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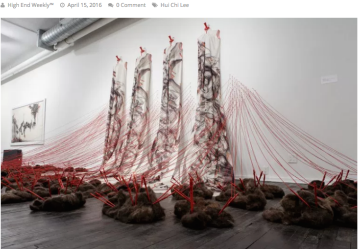
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Hui Chi Lee's Artwork: Calligraphy in Motion

By High End Design | April 15, 2014 | 4 Comments | No Photos



Hui Chi Lee's work show 'Tian Chi' is now on display until May at Flagship New Arts in Soho, New York.

The big apple is place where an inner culture and its outer places can this be best than American Soho, the East Village and of course, the Chelsea area. Back in March, we visited Flagship New Arts in Soho gallery which is a remarkable contemporary Chinese gallery with its galleries and had the opportunity to meet American artist Hui Chi Lee. This was his first show in New York, where he presented a new body of hand drawn graphite pen and colored pencil works on paper, as well as a hanging sculpture made of traditional, vertical 'Tian Chi'. The works were filled with energy and a modern spirit, which reflected his distinct paintings that can somehow be compared to 'Calligraphy in Motion'. In fact, his latest series is a true reflection of American cultural traditions that can seem expressive in contemporary society.

High End Design: "How was it growing up in Taiwan? and what were your early influences as an artist?"

Hui Chi Lee: I remember growing up in my mother's village, she taught me to sit with my back from the floor on the floor to the matras, several high above. Her painting attention to detail never left me. Art and hand-drawn artwork were always a part of my life. 'Tian Chi' is my current show at Flagship New Arts, it is a homage to her and my large family.



Hui Chi Lee

High End Design: Your body of work is heavily tinged with metaphoric messages, is that purposeful or is it part of your subconscious?

Hui Chi Lee: That is an excellent question on metaphoric, just as general of my culture. The use of figurative is metaphorical for long history, values and questions about life or earth. The focus is based on physical and symbolic motifs. For me.

High End Design: You currently have a show at Flagship, a contemporary fine arts gallery in Soho where you're showcasing a new body of hand drawn graphite pen and colored pencil works on paper, as well as an impressive sculptural installation, entitled "Tian Chi." Tell us about this project.

Hui Chi Lee: The title of series "Tian Chi" derives from a pair of Chinese homophones which, depending on the context, mean "to connect" and "to separate". On one hand, these two pair of words explore the tension and dynamics within human relationships. On the other, they explore how these same forces may connect or separate humans when negative forces come into play. While this series is in part a reflection on Chinese cultural traditions that can seem oppressive I believe it can be applied more broadly to the human experience.



Hui Chi Lee

Hair and eyebrows are visible motifs in this series. In Chinese tradition, length hair symbolizes longevity. Hair signifies the duration of life, an expression of which we see in their bodies. While we may not have hair, the hair and eyebrows are visible motifs. Through their stability and continuity, they reveal our inner conflict and calm is disrupted or unraveled by a fluid, ever-changing, and ever-evolving. Color is introduced here in a symbolic, metaphorical way. Red symbolizes both warning and an awakening moment in life.



Hui Chi Lee

High End Design: Are hand drawn graphite pen and colored pencil works on paper an investment? By its nature, paper is fragile, how should collectors care for this type of work?

Hui Chi Lee: All of my work is 100% archival, from paper to pigments. As with all artwork, placing it out of direct sunlight is always a good idea.

High End Design: This is another two-part question – Can you shed some light on what you meant regarding your earlier work "Morning Cargas and Walking Poets" when you said "Regardless of differences between nations and social structures, the flagrant reality remains on consumption and a lack of consideration given to spiritual dimensions have placed a heavy burden on contemporary life. Artists come together to make visible light of our materialistic desires and endless wants, and our craving for constant new forms on the subject to connect the spirit." Can this be said, for artists about the current state of the art market?

Hui Chi Lee: I have selected the qualities we associate with memories—places and figures that, traumatic and ambiguous as a vehicle to prompt a discourse on these seemingly contradictory but connected conditions. The carefully arranged materials for figures in these paintings feel self-determined and appear graceful, much the more vulnerable and invisible human beings in today's society. I want to encourage the viewer to consider this human condition as a critical and historic moment.



Hui Chi Lee: 'Tian Chi'

The answer depends on the viewer's own perceptions and projections. My work serves as a visual riddle for each viewer to decipher. The elements in each drawing seek to convey the imperceptible influence that an inherited tradition can have on each mentally, forcing one to look for an effort to break.

High End Design: I understand that you are currently teaching applied arts at the North Carolina Agricultural University. What do you tell your students about the future of contemporary art?

Hui Chi Lee: My students are always working within the context of their generation. I encourage them to explore the world and their place in it.

High End Design: When you travel around the world, what do you look for in these different cultures? What are your go-to museums, restaurants, and galleries around the globe?



Photo: Courtesy of Hui Chi Lee, opening of Flagship New Arts in Soho, New York.

Hui Chi Lee: It is the moments that I least expect to happen that I become more inspired by. In a short, it is in the small moments and details that we experience things in a new way. This is what I hope to capture in my new body of work.