

The Existence of Beauty Is both History and Culture

The Artworks of Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun

By Lai, Ying-Ying

Having been engaged in creative artworks during the past three decades, Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun has still been exploring, examining, experimenting and creating in her works of arts. In her mind, life is a constant process of introspection and of superseding oneself. Regardless of formats, styles, contents and attitudes, her creative artworks reflect not only her intellectual growth and changes of the society over time, but also her personal acts of testing and demonstrations in aesthetics. Ms. Lai regards arts as games, impulsiveness, as well as personal salvation and effectuation.

In search of the Utopia of arts and life, Ms. Lai studied arts in Japan and the United States of America, and also participated in artists' exchange programs in France and Switzerland. The learning and living experiences in multiple countries have provided Ms. Lai with a broad vision toward life. She thus engaged in cogitating about the issues of implementation of modern art theories and overall artistic performances, the meaning of the materials used in her artwork, the relations between spaces and the environment and the final objective of contemporary art creations. Her artistic performance was the epitome of Taiwan's history and culture in late 20th century.

Taiwan entered a new era of avant-garde arts in the 1980s when myriads of artists who studied and practiced arts abroad returned to Taiwan and brought home the innovative forms and concepts. Such a change decomposed the original structure in Taiwan's arts environment previously manipulated by arts schools and commercial art galleries. As the society became more open and economy turned better, Taipei Fine Arts Museum was officially opened in 1983 and has since provided the best platform for artists. Taiwan's contemporary arts thus developed into a new stage when artworks are full of momentum. During the period from 1977 to 1988, Ms. Lai's belief in artistic creations was to explore a variety of art materials and to search basic existence and changes in arts. Criticisms regarding historical, political and social issues became a mainstream after the Martial Laws were lifted in 1987. Taiwanese culture became the mainstream. Women began to probe into female issues that were widely discussed and also to scrutinize the gender issue in politics. Artistic presentations were manifold, without stereotypes, standards, certain topics or contents. However, diverse traveling experiences in foreign countries eased up Ms. Lai's outward exploration. After receiving educations in Eastern and Western aesthetics, Ms. Lai started her moments of introspection. Cultural identity was the main guidance of her artworks during the period from 1988 to 1994. Next, in the

period of “land and memory” from 1995 to 1999, Ms. Lai began her self-examination in life and dedicated her careful thoughts and forgiveness toward the universe. A Bodhisattva mind equipped her with the capacity to generate the “Hearts” series of artworks that displayed her personal characteristics and dispositions. The 21st century marks a digital period when artists are able to cruise between the actual and virtual worlds. After Ms. Lai encountered impacts of life, her tenacity, caprices, innocence and energy were revived by way of presenting bright and free artworks. The artwork series of “Juvenescent Fairy Land” from 1999 to 2002 were the best demonstrations.

This article tries to describe Ms. Lai’s dedications to arts for nearly three decades according to four phases as follows:

Phase I from 1977 to 1988: In Search of Artistic Utopia

[Contemplation]

After obtaining her Master of Arts degree from Tama Art University in Tokyo, Japan in 1987, Ms. Lai got accepted into Pratt Institute of New York, U.S.A. to study lithographs/woodblock printing/woodcut. It was the time in the U.S.A. when “Neo-Geo” paintings and Trans-Avant-Garde paintings were actively on display in SoHo galleries in New York. Simultaneously, Museum of Modern Arts and Whitney Museum of American Art highlighted Dada activities, Surrealism, collage and assemblage and installation work in Pop Arts. Inspired by the aforesaid new influences, Ms. Lai returned to the origin of artistic creations. She leaped from the pure depiction forms and began to combine different materials and apply the indirect traces transferred from woodblocks in her artworks. Holding a personal exhibition in the “American Cultural Center” Taipei, Taiwan in 1981, Ms. Lai already displayed her uniqueness and versatility in utilizing different materials. Her artwork titled “**Summer Ocean**” was created on a transparent celluloid sheet with a combination of blobs of paints, splashes and collage. This artwork demonstrated liquidity, layers and transparency. It not only expressed her personality traits but also struck up conversations with viewers.

“Originality and personal styles are important when engaging oneself in arts. However, it’s even more important that a practitioner of art fuses his/her personal experiences, feelings, thoughts and emotions from real life and convey such sentiments by way of paintings. Viewers would therefore echo the artist’s sense and sensibility. To me, it’s significant whether an art piece can represent a certain period of time in history.” by Lai, Chun-Chun in 1981

Ms. Lai advocated that a material should not be used to resemble another material. Each material had its own meaning for existence. Her unique perspective and attitude toward materials could be best exemplified in her personal exhibition in Japan in 1977 when her adviser Professor O-Ban of Tama Art University said, “Ms. Lai’s artworks show me the pigments.” Each material was presented as is while also inter-related. A material was a state of being in stead of a replacement. Ms. Lai therefore “expressed” rather than “presented” her arts in the form of Minimalism/Minimal Art when the work was stripped down to its most fundamental features.

“Strip everything else. Let colors see themselves. Let lines draw themselves. As to the overall spaces, why do colors turn into blue, white, red or green? Why do lines go horizontally or vertically? Even the colors and lines have no ideas in advance. Who else can we ask those questions?” By Taiwan’s poet Mr. Lo, Man

The 1980s was an important period of time in the development of Taiwan’s contemporary arts when myriads of artists who studied and practiced arts abroad returned to Taiwan and brought home the innovative forms and concepts. Such a change decomposed the original structure in Taiwan’s arts environment previously manipulated by arts schools and commercial art galleries. One after another, Mr. Lin, Richard (England), Mr. Tsong, Pu (Spain) and Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun (U.S.A.) came back to Taiwan and frequently met local artists such as Mr. Chang, Yung-Chun and Mr. Hu, Kwen-Jong to discuss essence of arts and exchange ideas. Together they held an exhibition titled “Atypical Dimensional Spaces” in 1984 and another titled “Supra-dimensional Spaces” in 1985 respectively in Taipei’s Spring Gallery. They pioneered a dialogue in art trends and clans regarding minimal limits, compositions and materials. In terms of formality, Ms. Lai’s work gradually evolved from two-dimensional to three-dimensional.

Established in December of 1983, Taipei Fine Arts Museum (referred to as “TFAM” hereinafter) was the first public art institution in Taiwan that advocated contemporary arts. Situated in a modern building on top of a piece of spacious land, TFAM holds art competitions titled “New Perspectives” and “Contemporary Sculptures Exhibitions” and also provides awards and prizes as well as spotlights to encourage local artists to engage in more artistic innovations. Besides, TFAM aggressively organizes exhibitions with special themes and actively participates in international art events. Avant-garde arts therefore bring vitality to Taiwan.

Taiwan’s arts were burgeoning when Ms. Lai returned to Taiwan in 1981. She ambitiously held personal exhibitions and participated in competitions to play an important role in this new era. Her active involvements created a high visibility and drew much attention. Her momentum in artistic creations and bright colors in artworks gradually formed a

unique personal style.

Ms. Lai's artwork was selected by the TFAM's "Contemporary Sculptures Exhibitions" in 1984. She won a silver award in "New Perspectives - Singing Praises" in 1985 and a gold award in "Contemporary Sculptures Exhibitions - Nihilism". She also submitted entries to "Avant-garde Art/Installations/Spaces" in 1985 and "Experiments/Behaviors/Spaces" in 1987.

"Ms. Lai's artwork of 'Nihilism' uses colors of red, green, yellow and black that twirl, float and fly in the air to compose an image of the spectrum. Such an arrangement breaks through the law of existence of lights and colors. Among the changes, viewers can feel a supreme spiritual level unimaginable to artists of Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism. Such visual effects are difficult to reach." by Mr. Lee, Zai-Chie

In 1986, Ms. Lai established "SOCA Contemporary Art Studio" on Chien-Kuo North Road of Taipei City, where gatherings were frequently organized for artists such as Mr. Tsong, Pu, Mr. Lu, Ming-Der, Mr. Chang, Yung-Chun, Mr. Yeh, Ju-Sheng, Mr. Hu, Kwen-Jong, Poet Mr. Lo, Man and Art Critic Mr. Wang, Je-Shung. Ms. Lai also offered small-scaled art classes regarding latest concepts. Artists including Ms. Shiao, Li-Hung, Ms. Chen, Chang-Li, Ms. Chen, Hwei-Chiao of IT Park, Mr. Liu, Ching-Tang and Hwang, Wen-Hao all played important roles. In the same year, she held an exhibition of "Environment/Installations/Tape Recordings" as a grand opening for her "SOCA Contemporary Art Studio". Full of enthusiasm and idealism, her artworks had a huge influence over the young artists and also stimulated ardent discussions about installation arts. The exhibitions inside her studio set a milestone at the time when exhibitions were generally held by public institutions. In 1995, SOCA recruited 10 young practitioners of arts to establish "Mobile Studio '95" that offered 6-month-long courses and promoted the "Fundamental Education and Appetence" exhibition that took place in a deserted beer house.

[SOCA III on Chien-Kuo North Road of Taipei City, Taiwan in 1995]

"This specific location provided an epitome of Taiwan for the past 50 years. It offered a reflection of humanistic fundamental education and appetite during this period of time. Every existing element is part of the content. Space is not only a background but also plays an irreplaceable role. The process, state and experience can be considered as activities rather than exhibitions. Some activities interact with objects, others relate to objects, still others connect to human beings and instant spaces. Instant spaces are absolute spaces. The absolute state of being is irreplaceable and cannot be pondered, repeated or persisted. " by Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun

[Existence and Changes]

Our spirits are absolute existence and will never be eliminated. Time and space exists separately. Things change frequently, but formality is fixed and eternal. It's an essence of philosophy. Things are the same, while forms vary.

“Among the never-ending transitions and shifts, there is only one thing that never changes: the nature of existence. Therefore, we must know the basic feature that exists in every event. We must see through the same human nature regardless of environments and customs. Immortal thoughts and art pieces are developed from experiences in life. On the contrary, those developed from concepts are at most duplications of sensible thoughts, or are simply tailor-made products for human needs.”
By artist Mr. Richard Lin

Having enjoyed fame in England, Mr. Richard Lin returned to Taiwan in 1982 and formed a spiritual group with Mr. Tsong, Pu, Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun, Mr. Chang, Yung-Chun, and Mr. Hu, Kwen, Jong. Mr. Lin's advocate for extremity of arts and absolute perspective about nature became a spiritual guidance for these young artists. They gave up everything and devoted themselves to discussing essence and ideals about arts and also searched for primitive forms of life and a pure world. The ideology and idealism reflected Ms. Lai's innermost attributes and aroused her enthusiasm for arts and aspiration for purity. It was a critical moment in Ms. Lai's art-dedicated life. She left Taiwan again and departed for Europe where she lived in exile as she thought that perhaps artists needed to undergo challenges and solitude in order to explore life. Mr. Lin ignited Ms. Lai's passion in a different perspective toward arts.

“Existence and changes are the essence of life and nature. ‘Changes’ are unlimited continuance of ‘existence’, whereas ‘existence’ is a form of unlimited ‘changes’.” by Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun

Phase II from 1988 to 1994: Cultural Identity

“Leaping over Horizon”

“Human beings are limited to the law of physics when viewing the world and universe, whether two-dimensional or three-dimensional, from the planet earth. Therefore, one must think beyond dimensions and see the universe and nature with direct visions. This is the way to sculpt nature. Control such a way with supra-sense and supra-sensibility. Formality is simply an outfit for inner essence --- Nature of Time, Nature of Spaces and Nature of Humanity ---” by Ms.

Lai, Chun-Chun

Living experiences in international art villages abroad inspired Ms. Lai to create arts in the latter half of the 1980s. She spent 6 months in IAAB (“International Exchange and Studio Program Basel” in English) in Basel, Switzerland in 1987 and began research on lines, paradigms, materials, lights and shadows and phenomena. The major elements in her artworks in this period were all black, white and transparent. She concentrated on the changes in shapes and the surroundings. She pursued absolute existence (colors/materials/shapes) and rationale to search for ego. She experienced the rational and strict Deutsche social orders inside a broad, bright and modern glass studio where pure rationale and geometric lines depicted contours of objects that changed under lights and shadows. The sharp contrast was her home culture with sub-tropical passions where organic lines/brushstrokes composed poetry, accompanied by southern Chinese Nan-guan music. Ms. Lai thus spent her time in such a “personal linear” retreat with two opposing extremes.

Residing in San Francisco in the U.S.A. from 1989 to 1994, Ms. Lai held exhibitions in many countries during this period. She discovered how different she was from the Western thinking, thus began to revert to Eastern aesthetics (paintings/music/poetry). Facing the cultural differences, she realized the value of “existence” in stead of “concepts” and further conceived relations between others and oneself, humans and society and humans and nature. She then presented her perspectives to sculpt nature: Nature of Time, Nature of Spaces and Nature of Humanity. Her new series of paintings during this period were presented by using the finest quality of traditional Chinese art supplies such as bamboo paper and silk canvases. Her artworks were filled with Chinese brushstrokes, floral patterns, calligraphy and poetry.

At Ms. Lai’s exhibition in Nabis Gallery in Tokyo, Japan in 1991, Japanese art critique Mr. Minemura, Toshiaki made a written comment on the exhibition pamphlet of Ms. Lai’s artwork “**Viewing the Flying Red of Peach Blossoms in March**”: to see “flying red” does not mean to see from the third party or become an observer by getting away from the world. The floating flower pedals of peach blossoms are red and well blend in the peach trees in the wilds. The floating red flower pedals witness the flying red color in the mountains and also enjoy such a passionate sentiment out in the fields.

In this phase, Ms. Lai spent two months in Laquepie, a town in Southern France. She also went to San-Yi Wood-carving Village, home of wood sculpture in Taiwan. Her artworks developed from two-dimensional paintings to three-dimensional sculptures. She polished wood pieces and eliminated the wood grains with lead powder in order to minimize the bulky impressions of wood, allowing the lines to catch attentions. Her

single-body sculpture resembled the organic body of a plant's seed that possesses strong vitality. Geometric lines worked harmoniously with organic hand-painted lines. Different elements blended very well with the sculpture itself.

“The most important elements in Ms. Lai’s artworks are running lights and permeable moisture, rather than painting skills or expressions of topics. It is not a coincidence. She cleverly incorporates both the traditional Chinese literary painting styles and the modern American Abstract Expressionistic styles. A higher altitude is embodied in the floating brushstrokes. Besides, her paintings fuse different elements to form a pleasing and satisfactory combination.

There is an interesting interaction between viewers and the artworks/sculpture. Such an interaction includes viewers’ sense of participation in the artist’s creations, viewers’ temptations to touch the artwork, viewers’ bewilderment in understanding the artwork, and even a sexual metaphor. A combination of two diverse components is not mechanical, conceptual, pictorial or linguistic. On the contrary, one element strikes up conversations with the other. Furthermore, perhaps two elements evolve into three.”
By Mr. Minemura, Toshiaki

Phase III from 1995 to 1999: Land and Memories

Criticisms regarding historical, political and social issues became the dominant course after the Martial Laws were lifted in 1987. Taiwanese culture caught the public’s attention. Women began to probe into female issues that were widely discussed and also to scrutinize the gender issue in politics. Manifold thinking and developments prevailed Taiwan’s society. In response to the social and cultural changes, arts were also presented in manifold forms, without certain paradigms, standards, topics, or contents. Everybody could be an artist and used the materials whichever he/she considered the best to express the theme of his/her artwork.

“Single-armed Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, a Buddhist ascetic, once stated, ‘One’s heart still works even if his/her mind is pure and empty.’. If Samantabhadra Bodhisattva remained quite, a silent message could yet be relayed through heart. Dispositions could also be seen. I rose as a wild lily and stood in front of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva with my chest open. It was a pious act. However, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva could see through my heart even if I did not cut open my chest with an axe. My heart is like an almost empty well. At the bottom of the well, water is placid like a mirror. It is clear, colorless, tasteless, yet drinkable and never dries up. You can see me from the top of the well and I can see you, too.” By Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun

Ms. Lai relocated back to Taiwan in 1995. Her **“Heart Series”** installation work dug into her inner world to express her memories and Taiwan identity. Her **“Site Specific”** artworks included: **“Heart Residence”**, **“Heart Automobiles”**, **“Heart Tools”**, **“Heart Medicine”**, **“Heart Water”**, **“Heart Fire”**, **“Heart Fields”** and **“Heart Soil”**. She searched for collective memories and employed concrete objects to depict, interpret and judge the social atmosphere, phenomena and culture. She integrated ancient, modern, Eastern and Western aesthetics into her artworks. After her exploration of existence and changes, she further looked within herself and expressed her perspectives and feelings by way of artistic creations.

The **“Heart Series”** originated from the quotation of **“One’s heart still works even if his/her mind is pure and empty.”** The statue of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva was placed inside an unadorned and broken model. The model could be regarded as the Buddhist doctrine as well as human concepts. The biggest energy within the model was **“emptiness”**. Such **“emptiness”** symbolized the ever-changing paradigms and unknown subconscious and potency. It was abstract, yet influential.

Ms. Lai’s **“Mobile Art Museum - Ju-Wei Studio”** was located by the riverside of Tam-Shui River at the foot of Guan-Yin (a Buddhist symbol Avalokiteśvara) Mountain. Ms. Lai was inspired by the beautiful shape of the Guan-Yin Mountain that she began her piece of **“Heart Residence”**. Numerous paper strips with Ms. Lai’s hand-written **“Buddhist Heart Sutra”** were hung and arranged like a tent. A recycled blender was placed inside as a tower to form a sacrificial altar. In her **“Heart Tools”** artwork, Ms. Lai constructed the **“Guan-Yin Statues in Respective Five Colors”**. In front of Guan-Yin statues, there was a simulated abstract projection cut from thin lead board to symbolize heart reflection, meaning that Guan-Yin was a spiritual projection. Ms. Lai presented this piece to her mother. Her intention was to show how women surpassed men in the patriarchy society. Motivated by her ascetic life when hand-writing **“Buddhist Heart Sutra”**, the **“Heart Series”** were new manifestations of feminism.

Art critique Ms. Lai, Ying-Ying commented in her article of **“The Minds, Spirits and Artistic Manifestations of Taiwanese Women”** that the **“Heart Series”** were presented in avant-garde forms in an attempt to cross borders, cultures and gender to express the artist’s introspection, criticism and concerns about religions and the Taiwanese society. The statues of single-armed Samantabhadra Bodhisattva and Guan-Yin are simply emblems. The core value lies in the wooden or metal artwork shaped like a **“seed”** that symbolizes tolerance, understanding and forgiveness.

“Heart Medicine - A Strong Aphrodisiac”

This artwork displayed the original status of depressions and bipolarity in Taiwan's society. Fiddle-faddle becomes well-known social news given the mass media are now weighted in favor of trivia. It is a trivia-consuming society in Taiwan. A dinner party titled "Aphrodisiac Banquet" was served during the opening ceremony for the "Heart Series" exhibitions. Various characters in bizarre social events in real life, namely the religious con artist Mr. Sung, Chi-Li and the Bikini girls who sell betel nuts, played important roles in a sarcastic yet entertaining episode in the artistic performance of the ceremony. Toilet seats surrounded a white table on the exhibition floor. A golden sandalwood incense burner was put on top of a table that resembled the cover of a toilet seat. Both are metaphors of absurdity. A container in the shape of a fly's dissection contains a slimy live loach that symbolizes Taiwan's bipolarity. The evening came to a climax when water and the loach were splashed across the floor and Ms. Lai, dressed in the five-poison costume with the Wain/Dipper Sword in her hand, played a role as an exorcist who danced to the music to pray for the people. The performance was full of the Chinese Daoistic atmosphere and it served as a transition to a spiritual magnetic field.

"Heart Fire - Inner Energy"

This installation work was located on the lawn in National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung, Taiwan. Nine white tents represented nine aboriginal tribes in Taiwan. Lights inside the tents glittered when night fell. There was a stone in each tent. Each stone was carved with various fire totems created by the nine tribes respectively. Visitors could cover the stones with vermilion ink and make an ink-rubbing impression on paper as a souvenir to take home with. This handiwork could be regarded as a form of momentum to carry the message from the ancient time when the universe, the nature, human bodies, minds and spirits were integrated with one another compatibly.

"In comparison with other installation work with explicit ideas and shapes, the "Heart Series" artworks are understated, metaphorical, serene and more personal. From a viewer's first impression, these artworks relay a message between Abstract Expressionism and Realism. They reflect real life experiences while sometimes demonstrate the artist's aesthetic point of view. They indicate a Chinese philosophy that 'Zen exists in materials and objects while everything vanishes eventually'. The installation work well blends into the background territory. Ms. Lai's contemplation about time is very impressive." By Mr. Jiang, Yien-Tao

Phase IV from 1999 to 2002: "Juvenescent Fairy Land"

"During those good old days in Basel, Switzerland, glass windows reflected numerous images of me. It was hard to tell which one was real. I constructed myriads of small

transparent acrylic models. These goblins turned into butterflies under shadows and lights. With elegant posture, they defied gravity to fly past time and space, or even transmogrified into a beam of lights or luminous stripes. They mutated from material forms to spiritual concepts that glowed in the air.” By Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun in 1987

The 21st century marks a digital period that cruises between the actual and virtual worlds. Images can easily be reproduced, corresponding to existence and changes in time. Mundane matters no longer bother artists' open minds.

Ms. Lai began to tend to the hidden power of the subconscious. She had accumulated vitality and momentum from the “Existence and Changes” period in Phase I and her artworks were always centered on the theme of “Colors and Emptiness”. Going forward in the 21st century, Ms. Lai, without the burden of stereotypes, enjoys the freedom in utilizing colors. She devoted the past twenty years of her life to examining the relations between objects and spaces while colors were set aside. It was until her “**Juvenescent Fairy Land**” series in 2002 when colors became active again. Ms. Lai previously tried to grab colorless clouds in the sky during Phase I. In Phase IV, however, she transformed herself into a beam of lights and floated among the clouds.

Ms. Lai's artwork titled “**Alice in Wonderland**” was displayed in Asiaworld Shopping Mall in Taipei, Taiwan in 2000. Giant colorful balloons in flower shapes decorated the showroom where Beethoven's Piano Sonata “Fur Elise” could be heard and the aroma of rosemary could be smelled. Participants/visitors were like miniature Alice, a child with changeable sizes, who set off for an interesting yet complicated adventure.

Another artwork titled “**Nuwa Returns to Fairy Land**” (Nuwa is a mythological character known for creating and reproducing people) was displayed in Museum of Contemporary Arts Taipei, Taiwan in 2001. Participants/visitors had to lift the furry curtains to enter the showroom in the color of bright fuschia. The showroom resembled an ancient Chinese temple surrounded by mystical and humid atmosphere. Nuwa's humming filled the air. Participants/visitors stepped on long-fiber carpet and felt a familiar temperature. Hung on the ceiling were transparent lines that constituted the contours of a female body. Lights from behind this flying object cast a shadow in the shape of a sword.

“Ruby-red lights twirl in the carpet fibers and emit mystic moisture. We are inside the secret chamber of a womb that produces life. Our lost memories are thus connected to life's origin. Life Tree keeps a record of the past and present. Nuwa fairy opens her wings to fly past the fears made by her own shadows and soars into the air above a pasture. Recollections hence are brought back.” by Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun

The multi-media installation work of “**An Island in the Sky**” was displayed in Wharf II Arts District, Kaohsiung, Taiwan and in Total Museum, Seoul, Korea in 2002.

“An island stands for solitude and enclosure. An extensive ocean stands for imaginations and hopes. The sky makes a supra-connection of them both, whether or not visible or possible. Such a supra-connection floats across the boundaries. Transparent fairies fly through the sunlight above this island in the sky.” By Ms. Lai, Chun-Chun

Ms. Lai incorporated the skills of web interaction and serial novels in the artwork titled “**An Island in the Sky**”. White spots in the gray carpet stood for white clouds in the ocean. Placed on top of the “island” in the shape of a glass disc were miniature toy models including figurines, a princess, a gorilla, a dinosaur, soldiers, a green-face pig, a furry bunny, a lizard, and a paper boat. It was an emotional mixture of absurdity, naivety, disorder, loveliness, alienation, anxiety and attractiveness. Enlarged images on the internet drew away temperature and humidity.

Ms. Lai’s novel thus began

Blue lights emit from a monitor in a range of mountains in the west. A bird, oh, no, many kinds of birds wake up to eat bugs. Hung in the air are pinkish mists and fog that blur in the eastern sky. Such soft pinkish lights reflect on the fast-moving eyes of little bunnies. Starless skies discharge a beam of green lights, where waves of fine droplets expand. The music recordings of Johann Sebastian Bach played by the most celebrated Canadian pianist Glenn Herbert Gould flow in the air.

Nothing is visible under tree shades. Depression and anxiety cause the sweat to wet my entire face. I step back, but fall into a deep hole. I’m mesmerized and try to support myself with hands. However, my hands touch something as soft as plump lips. Chilly water is crystal clear. Blue droplets float on the mint leaves as if they were sewn on by hands. Chilly mint water slide into my body and penetrate each of my body cell, arousing my desires.

“What’s the matter?” The green-face pig squints up at the princess and makes bubbles when opening its mouth to speak. The princess opens her eyes to see past willows.

“Happy birthday!”

“There are so many little fish. A lot of colorful fish.”

“Do fish fly in the sky?”

“The invention of internet expands the world and allows people to cruise the virtual reality. The internet media is a special system for distributing and sharing information to make it available for practically everybody. Every internet user has controls over the media. In the internet age when everyone is a reader, interpreter and author at the same time, information is dynamic and organic. There are unlimited possible interpretations and such creations are made with a relaxed attitude like a playing a game. The meaning of a piece of information is constantly disassembled and reconstructed by repetitive reading, understanding and interpretations. However, one cannot help but falls into the trap of never-ending inquisitions. Information can thus be superficial, loose, vague and even uncertain.” By Mr. Chen, Shui-Tsai, Assistant Professor, Architecture Department of National Chen Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

CONCLUSION

Public art is a tough task to integrate personal artistic creations with certain public surroundings. People are invited to conduct dialogues with art in public spaces where art can also talk back to its audience with unusual directness. Ms. Lai has recently participated aggressively in public art activities. She challenges traditional definition of art forms by fusing digital and internet tools into paintings, sculptures and installation work. Art can therefore be exhibited in a variety of configurations. Her passions and impulsiveness for artistic innovations thus pass the tests. Her ideas and believes can ultimately be presented and materialized in her unique way.

“**Young Mei-Le-Di**” in 1998 is Ms. Lai’s first piece of installation work in public art having been displayed at Nanshijiao Station of Taipei Metro System.

Lyrics of the song “The Juvenescent Mountain”

*A couple went to the Juvenescent Mountain
Birds chirped to welcome the couple
Crystal-clear creek reflected the couple’s images
Mother Nature played the music and rhythms
Red flower petals with white stamens blossomed on mountain tops
Bees flied with freedom among flowers*

*The Mountain was cooled by the spring breeze
The sky was clear and cloudless
The couple enjoyed the beautiful spring scene
The couple fell in love in the Juvenescent Mountain
Let's go to the Juvenescent Mountain!*

“The Juvenescent Mountain” was an old Taiwanese song that inspired Ms. Lai in her “**Young Mei-Le Di**”. The lyrics described the adventurous, hard-working yet optimistic dispositions and aspirations of freedom of Taiwanese people. Being juvenescent is a collective memory, full of perspiration, tears, warmth, affections and laughter. Our lives are surrounded by the Sun, the blue sky, beautiful flowers, and bird’s happy chirpings. Ms. Lai was inspired by such juvenescence and transformed the natural elements into her modern creations of various shapes and colors. Her artwork of “**Young Mei-Le-Di**” was composed of bright and colorful sculpture made of acrylics and epoxy resin. Lights pass through the interesting multiple-shaped sculpture. The vivid artwork is the best interpretation of the vigorous crowd in metropolitan Taipei. The Chinese word “Mei-Le-Di” originates from the English vocabulary “melody” while two words share similar pronunciation. “Mei-Le-Di” means pure land with joy. Ms. Lai hopes that busy metro passengers such as white-collar workers, students, senior citizens and children can release their pressures and fatigues and look to the bright side as well as search for inner peace when they see her work of “**Young Mei-Le-Di**”.

Located at the north-bound parking entrance of Shi-Hu Rest Area of the Second Highway in southern Taiwan since 2003, “**Work Together with One Heart**” is made of colorful steels. The sculptures are shaped like traditional Chinese mythical dragon, phoenix and Kirin that represent speed. Such good omens bring prosperity, promotions and excellent descendants. Curved steel pieces are intertwined with exaggerated postures. Bright tropical colors bring vigor. It is fine contemporary work.

“**Apocalypse of Taiwan County**” in 2003 contains two huge colorful screens displayed inside the glass windows at the lobbies of both the eastern and western wings to the main entrance of Taipei County Administration Building. The first screen titled “**Mien and Bearing**” depicts natural geography and interprets the literary aspect of Taipei County. On the screen are blobs of paints in different colors, shapes and sizes. There are also dynamic lines derived from traditional Chinese literati painting styles. A combination of Chinese and Western art fashions, the paintings are made with moving perspectives from a bird’s eye view. The second screen titled “**Constructive Dynamism**” expresses the industrialized appearance of modern Taipei County, a concrete city jungle comprised of factories and also a center of blooming economy in northern Taiwan. Geometric shapes are painted with different colors. Circles represent completion and perfections.

Geometric lines represent accuracy and precision. Such a composition translates into a constructive dynamism of Taipei County.

“**Dragonflies**” in 2003 won a gold medal in Taiwan’s Public Art Competition and is currently displayed at Gu-Keng Rest Area of the Second Highway in southern Taiwan.

Both “**Make a Fortune**” and “**Harmony**” in 2002 won a gold medal in Taiwan’s public Art Competition and are displayed at Yuan-Shan Branch of Bank of Taiwan, Taipei.

Ms. Lai’s engagements in public art can be dated back to 1993 when she began her participation in the public art activities in San Francisco, U.S.A. Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs commenced promotions for public art in 1996 by encouraging artists to design installation work for Cultural Centers island-wide. Ms. Lai has since played an active role. Public artworks barely express individualism. Human aspect as well as specific geographical locations and surroundings need to be taken into consideration. Besides the adeptness in artistic creations, artists need to take account of other areas of expertise, namely architecture, landscapes, structures, materials, productions, maintenances and appraisals. Aside from artistic ideas and forms of expressions, an appropriate balance between art and engineering need to be reached. Personal styles and persistence and believes in arts are also necessary. From her participation in public art, Ms. Lai demonstrates her amazing creativity, talents and tenacity. She orchestrates a tremendous harmony between her public artwork and the relative environment. Public art is a tough challenge to artists as they need to encounter difficulties such as bureaucratic rules and regulations of opens bids, a complicated execution process, long working hours, deadline pressures, public scrutiny and examinations. Artists’ aggressive involvements in public art reveal a fact that they suffer economic hardship in Taiwan’s art market. Public art is probably the only prominent theater stage to perform art. Ms. Lai has worked very hard to create this stage. Her persistence pays off by winning awards in a number of public art competitions.