

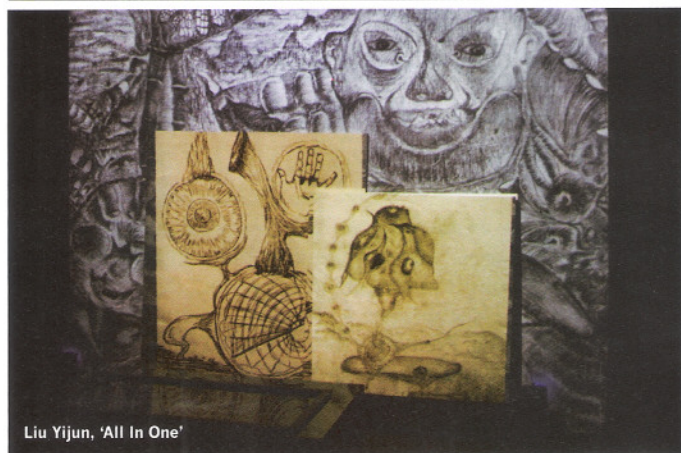
ART REVIEW By Berwin Song and Caroline Welles

When technology imitates art

MoCA's latest exhibit explores the relationship between artists and technology



Zeng Xiaoping, 'Water, Voice'



Liu Yijun, 'All In One'



Rolf Kleunter and Cheng Zhi, 'Core Periphery One'

While most museum exhibits have a strictly-enforced "do not touch" policy on all works of art on display, MoCA's latest show, entitled *Merging, Emerging – Art, Utopia and Virtual Reality*, provides Shanghai with a refreshing dose of hands-on, interactive designs, inviting you to wander through, explore and even kick various pieces.

Such low-brow amusement, however, belies the decidedly high-brow concept of the exhibit, which ultimately (after unraveling layers of artistic jargon) is meant to explore the relationship between art and technology.

Designed as a collaboration between the participating artists (22 in all) and artistic director Joe Hu, the exhibit uses various methods of displaying the basic works, often integrating different media. Several pieces become sensory experiences, such as with Liu Yijun's 'All In One,'

which allows you to rotate through a selection of Liu's sketches on a touch screen. Once selected, the image is projected onto the wall; each sketch is accompanied by a different piece of music (Liu, by the way, is perhaps better known as Lao Wu of China's first metal rock band Tang Dynasty). A successful application of technology includes Hu Jun's 'Elements,' in which viewers are encouraged to send an SMS to a listed phone number. Shortly after texting, an image (corresponding to the number) will appear within the constantly morphing backdrop.

Not every piece is a hit, though. We were clearly looking forward to the kickable elements of Rolf Kleunter and Cheng Zhi's 'Core Periphery One,' but the resulting effect was hardly noticeable. Likewise, Zeng Xiaoping's installation of a smoking fountain set in the middle of a dark room

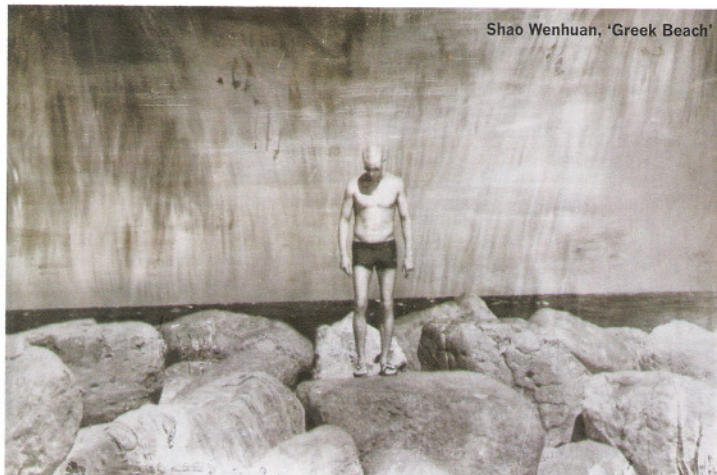
may initially pique one's interest, but ultimately it remains unsatisfyingly meaningless. And given the emphasis on "new technology," the inclusion of several oil paintings seems disconnected from the rest of the exhibit.

MoCA curator Victoria Lu revealed that a street-side encounter with artist Li Lei (who contributed several acrylic paintings to the exhibit, and stated at the opening, "technology may free the artist from being limited by technique") spawned the idea for the exhibit. MoCA's description backs Li's sentiment: "Art is no longer just about aesthetics; it is also part of our daily lives." Whether you agree or not, *Merging-Emerging* offers an opportunity to experience a wide range of new media art. And if you don't like it, at least you can give it a good, hard kick. // MoCA, through

June 30 (6327 1282)



Nadav Kandor, 'I Wish I Were Near You'



Shao Wenhuan, 'Greek Beach'

ARTYFACTS By Berwin Song and Caroline Welles

The odd couples

m97 and Eastlink offer exhibitions of paired photography

It's always hard to ignore m97 Gallery's group exhibitions – even when they're not trying. Their latest exhibit, a collection of works from 14 of the gallery's artists under the heading *Parallax*, came together "by accident," according to gallery director Steve Harris. The original idea, he explains, was to have a simple showcase for a number of m97 artists – providing a bit of breathing space after their painstakingly selected *Exquisite Corpse* exhibition. Instead, as the gallery went about looking through their catalog, their basic showcase turned into a fully-fledged thematic concept, offering pairs of similar works from different periods in each artist's career.

Of the 14 artists represented in this exhibit, Harris takes pleasure in explaining the circumstances of each pairing. He points to Greg Girard's 'House on Huangpi Lu #1,' a striking image of a solo free-standing house in the midst of a recently demolished street, then gestures to 'Sailor's Home, Vancouver' from 1973, one of Girard's earliest works,

commenting: "There's over 30 years between those photos – but the themes are still the same. That's amazing."

Certainly, while not every artist included has such dramatic, career-spanning connections, there's still much to marvel over. Nadav Kandor manages to find similar compositions along the Yangtze River and a Los Angeles highway, while Michael Wolf's dedication to urban density is expressed in three different works. And Han Lei's portrait shots remain provocative, whether candidly in 1989 or staged in 2007.

The exhibition has been extended to the 15th of the month, after which the gallery will begin to prepare for a different type of pairing: contrasting solo exhibitions of Lu Jun and Sun Ji, opening on the 18th. Likewise, Eastlink Gallery's *Transposing the Common* exhibition combines the work of two photographers, one from Europe (Dutch photographer Hans Wilschut) and one from China (Shao Wenhuan of Hangzhou),

and displays their pictures from opposite ends of the planet. Wilschut, having plenty of experience traveling far and wide, offers portraits depicting the often-ugly effects of urban development and globalization – notably, however, his portrayal of Shanghai's Lupu Bridge is both beautiful and a bold statement of urbanization.

In contrast (and in black and white), Shao Wenhuan travels to various historical sites around the world and photographs tourists. Believing that "the conception of history is more important than history itself," Shao prefers to focus on the beauty found in tourism. Pairing such disparate visions may not provide much common ground, but gallery director Charlotte Vurpas offers: "They are both taking pictures of common scenes... [as well as] both traveling outside homelands to catch a view from the outside." Hence: *Transposing the Common*. // m97 Gallery (6266 1597); Eastlink Gallery, from April 4-25 (6276 9932)



Xujie

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