the intuitive direction and contemplates more than the beautiful view.

This exhibition is made possible by F & T Group.

Back to the Garden: Daily Life to Spiritual Garden was curated by Luchia Meihua Lee, she has curated many exhibitions and events along with a wide variety of lecture series in America.

The title of the exhibition "Back to the Garden" was originally from Joni Michell's song "Woodstock."

Background:

One might suppose that an exhibition entitled *Back to the Garden* must be a collection of beautiful landscape paintings. Instead of this literal reading of the title, namely, we prefer to start from spiritual needs and thence return to the demands of routine life. The material world might be the arena in which our daily life unfolds, yet it is inevitable that no matter how much we pursue surface desires, a preoccupation with them will lead us to a loss of feeling and a meaningless life. Viewed from this perspective, these eight artists together cover a plethora of human needs and have explored the theme *Back to the Garden* in an astonishing variety of modes, from food and fashion to artificial versions of the natural world to a time-space shimmer.



A Utopian thread runs through this exhibition. Unknown lost paradises – such as the Chinese Peach Blossom Source Village² or Shangri-la - date from the origins of human civilization. All cultures give us myths of earlier Golden Eras, and enrich the content of recent art. From Plato in *The Republic* to Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, we have never stopped constructing idealistic political philosophies – despite Mao’s manipulation of the ideal in the Cultural Revolution. Mao’s heritage has been addressed at length in the Asian contemporary art world.

The vision represented in the phrase “back to the garden” is essentially a prioritization of needs and a statement about the human condition. Not only does it discount mundane concerns and give precedence to simplicity and spiritual values, but also it finds echoes in the ideas of numerous thinkers in disparate traditions. For example, psychologist Abraham Maslow³ attributed self-actualization to the instinctual desire of humans to make the most of their abilities and to strive to be the best they can. Before applying his ideas to the art field, we must note that Maslow’s hierarchy is set forth as a general proposition and does not imply that everyone’s needs follow the same rigid pattern. For example, the drive to create is stronger than the needs for food and safety. The artist living in poverty is a classic example of reversing the standard hierarchy of needs.

The physical body can easily be contented by feeding it well and wrapping it in costly fabric. However the petty pleasures of daily life cannot satisfy our deep heart. Recall that Socrates is said to have concluded that he was wiser than others but only in that he acknowledged his own ignorance, while most men do not. Most people don’t understand that they are stuck in the trap of the senses. It is vital to realize that spiritual vision – not input from the senses - actually directs our mind and behavior, and our profound virtue controls our future. Thus, creativity and self-realization can surpass everything else. This is the mysticism in which attitude of heart is considered superior to comprehension. Lao Tzu said “*To know the unknowable, that is elevating. Not to know the*



knowable, this is sickness.”⁷ It is in this sense that intuition becomes superior to knowledge.

Exhibition Layout

Eun Young Choi

Thousands of stickers and pieces of mylar lead to endless reflection and re-reflection of images, which generates a new scenery that surrounds and interacts with the viewer. Eun Young Choi has thus created a children’s dream world, a fairy tale inhabited by many fantastic characters. The work forms a world where pop idioms are superimposed on a surreal structure. Choi’s sticker installations can flexibly fly up and down, left and right and flutter around like butterflies. They fit the stairwell perfectly, and lead visitors with a childish curiosity into a type of Alice’s Wonderland, from the lobby up to the gallery on the fourth floor. Colorful in the extreme, her work is filled with, flowers, Superman images, candy, blue sky, green grass, ants, rabbits, butterflies, cartoon characters, hello kitty figures, and other denizens of the dreamscape.

The lyrics of the song *Woodstock* refers to a “child of God” and Utopian visions by their very nature take a pure, innocent – even naïve - view of the universe. Choi’s work must be classified as a playful pleasure Pure Land.

Ming Fay

Jungle Tango is a new site-specific installation at Queens Crossing’s glass-and-steel atrium, and the gallery. This newly created work shows its organic character in moving objects and tangled branches. In this art jungle inside the city jungle, insects crawl on the plants and dance to a mystical, exotic, and erotic rhythm. Like this busy shopping center, it



recalls the street crowded with people jammed together shoulder to shoulder, and towers above this exotic community. Fay likes to take a worldly issue such as *Qian* (money) and represent it by a tree to give an Asian atmosphere; yet his work always draws upon another vision. He has created an outsized inventory of fruits, seeds, herbs and hybrid objects, as the elements for magical gardens of abundance that he installs – frequently as public commissions. In Fay’s hanging nature piece, he makes the connection between people and the botanical world. His works, here as elsewhere, specifically refer to gardens.

Lin PeyChwen

Lin Pey Chwen virtual creation shows the tendency of human to play the role of the Creator. To do this, She employ various cutting edge technologies including advanced computer soft-ware, biotechnology, virtual reality, gene modification, human cloning, and artificial life. Human beings believe that technology can replace Nature. This interactive installation which allows the audience to be the Creator, computer programs and a touch –screen monitor produce an interactive experience during which views may create virtual butterflies; in the process, the audience indulges and develops it desire to create. At the entrance to the exhibition space, the outline of a butterfly is projected on a screen. By drawing the butterfly image with fingers, Viewers can complete the process of creating a butterfly.

Jeremiah Taipen

Jeremiah Teipen has placed his site-specific LED and video installation in the atrium of Queens Crossing, where it attracts attention from passersby. There he pays homage to the flag image of 20th century American artist Jasper Johns with a projection on the wall. At the same time, he makes reference to the ubiquity of the American flag, for example on Fox News. One way he does this is by use of new materials,



such as LEDs and innovative lighting that recently have been used to create fascinating art work - illusions and atmospheres beyond our conception. Teipen has arranged fans and other electrical and mechanical devices to build the shimmering image of a virtual jungle in the art tube, a hallway leading to the Crossing Art gallery. Inspired by shadows of trees on the wall of his home, it of course resonates with the botanical theme of this exhibition, yet at the same time as images of shadows is removed from Nature and recall even Plato's shadows.

YoYo Xiao

YoYo Xiao's piece emphasizes the contingency of human existence, even putting forth the notion of humans as aliens, and points the viewer to the impermanence of the material world and the importance of spiritual values – and the need to get ourselves back to the garden. Xiao characteristically starts with a single digital photograph, which he subjects to countless repeated distortions to yield a strange contorted image whose relationship with the original taxes the viewer's imagination. This process makes the city's high rises look like groaning animals in an organic world, and reflects the artist's own image through the thousand facets of a shattered mirror. He was trained in Chinese brush painting and calligraphy - the time-honored calligraphy using free lines and brush ink. While Xiao no longer adheres to the strictures of his tradition, he lets his mind dance with it so it recurs repeatedly in his work. He mixes his calligraphic skill with digital techniques that transform the images into unknown objects.



Zhang Hong Tu

Zhang Hongtu's *Last Banquet* reformulates Leonardo Da Vinci's famous depiction of the *Last Supper*. Where Da Vinci showed Christ plus 12 disciples, Zhang shows 13 images of Mao Tse-tung, so in one canvas he addresses the need for food, the politics of the Maoist era, and religious tradition. Of course communism is self-consciously Utopian, and even if the Maoist experiment failed in that respect, much Maoist rhetoric was expended in that direction. Ironically, Mao did his best to suppress Christianity, the source of the Garden of Eden myth.

Playing with various sources from ancient philosophy, Eastern artistic techniques, and Western masterpieces, Zhang in another series sets up reflections and refractions among and between multiple traditions, giving himself the opportunity to comment on all of them with each work. For example, he combines the colors and brush strokes of Impressionism and Chinese ink painting techniques to create a new genre. In a similar fashion, he contributes to this exhibition a version of a McDonald's French fries box, and a six pack of Coca-Cola bottles. They are treated like traditional Chinese cultural objects – for example, the Coca-Cola bottles are covered with blue and white Ming dynasty floral patterned glaze – in a satirical statement that comments both on our fast food life style and on the reverence paid to artifacts from earlier times.

Chee Wang NG

A different approach to the subject of Mao and the Cultural Revolution is used by Chee Wang Ng, who has installed a table covered by a red tablecloth with the cake stand in the middle bearing five five-pointed stars. This recalls of course the flag of China, commonly referred to as the “five star flag.” This is surrounded by bowls of rice and place settings. The focal point of the tablecloth is the hem of Chinese



characters taken from a book containing the hundred most common Chinese family names, such as Chao, Chien, Sun, Lee, Lin, Chen, and Zhang. Pronounced, these names yield a veritable symphony. Viewed another way, these hundred names recall the large groups of people that ate from the same wok, such as on people's communes during the Cultural Revolution in China. At the same time, the round table is also typical of Asian family style, and is also a symbol of gathering and harmony.

Continuing in ancient philosophy vein, Ng's rice bowls contain cultural treasures. In various arrangements, these rice bowls focus attention on food as the one of the most elemental human needs. Ng has continuously concentrated on contemporary art related to Asian food for over 15 years. Ng has arranged 108 bowls, collected from all over the world into the shape of an *I Ching* hexagram. The hexagram that he has chosen is number 61 or "Inner Truth" which is composed of two yin lines surrounded by two yang lines on top and bottom. The center of the hexagram is empty, and this is its determining feature. One must keep in mind that whole empires are transformed by the strength of inner truth. The entire structure of the hexagram is very harmonious and symmetrical. The yielding lines are within and the firm ones without. These are all highly favorable circumstances.⁴

Shannon Plumb

A cynical fashion show reveals the real material world. Shannon Plumb has assembled a video, a funky and cynical fair in which she plays all the various characters. She wears paper clothes and paper hair to produce an intentionally theatrical effect. Outside the video room, a wig made of paper has been installed and paper clothing hangs beside the video to indicate that models in fashion shows change dresses all too frequently.

Each character in the film acts directly without shame or guilt about

their human nature, with its shortcomings and frailties. They present themselves as honest, open, and without pose or facade. Of course, Plumb's work satirizes these poses. Her characters seek fame or glory to improve their view of themselves. But they must first accept themselves internally. These people need to gain recognition and have activities that give a sense of contribution, to feel accepted and self-valued.

Exhibition catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated 48 page catalogue, featuring a preface by Catherine Lee, an introductory essay by Luchia Meihua Lee, and biographies of the 8 artists in the show, as well as comprehensive information on the artists and the way in which they fit into this exhibition. (soft cover \$20) This notable catalogue is the first produced with a show sponsored by Crossing Art, and the accompanying exhibition will be on display during the grand opening of Queens Crossing.

Performance

March 8th, 4:30 Modern Dance Choreographed by David Shen
Theme music: Woodstock, by Joni Mitchell

Lecture and panel

March 22nd 2008, artists roundtable
As part of Asian Contemporary Art week 2008

About Crossing Art

Crossing Art 日新月藝 provided a new 8,000 square foot venue for contemporary art exhibitions and a wide variety of art events. It is a place where various cultures can meet and find common ground in art.

Art spans time and space, and blurs geographical boundaries because it allows free expression. This is vital for a diverse society to exist in enlightened harmony: the more we know about others express themselves, the more we will understand what is important to them. To facilitate this interaction, we have established Crossing Art, where we will host exhibitions, artist roundtables, and other cultural events.

Crossing Art reaches out to talent that, although recognized elsewhere, we have not yet had the chance to experience. Avoiding mainstream strictures, Crossing Art opens its doors to new ideas from around the world in its search for novel perspectives. From our New York base, and a sister location in Shanghai, China's most dynamic and open city, we will monitor the pulse of Asian contemporary art.



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Unexpectedly located in a commercial building, Crossing Art aspires to become a destination for the next wave of artists and art lovers. In keeping with our vision, we have located Crossing Art not in Chelsea or Soho, but in Queens - the most diverse county in the United States, but otherwise peripheral to established art circuits.

Admission and Gallery Hours

Admission is free

Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday 11:00 - 6:00p.m. or by appointment

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