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***Visualising Culture and Gender:  
Postcolonial Feminist Analyses of Women's  
Exhibitions in Taiwan, 1996-2003***

by

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A Doctoral Thesis

**Submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of**

Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

May 2008

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*For my beloved parents,*  
*Mr Chen Wu-Lung (       ) and Mrs Chen Liu Wan-Tze (       ),*  
*and my brothers,*  
*Chen Rui-Hong (       ) and Chen Tzung-Ching (       )*

## Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines a selection of Taiwanese women's exhibitions, held between 1996 and 2003. It explores the questions related to contemporary Taiwanese women's art and how art exhibitions can demonstrate women's role in the post-martial law period (since 1987) in the intersections of Taiwan's culture, history, economy, social classes and its relationship with the rest of the globe. It investigates the particular perspectives that women artists (as the subordinate part of Taiwan's patriarchal society) have contributed to the interpretation of the complex nature of Taiwanese presence. It also aims to identify a wide range of dimensions that women's art exhibitions enable us to question women's particular contribution to visualising the concepts and impact of what constitutes the multiple Taiwanese identities.

The research is driven by a triangular relationship, consisting of theory, culture and art, in which each element influences the other two. As my focus is on the ambivalent and hybridised culture of Taiwan, I have chosen specific postcolonial and feminist theories to examine its art.

I have categorised my thesis into three parts, covering six selected exhibitions. In Part I (Re-positioning History), I juxtapose both political and economic histories and examine issues related to national identity, nationalism, working-class women, industrialisation and Subaltern Studies. In the second Part (Colonial Heritage), my focus is centred on physical colonial space and on domestic micro space, where Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and in-betweenness are the main themes to address the ambiguity of Taiwanese conditions. In Part III (International Perspectives), my concern is the position of contemporary Taiwan, dealing with issues related to Westernisation, globalisation, urbanism and cyberspace. I argue that a new form of identity is generated in cyberspace and that women artists are visualising hybridised culture in the virtual world. Ultimately, I propose that Taiwanese women artists are contributing to the visualisation of a hidden but essential part of Taiwan's historiography, as well as the shifting nature of contemporary Taiwanese culture, through which an open yet complex field is created for us to explore.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Preface	viii
Introduction	1
 <b>PART I</b>	
<b>Re-positioning History</b>	
1 Historical Narratives and National Identity: the <i>2.28 Commemorative Exhibition</i> (1997)	53
2 Economic History and Hidden Women: <i>Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself</i> (1997-1998)	98
 <b>PART II</b>	
<b>Colonial Heritage</b>	
3 Colonial Space: <i>Sweet and Sour Yeast</i> (2001-2002)	128
4 Micro Space: <i>BuBaoFu</i> (2003)	168
 <b>PART III</b>	
<b>International Perspectives</b>	
5 Globalisation and Urban Culture: <i>Taipei Biennial 1996</i>	205
6 Cyberfeminism and Discourses of Identity: <i>From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age</i> (2003)	247
 Conclusion	 284
 Glossary	 294
Bibliography	305
Appendix: illustrations	334

## Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to complete this thesis without help from many people who have been very kind in providing me with all sorts of support. I am extremely grateful for the inspirational and insightful supervision from both Dr Marsha Meskimmon and Dr Jane Tormey. I especially thank Dr Gillian Whiteley, who was extremely helpful in carefully reading through my first draft and suggesting ways to edit and improve my text and arguments. Thanks too, to my examiners, Dr Dorothy Rowe and Dr Marion Arnold, who provided me with many valuable and intellectual suggestions for improvement and corrections. I should also mention those colleagues in LUSAD and my friends who have been very supportive during my four years of research. My grateful thanks go to Dr Clive Edwards, Sandra Leeland, David Chapman, Kim Tyler, Deborah Harty, Raff Dewing, Andy Chong, Ben Dolman, Beccy Kennedy, Sue and Dave Clews. My previous colleagues in the Taiwanese Women's Art Association have also been very supportive, providing me with research materials and answering my enquires. Indeed, my involvement with the Association during 2001 and 2003 was my motivation to conduct this project. Therefore, I am deeply grateful to Professor Lin Pey-Chwen, Professor Victoria Lu, Chang Hui-Lan, Chen Yen-Shu, Chang Jin-Yu, Chien Fu-Yu, Hsiao Li-Hung, Lin Pin and Wu Mali.

On a personal note, I thank my beloved parents and brothers at home, on the other side of the world, who have always shown their respect for whatever I have planned to do, and for their trust that I can achieve my ambitions. Finally, I do not think that I could have finished my research without the care and love of my best friend and husband, Colin Turner, whose unwavering support, patience and wisdom have been invaluable on this journey of discovery.

## Preface

You go round the entire globe: when you know what everybody else is, then you are what they are not. Identity is always in that sense, a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negatives.<sup>1</sup>

September 2005 was an important moment in my life. It was then that I was unable to obtain a visa to visit Italy where I had some works on show in an exhibition. This made me realise for the first time that being in a minority, especially being a resident alien, meant that I had subordinate status. It also occurred to me that because of my nationality, I was not readily entitled to partake of most of the world's systems and resources. Italy and the West recognised my art but I, as a person, could not obtain permission to visit my own show, even though my name was printed in the publicity material produced by the British Council detailing UK participation in the *Venice Biennale*. The simple fact of having been born in the developing world, meant that I could not easily pass the interview of the Italian embassy. My nationality sticks to me like a label which I cannot remove and the same is true of my colour, race and gender. Not until I left Taiwan, coming to England to begin my PhD research in the summer of 2003, did I become aware of my predicament as a citizen of a nation that is not universally recognised. It gives rise to situations in which I am denied the respect and the opportunities accorded to other people who are

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<sup>1</sup> Hall, Stuart. 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity' in King, Anthony (ed). *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1991, p 21. For the sake of consistency, in all of the footnotes in this thesis, I use English spelling rules, ie: 'ise', not 'ize'; labour not labor; colour not color; catalogue, not catalog, centre not center, etc. Those that have been changed will not be shown with square brackets.

citizens of states with stronger governments and established geopolitical identities.

Only when people are living away from their home countries do they realise in full the importance and meaning of national identity. It hardly occurred to me to argue about issues of identity when I was living in Taiwan, which indicates that it is diasporic people who tend to seek their identity in terms of nation and culture. Kurt Brereton, an Australian artist and academic who has regularly visited Taiwan since 1998, proposes in *Hyper Taiwan* (2005), that 'with more than a third of the population living abroad, the Taiwanese Diaspora is greater than most any other in the world – except perhaps for the Irish, some Greek Islands and European Jews'.<sup>2</sup> Although many of the Taiwanese living abroad do so for economic investment reasons, there has been an increasing number of people emigrating to other countries to seek a sense of security in politics and society, especially under the ever present military threat from Mainland China. For many years, Taiwan has been very isolated in the world and has been either expelled or excluded from virtually all of the key international organisations.<sup>3</sup> Taiwan is the only country that is excluded from the United Nations, although its population numbers twenty-three million.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, even though being the world's seventeenth largest economy, Taiwan's diplomatic partners have

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<sup>2</sup> Bereton, Kurt. *Hyper Taiwan*. Taipei: Art & Collection Group, 2005, p 46.

<sup>3</sup> One recent example is that for the tenth time, Taiwan's bid in 2006 to be granted observer status (not even membership) by the World Health Organization has been rejected. Taiwan has been ostracised due to China's relentless and arbitrary insistence that Taiwan must not be recognised as an independent political entity. Relevant information can be found in Gau, Michael. 'WHO's Deal with China is a Shame' in *Taipei Times*, Taipei, Sunday, 21 May 2006, p 8.

<sup>4</sup> The evidence can be seen in Andrew Morris's argument that '[w]ith the admission of Tuvalu into the UN in 2000, [Taiwan] is the last nation in the world to be excluded from the world body'. Morris, Andrew D. 'Taiwan's History: an Introduction' in Jordan, David K., Andrew D. Morris and Marc L. Moskowitz (eds). *The Minor Arts of Daily Life: Popular Culture in Taiwan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004, 31.



dwindled to fewer than two dozen countries, most of which are small Latin American, Caribbean and African countries or Pacific island nations.<sup>5</sup>

Under the trends of globalisation, those who have travelled and kept moving between boundaries have re-interpreted their roles and positions from various perspectives. It is this kind of phenomenon that provides the impulse for my research, to uncover the reality and the myth of being a Taiwanese woman, and the position of myself in the global environment. Being away from my homeland for an extended period of time, my primary concerns have been centred on my national identity, my memory and my imagination of home, all of which reveal a state of ambivalence and uncertainty.

My being outside of the geopolitical boundary of Taiwan has provided me with the opportunity to investigate the development of contemporary art on the island with an open eye and an open mind. Furthermore, as a part of the ethnic Chinese diaspora in England, I am fortunate enough to be able to observe the difference in life styles and cultures between my motherland and my current geographical location. The different languages I use, the food I eat, the clothes I wear and the people I have met all remind me of where I originate from and of what Taiwaneseness can be. As a consequence of this, apart from collecting first-hand materials (including exhibition catalogues, newspaper cuttings, journal articles, etc), this research has been conducted mainly responding to the 'cultural shock' I have experienced, which has aroused new impressions of my motherland whilst I have been in England. Thus, the differences I see between myself and the Englishness around me have

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Morris asserts that '[t]he world's seventeenth largest economy, Taiwan is recognised by less than two dozen tiny African and Caribbean nations'. Ibid.

strengthened my intention to explore both the attributes of Taiwanese-ness and myself as a real being.

After nearly four years research of contemporary Taiwanese women's art, the process of trying to outline what Taiwan is and the characteristics of gender issues in Taiwan have gradually directed me to another route - to investigate my current situation in England. In my mind, the ambiguous character of belonging has been shifted between the island, Taiwan, on the western rim of the Pacific Ocean, to England, on the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean. My initial search for identity as a Taiwanese woman artist has changed as a result of what Ien Ang has described as a sense of 'uneasiness'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, being a part of the group of people who have kept moving across geographical boundaries under globalisation, perhaps my next task will be to search for my sense of belonging. However, this time it is about my relocation to England.

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding the term, uneasiness, Ang states that 'the concepts of hybridity should be mobilised to address and analyse the fundamental *uneasiness* inherent in our global condition of togetherness-in-difference'. Ang, Ien. *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p 200.

## **Introduction**

This thesis examines selected exhibitions and artists' works, through which I explore questions related to Taiwanese women's art at the intersections of Taiwanese culture, history, economy and social classes in the post-martial law period, starting in 1987. In this thesis, I aim to explore the particular perspectives that women (artists), cast as the inferior part of Taiwanese patriarchal society, have contributed to the multiple observations of Taiwanese culture. Additionally, I intend to identify whether women's art exhibitions enable us to question women's particular contribution to visualising the concepts and impact of diverse Taiwanese identities. Finally, I aim ultimately to show how the attributes of Taiwan's contemporary culture are manifested through these selected exhibitions.

In this research, through women's visual art exhibitions, I am interested in analysing the intersectional conditions and contradictory nature of Taiwanese culture and identities. Taiwanese culture does not have a fixed identity; rather it is composed of shifting and complicated ideas, which keep negotiating their positions with each other. Rather, Taiwanese culture consists of mixed-up identities, which are always in the process of making, hybridising and constructing. The presence of Taiwanese society is at all times questioning the old and new colonial heritage and ideologies, including concepts introduced by diasporic groups, who have been trained in higher educational institutions in the West. Every element from the old/the new, East/West, Aboriginal Taiwanese/Chinese Hans and even different social

classes are mixed into multiple conditions, which cannot be identified with specific terms or definitions. The conditions of uncertainty, unpredictability, variability and changeability, are what I see as the shifting identities in Taiwan.

I propose that art exhibitions serve as a physical interface that identifies the multiple ideas of Taiwanese identities. The curatorial themes of the exhibitions are intended to permit viewers to examine the artistic and cultural environment and how they affect each other. In addition, I agree with Dorothee Richter's suggestion that '[e]xhibitions can be described as communicative situations that are produced in order to convey content'.<sup>1</sup> For Richter, the exhibition is a tool for communicating about situations and subject matter embedded in society. Therefore, I propose that one of the methods to observe women's changing roles and identities in Taiwan is to conduct analyses of exhibitions, through which I visualise the hybridised Taiwanese culture.

I demonstrate that exhibitions are the physical manifestation of an interpretation of contemporary Taiwanese culture, which is developed since the 1990s. Moreover, exhibitions, as visual presentations, produce the appearance of society and participate in creating a national and global identity.<sup>2</sup> Hence, I further propose that one of the ways to perceive a nation's culture is through the investigation of specific exhibitions. Exhibitions invite critical responses and debates, which sometimes strengthen the arguments

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<sup>1</sup> Richter, Dorothee. 'A Feminist Perspective on Exhibition Display and Education in Curatorial Practice' in *n.paradoxa*, Vol 18, 2006, p 75.

<sup>2</sup> This point will be argued in more detail in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, where the 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition (1997) and the *Taipei Biennial 1996* are addressed.

of the curators and the concepts of participating artists.<sup>3</sup> Exhibitions, especially those that are curated with specific topics, have provided me with themes relevant to my exploration of particular research questions. Most importantly, specific locations for exhibitions have demonstrated a distinct political focus for the shows, whilst at the same time, the involvement of regional communities offers different critical perspectives.<sup>4</sup> Exhibitions provide opportunities to consider more than one artist within the same curatorial theme, providing an overall observation of diverse artistic presentations, and allowing the development of a stronger analysis. Additionally, different artists' educational backgrounds are shown when comparing works produced by several artists at the same time. Finally, the organisation of some selected shows indicate the power of women's collaboration, by which gender identity may be demonstrated. In short, exhibitions, as the result of complex artistic, intellectual, political, educational and community involvement, offer a varied collection of evidence.

My research is conducted with a multidisciplinary approach and moves between the boundaries of economics, politics, history, gender studies, cultural studies and the visual art happening in contemporary Taiwanese society. At this point, it is essential to note that James Elkins has observed

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<sup>3</sup> Here, I need to address the fact that the concepts of 'curators' firstly appeared in Taiwan's artistic field in the mid 1990s and since then it has become an influential issue in Taiwan. Regarding when the ideas of 'curators' started to be adapted in Taiwan's public museums, Lin Ping asserts that '[it started] from the visiting of the well-known Japanese curator, Fumio Nanjo, to Taiwan in 1995 and also when the Taipei Fine Arts Museum initially participated in the Venice Biennial in 1995'. She further indicates that 'from the late 1990s, exhibition projects gradually started to be conducted by "independent curators" in Taiwan'. For full details, see Lin, Ping 'Curator's Halo – the Long and Winding Road of Curatorial Business in Taiwan' in Li, Ji-Ming (ed). *Special Edition of Taiwan's Contemporary Art*. Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2005, pp 213-236.

<sup>4</sup> This point can be observed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

and argued that art history, as a field, may disappear. He remarks that '[t]he notion of interdisciplinarity has already been augmented by transdisciplinarity and subdisciplinarity [...] art history might deliquesce, leaving only traces of its former sense of methods and objects'.<sup>5</sup> Hence, when investigating contemporary art history, it is inevitable that scholars should explore multiple disciplines in order to develop a more comprehensive discernment of current issues. My research is driven by a triangular relationship, consisting of theory, culture and art, in which each element influences the other two. As my focus is on gender and the ambivalent and hybridised society of Taiwan, I have chosen specific postcolonial and feminist theories to study the issues relating to culture when examining art. Hybridity (together with in-betweenness and ambivalence) was initially proposed by Homi Bhabha and the term has been regularly used to describe cultures that have been influenced by colonisation.<sup>6</sup> The theories and themes I have adopted include nation/ nationalism, identity/ belonging, gender politics, hybridity/ in-betweenness, industrialisation/ women's labour force, globalisation/ westernisation/ urbanisation, and cyberfeminism/ cyberspace, all of which are questions that are acutely relevant to Taiwan's postcolonial environment.

Each of the selected exhibitions engages with issues of gender as a central concern. However, not all of them address postcoloniality indirectly. It is important therefore that this thesis aims to investigate exhibitions not only through the lens of sexuality but also through an understanding of

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<sup>5</sup> Elkins, James. 'On David Summers's Real Spaces' in Elkins, James (ed). *Is Art History Global?* New York and London: Routledge, 2007, p 63.

<sup>6</sup> I explore the terms, hybridity, in-betweenness and ambivalence, throughout this thesis; however, in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, I specifically argue how they become the key concepts in Taiwanese women's art practice.

postcolonialism.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the curators had the intention to link Taiwanese women's art with the discourse of gender and it is my contribution and ambition to investigate the shows further through an understanding of postcolonial feminism. I am demonstrating that the most important part of Taiwanese women's art is not only the debate about gender, but that it also presents and visualises the hybridity of the culture and women's lives. Specifically, my research concerns Taiwanese women in the spheres of history, politics, global and local economies, virtual space and the global art world. Essentially, by interpreting some exhibitions which are hybridised in terms of their appearances and concepts, I intend to debate the ideas of westernisation<sup>8</sup> which have largely dominated the scene of contemporary fine art practice in Taiwan, and which were originally introduced by Taiwanese who were trained in, or currently inhabit, the West.<sup>9</sup>

My thesis aims to investigate how Taiwanese women's shows relate to the self-recognition of Taiwan's racial/ethnic identity, culture and gender. Therefore, I propose two research questions, as follows: first I wonder how Taiwanese women's art exhibitions can visualise the new expression of Taiwan's contemporary art practice, due to the complexity of its colonial history; secondly, I am interested in how these shows can demonstrate women's roles at the post-martial law era, especially in the intersections of Taiwan's culture, history, economy and social classes.

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<sup>7</sup> Only the exhibitions analysed in Part I were organised to examine women's issues beyond the discourses of gender. The other shows were curated merely on the topic of gender, especially based on the first-wave and second-wave feminism formulated in the West.

<sup>8</sup> The West, in this thesis, refers to Western Europe and North America.

<sup>9</sup> In the show, *BuBaoFu*, addressed in Chapter 4, I have specifically selected works created by two artists, who demonstrate different perspectives when creating their art. I address the question of Westernisation when comparing their works.

This introduction provides an historical, social and theoretical framework for my thesis. After detailing the structure of the chapters with reference to specific theoretical concerns for each exhibition, I explore a brief history of Taiwan and the Taiwanese women's social movement, followed by some arguments surrounding the impact of Confucian patriarchal ideology, and how it has influenced Taiwanese values. Finally, I introduce some of the terms of postcolonial and feminist literature, which serve as the key concepts underpinning my work.

### **Structure of Chapters**

Before martial law was suspended in 1987, Taiwan's artistic field was conservative and controlled by the Chinese Nationalist government (the Kuomintang, or KMT).<sup>10</sup> There were few exhibitions and limited events for artists, let alone for women artists. Importantly, after martial law was lifted, several women artists returned to Taiwan after studying abroad. Those women artists include Tseng Shai-Shu (1952-), Victoria Lu (1952-), Lai Chu-Chu (1953-), Fu Chia-Hui (1953-), Yen Ming-Hui (1956-), Huaeh Pao-Hsia (1956-), Wu Mali (1957-), Hou Yi-Jen (1958-), Lin Pey-Chwen (1959-), Hsieh Hung-Chun (1961-) and so on. Apart from the change of political climate, Victoria Lu indicates another reason that encouraged women artists to return home was the boost of economical development in Taiwan since the early 1980s. Additionally, since then, there were not only women artists returning home to contribute their knowledge received abroad, but

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<sup>10</sup> I will investigate the change in the political climate and the shift of history in Taiwan in the later part of this Introduction, as well as in the first chapter.



many women in the fields of film, dance, theatre, art history, art administration and art therapy who had also gone back to Taiwan after their studies in the West. However, most of the exhibitions from the late 1980s and the early 1990s were simply intended to heighten the visibility of Taiwanese women's artists' collaboration.<sup>11</sup> In other words, women's exhibitions, held since the lifting of martial law in 1987, came about as a result of women's cooperation but without curatorial concepts or discussions, concerning gender and/or national identity.

It was not until the mid 1990s that women's exhibitions were curated with a clearer concept. Since I cannot investigate all contemporary Taiwanese women's art exhibitions during the post-martial law era, I have only selected some exhibitions (especially those with explicit connections to the relationship between women, nation and culture) as a representative example for this research.<sup>12</sup> The method used for choosing exhibitions for inclusion in this research is that they need to have been held in recognised spaces and that they need to have been theme-specific with associated curatorial statements.

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<sup>11</sup> For full details, see Lu, Victoria. *History of (Contemporary) Taiwan Women Artists 1945-2002*. Taipei: Artist Publisher, 2002, pp 106-117.

<sup>12</sup> Women's shows held between 1987 and the mid 1990s include *Women's Ceramic Arts* (Howard Salon, Taipei, 1987), *Melody of Spring: Group Exhibition of Women's Arts* (Jih Cheng Gallery, Taipei, 1989), *Taiwan Women's Artists' Week* (Chern Piin Gallery, Taipei, 1990), *Taiwan Contemporary Women Artists Show* (Lung-Men Art Gallery, Taipei, 1991), *Women & I* (Dimensions Art Centre, Taipei, 1991), *Women-Women Paintings* (Jih Cheng Gallery, Taipei, 1991), *Women Artists* (Chun-Yung Art Centre, Taipei, 1993), *Shapes and Colours: Abstract Arts of Women Artists* (Taipei Home Gallery, 1993), *End of Century: Abstract Paintings of Taiwan Women Artists* (Hsiung-Shih Gallery, Taipei, 1994), *Water* (Dragon Gallery, Kaohsiung, 1994), *Power of Women's Creation* (Hsin-Sheng-Tai Art Space, Tainan, 1994) and *Taiwan Women Cultural Observation* (Hsin-Sheng-Tai Art space, Tainan, 1995). The research of Taiwanese women's exhibitions held in the early/mid 1990s can be seen in Wang, Jin-Hua. *Aesthetics and Politics of Gender: An Initial Study and Criticism of the Taiwanese Women's Art Exhibition in the 1990s*. MA Dissertation. Taiwan: Tainan National University of the Arts The Graduate Institute of Art History and Art Criticism, 1999, pp 14-28 and Chen, Elsa. 'Reading Feminist Dimensions of Contemporary Art in Taiwan' in Huangfu, Binghui (ed). *Text & Subtext: International Contemporary Asian Woman Artists Exhibition*. Exh. Cat., Singapore: Earl Lu Gallery, 2000, pp 75-88.

In addition, critical essays regarding the exhibitions should have been published and the shows need to be pertinent to gender issues and relevant social discourses. Furthermore, solo exhibitions have not been considered as their concepts tend to be more personal rather than dealing with issues regarding Taiwanese women's art within a larger social and cultural framework.

I have categorised my thesis into three main topics: 'Re-positioning History', 'Colonial Heritage' and 'International Perspectives'. Each of them covers two exhibitions, which have been chosen to respond to the topics during the period of 1996 to 2003. Choosing 1996 and 2003 as the starting and the ending points of my research is determined by two crucial exhibitions: the first official exhibition on gender issues, the *1996 Taipei Biennial*, and *The First International Women's Art Festival in Taiwan*, which was held in Kaohsiung in 2003.<sup>13</sup> I have chosen four other exhibitions for my research project, by which I have divided the development of contemporary Taiwanese women's arts into three main periods over six chapters in order to illustrate its trends in outline.<sup>14</sup> At this stage, I should emphasise that I do not include exhibitions

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<sup>13</sup> In the *Taipei Biennial 1996*, the theme, 'Sexuality and Power', is described by Wang Jin-Hua as the first show that 'brings Taiwanese women's art from private galleries to a public artistic "temple" and [through this show], the issue of gender has finally become one of the "subjectivities of Taiwanese art"'. Wang, J. H., op cit, p 29.

<sup>14</sup> Women's themed exhibitions, which were held between 1996 and 2003 but are not included in this thesis are *Women-Women* (Taipei International Art Centre, 1996), *Mind and Spirit: Taiwanese Women's Arts in Taiwan* (Fine Arts Museum of Taipei, 1998), *Women 60* (Lungmen Art Gallery, Galerie Pierre and Hsin-Sheng-Tai Gallery, 1998), *Women Interpret Women* (Taichung Ching-Shiun Gallery, 1999), *Heaven/ Men; Earth/ Women* (Taichung, Chiayi and Tainan galleries, Taichung, 2000), *Journey of the Spirits* (Kaohsiung Fine Arts Museum, 2000-2001), *Women's Comfort* (Hong-Gan Museum, Taipei, 2001), *I Am the Bride* (Kaohsiung Women's Bureau, 2001), *Absolute Body* (Taipei Trend Gallery, 2001), *Au Nom De Lui*. (Taichung Providence University Art Centre, 2002), *Show Colours: Women's Art and Interpretation* (Kaohsiung Dog-pig Art Café, 2002), *Hsiungnu Artists: A Way towards Arts* (Kaohsiung Chengshiu Art Centre, 2003) and *Women in May* (Kaohsiung Kia-A-Thau Art Village, 2003).

which were organised as collections of women's art, as they do not fall into the criteria of how I categorise the three main themes of my research. However, during the selected period of my work, there were two themed exhibitions, which I have not considered: *Journey of the Spirits* (2000-2001) and *Absolute Body* (2001). *Journey of the Spirits* did not explicitly explore my main concerns, nation and culture, while *Absolute Body* overlapped the topic surrounding 'body', which is extensively addressed in Chapter 5 (on the 1996 *Taipei Biennial*).

I have selected six exhibitions, divided into three parts. In part I, 'Re-positioning History', I juxtapose both political and economic histories, two crucial fragments of Taiwan's society, as the foundation of the whole thesis. In the second part, 'Colonial Heritage', my focus is centred on colonial space, a physical space within the frames of colonial architecture, and on micro space, which is women's domestic space, inspired by Chinese and Japanese textiles in colonial culture. In Part III, 'International Perspectives', my concern shifts from internal to external discourses, through which I consider the position of contemporary Taiwan in the structure of the globe. Here I need to emphasise that even though I chose the 1996 *Taipei Biennial* as the first case study for my research, I have categorised all selected exhibitions by the curatorial themes rather than by their chronological order. Therefore, the chapters start with a study of the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition*, held in 1997.

Chapter One, 'Re-positioning History' begins with the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* (1997). By considering the significance of Taiwan's history, I

argue that concepts of nation and nationalism have influenced women's artistic creation and vice versa. In this chapter, Taiwan's hybridised culture is initially interpreted in detail by looking at the complicated historical relationship between Taiwan, China and Japan. Using the ideas of Homi Bhabha on 'ambivalence', the uncertainty of Taiwanese culture and national identity emerges. Additionally, being inspired by Benedict Anderson's concepts regarding the 'imagined community', I study the development of Taiwanese national identity and how it influences women's artistic practice, as well as how women's re-interpretation of history changes the concepts of nation.

In Chapter Two, I examine the connection between industrialisation and the women's labour force, by examining the exhibition, *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself*, which was staged in 1997 and 1998. Here, my focus shifts from colonial politics (in Chapter 1) to the development of the Taiwanese economy since the 1970s, during which period, Taiwan experienced an 'economic miracle'. I address Chandra Talpade Mohanty's ideas of how to define 'women of the developing world' and the concepts of 'subalterns', firstly proposed by the *Subaltern Studies* group. Both of these terms are applied to the women's labour force in textiles during Taiwan's industrialisation. In this exhibition, I argue that apart from the discourse of nation, Taiwanese women can also find their identity in the market of labour force and materials.

Under the second main topic, 'Colonial Heritage', I firstly analyse the show, *Sweet and Sour Yeast* (2001-2002), which was held in two former colonial

buildings, built during the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan. In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate the fact that the Taiwanese have transformed the perspectives taken towards their colonial past. Additionally, the ideas of 'binarism' (the colonisers and the colonised) are re-examined when the colonial subject (the Japanese power and colonial architecture) is used as an object for the exhibition. I suggest that the re-use of the colonial buildings in this show has visualised Bhabha's concepts of 'hybridity' and 'mimicry', both of which will be addressed in detail in the chapter. Furthermore, I explore women's sensory experience and their involvement in administration work in this show.

In the fourth chapter, community projects and women's fabric arts are considered from the point of view of the curators' concepts. The show, *BuBaoFu*, held in 2003, gives evidence of the fact that Taiwanese women have hybridised traditional Chinese and Japanese handiworks (as a kind of colonial heritage) and given them a new appearance. The idea of 'micro space', introduced by the curator of the show, challenges how the domestic space can be viewed differently through women's artists' creation. In addition, I would like to emphasise that the exhibition title, *BuBaoFu*, which has dual meanings itself, has symbolised the hybridised culture and the heterogeneous characteristics of contemporary Taiwan's society.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, whilst the gap between different generations has been shown by the various perspectives adapted by different artists, I examine the ideas of Westernisation through their works.

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<sup>15</sup> Refer to Chapter 4 for the dual meanings of the term, *BuBaoFu*.

In the first exhibition chosen for the last main topic, 'International Perspectives', the *Taipei Biennial 1996: The Quest for Identity* was conceived at a time when globalisation and urban cultures provided the two main terms and influences for this show. In the *Taipei Biennial 1996*, I investigate how new ideologies have been juxtaposed and hybridised in the Asia-Pacific region, by which I aim to demonstrate how large-scaled international exhibitions are curated to construct a Taiwanese national and cultural identity in the globalised environment. I specifically consider how Taiwanese women re-think traditional values in order to maintain their individuality within the trends of westernisation and globalisation. In this (fifth) chapter, the themes will also be centred on 'power' and 'body'. In particular, I examine how contemporary Taiwanese women consider these terms in their artistic creation and how their works have expressed a new interpretation of looking at 'power' and 'body'.

In the final chapter, *The First International Women's Art Festival in Taiwan* (2003) is examined as a demonstration of the fact that the artistic climate for women artists has changed. From being considered merely as one category in an international biennial (the *Taipei Biennial 1996*), women artists have progressed to the holding of an international women's festival, from which it can be seen that the role of women artists in 2003 was considerably more visible than it was in 1996. In this chapter, essentially I propose that cyberfeminism is used as a strategy by Taiwanese women artists to debate and challenge the patriarchal systems which still exist, despite a technology-led society. Additionally, I adapt the concepts of Bhabha's 'Third Space', which is the 'in-betweenness' between the East and the West, to

address a new presentation and form of contemporary Taiwanese women's art. Through analysing this show, I have observed that the advancement of technology has been one of the most important governmental policies in twenty-first century Taiwan, in place of the intense labour-focused textile industry addressed in chapter two.

To explain how I have categorised my chapters and how specific themes have been chosen, I should outline a very brief history of Taiwan, before going on to explore some key theoretical terms. In the following argument, I aim to emphasise the shifting of colonial power on the island.

### **A Brief History of Taiwan**

Situated less than 100 miles from the southeast coast of Mainland China, Taiwan is located in one of a string of archipelagos in the western Pacific Ocean, extending from Japan to Indonesia [fig 1]. For six hundred years, Taiwan was a destination for Chinese (Han) immigrants who are the ancestors of most of today's Taiwanese.<sup>16</sup> Since the sixteenth century, Taiwan's geographical location has made it a desirable strategic target during the phase of Western and Eastern imperialist expansion in East Asia.<sup>17</sup> Taiwan was first made known to the West as *Ilha Formosa* (meaning 'beautiful island') by Portuguese sailors, who were the first Europeans to land on the

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<sup>16</sup> More detail regarding the history of Chinese (Han) immigration to Taiwan will be given in Chapter 1.

<sup>17</sup> The fact that Taiwan was a desirable target for both Eastern and Western imperial powers can be seen in John E Wills, Jr's research, which states that '[i]n the late 1500s many heavily armed ships – Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish – passed through the Taiwan strait every year, and the strategic position of Taiwan and P'eng hu [Peng-hu islands] attracted a good deal of attention. There were discussions in Japan in 1593 of an expedition to Taiwan'. See Wills, John E, Jr. 'The Seventeenth-Century Transformation: Taiwan under the Dutch and the Cheng Regime' in Rubinstein, Murray A (ed). *Taiwan: a New History*. New York: East Gate, 1999, p 87.

island in 1582, as the consequence of a shipwreck.<sup>18</sup> It is argued by Niu Ciong-Hai that '[i]t was the Dutch who established a formal government in Formosa for the first time' and this period of history happened during the time when the forces of Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands fought to conquer the Orient.<sup>19</sup>

In 1624, after eight months of fighting in Taiwan between the Dutch and the Ming Dynasty, the Dutch succeeded in gaining the right to occupy the island.<sup>20</sup> Taiwan, therefore, fell into the hands of the Dutch who ruled it through the Dutch East India Company and who established Castle Providencia in Tainan (the south of Taiwan).<sup>21</sup> However, the Dutch control over the island was not complete as at the same time, some Japanese traders remained on the island and the Spanish occupied some of the area around Tamsui (the north of Taiwan).<sup>22</sup> With the increasing threat of the Manchus (a tribe located in the North East of China, who established the Qing Dynasty in 1636 and who ruled China from 1644-1911), the Ming Dynasty was eager to take over the island in order to increase its military strength. In 1661, Cheng Cheng-Kung, a soldier of the Ming Empire in China, forced the Dutch to leave the island, which resulted in the fact that 'Taiwan had a Chinese ruler for the first time'.<sup>23</sup> In 1683, Qing's forces landed in Taiwan and in 1886, Taiwan was, for the first time, elevated to the level of a province of the Manchurian Empire.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Wills, *ibid.* Also in Boxer, C.R. *The Great Ship from Amacan: Annals of Macao and the Old Japan Trade, 1555-1640*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1959, p 44.

<sup>19</sup> Niu, Ciong-Hai. 'The Formation of the Formosan Nation' in *Formosan Quarterly*, Vol, 1, No 2, 1962, p 45.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p 46.

<sup>23</sup> See Wills, *op cit*, p 95.

<sup>24</sup> See Brown, Melissa J. *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power and Migration on*



However, Taiwan's tenure as a province of China lasted only briefly, as after China's failure during the Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895), Taiwan (including the Peng-hu islands) was then ceded to Japan in 1895, in accordance with the Treaty of Shimonoseki.<sup>25</sup>

During Japanese colonisation, Taiwan had become a reliable 'sugar bowl' and 'rice basket', producing agricultural products, for Japan's home island.<sup>26</sup> When Japan declared war against China in 1937, the colonial regime began to 'desinicise' the Taiwanese, the majority of whom were ethnic Chinese, and instead started to install a colonial Japanese culture with the 'Movement to Create Imperial Subjects'.<sup>27</sup> Apart from a 'name-changing campaign' (adopting Japanese names) and a policy that only allowed the Japanese language to be used in public spheres, any 'un-Japanese' culture was either prohibited or otherwise 'objectionable'.<sup>28</sup> For example, traditional Chinese religions practised in Taiwan were eliminated whilst Japanese Shinto shrines were introduced; Japanese style wedding and funeral services were encouraged whilst Taiwanese operas and puppet plays were forbidden.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the Japanese imperial power even encouraged the Taiwanese to serve in the war and to "die beautifully", if need be – in the Imperial Japanese military'.<sup>30</sup> Research has shown that between 1941 and 1945, some two hundred thousand Taiwanese joined the armed services, of which

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*Changing Identities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, p 42 and p 52.

<sup>25</sup> See Brown, *ibid.*, p 53. Also in Lamley, Harry J. 'Taiwan under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicissitudes of Colonialism' in Rubinstein (ed), *op cit*, p 202.

<sup>26</sup> See Morris, *op cit*, p 16. In Chapter 3, I will investigate a show, which was held at wine and sugar factories built during Japanese colonisation.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p 17.

<sup>28</sup> See Lamley, *op cit*, pp 240-241.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p 242.

<sup>30</sup> See Morris, *op cit*, p 17.

more than thirty thousand of them sacrificed their lives for the Japanese Emperor.<sup>31</sup>

After the Second World War, the defeat of Japan led to the restoration of Taiwan to China, whose Nationalist government was the recognised ruling power in China and which was a member of the Allies. From 1945, Taiwan was taken over by a one-party system, the Chinese Nationalist government, which continued to hold a fifty-year monopoly of political power on the island until the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidential election in 2000.

The civil war in Mainland China between Nationalist and Communist forces ended with the victory of the Communists in 1949. Soon after that, the Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek (1887-1975), the soldiers of Chiang's KMT army and over one million civilians fled to Taiwan and proclaimed Taipei the provisional capital of the 'Republic of China' (ROC).<sup>32</sup> Taiwan then became a military base for the Nationalist Chinese soldiers to fight the Communists in order, ultimately, to reclaim the whole of China. The KMT was thus eager to implant traditional Chinese culture and values on the

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<sup>31</sup> See Lin Ji-Wen. *Research into the Wartime Mobilisation Structure of the Late Japanese Period 1930-1945*. Taipei: Daoxiang Publisher, 1996, pp 217-227.

<sup>32</sup> The Republic of China is commonly known as 'Taiwan' or 'Chinese Taipei' and it is often confused with the 'People's Republic of China' (PRC), which refers to Mainland (Communist) China. The name 'Republic of China' was first proposed by Dr Sun Yat-Sen, as the national term during a revolutionary alliance's meeting in Mainland China in 1905, and was officially adopted in 1912 after more than two thousand years of dynastic control, ending with the Qing Dynasty, the imperial power in China for more than two hundred and fifty years (1644-1911). Thus, 1912 is referred to as the first year of the ROC. At the beginning of 1928, the Republic of China was ruled by the KMT as an authoritarian one-party state. In 1949, the KMT government in Nanjing relocated to Taiwan after losing the civil war against the Chinese Communists. The Republic of China was therefore re-established in Taiwan and continued to declare itself as the sole authorised government of China, despite the fact that the PRC denied the legitimacy of the ROC government. More information can be found in Fenby, Jonathan. *Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the China He Lost*. London: Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2003, pp 27-367 and Taiwan: Government Information Office, Republic of China. <http://www.gio.gov.tw/mp.asp>.

island whilst in China itself, the Chinese government, guided by communist doctrine, was beginning to criticise traditional values by declaring the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). As a result, it is Taiwan that has maintained the essence of traditional Chinese culture and language; Confucian patriarchy has, therefore, been preserved in Taiwanese society.<sup>33</sup>

To summarise Taiwan's colonial history, I propose a chronological list, as follows: the Dutch conquest (1624-1661), Spanish occupation (1626-1641), Chinese settlement (1661-1895), Japanese colonisation (1895-1945) and Nationalist control (1945-1987).<sup>34</sup> Owing to this kind of intricate history of Taiwan, postcolonial literature is useful to identify some possible ideas of Taiwanese identities. At this point, it should be emphasised that before the Han (Mainlanders) came to settle in Taiwan in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the aboriginal people had lived in Taiwan for thousands of years. Since my research aims to explore the complicated ideas of Taiwanese identities, it is indispensable to being with investigating the existence of the aboriginals who currently number 'some four hundred thousand, about two percent of Taiwan's population'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Shih Shu-Mei also proposes the same view and states that "[c]lassical Chinese culture" was one of the legitimizing mechanisms for the [KMT's] rule of Taiwan – the logic being that the Republic of China in Taiwan, not communist China, was the preserver of the authentic Chinese culture [...]. Shih, Shu-Mei. *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007, p 4.

<sup>34</sup> The Dutch did not occupy the whole of Taiwan, therefore the Spanish still held some part of the island during the Dutch colonisation. I determine the period, from 1945 to 1987, as the time of the Nationalists' control. It is from the time when the Chinese Nationalist government took over Taiwan from the Japanese to the time when martial law was revoked. Despite the fact that the Chinese Mainlanders still held the power in many aspects of the Taiwanese people's lives at the early stage of the post-martial law era, I still determine the ending of 'Nationalist control', to be the time when martial law was suspended in Taiwan. In Chapter 1, I will address in more detail Taiwan's even more complicated historical narratives and conflicts after it was taken over by the Chinese Nationalist party after World War II.

<sup>35</sup> See Morris, op cit, p 7.

There are (political) debates about the origins of the aborigines in Taiwan (which includes fourteen groups of lowland peoples and nine groups of mountain people), the most recognised of which may be found in the 'Theories of Southern Origin'.<sup>36</sup> In these theories, the aboriginal tribes are all descendants of settlers from around the Malay Archipelago, including Indonesia and the Philippines, where the Austronesian languages are used.<sup>37</sup> Being marginal in Taiwan's society and historical narratives, they were not recognised as the 'first arrivals' or the 'original inhabitants' (*Yuan-Chu-Min*) of Taiwan, until Lee Teng-Hui's (Taiwan's first Taiwan-born and democratically elected president, 1992-2000) speech at the 'Taiwanese Aboriginal Cultural Conference' in April 1994.<sup>38</sup> Folk tales, such as may be found in schoolbooks, state that the Han immigrants pushed the aborigines from the Western plains into the mountains, thus 'the mountain aborigines are the descendants of these displaced plains peoples'.<sup>39</sup> However, Melissa Brown asserts that '[m]any plains [a]borigines did not migrate; of those who did, many migrated only a short distance from their original villages'.<sup>40</sup> Plains aborigines who did not flee to the mountains have long since been sinocised (or Chinesised, or Chinesified) in Han society.

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<sup>36</sup> The 'Theories of Southern Origin' is proposed and supported by several anthropologists, including Dutch Indologist Hendrik Kern, Canadian missionary George Leslie Mackay, anthropologists Janet Montgomery, Miyamoto Nobuto, Shih Ming and Michael Stainton. Details about their arguments in support of the 'Theories of Southern Origin' and the numbers of different aboriginal groups can be found in Stainton, Michael 'The Politics of Taiwan Aboriginal Origins' in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, pp 27-42.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. These arguments have proved that the saying that Taiwan has an ancient-historical relationship with Mainland China is not true, but merely serves political purposes. Shih Ming also addressed this argument in Ming, Shih. *Four-Hundred-Year History of the Taiwanese People*. San Jose: Paradise Culture Associates, 1980, p 15.

<sup>38</sup> In Lee's speech, he argued that '[a]boriginal people in Taiwan must definitely not place themselves outside the whole society of Taiwan. People must have self-confidence and be far sighted, and no matter what, integrate into the larger whole of society bringing out the special characteristics of aboriginal people as part of the mainstream'. See Stainton, op cit, p 42.

<sup>39</sup> Brown (2004), op cit, p 35.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p 255.

For centuries, the Han had viewed the aborigines as 'barbarians' and they were either 'raw' (*Sheng*) or 'cooked' (*Shu*) according to their degrees of sinocisation (or Chinesisation or Chinesification). In other words, no matter how 'raw' or 'cooked' the aborigines are, they have integrated into Han's society to some extent. Stéphane Corcuff states that 'Taiwanese intellectuals have started to show that the multiplicity of Taiwanese historical experiences invalidates a linear history of the island viewed through the Han Chinese prism'.<sup>41</sup> I therefore demonstrate that the complexity of Taiwan's (ethnic) history cannot be simply studied through the history of the Han's immigration to, and their subsequent development of, the island.

During my research period 1996-2003, there were only two major women's exhibitions which invited aboriginal artists to participate; *Mind and Spirit: Taiwanese Women's Arts in Taiwan* (Fine Arts Museum of Taipei, 1998) and *Journey of the Spirits* (Kaohsiung Fine Arts Museum, 2000-2001). However, these two shows were curated largely to celebrate the power of sisterhood without a strong notion related to the central concern of my thesis, therefore, I have not included them in my research. As to the fact that no aboriginal artists participated in the exhibitions selected in my research, I shall briefly examine some artworks produced by them before investigating selected shows.

Aboriginal Taiwanese are considered to be skilful in fabric arts and they are

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<sup>41</sup> Corcuff, Stéphane. 'Conclusion: History, The Memories of the Future' in Corcuff, Stéphane (ed). *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*. New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002, p 249.

fond of using beads as materials for their embroidery. One of the known aboriginal women artists who produces embroidery and fabric works is Ruei-Sz-Ruo-Sz, and one currently well-established aboriginal artist is Wu Diing-Wuu Walis (a half aboriginal). Wu created *The Invisible Project* (2001-2002) [fig 2 and fig 3], which consists of historical photographs of Taiwan's aboriginals and a video installation revealing their fate, being killed or expelled by Chinese Han or the Japanese colonisers during their 'development' of and occupation of the island. The historian, Pan An-Yi, describes how Wu's passion for creating art concerning the aboriginal is 'a result of the rising consciousness of marginalised groups in the post-martial law era'.<sup>42</sup> Wu's work, covering issues of the marginal parts of Taiwan's society, has a similar motivation to that of my own research, also aiming to reveal the stories of hidden women whom are considered to be the victims of Chinese (and also Japanese) patriarchal ideology.

The fact that there are not many aboriginal Taiwanese artists exhibiting their works in official museums or galleries indicates that there exists a sense of preference for Westernised, rather than indigenous works. The Taiwanese who are 'more' Westernised are mainly Han, rather than the aborigines, the majority of whom still maintain their traditional lifestyle and culture. Additionally, artworks and exhibitions which explicitly examine issues of national and gender identity are mainly produced and curated by Hans, who have been trained and educated in the West. There exists a form of prejudice against the aboriginals when selecting artists for contemporary

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<sup>42</sup> Pan, An-Yi. 'Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention' in Taipei Fine Arts Museum, *Contemporary Taiwanese Art in Era of Contention*. Exh. Cat., Taipei, 2004, p 39.

exhibitions, which highlights the fact that there is a sense of superiority in those who appear to be 'Westernised' rather than those who are comparatively more 'traditional' in the Taiwanese artistic community.<sup>43</sup> The issues of Westernisation will be addressed throughout this thesis, as Taiwan is confronting the trends of globalisation and seeking its position in the contemporary world environment.

### **Taiwanese Women and Transnational Feminism**

Women, being the inferior sex in Confucian philosophy, have struggled to maintain a consistent gender identity and their position in Taiwanese society as political power has shifted from one party to the other. Women's Movements have played an important role in the changing social environment as they have helped to visualise women artists' practice. Before examining Taiwanese women's art in more detail in the light of my research, I shall give an outline history of Women's Movements in Taiwan.

Women's issues in Taiwan have received little academic discussion until the present decade. To describe adequately the characteristics of women's roles in modern Taiwanese society, it is essential to begin by considering the status of women in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Chinese started to emigrate to, and cultivate, Taiwan. Whilst Taiwan was governed by the Qing dynasty from 1683 to 1895, upper-class Chinese Han women's feet were bound tightly

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<sup>43</sup> Alan Wachman describes the status of Taiwanese aborigines as 'comparable to that of the Native American "Indians" in the United States'. Wachman further indicates their marginal status by asserting that '[t]hey were smitten by unfamiliar diseases and their communities violated by aggressive settlers [Hans]. They have a marginal status in contemporary society and virtually no influence as a group on national politics'. Wachman, Alan M. *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*. New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p 17.

as a mark of their high social status.<sup>44</sup> During the period of Japanese colonisation, Taiwanese women were released from foot-binding in 1915, drawn into the workforce and granted education when the first girls' school was founded.<sup>45</sup> This period saw the appearance of the first women professionals, including teachers, doctors and pharmacists. When the KMT arrived in Taiwan in 1947, there was additional but limited development of women's rights. For example, women were allowed to be elected as political representatives because of the constitutional law that reserved around ten per cent of political positions in every election for women. Moreover, the Chinese Women's Anti-aggression League was founded in 1950 by Madame Chiang Sung Mei-Ling, the wife of Chiang Kai-Shek. Its members were all famous and wealthy women whose husbands played important roles in politics or the military, hence this organisation functioned as an exclusive club for women with a higher social status.

The main task for the Chinese Women's Anti-aggression League was to provide the military with financial and material support, to take care of families that had lost relatives who were soldiers in the war, and to establish schools, orphanages and medical institutions. Subsequently, in 1954, the KMT's

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<sup>44</sup> It is demonstrated by Melissa Brown that '[t]hey [Hans] maintained this identity [foot-binding] through the Qing period [...] until after the Japanese colonial government mandated a ban on foot-binding throughout Taiwan'. Brown further indicates that foot-binding can also be used to distinguish between Han and aboriginals. Brown (2004), op cit, p 66. Although foot-binding resulted in broken and twisted bones, small feet were thought to be a sign of beauty, not to mention the high esteem that was given to women's virtue, protected as it was by their resultant immobility. In later chapters, works inspired by this concept of beauty will be discussed.

<sup>45</sup> During Japan's colonisation of Taiwan, the Japanese established the first girls' school in 1896. In 1906, the course, women's handiworks (including drawing and painting), was promoted from a school level to be a part of college education, which aimed to train women teachers in art. When Japan ended its control of Taiwan in 1945, there had been some twenty girls' schools established by the Japanese colonial government, as well as two private girls' schools. See Lu, V. (2002), op cit, pp 28-29.



Department of Women's Affairs (which was the highest institution for women during the martial law period) was founded in order to ensure that policies benefiting women were put into practice. It advocated an anti-communist ideology, the traditional virtues of women, and encouraged Taiwanese women to be filial, economical and patriotic. In addition, it offered various kinds of classes for women, such as sewing, calligraphy and nursing. In effect, the functions of these two organisations were to maintain the social order and to enforce the traditional patriarchal ideology. Thus, these institutions had, in reality, nothing to do with the improvement of women's rights or women's self-awareness.

It was not until 1971 and the declaration of 'New Feminism'<sup>46</sup> by Ms Lu Shioh-Lien, the current Vice President of Taiwan, that the first wave of the Taiwanese Women's Movement arose. In the 1970s, Lu had witnessed the way in which the sexual revolution in the United States transformed that country and after she finished studying there, she returned to spread the concepts of feminism in Taiwan. She promoted 'New Feminism' in a series of articles, essays and books and called for the abolition of discrimination against women and the establishment of a new system that placed the emphasis on equality for both sexes.

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<sup>46</sup> The concept of 'New Feminism' was promoted by Lu's series of articles entitled 'The Traditional Roles of Men and Women' published in the literature section of the newspaper, *United Daily News* from 23 to 30 October 1971. Thus, the Taiwanese Women's Movement was initiated. Lu's book, *New Feminism*, was first published by *Youth Monthly* in 1974, but it was instantly banned because it was unable to pass the censorship of the Ministry of the Interior. The subsequent attempt made by Pioneer Publisher, which Shih Shu-Ching and Lu had established in 1977, to publish *New Feminism* also failed. Not until martial law was suspended could *New Feminism* eventually be published, by Avant-garde Publisher. To Lu's surprise, it became a hit and had to run into a second edition after only one week. Relevant information can be found in Wang, Hsiao-Yung. *'Self' in the Discourse of Vice President Annette Lu: a Narrative Criticism from Feminist Perspectives*. Masters Thesis. Taiwan: National Fu Jen Catholic University, 2003, p 17.

The movement was taken forward in the 1980s with the publication of the *Awakening Foundation Magazine* (founded in 1982), a feminist monthly which later gave rise to the current Awakening Foundation (established in 1987), a centre for progressive feminist activities in law, politics, society, culture and educational change. After the suspension of martial law in 1987, grass roots organisations mushroomed and their primary function was to focus on gender concerns from different perspectives and also to provide professional assistance to those who needed it. Some offered women practical services or support whilst others actively participated in political and social movements to urge the modification of the law and public policy to improve women's status in Taiwan.<sup>47</sup>

To summarise: with the revocation of martial law, Taiwanese women's groups have expanded and they all now aim to help women of every social class and in all aspects of their lives, which is very different from the situation that prevailed in the 1940s and 1950s. The increase in the number of institutions is also a reflection of the tumultuous change that has taken place in Taiwan's economy. In the post-martial law era, Taiwanese society has begun to receive information from the developed countries in the West, resulting in a

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<sup>47</sup> Examples of such organisations include the Warm Life Association (1984-), which provides marriage counselling, the New Environmental Homemaker's Association (1987-), which is mainly concerned with environmental protection and education, and the National Organisation for Women in Taiwan (1991-), offering professional guidelines and political participation for women. The Women's Research Centre of National Taiwan University (1985-) and the Centre for Young Women's Development (1993-) are the pioneers that have incorporated the study of women's issues into academia. See Lu, Hwei-Syin. 'Transcribing Feminism: Taiwanese Women's Experiences' in Farris, Catherine, Murray Rubinstein and Lee Anru (eds). *Women in the New Taiwan: Gender Roles and Gender Consciousness in a Changing Society*. London: M E Sharpe, 2004, pp 223-243 and Wang, Yako. *History of Taiwanese Women's Movement*. Taipei: Chuliu Book Company, 1999.

re-interpretation of social structures and ideologies. In the wake of the social transformation that has accompanied the modernisation of agriculture and industrialisation in Taiwan and with the advent of democracy in its political system, Taiwanese women, in the post-martial law era, have achieved higher employment rates and education levels.<sup>48</sup> Such factors have assisted with moving women from their marginal roles in society into a more central location.

After giving a brief description of women's movements, I am now moving my focus to how women are viewed in Taiwan's society. In Taiwan, it is widely believed that a woman is not married to a man but to his family. It is still most people's assumption that a woman should give birth to a son in order to maintain the 'strength' of the man's family.<sup>49</sup> A common Taiwanese saying about women is that 'women simply have ears rather than mouths', meaning that women can only listen to what other people (read: men) say, but they should not speak themselves. As a result, apart from finding a sense of national identity in the past colonial history, Taiwanese women are actually facing another task: seeking their gender identity in a male-centred society.

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<sup>48</sup> Some evidence can be seen in Catherine Farris's research:

In 1960 only 25 percent of women over the age of fifteen were in the workforce; in 1970 this rate had risen to 30.2 percent. By 1990, 45 percent of all women were in the workforce and this rate has remained stable since then. For the generation that came of age in the 1980s, education levels are in many cases much higher than those of their parents (e.g., elementary school level of the parents versus college training of their children). Fertility levels are lower and women are increasingly seeking meaningful social roles in addition to the traditional familial ones.

Farris, Catherine. 'Women's Liberation under "East Asian Modernity" in China and Taiwan: Historical, Cultural and Comparative Perspectives' in Farris et al (eds), op cit, p 358.

<sup>49</sup> Regarding the assumption that a woman's value lies in her ability to give birth to sons, I am considering Lydia Kung's argument. Kung asserts that '[t]o the husband's family, the value of his wife lies in her ability of producing sons to continue his line, and it is also this capacity upon which a woman's own security rests'. Kung, Lydia. *Factory Women in Taiwan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p 10.

To describe how women have been seen as an object in a patriarchal society, I am looking at how women are defined in negative terms. The Vietnamese American filmmaker and writer, Trinh T Minh-ha, asserts that:

‘Woman’ can never be defined. Bat, dog, chick, mutton, tart, Queen, madam, lady of pleasure. MISTRESS. Belle-de-nuit, woman of the streets, fruitwoman, fallen woman. Cow, vixen, bitch. Call girls, joy girl, working girl. Lady and whore are both bred to please. The old Woman image-repertoire says She is a Womb, a mere baby’s pouch, or “nothing but sexuality.” She is a passive substance, a parasite, an enigma whose mystery proves to be a snare and a delusion.<sup>50</sup>

In most of the world’s cultures and countries, women are labelled as the disadvantaged minority in social, economic and political realms. When looking at Trinh’s statements above, it is clear that most of the epithets applied to women are negative and that, when being criticised and discriminated against, women are labelled with the name of some kind of animal. In the Chinese language, the term for women’s sex organs and the word ‘mother’ are the most impolite words used for insulting other people, whether male or female. Although new life is developed in the womb, it is still the name of women’s sex organs which is most frequently used as coarse language. It is a strange kind of psychology that permits women’s bodies not to be respected as the source of life but to be regarded in such negative terms. This abuse of language happens both in Chinese and English, which underlines the circumstance that, despite the fact that there exist large differences among women of various colours, ages, classes, races, cultures and educational

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<sup>50</sup> Trinh, T. Minh-ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp 96-97.

backgrounds, they all face oppression of patriarchy in their everyday lives.

Next, I attempt to explain why Chinese culture is male-centred and how Taiwanese society follows the traditional Chinese route. Both sexes in Taiwan have inevitably inherited China's longstanding and complicated ways of defining gender and relationships between men and women in the past fifty years. As already addressed, the Chinese mainland has been reshaped by revolutionary Marxists who trumpet the message of gender equality and new attitudes towards tradition. Taiwan, having been ruled since 1945 by the authoritarian Nationalist Party, has, on the contrary, inherited traditional Chinese patriarchal ideology. Pan has indicated his view that Chinese society has an androgynous but male-dominated culture and it is appropriate to quote his conclusion at some length:

In the Eastern Han [D]ynasty Wu Liang Shrine depiction of the Three Sage Kings and Five Emperors, for example, only Fu-his and Nu-wa appeared together, and Fu-his held a square, symbolising his role as creator of the world, whereas Nu-wa held a child symbolising her position in society. The remaining two Sage Kings and Five Emperors were all male. If we examine Chinese language that developed in this male-dominated culture, we see that in oracle bone script, a person is a standing figure, whereas a woman is a kneeling figure.<sup>51</sup>

The Oracle Bone Scripts are ancient Chinese characters that were created and inscribed on turtle shells and animal bones during the Shang Dynasty (c 1600BC – 1046 BC). According to the *Dictionary of Oracle Bone Scripts* (1988), the word 'man' [fig 4] comprises two elements, which are a

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<sup>51</sup> Pan, op cit, p 53.

square-shaped rice field at the top and a symbol denoting 'strength' at the bottom.<sup>52</sup> Many ancient Chinese words are pictographic, with the meanings being shown by means of simple representation. When interpreting the character for 'man', by looking at its constituent parts, it is apparent that in ancient Chinese culture, a man was expected to be working in the fields. According to its definition in the *Dictionary*, agriculture is men's work, therefore it follows that using strength in the field means 'being a man'.

For the word 'woman' [fig 5], the shape resembles a woman bending her body and kneeling on all fours, which is very different from the appearance of the character for 'man', who is depicted as standing upright.<sup>53</sup> In the definitions of the *Dictionary*, women are defined as needing to stay at home to do their housework, therefore bending is the most common bodily position seen inside the house. Thus, Chinese culture has shown its opinion of gender differences by creating these characters whereby the woman is considered to perform a domestic role whilst a man should be working outside.

Apart from being known for its ancient tales and sayings, Confucianism (the main philosophy of Taiwan's previous colonisers, China and Japan) is the other important element that has engendered patriarchal ethics in Taiwan. Murray Rubinstein suggests that 'Confucianism was a philosophy that made women into second-class citizens at best and into little more than chattel at most'.<sup>54</sup> Confucianism contains a clear gender hierarchy, in which women

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<sup>52</sup> The word, man, can be found in Hsu, Chung Shu (ed). *Dictionary of Oracle Bone Scripts*. Cheng Du City: Ssu-Chuan Dictionary Publisher, 1989, p 1477.

<sup>53</sup> The word, woman, can be found in Hsu (ed), *ibid.*, p 1299.

<sup>54</sup> Rubinstein, Murray A. 'Lu Haiu-lien and the Origins of Taiwanese Feminism, 1944-1977' in Farris, *op cit*, p 252.

are not only given little choice and freedom but are also taught to accept this ideology. The statement below relates to the well-known Confucian treatise, *Three Obediences and Four Virtues*, which defines the behaviour to be expected of a good and filial woman:

The *Three Obediences* required that a woman obeyed the father before marriage, obeyed the husband after marriage, and answered to the son after the death of her husband. The *Four Virtues* included attention to criteria that women had to meet to be 'virtuous': morality, skill in handicrafts, appearance, and propriety in speech.<sup>55</sup>

In Confucianism, there are distinct paths for men and women to follow: public discourse is for men whilst women are restricted to strictly domestic functions.<sup>56</sup> Kumari Jayawardena has argued that 'according to Confucianism, the most important social institution is the family: first because it provides the natural ground for training and second, because it forms the bridge between the individual and society'.<sup>57</sup> Jayawardena also observes that society, in the view of Confucianism, is built on the basis of five relationships, as follows:

[B]etween father and son there should be affection, between ruler and minister there should be righteousness, *between husband and wife there should be attention to their separate functions*, between elder and

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<sup>55</sup> This text has been translated by Murray A Rubinstein. Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to note that even in (relatively recent times) in the West, it was not considered appropriate for women to be seen alone in public, where such behaviour would be viewed as a sign of disorder. This phenomenon can be seen in Elizabeth Wilson's words, which indicate that '[s]he [a woman in cities] may take the shape of the Victorian prostitute, of the red whore of the barricades [...]. Women have fared especially badly in western visions of the metropolis because they have seemed to represent disorder'. See Wilson, Elizabeth. *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder and Women*. London: Virago Press Limited, 1991, p 157.

<sup>57</sup> Jayawardena, Kumari. *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1986, p 170.

younger brothers there should be order, between friends there should be good faith.<sup>58</sup>

According to the statements above, Confucianism demonstrates that there are separate functions and responsibilities to be fulfilled by men and women and the basic premise is that men should take precedence over women. This kind of relationship is also in evidence in traditional Chinese cosmology in which heaven (yang) dominates earth (yin). 'Yang' means 'sun, bright, positive and male', whereas 'yin' indicates 'moon, dark, negative and female'. In Chinese philosophy, nature tries to preserve a balance between both yang and yin but their relationship is based on a fundamental inequality. We can observe the influences of Taiwan's patriarchy deriving not only from Confucian and Chinese philosophies but also from the traditional culture of the Taiwanese.<sup>59</sup> In *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (1972), which was the first English-language publication concerning Taiwanese women, Margery Wolf proposes that:

A woman can and, if she is ever to have any economic security, must provide the links in the male chain of descent, but she will never appear

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., original emphasis maintained.

<sup>59</sup> Here, it is essential to address the differences between Taiwanese and Chinese culture as they both originate from Hans. However, owing to the fact that Taiwan is an island separated from the mainland, it absorbs foreign cultures easily and gradually develops its own culture rather than a 'purely' Chinese style. To demonstrate this point further, I need to cite Wachman at length:

It is evident that Taiwanese differ from most Mainlanders in that they speak a different dialect, worship different deities, have cultivated a self-referential literature, perform distinct forms of folk opera and puppetry, and practice different funeral and burial customs. What some Taiwanese refer to as Taiwanese culture is most easily characterised as the transported culture of Fukien Province (from which most Taiwanese families trace their roots), leavened with bits of other southern Chinese cultural ingredients and flavoured with the peculiar historical experiences of Taiwanese interactions with Japan and the West.

Wachman, op cit, p 102.



in anyone's genealogy as that all-important name connecting the past to the future. If she dies before she is married, her tablet will not appear on her father's altar; although she was a temporary member of his household, she was not a member of his family. A man is born into his family and remains a member of it throughout his life and even after his death. He is identified with the family from birth, and every action concerning him, up to and including his death, is in the context of that group. [...] There is no such secure setting for a woman.<sup>60</sup>

Men and women are valued differently by society and it is still rare to see women's names on family gravestones.<sup>61</sup> On the tombstones, there are only male family members' names, as if women are unseen and unmentioned, even though it was them who have prepared all of the food and materials for the ceremony during the Tomb Sweeping Festival.<sup>62</sup> This illustrates the fact that Taiwanese culture emphasises the importance, above all, of having a male member in the family whilst women are not given equal appreciation or status. According to a Taiwanese saying, a married daughter is like spilt water which cannot be returned (to its original home). In traditional Taiwanese values, married women are expected to maintain their husbands' families' offspring and also to carry out housework with their sisters-in-law.<sup>63</sup> Wolf further states that 'Taiwan is a place where much of life is carried on in full view of the neighbours'.<sup>64</sup> Thus, religious and wedding ceremonies need to be practised in full view in front of one's house in order to show conformity

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<sup>60</sup> Wolf, Margery. *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972, p 32.

<sup>61</sup> In Taiwan, people put male family members' names on their ancestors' gravestones to show the number of males in the family, as a sign of strength.

<sup>62</sup> The Tomb Sweeping Festival, a national holiday, is a traditional Chinese festival held on 5 May by the Chinese calendar. On this day, most Taiwanese families go to the cemetery to clean and tidy their ancestors' tombs and worship their spirits with gifts of flowers, fruit, meat and paper money.

<sup>63</sup> It was very common for the whole of a large family to live together in the same house. Those with several sons would bring their wives and children to the family house and it was those women who married into the family who shared all of the housework.

<sup>64</sup> Wolf, M., op cit, preface.

to traditional values. Most people do not challenge or try to change these values because they would be criticised by their neighbours and other family members. For most people, especially those dwelling in rural places, their lives are limited by a specific framework of morals, styles of behaviour and ideas, which has made the ideology of people living in rural places more difficult to change.

The Taiwanese are accustomed to being patient and tolerant, hence their way of life keeps repeating itself with little change and they consider the bad or negative elements to be their 'fate'. Most Taiwanese (in both urban and rural areas) go to Buddhist and Taoist temples to seek good luck and directions from the gods for leading their lives more successfully. It is on account of this kind of traditional and religion-bound ideology that I classify (rural) Taiwan as a part of the developing world. However, Taiwan is not evenly developed and there is a large gap between the cities and rural areas. When travelling from major cities to rural places, one travels from a place where you can receive the most up-to-date international information, where there are dozens of high-tech modern buildings, to places where conservatism and religious control are deeply entrenched in people's values and where poverty and gender inequality are much more prevalent. The gap seems to be as profound as the difference between the developed and the developing world, yet these people with varied life styles and ideologies live together on the same island.<sup>65</sup> Although the exhibitions I have selected to discuss were held in three major cities (Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung), I cannot ignore

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<sup>65</sup> Some evidence to describe this kind of unbalanced development of the island can be seen in Chapter 2, where I demonstrate the different living styles of Taipei city and Sinjhuang, Taipei county.

consideration of the rural part of Taiwan, the majority of which still remains bound by tradition and religion. I suggest that Taiwanese society, as a whole, is still described as developing because of the difference in wealth distribution around Taiwan.

The term 'Third World' has been defined by Chandra Talpade Mohanty as referring to the situation of 'underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism and over population', of which 'oppressive traditions' particularly applies to the rural areas of Taiwan.<sup>66</sup> In her essay, *Under Western Eyes* (1991), Mohanty further indicates that '[T]hird [W]orld women lead an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being "[T]hird [W]orld" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimised, etc)'.<sup>67</sup> To sum up, although some major cities have joined the developed world 'club' by dint of Taiwanese government's policies, Taiwan even now is classified as developing and less-advantaged in the global environment.

Here I should emphasise that I have avoided adopting the term, Third World, to label contemporary Taiwan's society even though Taiwan fixes into some characteristics of the term. Therefore, I shall delve into how this term has been used in literature and how to 'characterise' it; I then address how I use

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<sup>66</sup> Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 'Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle. Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism' in Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (eds). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991, pp 5-6.

<sup>67</sup> Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 'Under Western Eyes' in Mohanty et al (eds), op cit, p 56.

this term in my research.<sup>68</sup>

It is impossible to completely define the developmental condition of a region with a single term, as 'development is a complex economic, social and political phenomenon'.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, even within the same category, no countries can be identified as identical as different social, political, customs and economic conditions vary among them.<sup>70</sup> Michael Barke and Greg O'Hare demonstrate how different terms have been used to indicate the region, which we now see as 'developing':

Many of the earlier terms such as 'colonies' and 'territories' used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and 'primitive', 'backward' and 'underdeveloped' used in the 1930s and 1940s are no longer in general use. Conversely, some more recent descriptions which are less harsh, less Western and less superior in tone, for example the 'underdeveloped', and the 'less developed' countries, together with the 'South' and the 'Third World' itself, have become increasingly popular.<sup>71</sup>

Barke and O'Hare's argument above suggests the fact that the ideas of development have a long history, albeit, being generated in the West. The term, Third World, provided a third route between the capitalist (First World) and communist (Second World) 'protagonists' of the cold war after the Second

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<sup>68</sup> James Mittelman and Mustapha Kamal Pasha have declared that '[t]he Third World is easier to characterise than to define'. See Mittelman, James H. and Mustapha Kamal Pasha. *Out from Underdevelopment Revisited: Changing Global Structures and the Remaking of the Third World*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997, p 19.

<sup>69</sup> Barke, Michael and Greg O'Hare. *The Third World: Diversity, Change and Interdependence*. Harlow: Oliver & Boyd, 1991, p 2.

<sup>70</sup> Barke and O'Hare argue that 'no Third World countries are exactly alike [as] [t]hey are diverse from one another in cultural condition, economic level and social and political structure'. Ibid., p 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p 2.

World War.<sup>72</sup> David Drakakis-Smith explores how the term was founded and used, and it is worth citing him at some length:

The newly independent countries hoped to form a non-aligned movement following these principles and many of them began to adopt the collective term 'Third World' following their first meeting in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955. Broader use of the term followed the publication of the sociologist Peter Worsley's book of the same name in 1964 but it also served to widen the meaning of the concept by incorporating into the discussion not only the common heritage of these countries (colonialism), but also a common legacy (poverty).<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the concepts of 'Third World' were to categorise nations which were newly established after the Second World War and which were once-colonised by an imperial power. Most importantly, they were categorised as a less materially privileged group. Ray Kiely proposes that 'it was in the post-1945 period that it [the idea of development] was consciously advocated as a way for "the Rest" (or Third World) to become more like "the West" (or First World)'.<sup>74</sup> More specifically, the concept of 'Third World' was created based on the standards proposed by the West. Kiely further argues that 'development is simply a form of cultural imperialism [which] homogenises both the West and Third World, and reduces the latter to

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<sup>72</sup> David Drakakis-Smith asserts that '[t]he term "Third World" had its principal origins in the search for an alternative to the polarised politics of the immediate post-war years. A third way or path between the capitalist and communist protagonists of the cold war'. Drakakis-Smith, David. *Third World Cities, Second Edition*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p 1. Trinh T Minh-ha also suggests that 'Third World commonly refers to states in Africa, Asia and Latin America which called themselves "non-aligned", that is to say, affiliated with neither the Western (capitalist) nor the Eastern (communist) power blocs'. Trinh (1989), op cit, p 98.

<sup>73</sup> Drakakis-Smith, op cit, pp 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> Kiely, Ray. 'Introduction' in Kiely, Ray and Phil Marfleet (eds). *Globalisation and the Third World*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p 6.

passive recipients of the former's idea'.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the term, Third World, itself is opposed to the principles of postcoloniality, which aim to re-consider Western dualism and essentialism. Additionally, since rapid economic development happened in some (ex-) 'Third World' countries, such as, for example, in East Asia (including South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong) in the 1970s, 'the end of the Third World' has arrived.<sup>76</sup> Hence, I propose that the term, Third World, appears to be inappropriate and outdated for use in contemporary cultural studies. Additionally, it is interesting to note that since the mid 1970s, there have been some reports indicating more worlds than three.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, I replace the term 'Third World' with the more accurate term 'the developing world' when describing issues happening in contemporary Taiwanese society.<sup>78</sup>

### Theoretical Concerns

In order to analyse contemporary Taiwanese women's art, I have begun by narrating Taiwan's historical and social background, which has provided me with the stimulus for undertaking this project. However, the theoretical points I address are based on the acquisition of an understanding of postcolonial feminism, which, being one of the most influential theories in academia in recent decades, has provided me with various ideas and perspectives for

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p 36.

<sup>76</sup> More details regarding the rapid economic development (also called the 'economic miracle') happening in East Asia will be addressed in the second chapter. The phrase 'end of the Third World' is cited from Kiely, op cit, p 9.

<sup>77</sup> Regarding the idea that 'there are more worlds than three', Drakakis-Smith states that 'Newsweek [...] outlined four worlds; the third encompassed those countries with significant economic potential while the fourth consisted of the "hardship cases". [...] Time magazine suggested five worlds: here the third comprised the oil producers, the fourth constituted other resource-rich states, while the fifth contained the "basket-cases"'. Drakakis-Smith, op cit, p 2.

<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Wilson also argues that '[t]he term "third world" is used as a familiar, although unsatisfactory, shorthand'. Wilson, op cit, p 121.

analysing the questions and issues raised by Taiwanese women artists' works. I am now going to look briefly at the theories I have studied.

The theories considered here have been advanced by postcolonial feminist scholars, many of whom originated in the developing regions but now hold academic positions in the West.<sup>79</sup> Ankie Hoogvelt remarks that '[i]n First World academe, Third World scholars found a welcome home and symbiotic environment in the burgeoning discipline and polemics of "cultural studies"'.<sup>80</sup> It is through the change of environment that diasporas become aware of the differences between their motherlands and the developed world in which they are living. Robert Young describes how postcolonialism, as a field of academic discipline, has developed by asserting that '[it] has emerged from Anglophone universities around the world [...] though by no means exclusively, in western institutions'.<sup>81</sup> Young further argues that postcoloniality is a subject of cultural studies by intellectuals who increasingly 'invented critical, analytic and politically assertive ways of resisting the west'.<sup>82</sup> The 'West' in Young's arguments refers not only to Western Europe and America but also to any colonial power that dominates any region in the world. Therefore, postcolonial studies, even though generated in academia in the West, can be used in the issues related to Taiwan when researching the

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<sup>79</sup> Ien Ang also makes the same observation by stating that '[t]he figure of the postcolonial diasporic intellectual – born in the Third World and educated and living and working in the West – has become the subject of much controversy in recent years. [...] [S]ome diasporic intellectuals [...] have gained international celebrity status in the halls of the Western academy'. Ang, op cit, p 1. Additionally, Robert Young proposes an identical view and asserts that '[i]n Europe and the US, it was above all minorities, particularly people of colour, who developed postcolonial theory for its radical political potential'. Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, p 61.

<sup>80</sup> Hoogvelt, Ankie M M. *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1997, p 157.

<sup>81</sup> Young, R (2001), op cit, p 63.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

colonial political and cultural power from the Chinese Nationalists and the Japanese.

When being interviewed by Alfred Arteaga during 1993 and 1994, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak mentioned that one of her earliest memories was of her country's negotiating its political independence. She asserted in the interview with Arteaga that:

My generation was on the cusp of decolonisation. On our childhood and adolescent sensibilities was played out the meaning of a negotiated political independence. We were not adults; yet we were not born after independence. In a way, it's more interesting to have been in my generation than to have been a midnight's child, to have been born at independence, to be born free by chronological accident.<sup>83</sup>

I grew up against the background of a similar kind of society and nation as many postcolonial and feminist scholars (for example, Spivak); thus, their texts become essential for my research.<sup>84</sup> Most of the Taiwanese women artists and curators who I am currently researching, were born before 1987, which was the year when martial law was suspended. Those who have experienced an unstable society and political uncertainty, especially because of the historical past, are more likely to have a tendency to determine their own position in terms of culture and politics. Thus, postcolonial literature has been created by those who have tried to establish a new identity for their

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<sup>83</sup> Arteaga, Alfred. 'Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga' in Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean (eds). *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp 16-17.

<sup>84</sup> The theories, which I have employed in my work, are mainly produced by Ien Ang, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, Homi Bhabha, Arif Dirlik, bell hooks, Ankie Hoogvelt, Trinh T Minh-ha, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Robert Young. Among them, I have mostly been inspired by Bhabha.



people. Because of this ideology, I intend to search for a position for contemporary Taiwanese (women) artists in world history.

Many of those who have contributed greatly on the subject of postcoloniality, especially in the English language, are members of Asian and West Indian diasporas, who reside as intellectuals in Britain, the United States and Australia and who have a strong affiliation with the history of post-war immigration.<sup>85</sup> These postcolonial intellectuals have argued that postcolonial discourses, inspired by the colonial experiences of their origins, have become trans-national research, which is engaged with issues of culture, politics and economics related to more than two nations. Nevertheless my research centres on the contemporary Taiwanese women's art scene, and my research questions are actually based on how the Taiwanese consider themselves in their colonial history, and how complex the Taiwanese presence is formed due to the layered colonial culture. The method to explore contemporary Taiwanese culture requires cross-national analyses as clearly, Taiwan is deeply under the influences of China, Japan and even the West. Particularly, I propose that Taiwan, itself, is a typical postcolonial nation.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin address how to define and use

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<sup>85</sup> Young has clearly demonstrated that the academic origins of postcolonial studies are strongly associated with the history of post-war immigration:

In Britain, with the arrival of the *SS Windrush* in London in 1948; in the US, with the changes Bobby Kennedy made to the US Immigration laws in 1965, which altered the immigration quota system from one directed predominantly towards Europe to one divided more equitably on a global basis; in Australia, with the abandonment of the 'white Australia' immigration policy as recently as 1972.

Young, R. (2001), op cit, p 62.

the term, postcolonial, and state that '[w]e use the term, 'post-colonial' [...] to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day.<sup>86</sup> Hence, according to Ashcroft et al, 'postcolonial' is the term used to denote countries that are politically independent but whose cultures are still under the influence and control of the former imperial authority. Young interprets postcolonial theory in an inspiring historical sense, which I think is worth citing at some length:

The origins of postcolonialism lie in the historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control, the success of which then enabled a radical challenge to the political and conceptual structures of the systems on which such domination had been based. Historically, therefore, postcolonial theory works from a number of different axes: a product of revolutionary Marxism, of the national liberation movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the political and cultural consequence of the success of those movements, the tricontinental economic and cultural critiques of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and the historical effects of migration, past and present, forced or voluntary.<sup>87</sup>

From Young's argument, the concepts of postcolonialism first appeared after the revolutions in the independent Marxist states, although, at the time the term was often hyphenated: i.e. post-colonialism. It has now been widely used in the spheres of politics, culture, academic literature, international relations and area studies.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the theory has today gone beyond specific geographical territories and has been affiliated with discourses of

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<sup>86</sup> Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989, pp 1-2.

<sup>87</sup> Young, R (2001), op cit, pp 60-61.

<sup>88</sup> Here it is worth noting that before postcolonial cultural critique was used in the spheres of political and academic literature, the term 'post-colonial' (usually with a hyphen) was used 'in social sciences with a specific Marxist reference, a usage that continues today in the language of contemporary area studies, economics, political science and international relations [...]'. See Young, R. (2001), op cit, p 58.

diasporas, transnational migration and international studies.

I suggest that postcoloniality is understood to refer to the period when the colonisers arrive and people start to fight against this violent invasion (in this case, 'post' means 'after a period of time'). Additionally, it indicates that postcolonialism describes cultural affairs in the time when political colonisation has finished (here 'post' refers to 'against some ideas'). When understood in the former sense, postcolonial theory indicates the revolutionary battles against the dominant political power, whilst the latter means that postcolonialism is a theory that opposes colonisation in terms of culture and identity. The latter has inspired postcolonial scholars to argue 'tricontinental' issues about identity, hybridity and ambivalence, which have formed the main themes in my thesis. Postcolonialism can, therefore, be defined from many different perspectives, depending on the subject to which one refers.

Postcolonialism has been developed as a globally influential set of debates and political arbitration in the last thirty years. This fact can be observed by the large proportion of the present global population that used to be colonised. Ashcroft et al note that '[m]ore than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism'.<sup>89</sup> Young also states that by the First World War, 'imperial powers occupied, or by various means controlled, nine-tenths of the surface territory of the globe'.<sup>90</sup> Reclaiming the term is empowering and it helps to develop an

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<sup>89</sup> Ashcroft et al (1989), op cit, p 1.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Young further emphasises that by the First World War, 'Britain governed one-fifth of the area of the world and a quarter of its population'. Young, R. (2001), op cit, p 2.

imagined community for the once-colonised regions to re-consider their fate, future and hybridity of themselves.

However, apart from the 'old' colonial power before the First World War, the imperial power of Japan and the trend of globalisation from the United States, different kinds of anti-colonial struggles which have occurred more recently, have been formulated. These include East Timor by Indonesia, Tibet by China, Taiwan by the Nationalist Chinese, Kashmir by India, Palestine and the West Bank by Israel and the state of Israel itself. In addition, there are those tribal peoples who seek nothing more than their own survival, many of whom wish to, but cannot return to their own country, disadvantaged ethnic minorities and impoverished classes in most countries of the world, etc.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the 'colonial subject' in postcolonialism has gone beyond the stereotypical imagination of imperialism as it can now be used to describe the subaltern status of ethnic or class minorities who live in the same society as the dominating part. Examples of this new kind of colonial relationship include working-class women, the majority of the Taiwanese aborigines who are at the marginal position in the spheres of economics and politics, and the ever increasing number of 'foreign brides' in Taiwan.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See Young, R. (2001), op cit, pp 3-4.

<sup>92</sup> In 1992, Taiwan started to have an increasing number of local men marrying foreign women, when foreign workers from Southeast Asia were allowed to work in Taiwan. Statistics from the Cabinet's Ministry of the Interior have shown that by July 2001, there were around 100,000 foreign brides in Taiwan, half of whom originated from Mainland China whilst the other half were from Southeast Asia. The term 'foreign brides' was created to describe these women, most of whom married Taiwanese men through agents. Max Hirsch has indicated that in 2006, one out of every eight newborns in Taiwan is from a cross-border family (in most cases from the foreign brides), something which most Taiwanese consider to be a 'severe' situation in Taiwan's society. For more details, see Ko, Shu-Ling. 'Foreign Brides in Taiwan: Wedding Bells for Foreigners' in *Taipei Times*, Monday, 1 October 2001, p 3 and Hirsch, Max. 'Cross-border Couples Discussed' in *Taipei Times*, Thursday, 21 September 2006, p 2.

Young has suggested that postcolonial critique, mainly generated in academic circles in the West, is actually to go against western ideology. He notes that

[p]ostcolonial critique marks the moment where the political and cultural experience of the marginalised periphery developed into a more general theoretical position that could be set against western political, intellectual and academic hegemony and its protocols of objective knowledge.<sup>93</sup>

Postcolonial theory examines the binary opposition established between the colonised and colonisers in the spheres of culture and tradition, by which it intends to constitute another possibility of knowledge that is against the hegemony of the West. Nevertheless, in Edward Said's 1994 *Afterword to Orientalism* (originally published in 1978), the author asserts his observations on postcolonial studies and notes that:

[O]ne of the most interesting developments in post-colonial studies was a re-reading of the canonical cultural works, not to demote or somehow dish dirt on them, but to re-investigate some of their assumptions, going beyond the stifling hold on them of some version of the master-slave binary dialectic.<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, Said's wise interpretation of postcolonialism is to re-investigate and re-formulate the colonisers' absolute binary parts (developed/developing and Central/Margin). In other words, postcoloniality offers a bridge that forms a new relationship between the colonial subject and the colonised object. The individuality of the latter has been influenced by the former and this has given

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<sup>93</sup> Young, R. (2001), op cit, p 65.

<sup>94</sup> Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 2003, pp 352-353.

rise to a kind of hybridised culture which differs from that which existed before colonisation. Thus, postcolonialism is the process by which the once-colonised intend to establish their new voices, both in cultural and in national spheres. Furthermore, the essential nature of the artistic representation of postcolonialism not only reveals and places emphasis on its individuality but also re-locates the tensions between the colonised people and their colonisers. What I aim to seek in this thesis is the cultural outcome of the new structure of order and power, whilst contemporary artistic practices visualise this kind of possibility and knowledge.

Postcolonialism has been one of the most powerful discourses in contemporary cultural studies and it has been developed with the influence of globalisation. Arif Dirlik has proposed that 'the post-colonial begins with the emergence of global capitalism',<sup>95</sup> and that '[it is] not in the sense of an exact coincidence in time but in the sense that the one is a condition for the other'.<sup>96</sup> Postcolonialism and global capitalism have been essential elements for one another and it was not until global capitalism spread to, and economic development took place, in the developing regions of the world that the situation of being 'Janus-faced' came to be discussed more seriously and academically.<sup>97</sup> This phenomenon also exists in Taiwan and the ways in which Taiwanese women have re-interpreted their gender myth under the influence of the trends of globalisation and postcolonialism will be discussed

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<sup>95</sup> Dirlik, Arif. *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997, p 352.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> The term 'Janus-faced' is used by Homi K Bhabha to mean that the situation is vague and not definable, which implies the process and phenomenon of hybridity. In the original text it is stated that '[t]he boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity'. Bhabha, Homi. 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation' in Bhabha, Homi (ed). *Nation and Narration*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p 4.

in greater depth in later chapters.

Postcoloniality has transformed the appearance of the developing nations and it is in evidence as a global condition within the developing regions, including the Asia-Pacific region. A Taiwanese scholar, Chen Fang-Ming, believes that postcolonialism is 'nothing but the establishment of identity'.<sup>98</sup> In summary, postcoloniality is the process by which a people seeks for its own location in terms of its culture, politics and history.

For Taiwanese artists, postcolonial ideology can be traced back to the 1940s and to the work of several woodblock printmakers. These artists, including Ju Ming-Kang, Mai Chun-Kuang and Liu Lun, had strong socialist values which prompted them to criticise the racial and social discrimination (among the Taiwanese and the Chinese Mainlanders) which had existed in Taiwanese society since the Chinese Nationalist government took over in 1945. For example, the work, *Three Generations* [fig 6], created by Ju Ming-Kang in 1946, depicts the poor and hard life of the average Taiwanese in the early days of Chinese colonisation. This work vividly illustrates the reality of being Taiwanese in the 1940s and it implies that the Taiwanese, as an 'imaginary community', were opposed to the Chinese who monopolised them during that time. In *Three Generations*, the image of the ordinary Taiwanese is portrayed by the members of a family living in a rural place. A woman, carrying a little boy and with another child standing beside her, is working hard at the pump in order to draw some water from the well. A man is squatting

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<sup>98</sup> Chen, Fang-Ming. *Postcolonial Taiwan: Essays on Taiwanese Literature, History and Beyond*. Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2002, p 16.

behind her, cutting wood with a knife, whilst a small boy holding some banana leaves is depicted at the centre of the picture. The boy's swollen belly is exposed to the viewer, indicating that he is not very healthy and he is even too poor to wear any underpants. This print portrays the hard life of the Taiwanese at the beginning of the KMT's rule in Taiwan. The artist intended his work to be a critique of the cultural isolation and the inferior social status of the Taiwanese, through which he expressed the consciousness of being Taiwanese within the same community. The exposure of the hardship of Taiwanese people's lives in the early stage of the KMT's control has given a voice to politically and socially marginalised Taiwanese, through which a sense of postcolonial consciousness (identity) is shown.<sup>99</sup> Although the original artists who initially developed postcolonial ideas were men, since the early 1990s, women artists have started to contribute their own criticism to the discourse of identity, including issues of gender, social class and nation in the post-martial law era.

### **Global Capitalism, Westernisation and Essential Terms**

Even after attaining its political independence, the developing region is still in a state of economic and cultural colonisation by the West because of the vast global network for the communication of information and persistent economic ties. Colonialism does not simply disappear, but rather it is transformed and continues to affect the developing area, with the result that a nation like Taiwan has transformed itself from being an agricultural economy to an industrial/high-tech economy as a consequence of its government's policies

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<sup>99</sup> Here, I need to emphasise that owing to the fact that the Chinese Nationalists were eager to implant traditional Chinese culture in Taiwan, this has resulted in a sense of superiority in the Mainlanders over the rest of the people living on the island. Therefore, even today it is considered that speaking Chinese Mandarin is more 'civilised' than speaking 'Taiwanese'.



over the last thirty years.

Capitalism has changed the appearance of some major cities in the developing nations and it has also persuaded people to consider their locations in terms of culture and identity. For those nations who gained their political identity from their colonisers, postcolonialism is the forum for them to challenge the boundaries and limits of outside and inside. Global capitalism has brought the ideas of localism and individuality to some parts of the developing world, especially in major cities of the Asia-Pacific region. In my research, the exhibitions I aim to discuss were mostly held in major cities in Taiwan and this situation indicates the fact that under postcolonialism and globalisation, identity has been addressed significantly in Taiwan, especially in its cities.

Apart from global capitalism, the other aspect that has played an important role in contemporary Taiwan's society is Westernisation. I shall briefly examine its concepts as it has greatly influenced the methods of many contemporary Taiwanese artists' practice (such as video, multi-media, installation etc).<sup>100</sup> To explore the concepts of Westernisation, I begin with James Elkins's arguments on whether art history is global. In *Is Art History Global* (2007), Elkins states that '[a]rt history is closely affiliated with senses of national and regional identity' and in response to E.H. Gombrich's

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<sup>100</sup> Here I need to emphasise that even though the theories I have modified in my research are mainly generated and published in the West, there is no contradiction of my argument to examine the ideas of Westernisation. Despite the fact that postcolonial feminism is mainly written and published in the West, its main concept is to challenge the norms of homogeneity and essentialism, established by the West (the middle-class white). To be more specific, my intention to examine Westernisation shares the same spirit as the postcolonial (feminist) scholars featured in my research.

Eurocentric *The Story of Art* (1950), he further proposes that art history should not be global.<sup>101</sup> To challenge the Eurocentric views of art history writing, Elkins proposes that:

The possibility of non-Western interpretive methods looms on the horizon for a genuinely multicultural world art history. Otherwise the 'global community' of art historians will continue to refer [in Hayden White's words] to 'congeries of historians from various countries who have adapted the "standards of practice" of Western professional historians'.<sup>102</sup>

Friedrich Teja Bach responds to Elkins's question and asserts that in the era of a 'politically aggressive globalisation', a 'centrism' of Western cultures have become 'a form of cultural imperialism'.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, even though the ex-colonised nations (the non-West) have gained their political freedom, they still live under great influences of the West, in terms of culture and economy. This situation can be observed in the majority of contemporary Taiwanese artists' works, which absolutely follow the forms and concepts of the West and which exclusively abandon 'oriental' materials, such as ink or silk paintings. Ironically, even these are originated from Taiwan's previous colonisers, China and Japan.<sup>104</sup> Under the increasing power of Westernisation today, the majority of contemporary Taiwanese artists simply emulate the style of

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<sup>101</sup> Elkins, James. 'Art History as a Global Discipline' in Elkins (ed), op cit, p 9.

<sup>102</sup> Elkins (David Summers), op cit, p 62.

<sup>103</sup> Bach, Friedrich Teja. 'The Modality of Spatial Categories' in Elkins (ed), op cit, p 73.

<sup>104</sup> Here, it is interesting to note that 'political' reasons have also influenced the preference of the contemporary fine art market. After having an interview with a Taiwanese ink painter, Li Kuang-Chun argues that 'the changing taste of the painting market highlights something fundamental about the meaning of Taiwanese ascendancy. In fact, the downplay of traditional painting is part of the very definition of the ascendancy of the Taiwanese, which is trying to create a culture of its own, including painting style'. Thus, the conscious devaluation of ink and silk paintings has some political connection to develop a 'new' appearance of Taiwanese culture, which aims to be different from Chinese and Japanese cultures. Li, Kuang-Chun. 'Mirrors and Masks: an Interpretative Study of Mainlanders' Identity Dilemma' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, p 121.

Western artists, which indeed is against the spirit of seeking a sense of their own identity in the post-martial law era. Yet, Westernisation has become another form of cultural globalisation, and I am suggesting that those who have forgotten or ignored their own characteristics and cultural heritage will eventually still remain negligible in the global art market.

bell hooks, a black feminist thinker, proposes that '[t]o be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body'; she further points out that '[l]iving as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out'.<sup>105</sup> Taiwanese women, being on the edge of both the geographical and cultural world centres, have a similar kind of experience in that they observe the developed West from an outsider's angle. This experience emerges from a new understanding of how global systems work and how the centre and edge interact. Therefore, Taiwanese women artists are questioning the environment from their position as objects in society and the globe as a whole.<sup>106</sup>

Since a leading motif of postcolonial studies is to criticise the dominant power, postcolonial literature has widely included the concerns of women, non-West

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<sup>105</sup> hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*. Boston: South End Press, 1984, preface.

<sup>106</sup> At this stage, it is essential to consider the proportion of artists by gender in Taiwan. According to a survey conducted by the Society of Contemporary Art, Taipei in 1999, the proportion of male students to females in fine arts is 1:1.45; the proportion of men artists to women artists who had shown their works in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (1993-1998) is 4.2:1, in the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (1993-1998) is 17:1 and in the National Taiwan Museum (1988-1998) is 9.9:1. The proportion of men artists to women artists in Taiwan is 3.8:1. Society of Contemporary Art, Taipei (SOCA). *An Analysis of Data for the Establishment of the Women Artists' Association*. Taipei: SOCA, 31 December 1999, appendix 2, no page numbers.

ethnic minorities and subalterns. Here, I shall bring forward the ideas of 'subaltern', which, itself, implies the lower layer of the social power and Marxist structure. Said describes 'subaltern' and states that:

Their [the *Subaltern Studies* group's] aim was nothing less than a revolution in historiography, the immediate goal being to rescue the writing of Indian history from the domination of the nationalist elite and restore to it the important role of the urban poor and the rural masses.<sup>107</sup>

I have adopted the methods of the *Subaltern Studies* group to reveal the hidden voices of Taiwanese women in both political narratives and economic history. The other essential term I have addressed regularly in my thesis is 'nation', which is also what the *Subaltern Studies* group aimed to explore when re-writing India's history.

In *Imagined Communities* (1983), on the subject of the nation's cultural roots, Benedict Anderson proposes that 'nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being'.<sup>108</sup> For Anderson, a nation is understood not only by referring to its political status but most importantly to its people's lives and cultures. In a state of postcolonialism, the once-colonised find their national identity not through a matter of politics but through how they consider themselves. It is not the geographical territory, recognised power and government that create the concept of a nation; more importantly, it is the

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<sup>107</sup> Said (2001), op cit, p 352.

<sup>108</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1983, p 12.

ideology and culture that are embodied in people's lives that allow them to be regarded as an existing community.

After martial law was suspended, Taiwan started to find its own identity after more than 400 years' colonial history. It has been a task to find the authenticity of Taiwanese characteristics, as every invader tried to imprint the Taiwanese with its own culture when they occupied the island. As a result, Taiwanese culture is made up of many different elements from different countries which never really planned to develop Taiwan except for commercial, political or military purposes. Thus, I am emphasising that the essential nature of Taiwanese presence is hybridised, multi-layered and polysemous. Hence, 'hybridity' has become the other main theme in my research.

David Theo Goldberg describes hybridity and asserts that '[h]ybridity itself is taken as conceptually catching the in-between, as the product if not the very expression of mixture, of the antipure, of Becoming in the face of Being's stasis'.<sup>109</sup> Owing to Taiwan's layered colonial history, contemporary Taiwanese culture is in the process of 'becoming', which is the typical example of hybridity, a mixture of the previous colonial cultural elements and present globalised Western impact. Exhibitions can be seen as the means to visualise the conceptual ideas of hybridity happening in current Taiwan's society.

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<sup>109</sup> Goldberg, David Theo. 'Heterogeneity and Hybridity: Colonial Legacy, Postcolonial Heresy' in Schwarz, Henry and Sangeeta Ray (eds). *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p 72.

Finally, the last term to consider is cyborg, which is an emblem to indicate the arrival of the digital age in Taiwan. Cyborg, an asexual and semi-human creature, actually provides contemporary Taiwanese (women) artists with a new interface with which to create their works, such as multi-media and digital works, etc. Owing to the fact that technology has now greatly transformed Taiwanese people's lives, a different way to consider sexuality can be proposed. The digital age also marks the time that artists of younger generations have viewed themselves differently and a generation gap has been generated gradually in the post-martial law era. Cyborg is a new kind of hybridity, as it is a mixture of modern technology, the ideas of globalisation and Westernisation, the Taiwanese people and, more importantly, their distinctive input from their experience as both the manufacturing labourers and Oriental cultural heritage.

## **PART I: Re-positioning History**

### **1**

#### **Historical Narratives and National Identity: the 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition (1997)**

To live in Taiwan today means to inhabit a fragmented and segmented world, where traditional cultures live alongside new Western ways of life and where identity is continuously put to a [test] and can be lost in an infinite accumulation of behavioural modes becoming an instance of new energy capable of creating interconnectedness, a reality where the elements of the past conjugate and converge with the evolved facts of the present.<sup>1</sup>

To start this chapter, I have quoted the most well-known Taiwanese woman artist, Wu Mali. She is clearly indicating the fact that the social phenomenon in Taiwan is unsteady, changing and interacting with tradition and modern ideas (Western style). To paraphrase, the issue of identity is not permanent. Taiwan's colonial history has created this kind of social environment and since the revocation of martial law in 1987, people living on the island have experienced both the largest sense of freedom and the most chaotic changes in terms of everyday culture and social values. What makes the Taiwanese experience such an uncertainty are the constantly changing concepts within politics, society, culture and nationhood. To be a resident of Taiwan is to experience the feeling of being the middle part of a sandwich, clamped between several kinds of heterogeneity: traditional, modern, Chinese, Japanese and the West. In particular, Taiwan's trilateral relationship with China and Japan with regard to politics and culture during the past hundred

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<sup>1</sup> Wu, Mali. 'Wu Mali' in *n.paradoxa*, No 5, 1997, also from <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/n.paradoxa/maliwu.htm>, consulted 12 August 2007.

years or more of history, has continued to affect Taiwanese society right up until today.

To explain this social phenomenon and to analyse the social background, a good example to draw on is the notorious massacre known as the 228 Incident, which occurred in 1947 and which resulted in the installation of martial law on the island by the Chinese Nationalist government in 1949. In this chapter, I am intrigued by two crucial issues of postcolonial studies: national identity and historical narratives and how they interact with visual art. By collecting evidence from the literature regarding the Incident, I illustrate the historical facts that result in Taiwan's confusion about its identity and its concepts of nationalism. I then explore the curatorial background of the show, the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition: Sorrow and Sublimation*, held in the Fine Arts Museum of Taipei (FAMT) [fig 7] in 1997, which was developed in order to memorialise the Incident by presenting relevant documents and artworks.

An element of the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* in 1997 was subtitled, *The Forgotten Women* [fig 8], which emphasised healing the wounds and forgetting the grief under Chiang's Nationalist government, as seen from a woman's point of view. For the first time, this brought consideration of the women affected by the 228 Incident into the male-dominated history. After addressing the historical narratives of the Incident and the ideas of nationalism for the Taiwanese, I move my focus to this show and how women have examined the history that had, until now, been largely recorded by patriarchal authorities. In this chapter, I initially consider the issues of nation and national identity by looking at the history of the 228 Incident and the triangular relationship



between Taiwan, Japan and China. I then examine women's perspectives towards the ideas of nationalism and their views of the Incident by analysing the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* with reference to the studies of subaltern theory. Additionally, I am demonstrating that Taiwanese women artists are re-fabricating the concepts of nation and nationalism, through which they are legitimising themselves in Taiwanese culture. Eventually, by examining women's re-interpretation of the concepts of nation, I suggest that women artists are divulging hidden memory and culture, through which a more complete sense of Taiwanese identities is developing.

### **The 228 Incident: Politics and History**

The term, 228, refers to the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. The '228 Incident' (also entitled the *228 Revolution* and the *228 Massacre*), which is a deeply rooted trauma for the Taiwanese, refers to the massacre of an estimated 10,000 Taiwanese<sup>2</sup> during a bloody conflict between the Taiwanese and the Chinese Nationalists in 1947. For most Taiwanese, the 228 Incident reminds them that there can be no dignity for themselves without a final, permanent separation from China, and thus, the record of the 'massacre' has become the most significant Incident in Taiwan's history. Regarding the importance of this event, Robert Edmondson asserts that:

The February 28 Incident made Taiwanese history knowable not through its sufficiency as a historical cause per se, but through a much more complex, drawn-out process of meaning-making, iconization, deployment, and ritualization. Attending to this kind of 'narratological causality' challenges us to think about the intricate and intimate relationship

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<sup>2</sup> The figure, 10,000, is an estimated number and some discussion about the deaths during the Incident is detailed in the latter part of this chapter.

between what we think of as the 'fact' of history and the process of their performative and narrative construction.<sup>3</sup>

For Edmondson, the 228 Incident has made Taiwanese history a subject which identifies itself to be independent from Chinese history. The facts of history make the Taiwanese consider their own identity and location within history. According to Melissa Brown's *Is Taiwan Chinese?* (2004), before Japan took over Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, people in Taiwan did not consider themselves as a unified community. Even though the 'Han' in Taiwan viewed themselves as different from non-Han, including aborigines and Europeans (the Dutch), Taiwanese identity does not neatly correspond to any of the Chinese and 'regional' Han identities.<sup>4</sup> Brown explains this kind of ideology by asserting that 'Taiwan's sociopolitical experience took a different path from China's'.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, even though many Taiwanese living on the island can trace their ancestors, mostly from the southeastern coast of China, they do not consider themselves as a part of China. This understanding remains until now and has become even more implicit and political, having been strengthened by the 228 Incident. It is evident therefore that the 228 Incident has become an important historical event that vividly and politically separates the Taiwanese (Formosans) from Mainland China, and the Mainlanders who came to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-Shek in 1945. This assumed a clear significance in the late 1990s when the Taiwanese authorities started to re-consider the tragedy and when more and more Taiwan-born Taiwanese gained political power from Chiang's party, the KMT.

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<sup>3</sup> Edmondson, Robert. 'The February 28 Incident and National Identity' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, p 25.

<sup>4</sup> Han here refers to both Taiwanese (Minnan and Hakka) and Mainlanders.

<sup>5</sup> Brown (2004), op cit, p 7.

In order to explain the significance of the 228 Incident, and how the first 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* was held some fifty years after the tragedy took place, I need to detail more narratives of Taiwan's history. Furthermore, in order to explain how Taiwan's national/ethnic identity was developed after the 228 Incident, I need to re-consider certain elements of Taiwan's history, particularly with regard to the influences in women's art.

Before looking at the details of the Incident and before considering Taiwanese people's endeavour to develop their own national identity, it is worth tracing the history of Taiwan from when the island began to be included as a part of China. According to John Wills Jr., the earliest record of China's interest in Taiwan is 'Wang Ta-Yung's *Tao-I chih-lueh* (1349)'.<sup>6</sup> Until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, China paid little attention to Taiwan and there was little Chinese settlement on the island, except for some fishermen, smugglers and pirates. It was not until the Qing dynasty that Chinese imperial power eventually took over Taiwan and included it as a part of its territory. Therefore, early development of Taiwan by the Chinese took place during the Qing period, from approximately 1683 to 1770, and this is generally referred to as the 'pioneering stage' of the island's history.<sup>7</sup> Later, the period between the 1780s and 1860s is characterised by historians as the 'intermediate stage', when thousands and thousands of Chinese started to emigrate to the island. According to data, Chinese immigrants in Taiwan numbered 600,147 in 1756; 839,800 in 1777; 912,000 in

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<sup>6</sup> Wills, op cit, p 86. Also in Thompson, Laurence G. 'The Earliest Chinese Eyewitness Accounts of the Formosan Aborigines' in *Monumenta Serica*. Sankt Augustin, No 23, 1963, pp 163-204.

<sup>7</sup> See Wills, op cit, p 134.

1782 and 1,786,883 in 1824.<sup>8</sup> During the early stage of Chinese development in Taiwan, 'newcomers constituted fully half the total population, and from 1782 to 1881 they made up two thirds of the island's population'.<sup>9</sup> This is the period when the ancestors of most Han Taiwanese arrived in Taiwan to start their new lives on the island.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in my research, the distinction between the Taiwanese and the Chinese Mainlanders refers not to their race (both are Han), but to historically different groups who arrived on the island at different periods of time. Hence, Taiwanese refers to those Han who have lived in Taiwan for centuries, whilst the Chinese (also Han) who came to the island after 1945 are affiliated with Chiang's Nationalist government. Clearly, this comparison is centred on the Hans at different historical periods whilst the aborigines have lived on the island long before the arrival of the Chinese Han immigrants.

Taiwan, including the Peng-hu islands, was ceded to Japan from China (Qing Dynasty) in 1895 as part of the agreement after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). After the Japanese troops arrived in Taiwan, the first 'pan-Taiwan' identity was developed, although this was effectively limited to a Han identity rather than a 'native' Taiwanese identity. James Davidson, an American war correspondent with the Japanese army, reports that representatives of the various Han groups in Taiwan formed the 'Republic of Taiwan' (*Taiwan Min Zhu Guo*) in 1895, which had a seven-year resistance to Japan's occupation of the island.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the first clear Taiwanese identity

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<sup>8</sup> See Wills, *ibid.*, p 136. Also in Shepherd, John. *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, p 161.

<sup>9</sup> See Chen, Chiukun. 'From Landlords to Local Strongmen,' in Rubinstein (ed), *op cit*, p 136.

<sup>10</sup> The ancestors of my family are included in those Hans, who came to Taiwan for settlement in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Mainland China. In the text, the Han Taiwanese do not include the aborigines who have lived in Taiwan for thousands of years.

<sup>11</sup> Davidson, James W. *The Island of Formosa Past and Present: History, People, Resources*,

was established in resistance to the colonisation by Japan, although it did not succeed. However, Japan considered the island as their 'model colony',<sup>12</sup> through which they intended to develop Taiwan as the first 'Japan-ised' territory of its 'Southward Thrust' policy,<sup>13</sup> which was their colonial plan to occupy South Asia.

The Japanese started to modernise Taiwan (in a very different way from the Qing dynasty) including the 'unifying [of] weights, measures and currency; guaranteeing private property rights; building a modern infrastructure; mobilizing natural resources; increasing agricultural productivity [and] making investment capital available',<sup>14</sup> all of which had never been established during the Qing dynasty. As a result, even though the Taiwanese could not determine their own political and social power and status, they experienced constructive and modernised development under Japanese colonisation. The contrast between Japan's and the Chinese Nationalist government's rule in Taiwan resulted in the Taiwanese people's disappointment when Chiang Kai-Shek took over Taiwan in 1947. Even though Japan's colonisation of the island was mainly for the sake of its own imperial economic benefit, the

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*and Commercial Prospects – Tea, Camphor, Sugar, Gold, Coal, Sulphur, Economical Plants and Other Productions*. Taipei and Oxford: Southern Materials Centre Inc. and Oxford University Press, 1988 (1903), pp 257-370. Also in Brown (2004), op cit, p 8.

<sup>12</sup> The term, 'model colony', comes from Edmondson's essay, *The February 28 Incident and National Identity*, and this term implies the positive perspectives of Japanese development in Taiwan during its colonisation. Edmondson, op cit, p 26.

<sup>13</sup> According to Premier Konoye, the Southward Trust policy is Japan's imperial and military strategy to occupy East Asia, which was proclaimed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1938: '[w]hat Japan seeks is the establishment of a new order which will ensure the permanent stability of East Asia. In this lies the ultimate purpose of our present military campaign'. The phrase 'new order in East Asia' soon became a slogan for Japanese expansionism in the Pacific area and the term envisaged the establishment of an Asian and even a world's empire under the hegemony of Japan. See Furuya, Keiji. *Chiang Kai-Shek: His Life and Times*. New York: St John's University Press, 1981, pp 628-629.

<sup>14</sup> Gold, Thomas. *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1986, p 44.

Japanese authority did at least bring positive development to the island, as opposed to the early stage of Chiang's control. With regard to the Taiwanese people's affirmative views towards Japan's colonisation on the island, Melissa Brown asserts that 'Japan improved public safety, health, education, and the industrial and communications infrastructures. These changes created a Taiwanese middle class, many of whom remember the Japanese colonial period with nostalgia'.<sup>15</sup> Brown, further notes that '[e]ven working-class and rural Taiwanese remember the Japanese as strict but fair'.<sup>16</sup> Hence, after fifty years of Japanese colonisation of the island, the Taiwanese, even though still suppressed as colonised objects, were used to the discipline and regulations set up by the Japanese, which ultimately changed Taiwan's society from being an agricultural economy to one of industry.

After the end of the World War II, while Chiang was still holding large parts of China with his Nationalist forces, the Allied forces ceded Taiwan to Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist government without asking for Taiwanese opinions. The Taiwanese, under Japanese rule from 1895 to 1945, initially welcomed the Chinese Nationalist forces (Chiang's soldiers and their families) in 1947. It was considered by the Taiwanese that Taiwan was being 'gloriously returned' (*guangfu*) to Chinese rule, as if being returned to its motherland.<sup>17</sup> The joy of returning to China did not last long and, as Chang Mao-Kuei describes:

There must have been a moment when, knowing they would soon be

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<sup>15</sup> Brown, Melissa J. 'Reconstructing Ethnicity: Recorded and Remembered Identity in Taiwan' in *Ethnology*, Vol 40, No 2, Spring 2001, p 154.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Here, Taiwanese refers to Han living in Taiwan during that time and who considered themselves as ethnic Chinese.

under Chinese rule again, the Taiwanese (i.e., Han in Taiwan) could assume themselves simply to be Chinese. That moment lasted until shortly after the Mainlanders arrived.<sup>18</sup>

This cheerful celebration soon changed into sorrow and anger when the new authorities turned out to be repressive and disorganised. Additionally, corruption was rife at all levels after the Mainlanders' arrival on the island. From late 1945, Mainlanders gradually emigrated to the island and according to the records, there were some one or two million of them by the autumn of 1949, during which time, there were approximately six million people living on the island.<sup>19</sup> Although the Taiwanese started to feel that the arrival of the Chinese Nationalist government was not in fact 'decolonisation,' (to liberate them from Japanese colonisation), rather they were encountering 'the pain of recolonisation'.<sup>20</sup> The tension between the Taiwanese and the Mainlanders increased. In order to make this point more clear, it is worth citing Edmondson at some length:

In many significant ways, the Nationalists [Mainlanders] were unable to distance themselves from the Japanese who had ruled before them. They moved into Japanese residences, filled the most important administrative posts, replaced the Japanese as the police force, nationalised the largest industries previously owned by the Japanese, and imposed Mandarin Chinese, a foreign language to the Taiwanese, as the national dialect. Portraits of the Japanese emperor in public schools and offices were replaced by pictures of Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-Shek as the new objects of mandatory ritualised state-worship and urban spaces were recorded with place-names evoking a 'motherland' that few living

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<sup>18</sup> Chang, Mao-Kuei. 'On the Origins and Transformation of Taiwanese National Identity' in *China Perspectives*, No 28, March/April, 2000, pp 51-70.

<sup>19</sup> The figures can be found in Brown (2004), op cit, p 9 and Wachman, op cit, p 7.

<sup>20</sup> Pan An-Yi has suggested that during the martial law period, the Taiwanese 'did not feel that they were returned to the embrace of the motherland; on the contrary, they felt that they were enduring the pain of recolonisation'. Pan, op cit, p 3.

Taiwanese had ever seen.<sup>21</sup>

With the new disciplines and guidelines imposed by Chiang's government, the Taiwanese were forced to learn how to be Chinese after fifty-one years' of colonisation by Japan. The Chinese failed to understand the fact that the Taiwanese were to some degree Japan-ised and that it was very difficult for them to accept another political, social and cultural system within such a short time. To re-iterate the point made earlier, this major change was as a result of the decision made by the Allies, without consultation with the Taiwanese. The tension between the Taiwanese and the Mainlanders became more critical because in the years leading up to 1947, the problems of inflation, grain shortages, corruption, lack of military discipline, unemployment, industrial collapse, and cultural conflict had become much worse even before the KMT arrived. All of these problems became the sparks which resulted in the 228 Incident [fig 9 and fig 10], and it has been argued by some historians that 'Nationalist rule of Taiwan during the latter half of the 1940s was a failure'.<sup>22</sup>

I should now give some details about how the Incident occurred by looking at some historical narratives. On 27 February 1947, Lin Jiang-Mai, with her two small children, set up a stall in Taipei's Round Park, selling a few packs of cigarettes in order to try and eke out a living. Agents from the Taipei Wine and Tobacco Monopoly Bureau appeared, accusing the woman of selling untaxed cigarettes, and then seized her meagre stock and her cash. The woman

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<sup>21</sup> Edmondson, op cit, p 27.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips, Steven. 'Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945-1948' in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, p 282. Also in Pepper, Suzanne. *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle 1945-1949*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.



screamed in protest, while the crowd started to gather, but was brutally knocked down, and pistol-whipped about her head. People started to gather around angrily, so the agents started to shoot wildly into the crowd in order to open a way for them to escape. During this Incident, a person in the crowd was shot dead and Lin was severely injured. On the next morning (28 February 1947), a crowd, estimated at about 2,000 people, marched to the Monopoly Bureau Headquarters, with a petition demanding that the agents who had caused the death and injury on the previous day should be prosecuted and sentenced to death.<sup>23</sup> At the time, Chiang was still in China fighting against Mao's Communist army and Chen Yi had been appointed as the administrator and commander of Taiwan. Working through the Executive Office he had direct control over the administrative, military, judicial and regulatory organs on the island.<sup>24</sup> The protestors' petition did not succeed and Chen Yi ordered the military police to fire upon the crowd with machine-guns. Thus the tragedy started and the riots of the Taiwanese against the military suppression by the Mainlanders spread throughout the island.

During the first ten days after 28 February, Chen Yi kept up the pretence of negotiating with the leaders of the protest movement, and Chiang's troops were promptly sent from the mainland to Taiwan to 'help' Chen to 'sort out' the

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<sup>23</sup> The historical narrative of how the 228 Incident occurred can be found in Kerr, George H. *Formosa Betrayed*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966, pp 254-262; Yip, June. *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004, pp 15-17; Brown (2004), op cit, pp 58-59; Philips, Steven. 'Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations under Nationalist Chinese Rules, 1945-1948' in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, pp 292-296; Wachman, op cit, pp 98-101 and Edmondson, Robert. 'The February 28 Incident and National Identity' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, pp 29-31.

<sup>24</sup> More details can be found in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, p 282.

problems of the riots. Chiang's troops had been trained to fight against the communist forces in China's civil war, and as soon as they arrived on the island they started rounding up and executing people, especially the local leaders of the protest movement and the professional classes, most of whom had been educated and trained in the period of Japanese colonial rule.<sup>25</sup> George Kerr details his personal experience during the 228 Incident in *Formosa Betrayed* (1966) and argues that the massacre targeted the intellectuals and social élite, especially the members of the Settlement committees, teachers, lawyers, newspaper editors and other well-educated Taiwanese.<sup>26</sup> As to the number of Taiwanese who were killed during the Incident, Steven Philips explains that:

Estimates of the number killed range from ridiculously low (500) to high (100,000). Those who have closer ties to the Nationalist government provide lower figures for the dead and injured, while supporters of Taiwan independence insist on higher numbers. One common estimate is 10,000 killed and 30,000 wounded.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from those who were killed, thousands of others were arrested and imprisoned in the 'White Terror' campaign, which took place during the following decade.<sup>28</sup> Many of them continued to be imprisoned until the early

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<sup>25</sup> This information can be found from a book written by the previous president of Taiwan, who himself, was educated in Japan in his youth. Lee, Teng-Hui. *Selected Addresses and Messages: 1988*. Taipei: Government Information Office, 1989, pp 33-34.

<sup>26</sup> For full details see Kerr, op cit, pp 291-310.

<sup>27</sup> Philips, Steven. 'Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945-1948' in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, pp 295-296.

<sup>28</sup> In 1955, the National Security Bureau was established, which coordinated all security agencies including the KMT, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan Garrison Command, the military police and the local police. The Bureau aimed to exterminate all Communist agents and influence in Taiwan, resulting in the fact that Taiwan's government arrested, imprisoned and executed thousands on insufficient or circumstantial evidence. The 1950s and the 1960s are therefore known as the period of 'White Terror'. Taiwanese people dared not to criticise the government and make any comments on public issues. More details can be found in Wang, Peter Chen-Main, 'A Bastion Created, a Regime Reformed, an Economy Reengineered, 1940-1970' in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, p 330.

1980s. Shortly after the Incident took place, martial law was announced by Chiang Kai-Shek on 19 May 1949 and Taiwan went on to experience thirty nine years military control until 1987. This period of 'White Terror,' was a time during which no discussion of political and public issues was allowed. Narratives of the Incident remained locked in private spaces, especially within those who physically experienced the tragedy. The younger generation remained unaware of this massacre until recent decades when Taiwan's government started to establish public memorials for this tragedy and to add this history to school books.

[I]t [Taiwan] is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.<sup>29</sup>

As is clear from this extract from *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson argues how people have been willing to sacrifice themselves in order to keep their 'imagined community'. The Taiwanese, who fought against the Chinese Nationalists and were then killed or jailed due to the Incident, were struggling to keep their 'imagined community', which was different from that of the Mainlanders. The Taiwanese dreamed of an imagined sovereignty for their conceptual territory and nation state, and it was this which was invaded by the Nationalist forces once the Incident had started. As a result, therefore, the Taiwanese people's fury was aroused and they began to take risks to challenge the Chinese Nationalist authority in order to

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<sup>29</sup> Anderson, op cit, p 7.

protect their conceptual community.

Whilst under severe political control during martial law under the Chinese Nationalists, the Taiwanese maintained a separate identity as Taiwanese, even though this identity continued to be viewed as 'inferior' by the Mainlanders.<sup>30</sup> The 'imagined community' does not lie in geographical territories but in the roots of culture, history and people's minds. It is this belief that motivated the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* to be curated, some fifty years after the Incident and after thirty-nine years of military law. The Taiwanese have consciously used an art exhibition to memorialise their unforgettable history and trauma.

The 228 Incident remained a taboo subject on the island until approximately fifteen years ago. The KMT authorities did not want to be reminded of their dark past and the Taiwanese did not dare to speak out for fear of retribution by the KMT's secret police. Therefore, Taiwanese lived within their own imagined world where they found a psychological shelter away from the Chinese Nationalist's political suppression, during which time, Sinocisation was applied to the island. The massacre was the beginning of thirty-nine years of repressive martial law on the island, during which time the KMT ruled Taiwan with an 'iron fist' as Chiang subjugated the island for his own

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<sup>30</sup> During an interview with Alan Wachman, Taiwanese writer, Chiang Chun-Nan, stated that:

Under KMT indoctrination [...] we not only don't know much about Taiwan [...] we learn[ed] to despise Taiwanese, Taiwanese language. They said Taiwan has no language, no culture. Taiwanese history started from the day the KMT arrived in Taiwan. Taiwan has no purpose in itself. The purpose of Taiwan is to be a stepping-stone to go back to China. [...] So, we [Taiwanese] feel humiliated [...] downgraded [...] We have no hope because we are too small.

Wachman has therefore argued the fact that under martial law, the Taiwanese were considered with 'hostility', 'suspicion' or 'indifference' by the Mainlanders. Wachman, op cit, p 111.

purposes.<sup>31</sup>

Under martial law, a repressive authoritarian system dominated by the Mainlanders was established without regard for the wishes and sentiments of the island's original inhabitants. The KMT exercised complete control over the island and they claimed that rebelling against the communists was a state of emergency and temporary. Free assemblies, associations, demonstrations and the right to petition were prohibited under Martial law, and the KMT censored the content of public speeches, teaching, pictures and all published materials. Religious and union activities were carefully monitored and limited; mail was examined and personal property was inspected. The Taiwanese were forced to accept this undemocratic type of government by means of unremitting coercion and repression. To implant Chinese impacts in Taiwan, the KMT practiced a strict policy, which enforced the rule that only Mandarin was to be used in official affairs, in schools, on radio and on television. Alan Wachman argues that having been forced by the Japanese to speak Japanese and by the KMT to speak Mandarin (which has, since then, been labelled as the 'standard' and 'official' language), the Taiwanese

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<sup>31</sup> The term, 'iron fist', has often been used to describe Chiang's control in Taiwan and I shall give an example by looking at June Yip's words. She asserts that '[d]iscussions of these [political] periods in local history were considered taboo under the iron-fisted rule of the KMT [...]'. Yip, op cit, p 87. To explain why the term is used to interpret Chiang's political power, I need to discuss how Alan Wachman describes Chiang's control over the island. He asserts that 'The Constitution of the ROC was suspended and the island was ruled under emergency provisions that institutionalised a prolonged period of martial law. Dissent of any form was suppressed and opposition severely punished'. However, after the death of Chiang in 1975, his son, Chiang Ching-Kuo, with a 'more moderate, less doctrinaire soul' than his father, is considered with respect and appreciation by most of the Taiwanese. Wachman describes Chiang Ching-Kuo's contribution to the island and states that '[u]nder his leadership, a range of programs was undertaken with the aim of invigorating the economy and the viability of the island itself. [...] Toward the end of his life, Chiang Ching-Kuo oversaw the initiation of dramatic political reforms that gave rise to a process of democratisation'. Wachman, op cit, pp 7-8.

'resented the imposition that restricted the use of their own mother tongue'.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, educational courses and school books were obliged to praise the virtues of Chiang Kai-Shek as well as his 'valiant' fight against the Chinese Communists. Nobody was allowed to enter the teaching profession, the civil service or the military unless they were members of the KMT.

On 14 July 1987, ROC President Chiang Ching-Kuo (1910-1988, a son of Chiang Kai-Shek) lifted martial law six months before his death and replaced it with a similar 'National Security Act', which was less harsh than the old martial law. However, it was not until 1991 that the state of emergency was ended with the announcement that 'the period of mobilisation to resist communist aggression had passed'.<sup>33</sup> It has been argued that even though the ROC was not a communist state, it had an authoritarian one-party regime, which was more 'similar' to the communist states that it claimed to oppose than the democratic states it intended to follow.<sup>34</sup>

Since martial law was suspended, family visits to Mainland China have been permitted; restrictions on newspapers and television programmes were removed in 1994; people of Taiwan can directly elect the National Assembly (since 1991), the governors of Taiwan and the mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung cities (since 1994), as well as the president and vice president

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<sup>32</sup> Wachman, *op cit*, p 108. To emphasise the policy that Japanese enforced the Taiwanese to speak Japanese during its colonisation, I shall cite some relevant text from Andrew Morris. He states that 'Chinese-language sections of newspapers were eliminated, Taiwanese public servants were ordered to speak only Japanese [...] Japanese-speaking Taiwanese families became eligible for a 50 percent raise in salary'. Morris, *op cit*, p 17.

<sup>33</sup> The period between 1948 and 1991 was also called Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion. Wachman, *op cit*, p 105.

<sup>34</sup> See Wachman, *ibid.*, p 131.

(since 1996).<sup>35</sup> With the death of Chiang in January 1988, Vice President Lee Teng-Hui (1923-) became the first native Taiwanese president, when he was still the leader of the KMT.<sup>36</sup> Being described as 'a dexterous political enemy-friend' of the KMT, Lee had gradually changed the political climate in Taiwan's 'democratising' and 'nativising' state power.<sup>37</sup> Various official and unofficial research on the 228 Incident was later carried out.

In *Rewriting Taiwanese National History* (1993), Liao Ping-Hui asserts that at least two of the investigations of the Incident 'have been commissioned by the President [Lee]'.<sup>38</sup> The government's involvement in the investigation of the 228 Incident indicates the fact that President Lee intended to dilute the hatred among different groups living on the island. On 28 February 1998, President Lee gave reporters his views of the Incident by stating that '[n]ot long after Nationalist China recovered Taiwan, a tragedy took place. Society must have tranquillity, and that Incident should be treated with sincere understanding'.<sup>39</sup> This is the first time in Taiwan's history that Taiwan's President officially acknowledged the fact and the tragedy of the Incident. The change of political climate (from Chiang's monopoly to the Taiwanese-born president, Lee Teng-hui) has at last made this massacre visible. In fact, before Lee declared his statement concerning the Incident, several articles and books on the

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<sup>35</sup> Brown (2004), op cit, p 11.

<sup>36</sup> The term 'native' here refers to Taiwanese inhabitants prior to the flow of political and military refugees from Mainland China around 1949. Therefore, 'native', used in this context, includes aboriginals, Minnans and Hakkas.

<sup>37</sup> See Corcuff, Stéphane. 'The Symbolic Dimension of Democratisation and the Transition of National Identity under Lee Teng-Hui' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, p 73 and Wu, Rwei-Ren. 'Toward a Pragmatic Nationalism' in Corcuff (ed), ibid., p 200, respectively.

<sup>38</sup> Liao, Ping-Hui. 'Rewriting Taiwanese National History: The February 28 Incident as Spectacle' in *Public Culture*, No 5, 1993, p 284.

<sup>39</sup> See Lai, Tse-Han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Wou. *A Tragic Beginning*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, p 1.

tragedy had been published in Taiwan after 1987<sup>40</sup> and the production of the film, *A City of Sadness* (1989) [fig 11], directed by Hou Hsiao-Hsien, visualised the tragedy through the story of a Taiwanese family. This film won the Golden Lion in the 1989 Venice Film Festival, and this award has not only encouraged the Taiwanese to 'bravely' create artworks to expose their history but has also given the Taiwanese a creative view of declaring their identity in terms of politics, culture and nationalism through the means of art.<sup>41</sup>

As to fine arts exhibitions, it was not until the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Chen Sheui-Bian was elected as the mayor of Taipei city in 1996 that the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* became a curatorial show to be held at the FAMT. From 1996 to 1999, the 228 memorial exhibitions were held annually at the FAMT until the KMT's Ma Ying-Jeou became the city mayor of Taipei in 1999.<sup>42</sup> Curatorial projects such as these show the ambiguous relationship between the new political power and suggest that different political ideologies determine how things can be arranged and recognised variously in Taiwan's highly politically-sensitive society. Politicians with different ancestral backgrounds have different policies in terms of art and culture; they have different views of looking at history and how they consider Taiwan's political

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<sup>40</sup> Liao Ping-Hui asserted this argument in her essay, *Rewriting Taiwanese National History* (1993), and I have found several publications to support this statement. The publications include Ma, Chi-Hua. *The Studies of 28 February Incident*. Taipei: Association of Public Orders, 1987; Jiang, Chung-Lin. 'The Truth of the 228 Incident: The Shameful Trauma', in *Chung-Wai Journal*, Vol 42, No 4, 1987, pp 56-61; Yen, Yen-Tsun. 'Personal Experience in the 228 Incident and Its Analysis' in *Biographical Literature*, Vol 50, No 6, 1987, pp 40-44.

<sup>41</sup> The reason why I chose this film as an example is to emphasise the fact that the production of films represents and examines the politics, colonial history and even 'present-day realities' of Taiwan much earlier than fine art exhibitions (the first 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* was held in 1996). In fact, *A City of Sadness* (1989) is one of the three works, which form the series, *Taiwan Trilogy*. The other two films are *The Puppetmaster* (1993) and *Good Men, Good Women* (1995), which examine 'the Japanese Occupation' and the 'White Terror', respectively. See Yip, op cit, pp 86-87.

<sup>42</sup> The fourth 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* in 1999 was organised during the mayorship of Chen, but was on show when Ma won the election as the city mayor instead of Chen.



location within the world environment. Ultimately, different cultural policies are determined by what the authority defines as the sovereignty of Taiwan and the ideas of being Japanese, Chinese and Taiwanese. In addition, this is complicated by the fact that the Taiwanese living in different regions (e.g. Taipei city and Kaohsiung city) consider their national identity differently.<sup>43</sup>

The complexity of Taiwan's history, since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, has created an exceptionally unusual social and political background. The lifting of martial law and the change in the political climate have encouraged artists and curators to represent their history and identities through the means of art. However, before looking at the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* in 1997, I shall address the issues of nation and national identity in Taiwan.

### **Nation and National Identity**

Liao Ping-Hui argues that Taiwan has a 'totally different cultural experience than the rest of the world'.<sup>44</sup> It went through different colonial periods and its society is composed of different races and genealogy. Different races and

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<sup>43</sup> Research has been conducted which shows that in Taiwan, different regions have different support for different political parties and that they have diverse views of political policies towards either independence from, or union with Mainland China. Different political support can therefore be seen as having different views of national identities. According to Chen Po-Wei's research, '(Taiwan-born) Taiwanese tend to support the DPP rather than the KMT whilst Mainlanders tend to support both the KMT and the People First Party [established in 2000]; the DPP supporters tend to consider themselves as "Taiwanese" and "Independent", whilst the KMT supporters tend to label themselves as "Chinese" and "Unified"'. Furthermore, according to the result of the mayoral elections in recent years, 'Kaohsiung city has become a representative government of the DPP and Taipei city has been under the political power of the KMT'. Thus, I propose that there are heterogeneous views towards political and national identity in different regions of Taiwan. See Chen, Po-Wei. *The Preference of Voters - Party Preference Between Taipei and Kaohsiung Metropolises: a Case Study of 2002 Mayor Elections*. MA Dissertation. Taiwan: National Chung Cheng University Department of Political Science, 2005, p 56 and Wang, Chih-Yao. *An Analysis of Chinese Consciousness in the Development of Taiwan's Society and Politics, 1988-2000*. MA Dissertation. Taiwan: Chinese Culture University Graduate Institute of Chinese Studies, 2002, pp 85-98.

<sup>44</sup> Liao, op cit, p 286.

ethnic groups came to the island at different periods of time with their own cultural heritages, and this situation resulted in the chaotic social phenomenon which I discussed at the start of this chapter. For more than 400 years, the Taiwanese have been drifting between different periods of political and cultural domination and thus, there exists ambivalence in terms of nation and culture due to Taiwan's layered colonial and cultural history.

Regarding the idea of 'ambivalence', I shall discuss the definitions of its adjective, ambivalent. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, 'ambivalent' means 'having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone'.<sup>45</sup> In other words, being ambivalent is the state of being uncertain of one's will, where one cannot identify definite likes or dislikes. For Homi Bhabha, the term, 'ambivalence', refers to the complex mixture of repulsion and attraction in the relationship between the colonised and the colonisers. Moreover, 'ambivalence' is often used by Bhabha to describe the indeterminacy of the state of mimicry. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha asserts that '[...] the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference'.<sup>46</sup> For Bhabha, the ambivalence of mimicry has been transformed into uncertainty, which demonstrates the situation of being 'almost the same, but not quite'.<sup>47</sup> The shifting political authority in the island determines the choice of the term, 'ambivalence', in the content of Taiwan's identity of nationhood and culture. A fixed idea of what

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<sup>45</sup> Pearsall, Judy (ed). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Tenth Edition. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p 41.

<sup>46</sup> Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p 122

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p 123.

Taiwan is, does not exist apart from its geographical location on the world map. While Taiwan is made up of different layers of immigration history, colonial experience, diverse ethnic/cultural backgrounds and many of those who are 'in-between' (e.g. the offspring of different groups), the concepts of 'new Taiwanese' (*Xin Taiwan Ren*), proposed by Lee Teng-Hui in 1995, strategically include all of the differences and uncertainties, which aim to develop a more visible entity and a new understanding of national identity on the island. Despite the fact that the invention of the term, 'new Taiwanese', was made for political purposes, the concepts of the term indeed echo the ideas of Bhabha's 'mimicry', which are to go beyond certainty and determinacy in order to cover all differences.<sup>48</sup>

Before addressing how Lee defines the term, 'New Taiwanese', I would like to explore the ideas of 'nation' and 'identity' and how they have been argued by scholars in postcolonial studies.

Bhabha begins his essay, *Introduction: Narrating the Nation* (1990) by stating that:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the West.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> According to Stéphane Corcuff, the concept of 'New Taiwanese' is published in Lee's famous article, *Taiwan's Point of View* (1999, in the Japanese language) but it firstly appears in Lee's public speech to the KMT in August 1995. Corcuff, Stéphane. 'Taiwan's "Mainlanders," New Taiwanese?' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, pp 186-187.

<sup>49</sup> Bhabha, Homi K. 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation' in Bhabha (ed) (1990), op cit, p 1.

For Bhabha, the ideas of nation are realised through the mind's eye and by the means of political ideas and literary writings. Nation and its narratives (even though ambivalent) are metaphorically transformed into literary language in order to be visualised and understood. Bhabha further asserts that '[w]hat I want to emphasise in that large and limited image of the nation with which I began is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it'.<sup>50</sup> The concepts of nation come from how history is written and how nationalists attempt to record the narratives from specific perspectives. However, 'mind's eye' can be interpreted more broadly as a cultural symbol, including political ideology and how people recognise themselves as being in an 'imagined community'. Bhabha further asserts that '[t]he nation's "coming into being" as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity*, emphasises this instability of knowledge'.<sup>51</sup> Since the 228 Incident until the present day, the Taiwanese have developed their conceptual 'national state' by suffering the massacre and then the horror of the martial law period. This imagined nation is separated from that established by the Chinese Nationalist government as it metaphorically exists within Taiwanese people's minds. The *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* is a physical presentation that reveals this kind of conceptual community and the 'mind's eye' is manifested in artworks rather than narratives.

Bhabha's definition of nation lies in culture and people's lives, which is similar

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp 1-2.

to the definition given by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2000). They claim that '[t]he concept of nation also served as an ideological weapon to ward off the dominant discourse that figured the dominated population and culture as inferior. [...] The nation is progressive strictly as a fortified line of defence against more powerful external forces'.<sup>52</sup> For Hardt and Negri, the concept of nation is not only an ideological weapon to defend against the dominant power but also the external forces of the invaded colonisers. Alan Wachman offers another view on nation and asserts that:

When one speaks of a nation, one invokes a sense of political solidarity that goes beyond community and suggests a tie between social order and political power. [...] Beyond any cultural, regional, or linguistic traits the people subsumed by the term *nation* may share, there is also an implication of political sovereignty.<sup>53</sup>

Wachman suggests two essential elements to form a nation: geographical territory and political solidarity. Importantly, he emphasises that the concepts of 'nation' should go beyond the variance among cultures, regions and languages as they can be 'shared' by different peoples within the same political sovereignty and physical territory. Wachman's perspectives have suggested that despite the fact that there are various groups of peoples with diverse languages living on the island, they actually belong to the same 'nation', which actually echoes Lee's concepts of the 'New Taiwanese'. Thus, it is obvious to note that especially in Taiwan, the consciousness of nation and nationalism is not produced by nature, rather it is formulated by the élite at different periods

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<sup>52</sup> Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, p 106.

<sup>53</sup> Wachman, op cit, p 25, original emphasis retained.

when political and social authorities have continued to transform very rapidly.<sup>54</sup>

Since the lifting of martial law and the successful political shifting from Chiang to Lee, from the late 1980s, the re-interpretation of the myths of Taiwanese national identity has been seriously examined. Having addressed some ideas of the term, 'nation', it is now essential to consider the other term, 'identity' as it pertains to my argument. There are many different kinds of identity, such as national identity, social identity, cultural identity, racial identity, class identity, familial identity, gender identity, sexual identity, etc. Jeffrey Weeks begins his essay, *The Value of Difference* (1990) by stating that '[i]dentity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality'.<sup>55</sup> Identity is how you distinguish yourself from others and indeed, it is defined based on the conflicts of differences not only between different communities but also within every individual. Jiang Yi-Huah, a professor in the department of Political Science of National Taiwan University, combines the definitions of identity given by John Locke, Aristotle and the Oxford Dictionary with his own opinions and arrives at three definitions: 'Oneness/ Sameness', 'Identification/ Belongingness' and 'Approval/ Agreement'.<sup>56</sup>

According to both Weeks and Jiang, identity concerns how we distinguish

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<sup>54</sup> Lin Chia-Lung has also suggested that '[n]ational identities are not inborn, they are socially and politically constructed sentiments that are subject to change'. Lin, Chia-Lung. 'The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, p 227.

<sup>55</sup> Weeks, Jeffrey. 'The Value of Difference' in Rutherford, Jonathan (ed). *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, p 88.

<sup>56</sup> Jiang, Yi-Huah. *Liberalism, Nationalism and National Identity*. Taipei: Yang Chih Publisher, 1998, pp 8-12.

ourselves (similar to Anderson's concepts of imagined communities) from others in this changing environment, and how we search for a clear position on which we stand. Identity provides us with a location in the world as it represents the 'belongingness' that we 'agree' or 'approve' to live with. To identify is to identify fragmented established identities in culture and politics (e.g. how the Taiwanese considered themselves during Japanisation and Sinocisation). Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the definition of our identity in order to compensate for the unstable social and world environment and, thus, identity is something created, man-made, changeable and partly beyond our control.

Postcolonial theories address how people in the developing world (read: the once-being colonised) establish their own identity, either in the cultural or national spheres. The colonised country has to have its own sovereignty and then it can start to set up its cultural identity. Austin Ranney argues that '[e]ach nation has sovereignty, which is *the full and exclusive legal power to make and enforce laws for a particular people in a particular territory*'.<sup>57</sup> A radical idea of a nation is that they occupy a particular area of the earth and regard certain people as its citizens and all others as aliens. National identity is therefore how people consider themselves as belonging to a specific nation with a specific territory and government, in which they find shelter and feel safe. Furthermore, every nation, no matter how large or small, strong or weak, has absolute authority over its own affairs and is completely equal to all other nations in the eyes of international law.

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<sup>57</sup> Ranney, Austin. *Governing: An Introduction to Political Science*. Englewood Cliffs and London: Prentice Hall, 1993, p 19 (original emphasis retained).

However, 'national identity' in Taiwan seems to be a very complicated matter owing to its historical background and its present political relationship with Mainland China. Due to these complex circumstances, in December 1998, Lee Teng-Hui, during his second Taiwanese presidency, used the term, 'New Taiwanese', to create a new definition for Taiwan's national identity, with the aim of diluting the differences and the hatred among different groups of Taiwanese living on the island. The definition of 'New Taiwanese' has changed from being a 'Taiwanese Nationalist' to being a new Taiwanese citizen who does not have to have been born in Taiwan, or speak Taiwanese, but lives and works on the island. The notion of 'New Taiwanese' develops a cross-ethnic society which aims to forgive historical difficulties and to cooperate with different groups. Furthermore, the idea of 'New Taiwanese' softens the tension and conflict between the Taiwan-born Taiwanese and the Mainlanders, and a new understanding of Taiwan's national identity appears.

Even though Lee's announcement of 'New Taiwanese' is thought to be a political strategy to support Ma Ying-Jeou's election as mayor of Taipei city in 1998, it does furnish all of the inhabitants of Taiwan with the chance to re-interpret their understanding of national identity. Brown argues that the term, 'New Taiwanese', was not only invented by politicians but rather 'they [politicians] articulated and emphasised a change in Taiwanese identity that had been merely developing over the previous decade'.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the ideas of 'New Taiwanese' are based on the observation of Taiwan's changing society by Lee and are declared to be clear concepts. Hence, once again, the

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<sup>58</sup> Brown (2004), *op cit*, pp 12-13.



concepts of the imagined community as a nation have been shifted and this time, it was moved towards a more calm and peaceful condition.

The *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* reminds the Taiwanese of their suppressed past, through which they are aware of their history and of what their parents' or grandparents' generations have endured and sacrificed before Taiwan embraced democracy in the late 1980s. I propose that the show aimed to establish a more complete narrative of Taiwan's history through the means of art rather than to cause more hatred and misunderstanding as a result of the discovery of the massacre.<sup>59</sup> The *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* serves as the means for the Taiwanese to fully realise their 'horizons' (their positions in history) in the mind's (artists') eye, through which they suppose to be more tolerant of differences and to be percipient to amplify the concept of Taiwanese identities.

### **National Identity/ Gender**

The postcolonial feminist intelligentsia has devoted much of its debate to national and global politics. They refuse to regard feminism as being simply sexuality but consider that it should be connected with international/national politics and socio-economic policies.<sup>60</sup> Having been seen as inferior to their male counterparts, Taiwanese women are also enduring the suppression of 'double colonisation', which refers to the fact that women are twice colonised –

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<sup>59</sup> Chen Hung-Mian addresses a similar point to interpret the discovery of the 228 Incident. He states that '[t]he 228 Incident is a historical event. [...] We should reveal the truth of the history in order to record our history in a "healthy" way rather than use it as a means to gain any personal [and political] benefits'. Chen, Hung-Mian. 'Simulation of the 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition: Through Artists and Its Meanings of the 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition' in *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*, No 70, February/March 1997, p 4.

<sup>60</sup> See Chiu Kuei-Fen. 'Post-colonialism Feminism: Gender, Class, Ethnic and Nation', in Ku, Yen-Lin (ed). *Feminist Theories*, Taipei: Fembooks, 1996, p 252.

both by colonialist realities and representations, and by patriarchal ones.<sup>61</sup> Thus, women's views regarding the debate of nation are different from their male counterparts, who enjoy much more political power in Confucian society. As a result, Taiwanese feminists are concerned about not only the discourses of gender but also the problems of nation.

Regarding women's involvement with the issue of nation in Taiwan, the artist Wu Mali (one of the artists invited to participate in the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* in 1997) states that 'Taiwan's nationalism and institutions are established on the basis of patriarchal ideology; women are always the "outsiders" within this kind of system'.<sup>62</sup> Since 1987, the arguments centring on the notion of identity have attracted considerable academic attention, and in Taiwan, identity is mostly discussed in the context of the 'New Taiwanese'. However, there are many different attitudes towards national identity among Taiwanese women's groups. Some Taiwanese feminists think that it is necessary to participate in politics, by means of which they can have a practical influence on a political party,<sup>63</sup> whilst on the contrary, others view nationalism as a sign of male, patriarchal, ethnic and capitalist hegemony, under which women's rights may be ignored and traditional patriarchy emphasised in the process of establishing a national identity.<sup>64</sup> However,

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<sup>61</sup> McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p 175.

<sup>62</sup> See Chen, Elsa Hsiang-Chun. *Translating Dialogue: Journeys Between Art and Social Contexts*. Taipei: Artists Publisher, 2004, p 30.

<sup>63</sup> Hsu Chia-Ching. 'Women's Movements, National Resources and Political Participation', *Disturbance Journal*, Volume 3, January 1997, pp 88-92.

<sup>64</sup> In Taiwan, the people who seriously criticised nationalism were the members of *Isle-Margin*, an important journal published from 1991 to 1996. It was edited by some Taiwanese scholars with critical and cultural perspectives; one of the editors was Wu Mali. The website of *Isle-Margin* is <http://www.intermargins.net/intermargins/IsleMargin/index.htm>, consulted on 14 Feb 2007.

Taiwanese women artists were keen to create artworks for the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* in order to show their ideas of national identity and to visualise the impact of the Incident. Moreover, the topic of 'national identity' is so sensitive that it provides artists with subject matter that is particularly meaningful for the Taiwanese.

National identity is always perceived vaguely in Taiwan, because cultural influences of previous colonisers have affected the Taiwanese cultural structure so much that there are still many Taiwanese who hold ambiguous attitudes towards their origins. The debates on national identity still remain blurred on the island and a fixed idea or concept of 'what Taiwan is' may be just an enigma. However, what intrigues me most is how women find their location and 'voice' in this kind of environment. I suggest that the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* has conveyed some answers by showing women's artistic creation.

### **2.28 Commemorative Exhibition: The Forgotten Women**

The four 2.28 Commemorative Exhibitions were held in the FAMT under the mayorship of Chen Sheui-Bian between 1994 and 1999. The titles of the shows were *Retrospection and Introspection* (1996), *Sorrow and Sublimation* (1997), *Reflection and Reconsideration* (1998) and Historical Event Re-mapping: *Witnesses, Reflections and Revivals* (1999). Most of the artists represented at these shows were men. For example, there were forty-three artists invited to the second 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition, but only six of them were women, including Hsiao Li-Hung, Liu Hsiu-Mei, Wu Mali, Lin Pey-Chwen, Tsai Hai-Ru, Chien Fu-Yu, whose artworks are all relevant to the

themes of gender, nation, history and memory and were created in the form of installation, multi-media and paintings. Even though those artists participating in the second 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition combined issues of politics and history into their works, in fact, there were only a few Taiwanese women artists who really used them as their main concepts. Unlike the fields of literature, performance or drama, most of the Taiwanese women artists in fine arts have not been used to creating artworks that express a strong political intention of gender or nation, except the works in the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition*. Yang Wen-I argues that most Taiwanese women's art is more self-indulgent than politically motivated by stating that:

As far as the creative direction of most [other] Taiwanese women artists is concerned, two major tendencies can be detected. One is concerned with projections of mind and soul, of inner emotions, depicting in a predominantly abstract style spiritual directions of the artists' psychological world and consciousness. The other tendency relies on the use of materials and images which represent the peculiarities of the female body and mind, such as delicacy, sensitivity, emotionality, softness, which all appear in works of art of this kind.<sup>65</sup>

The *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* in 1997 was one of the most important exhibitions in Taiwanese women's art history as the show was arranged specifically to reveal the suffering of the women victims during the 228 Incident.<sup>66</sup> The emphasis of women's perspective towards the Incident in this

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<sup>65</sup> Yang, Wen-I. 'A Banana is not a Banana' in Dysart, Dinah and Hannah Fink (eds). *Asian Women Artists*. Roseville East: Craftsman House, 1995, pp 45-46. Chien Ying-Ying proposes a similar view and states that 'in the whole artistic field and the field of political art [in Taiwan], it is very rare that women's art is created to connect the issues of gender and nation'. Chien, Ying-Ying. 'Daughters' Ceremony: Taiwanese Women's Spirits and Environmental/ Political Art' in Lin, Pey-Chwen (ed). *Women's Arts: Phenomena of Taiwanese Women's Art and Culture*. Taipei: Fembook Publisher, 1998, pp 188-189.

<sup>66</sup> In the Foreword of the exhibition catalogue, the Director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Lin Mun-Lee, asserts that 'the exhibition not only shows concern for the pain of the victims, but

exhibition can also be seen in three essays included in the catalogue, including Hsieh Li-Fa's 'Memorialise the 228 Tragedy: How Art can Overcome the Shadow from the Politics', Chen Fang-Ming's 'The Door of Destructions' and 'The History of Female Victims of the 228 Incident', written by Chang Yan-Hsien.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast to most galleries and museums in Taiwan, which offer free entrance for visitors, tickets are required to enter the FAMT (30 Taiwanese dollars, which is approximately £0.50, or 15 Taiwanese dollars for concessions). Nevertheless, the low cost to enter the museum still makes it appealing to the general public, especially for art-lovers not only from Taipei city but also from all over Taiwan. The popularity of, and easy access to the museum increased the exposure and discussion of the show, through which visual art produces cultural identity and political dialogues.

The exhibition was displayed both inside and outside the museum, including the square space in front of the main entrance, the main hall, two major hallways and two gallery rooms on the ground floor. In other words, the exhibition was arranged to be shown on the whole ground floor space of the museum, exhibiting works created by artists of different generations and of diverse ethnic origins. It is evident that the museum ambitiously utilised any space for artists to express their responses to the themes of each category, therefore, artworks covered various materials and forms, including

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also reveals the suffering of women after the Incident'. Thus, women's points' of views towards the Incident are the main themes, around which this show was organised. Taipei Fine Arts Museum. *Sadness Transformed – 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition*. Exh Cat., Taipei, 1997, p 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, contents.

two-dimensional paintings, photographs and three-dimensional sculpture and installations.

Forty three artists were involved in this show, I have specifically looked at Wu Mali's work, *Epitaph* (1997) [fig 12 and fig 13], which attracted the most critical attention in Taiwan's artistic field, and Lin Pey-Chwen's *Black Wall, Inside and Outside the Window* (1997).<sup>68</sup> When the show finished, Wu's *Epitaph* was added to the collection of the Fine Arts Museum of Taipei and can now be accessed through the archive of the museum.

Wu Mali was born in 1957 in Taipei, Taiwan, and graduated in 1979 from Tamjang University with a degree in German language and culture. She then went to Vienna, and shifted her focus to art. From 1982 to 1986 she studied at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Dusseldorf, after which she went back to Taiwan and became a professional visual artist.<sup>69</sup> *Epitaph* was presented in a meditative space with an atmosphere of mourning. The work was installed in a detached and U-shaped space, with a plain background and two sidewalls. A continual 60-minute documentary film, on Mrs Ran Mei-Su (1928-) whose father was executed during the 228 massacre, was projected at the end of the hallway. The film shows images of powerful tidal waves churning the coast of Pa-Tou-Tzu in Keelung, which was one of the places where the bodies were dumped by the KMT during the 228 Incident. Meanwhile, the space is filled with the sounds of breaking waves, evocative of crying and moaning. On the

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<sup>68</sup> The selection of artists' works as examples for each chapter is based on how much the works have responded to the issues I have addressed as the main themes for each chapter and the curatorial concepts. Some artists did not create and exhibit their works in relation to the concepts of the shows, rather they simply presented their most well-known pieces.

<sup>69</sup> See Lu, V. (2002), op cit, p 188.

left sidewall, written on the surface of sandblasted glass, is the epitaph which is comprised of selected words from *Sixty Years of Loneliness* (1994) and *Sobbing in the Dark Corner* (1996), both written by Ran.<sup>70</sup>

Wu Mali presents the tragedy from the viewpoint of a woman's experience. On the right side of the ground glass, she poses the question: '[h]is-story has been revised; the rioter may become the hero. What about her story?'<sup>71</sup> By asking this question, she criticises the fact that history of the Incident is told as a story of men, in which they became heroes or victims, whilst the women have been ignored and forgotten. The opposite side of the glass shows the words from Ran:

#### Epitaph

She washed the corpse with tears. After the funeral was over and all the relatives ha[d] gone. She finally burst out crying: God, I'm scared! God, I'm scared! She, burn[ing] everything, never utter[ing] a word about it nor dress[ing] up again. She, clean[ing] herself up and [sitting] at home waiting, prepar[ing] for life and death. She, having been raped and feel[ing] ashamed, [leaving] the kids and [running] away. She, holding several jobs down, ha[ving] 6 kids from a babe to a ten-year old. She, crying all the time, but only in the dark. Fear following her like a shadow. She, passing the rest of life silenced. She, [a] 'woman' in plural form. Her sorrow has always been ours.<sup>72</sup>

*Epitaph* is radical because it seriously criticises the tyranny of the KMT and reveals the hidden history of Taiwanese women in the 228 Incident. Ironically, according to historical documents, the people who were murdered and

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Both of these books were published by Avant-garde publisher.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p 10.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Also in Wu, Mali. 'Wu Mali: Profile', first published in *The Journalist Magazine*. Taipei, No 5, 5 May 1996, <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/n.paradoxa/maliwu.htm>, updated 1997, consulted on 7 February 2004.

suffered during the 228 Incident were all men, and it is very hard to find any records about Taiwanese women during that time. The first book that covered women's sorrow and misfortune was titled *Women's 228: the Story of a Political Widow*, written by Shen Hsiu-Hua, published by Taiwan Interminds Publishing in 1997. This book records what had been ignored for fifty years, and changes the monolithic and patriarchal viewpoints of Taiwanese history, divulging the voices of the women whose fathers, husbands or brothers died because of the massacre. The book illustrates that it had been forgotten that the Taiwanese women who were left behind to care for themselves and their children were equally traumatised and disadvantaged by the Incident. As citizens with subaltern status, this recognition had previously been denied to them.

*Epitaph* is also a typical feminist work that insists on including hidden women in the writing of Taiwan's historiography. This piece is a good example of using text as an essential part of an artwork, a practice which was rarely used by Taiwanese artists before the mid 1990s. The text shown at the left side of the hallway created a scenario which cannot be easily replaced by figurative images and it directly indicates and explains the grievous situation that women suffered during the Incident. On the opposite wall, Wu proposed the question, 'where is her story?', which directly and critically challenged the narratives of Taiwan's history-writing. The method of presenting this piece is minimalist, yet extremely powerful and straightforward.

Wu Mali skilfully uses film, sounds and words to create a sorrowful aura, similar to that of a funeral ceremony, arousing audiences' sympathy toward those



people who had suffered or died. Furthermore, the artwork itself is also a memorial to the deceased and the tragedy. After viewing the film, which features waves striking the coast with a continuous and echoing sound, the Taiwanese feminist scholar, Chien Ying-Ying, interpreted this work as symbolic of the fluid in a mother's womb, which itself continually moves and functions as a healer of pain, imparting memories to the unborn child.<sup>73</sup> What this work has contributed is to expose the subaltern women to the public view and to re-position women in Taiwan's historiography. The idea of the re-interpretation of history writing is the main concept of subaltern studies, therefore I need to address this term in more detail in the following section.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, the term, 'subaltern' refers to 'status', meaning 'of inferior rank' referring to those groups in society who are 'subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes', which include 'peasants, workers and other groups denied access to "hegemonic" power'.<sup>74</sup> The term, subaltern, has been adopted and adapted by a group of postcolonial scholars who study Indian history with consideration for the lower layer of society. This *Subaltern Studies* group is led by Ranajit Guha, an Indian historian and political economist, resident in Australia, and the term is defined by them, as follows:

The word, 'subaltern', first of all, has both political and intellectual connotations. Its implied opposite is of course 'dominant' or 'élite', that is, groups in power, and in the Indian case, classes allied either with the British who held India for 300 years, or with a select number of disciples,

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<sup>73</sup> Chien, Ying-Ying. *Daughters' Ceremony: Taiwanese Women's Spirits, Literature and Artistic Representation*. Taipei: Fembooks Publisher, 2000, p 192.

<sup>74</sup> Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p 215.

students or epigones who in a sense collaborated with the British.<sup>75</sup>

The word, subaltern, originally refers to a rank in the British army and has been used by the *Subaltern Studies* group to indicate the disempowered people in Indian society. The term, subaltern, has regularly been used in the *Subaltern Studies* group which intends to reconsider Indian history with all aspects of society, including those that have been excluded by the political and economic élitism. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that '*Subaltern Studies* raised questions about history-writing that made the business of a radical departure from English Marxist historiographical traditions, inescapable'.<sup>76</sup> The *Subaltern Studies* group aims to re-write its history separated from English Marxist orthodoxy in order to include all groups of people, especially of the bottom class.

Yet Spivak has adapted the word 'subaltern' to signify anyone who is disadvantaged in social or political spheres, which do not inevitably have divisions of class. To explain why this term is useful to indicate the status of women, it is appropriate to examine some of Spivak's words from an interview conducted at the Duke Centre for Critical Theory in 1987:

I like the word 'subaltern' for one reason. It is truly situational. 'Subaltern' began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was used under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism 'monism', and was obliged to call the proletariat 'subaltern'. The word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no

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<sup>75</sup> Guha, Ranajit and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds). *Selected Subaltern Studies*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp v-vi.

<sup>76</sup> Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies' in Schwarz Ray (eds), op cit, p 468.

theoretical rigour.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, the term, subaltern, can be employed to indicate 'women and the colonised', who are not categorised into specific Marxist 'class-analysis'.<sup>78</sup> The ideas of being subaltern, used in the case of Taiwan in recent history, signify the Taiwanese who experienced the suppression of the Chinese Nationalist government during the Incident and during the period of martial law. The Taiwanese were regarded as those who did not have any power in terms of political and intellectual realms, unless being a member of KMT. For Taiwanese women, they experience both what the men have already suffered as inferior to the Chinese Nationalist government, and they still live under the shadow of patriarchal ideology influenced by Han culture.

According to Ranajit Guha, the 'dominant indigenous group' includes 'the biggest feudal magnates, the most important representatives of the industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie and native recruits to the uppermost levels of the bureaucracy'.<sup>79</sup> Although Guha's interpretation of the 'dominant indigenous group' refers to the upper class Indians who held the power over the lower class, I have adopted the term to refer to the dominant power of the males in Taiwan's society as the term describes different distributions of power among 'indigenous' people. Regarding the 'dominant foreign groups', Guha asserts

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<sup>77</sup> Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (edited by Sarah Harasym). *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p 138. Also in Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p 46.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Morton interprets Spivak's concepts towards 'subaltern' and notes that '[f]or Spivak the term "subaltern" [...] can accommodate social identities and struggles (such as woman and the colonised) that do not fall under the reductive terms of "strict class-analysis"'. Morton, *ibid.*, p 45.

<sup>79</sup> Guha, Ranajit. 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India' in Chaturvedi, Vinayak (ed). *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. London and New York: Verso. 2000, p 7.

that they included 'all the non-Indian, that is, mainly British officials of the colonial state and foreign industrialists, merchants, financiers, planters, landlords and missionaries'.<sup>80</sup> I suggest that the term can signify the political control of the Chinese Nationalist government. Hence, Taiwanese women, being the disempowered group in the spheres of both male-centred social values (the 'dominant indigenous group') and the Chinese Nationalist authoritarianism (the 'dominant foreign group'), are identified as the subaltern.

In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak uses the term 'subaltern' to describe the colonised object who has no history and cannot 'speak'. For Spivak, the subaltern does talk but what they say cannot be heard, therefore they do not *speak*.<sup>81</sup> Thus, *Epitaph*, memorialising the tragedy, not only makes Taiwanese women 'talk' but helps them to 'speak'. *Epitaph*, as an interface, has created the possibility of making the history of disregarded women known by visualising their experience. Most importantly, it has provided the Taiwanese with another perspective, with which they are able to re-examine the past in order to narrate a history closer to the reality.

Despite the fact that the *Subaltern Studies* group aims to discover the 'historiography' of the Indian peasants (read: the subaltern class) in the nineteenth-century, from the narratives written by the élite (both the imperial foreigners and indigenous upper class),<sup>82</sup> it does open a challenging perspective to reveal the silent group of the colonised society. As already

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> See Landry and MacLean (eds), op cit, pp 290-291.

<sup>82</sup> See Guha, Ranajit. 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India' in Chaturvedi (ed), op cit, and Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 'The New Subaltern: a Silent Interview' in Chaturvedi (ed), ibid., p 331.

addressed, Taiwanese women under the control of the Chinese Nationalist government were indeed enduring a form of 'double colonisation' (from the colonial past and from Confucian patriarchy), indicating that Taiwanese women were given subaltern status in the discourses of politics and social ideology, especially after the occurrence of the 228 Incident. *Epitaph* has therefore contributed to the unveiling of the forgotten women in Taiwan's recent political historiography, through which the concepts of nation should not exclude the voices from women. Through Wu's *Epitaph*, women's experience as objects of political and patriarchal dominance is unveiled.

Lin Pey-Chwen's piece, *Black Wall, Inside and Outside the Window* (1997) [fig 14-16] was shown in the gallery space, opposite from Wu's *Epitaph*. Lin's work also unveils the story of women victims during the Incident and is presented in a form of a life-size installation, which is very different from *Epitaph*. To express her artistic concepts, Lin used ready-made objects, with which she installed a calm and sombre domestic living room. Three sets of aluminium blinds were put on a black wall; one of them was opened fully, another was half opened while the other was completely closed. Behind the blinds, Lin put up fifty reproductions of documents and photographs related to the Incident, which the audience were able to view directly or indirectly by peeking through the gaps of blinds. The photographs used in this work are family photographs of those who lost some of their loved ones in the Incident. In front of the black wall, a black acrylic board was laid on the floor, with one of its sharp angles vertically against the wall. The two main black objects, the wall and the acrylic board, form a sense of tension in the installed domestic space, a space which is normally considered to be calm and peaceful. The

flower arrangement, made of silver metal, laying on the board, strengthens this kind of uneasiness as if something unusual and peculiar has happened or is going to happen.

The reproductions of the Incident hidden behind the blinds provide the audience with documents of the bloody history that Lin intends to be viewed through this piece. With brown stains and marks deliberately added by Lin, the reproductions illustrate a sense of passing of time and history. Different from *Epitaph*, Lin uses historical documents to directly narrate the history rather than by showing the film of the scene where bodies were disposed of, which indicated the tragedy indirectly. A more straightforward method of exposing the hidden history is adopted in this work. The silver aluminium of the blinds and metal of the artificial flowers produced a sense of coldness surrounding this piece. The sharp edges between the pale-coloured floor, the black wall and acrylic board seem like cuts or wounds, making a sharp impression on viewers' eyes and minds.

The concept of subaltern-ness in Lin's work refers to the wives and children of those men who sacrificed their lives during the Incident. Lin proposes that after being known as the victims, how can the subaltern endure the pain of being watched by society and being reminded of the death of their families. The photographs hidden behind the blinds fill all of the space within the frames, creating a large window scene that is open to be viewed by the audience. The exposed, semi-exposed and hidden photographs represent the struggle of those women who are in a state of limbo; whether, or to what degree, they can stand to let their stories be discovered by the visitors and shown in public. By

exploring these two works, I am arguing that visual art imagines society and also creates the ideology of the public. Both Wu and Lin's works expose the subaltern part of Taiwan's narratives and they re-shape what the Taiwanese have ignored in their history-writing, through which the subaltern both talks and speaks.

### **Cultural Representation and Reconstruction**

No cultural identity is produced out of thin air. It is produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginal experiences, those peoples and histories which remain unwritten. Those are the specific roots of identity. On the other hand, identity itself is not the rediscovery of them, but what they as cultural resources allow a people to produce. Identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed.<sup>83</sup>

According to Stuart Hall's words cited above, identity is based on how we construct the future rather than what we have found in history. Therefore, identity is not a fixed concept and is changed by how we interpret the past and the viewpoints, with which we examine history. When trying to identify the position and culture of nation and gender, Taiwanese women have been recalling the past, which might no longer represent the history but rather a history they have re-fabricated instead. As identity is 'in the future to be constructed', when looking back at the 228 Incident and Taiwan's history of immigration, we should consider how to interpret Lee's concepts of 'New Taiwanese', only through which, a wise and broad-viewed understanding of Taiwan's presence and identities will appear with respect for differences and

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<sup>83</sup> Hall, Stuart. 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity' in King, A. (ed), op cit, p 14.

ethnic minorities in Taiwan's society.

Additionally, I emphasise that The *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* held in 1997 was organised fifty years after the Incident took place. As it was the second exhibition on this subject officially held at the Fine Art Museum of Taipei, it is evident that the city government intended to utilise exhibitions to arouse the consciousness of the public in order to re-examine the history of the island. There were a series of other events held to strengthen the concepts of the show and to encourage the general public to be involved in the exhibition. These events included seminars, tours and talks led by artists and the families of the victims, through which this exhibition diluted the distance between the audience and the exhibited artworks.

It is also worth noting that after Chen Sheui-Bian lost the election for Taipei city mayor in 1998, which resulted in the suspension of the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* held in the FAMT, the Chia-Yi city government organised the next *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition*, entitled *Chia-Yi 2.28 Commemorative Exhibition*, in 2000. The show was curated to fulfil the expectation of memorialising the tragedy in South Taiwan, which is considered to have more supporters for the DPP than the KMT than in the North of the island. In 2002 and 2003, *2.28 Commemorative Exhibitions* were organised by the Foundation of Ocean Taiwan (FOT) and held in Taipei city and in I-Lan county, whilst in 2005, the show, *International Exhibition for the 228 Incident: Longing, Yearning, Where Am I*, was also organised by the FOT and shown in the Kaohsiung



Museum of Fine Arts and the Institute of I-Lan History.<sup>84</sup>

Consequently, I suggest that the record of history diverges depending on how it is documented. Moreover, what will be written and maintained in history changes with different sentiments of gender, politics and social status. Stéphane Corcuff asserts that '[i]t is probably legitimate to say that no history textbook can be objective, as objectivity in history does not exist'.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, when investigating the Incident, we need to be aware that what has been written in history may be just a part of the whole, thus, the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* provides the Taiwanese with a hidden view of history and unveils what has hitherto been unseen. National identity and cultural presentation in Taiwan are based not only on the politically and socially privileged but also on those who are at the margin, the less advantaged and the ethnic and cultural minorities.

Robert Young argues that women's struggles cannot be viewed simply via national politics by stating that:

The nature of women's struggles, often conducted from positions of extreme marginality outside the space of national politics, means that their history cannot be written or understood in the same way as conventional anti-imperialism, and requires different archival techniques.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, the main theoretical consideration in my research is postcolonial

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<sup>84</sup> Li, Chin-Hsien. '2.28 Commemorative Exhibition' in the *Encyclopaedia of Taiwan*, <http://taipedia.cca.gov.tw/Entry/EntryDetail.aspx?EntryId=20538>, updated on 13 June 2006, consulted on 19 February 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Corcuff, Stéphane. 'Conclusion' in Corcuff (ed), op cit, p 249.

<sup>86</sup> Young, R. (2001), op cit, p 361.

feminism, which I see most importantly as the theory that rediscovers the marginal and respects the differences of gender, culture, ethnicity and class. It is also the theory that helps us to understand our environment more thoroughly, to re-fashion an identity based on broader perspectives and finally to look into the current climate of diversity and plurality. Through presenting the concealed history of the 228 Incident by the means of artworks, a new understanding of the Taiwanese themselves as a community is being generated. Re-discovering the 228 tragedy through the show aims to open a dialogue between different groups of Taiwanese, in order to dilute the misunderstanding and hatred in their society. Women, who are considered inferior in Taiwan's patriarchal society, have therefore had the chance to be discovered through this specifically curated show, through which the re-interpretation of Taiwan's history is being formulated. This situation has also mirrored Taiwan's constantly changing ideology of national identity. Women artists continually construct a historical narrative by means of their art creation which responds to what Edmondson has demonstrated, which is that the process of interpretation of the Incident and building national identity has never ended.<sup>87</sup> Hence, under the process of 'nation-building', women artists have contributed to visualise the essential but disregarded part of Taiwan's history-writing, and to elucidate the intrinsic nature of Taiwanese identities from the complexity of its colonial past. Finally, I argue that the impact of this exhibition can be seen in *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself* (1997-1998), an exhibition which was held soon after the end of the second 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition*, and which parallels the themes concerned with

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<sup>87</sup> Edmondson asserts that '[t]he February 28 Incident continues to be variously interpreted and accounted for as the people of Taiwan assume the powerful agency of historical narrative production in the always unfinished process of nation-building'. Edmondson, op cit, p 42.

exposing hidden women's voices in history.

## 2

### **Economic History and Hidden Women:**

#### ***Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself (1997-1998)***

Sinjhuang is a very special place. When I knew [visited] this place the first time, I felt that it was a typical industrial town where inhabitants live with factories, where electricity poles are alongside commercial neon signs and where various kinds of shops are mixed up together. [...] I saw all sorts of electronic and mechanical raw materials, handiworks, and semi-finished products, all of which I had never seen in my life. Furthermore, with the chaotic spreading of people's houses, factories and warehouses, I started to realise that Sinjhuang is like the origin of the economic power in the past thirty or forty years in Taiwan.<sup>1</sup>

The above statement is cited from Chang Yuan-Chien, the curator of the exhibition *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself*, held at the Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre in Taipei county. Chang describes how she has been astonished by the views of streets and the living environment in Sinjhuang, which is famous for its textile industry and is located outside of the Taipei metropolis. The chaos and disorder in the landscape of Sinjhuang indicate a typical industrial town in Taiwan. Being one of the major textile export industrial areas in Taiwan, Sinjhuang has a large population of women who make up the labour force, as textile production is traditionally considered to be women's work in the male-centred society. According to Wang Shih-Chih's research, during Taiwan's key period of industrialisation between the 1960s and the 1980s, three quarters of the labour force in textiles were women.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chang, Yuan-Chien. 'Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself' in *Artist*, No 272, January 1998, p 338.

<sup>2</sup> Wang argues that during Taiwan's industrialisation between 1966 and 1981, women made

Those women mainly working in Taiwan's export-oriented economy during the past fifty years are globally considered to be cheap labourers and as people of the developing world. These women, seen as disadvantaged and being subalterns in the social and political structure, have greatly contributed to the boost to Taiwan's economy since as early as 1960s until the mid 1990s when China and South Asia began to provide a cheaper global labour market than Taiwan.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I shift my focus from the relationship between women and nation, to investigating how industrialisation has influenced women's lives in Taiwan in the past several decades. The exhibition I am examining was held at the Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre, which is situated in an area known for its textile industry and associated with the women's labour force [fig 17 and fig 18]. The significant part here is that it is women who contribute the major share of the labour for what is an export-oriented economy. I initially argue the political consideration of Taiwan's economic development and how its women's labour force became an essential input, contributing to the development of Taiwan's 'economic miracle' (*Jing Ji Qi Ji*).<sup>4</sup> I then investigate the concepts of Subaltern,

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up to 75 % of the labour force in the textile industry. Wang, Shih-Chih. *Capitalism, Patriarchy & Women Workers in Textiles: The Case of Taiwan*. MA thesis. Taiwan: National Chung Cheng University Institute of Labour Studies, 1997, p 13. Pinpointing the beginning of Taiwan's industrialisation is problematic as other historians propose that it starts from the early 1950s. For example, Murray Rubinstein asserts that '[t]he first stage of Taiwan's dramatic economic transformation took place from the early 1950s to the early 1960s'. See Rubinstein, Murray A. 'Taiwan's Socioeconomic Modernisation, 1971-1996' in Rubinstein (ed), op cit, p 367.

<sup>3</sup> The dates, referring to the period when the women's labour force started to contribute significantly to Taiwan's economy, are cited from Yen Shiang-Luan, 'Analysis of Genders in Labour Forces in Taiwan, 1951-1994' in *Journal of Labour Studies*, No 5, 1996, pp 147-175. According to Yen's research, there are three periods of Taiwanese industrialisation: Pre-industrialisation (1951-1965), Industrialisation (1966-1981) and Post-industrialisation (1982-1994). The women's labour force played an important role in the textiles industry during these periods.

<sup>4</sup> The term, 'economic miracle' (*Jing Ji Qi Ji*), has become a kind of cliché to describe Taiwan's rapid economic growth in the past several decades. It has been widely used in schoolbooks, journal articles, newspapers, and everyday conversations and even on television programmes.

with comparison to the issue of women of the developing world, which apply to these working-class women in Taiwan. An investigation of the exhibition is conducted in order to research how fine artists reflect those women's lives through the means of visual art and how the issues of being marginal are revealed through this exhibition.

### **Political and Economic Background**

Before looking at the development of Taiwan's 'economic miracle', I outline the connection between economy and politics. Following the debates in the first chapter, the impact of the 228 Incident and the proclamation of martial law made the KMT become the monopoly political power in Taiwan. The KMT viewed Taiwan as the only authorised government of China and it continued to claim sovereignty over the Mainland's communist power after it took over the control of Taiwan in 1945. Hence, the KMT required a stronger military force to strengthen its power over the Mainland. Consequently, the increase and maintenance of its military hardware has intensified the economic burden on the Taiwanese. To address this point further, I shall consider some length at Hsiung Ping-Chun's *Living Rooms as Factories* (1996):

The KMT in Taiwan has sought to sustain rapid economic progress, to maintain absolute political control, and to reclaim Communist China through military action. In consequence, people in Taiwan have had to bear the economic burden of financing a large military establishment and the political burden in living under an authoritarian government that kept the country in a continuous state of war, restricted individual freedoms,

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Since the mid 1990s, there has been a television commercial advertising a kind of drink for the working-class males, and the commercial adapts this term as the link to connect the working class with Taiwan's rapid economic growth. The term, 'economic miracle', has therefore become more popular for most people in Taiwan. I will further explain what contributes to, and creates Taiwan's 'economic miracle' later in the text.

and subjected individuals to arbitrary abuse from military personnel and the police.<sup>5</sup>

To address how the KMT has pushed Taiwan's economic development to fulfil its ambition of a potential war with Chinese communism, I briefly discuss Taiwan's 'economic miracle' as an example before considering the role of women in the textile industry. Chou Bih-er, Cal Clark and Janet Clark argue that Taiwan's economic growth is one of the highest in the world in the post-war era and state that:

During the post-war era, the Republic of China [Taiwan] has witnessed an 'economic miracle', with real growth averaging about 9% a year over the last four decades, one of the highest sustained growth in the world. Consequently, the country has been transformed from a rural backwater with a per capita income of \$100 in 1950 to a middle-income society with an income per capita of \$7,000 in 1989.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, according to Hsiung, Taiwan's Gross National Product (GNP) has increased twofold since 1986, and by 1989 Taiwan was the second richest nation (after Japan) in the world in terms of foreign exchange reserves and the world's thirteenth largest trading partner.<sup>7</sup> The rapid growth of the economy

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<sup>5</sup> Hsiung, Ping-Chun. *Living Rooms as Factories: Class, Genders and the Satellite Factory System in Taiwan*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996, p 25.

<sup>6</sup> Chou, Bih-er, Cal Clark and Janet Clark. *Women in Taiwan Politics: Overcoming Barriers to Women's Participation in a Modernizing Society*. Boulder & London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1990, p 33. Taiwan's current per capita income is around \$15,000 according to the database of the Government Information Office. See Government Information Office, Taiwan, 'Taiwan Residents Enjoy World's Sixth-longest Healthy Life Ratio', updated on 10 August 2006, <http://www.roc-taiwan.org/ct.asp?xItem=17384&ctNode=463>, consulted on 7 May 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Hsiung, op cit, p 31. Another example to show the speedy growth of Taiwan's GNP can be found in Denis Fred Simon's research. Simon asserts that:

In 1978, total expenditures in Taiwan on national research and development constituted 0.48 percent of GNP, equalling about US\$111 million. [...] By 1984, total national expenditures climbed to 1.0 percent of GNP or US\$540 million. [...] [B]y 1985, [it] reached US\$634 million (1.06 percent of GNP) and by 1986 it reached US\$808 million (1.04 percent of GNP). Preliminary government figures for 1987 indicate that it reached

means that Taiwan has transformed itself from an under-developed to a developing country and this impressive economic expansion has been obtained through Taiwan's transformation from an agricultural to industrial society. The evidence and the change can be seen in Table 1 provided by the Executive Yuan in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup>

Table 1. Gross Domestic Product by Industry, Taiwan, 1960-86 (percent)<sup>9</sup>

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1986
Agriculture <sup>a</sup>	29	24	16	13	8	6	6
Mining <sup>b</sup>	3	4	3	4	3	5	5
Manufacturing industry	22	26	34	37	42	41	43
Construction	4	4	4	5	6	4	4
Retail <sup>c</sup>	16	16	15	13	13	14	14
Transport <sup>d</sup>	5	5	6	6	6	6	6
Other <sup>e</sup>	21	21	22	22	22	24	22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

<sup>a</sup> Includes hunting, forestry and fishing.

<sup>b</sup> Includes quarrying and utilities.

<sup>c</sup> Includes wholesale trade.

<sup>d</sup> Includes storage and communication.

<sup>e</sup> Includes banking, insurance, real estate, ownership of dwellings, public administration, and defence and other services.

In Table 1, the Gross Domestic Product of agriculture dropped dramatically from 29 percent to 6 percent between 1960 and 1986 whilst the share of

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the level of 1.16 percent of GNP [...].

Simon, Denis Fred. 'Emerging Technological Trajectory' in Simon, Denis Fred and Michael Y. M. Kau (eds). *Taiwan: Beyond the Economic Miracle*. New York and London: M. E. Sharpe Inc, 1992, p 139.

<sup>8</sup> 'Executive Yuan' is the highest governmental department below the President in Taiwan and it is similar to the Home Office in Britain. The term is adapted from the official website of the Executive Yuan and the word, Yuan, spelt according to the Pinyin system, means 'department'.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Bureau of Statistics, Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics (DGBAS). Taipei: Executive Yuan, Republic of China, 1987, Table 26, p 97. Also in Hsiung, op cit, p 28.



manufacturing industry increased from 22 percent to 43 percent, which is nearly half of the whole GDP figures in Taiwan. Taiwan's shift from a mainly agriculture based economy to a predominantly industrialised economy has increased its wealth significantly, and it is shown that the income per capita has been significantly boosted during the same period. In short, the increase of Taiwan's wealth has come from the change in the social and industrial structure: from agriculture to industry. To be specific, Taiwan's 'economic miracle' has mainly resulted from the prosperity of the 'export-led' nature of industry. Chou, Clark and Clark demonstrate this fact by asserting some figures:

Exports surged by an average of 15% a year for most of the 1960s, and then skyrocketed by 30% annually for the period 1969-1973. Consequently, their share in gross domestic product almost quadrupled from 11% in 1962 to 42% in 1973, indicating that the economy had become extremely export-oriented. Taiwan's export mix became overwhelmingly industrial in composition (industrial goods rose from 14% to 85% of total exports between 1958 and 1973), proving that the island's manufactured products were internationally competitive.<sup>10</sup>

During the period of the 'economic miracle', the main feature of Taiwan's industrial experience was based on 'small labour-intensive producers', such as the 'satellite factory system'.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, apart from some large factories or warehouses, many Taiwanese were self-employed owners and labourers at the same time. Most of them used the ground floors of their houses as a factory space whilst they lived on the first floor and above, which meant that they didn't need to raise additional funds to set up a remote factory and thereby

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<sup>10</sup> Chou, Clark and Clark, op cit, p 39.

<sup>11</sup> Hsiung, op cit, pp 29 and 86.

managed to avoid large overhead expenses.<sup>12</sup> As a result, factories and warehouses are mixed together with people's houses.

During Taiwan's industrialisation, there was a large increase in the amount of 'petit bourgeois' who were originally the working-class but who become the lower level of the middle class after having accumulated a modest amount of wealth. However, those 'petit bourgeois' were mainly the owners of the factories rather than the labour force, e.g. women textile labourers, who devoted their youth to create Taiwan's 'economic miracle'. Therefore, the gap between the working class and the relatively wealthy has expanded whilst working-class women are, in general, still at the bottom of the social and economic spectrum.

In *Re-orienting Western Feminisms* (1998), Chilla Bulbeck suggests that '[t]he so-called "economic miracles", the Asian dragons of Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore have been built largely on a female workforce'.<sup>13</sup> Crucially, Bulbeck has confirmed that women are the major labour force contributing to the 'economic miracles' of Asia, which is largely considered to be developing. Wang demonstrates the fact that the 'textile industry has played a leading role in the development of the Taiwanese economy and furthermore, the importance of textiles in people's lives is just less than that of

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<sup>12</sup> This was also the scene of my own home house before I was fifteen years old. My father is the owner of a factory producing plumbing hardware, mainly for domestic purposes within the island, rather than to be exported abroad. My father did not move his factory to an industrial area outside of the city until I was about fourteen years old and before he did so, the whole family lived on the first floor and above whilst the ground floor served as an industrial factory unit.

<sup>13</sup> Bulbeck, Chilla. *Re-orienting Western Feminisms: Women's Diversity in a Postcolonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p 176.

agriculture'.<sup>14</sup> The textile industry is heavily dependent on women's labour and it is not only because of the fact that their wages are just 50 to 62 percent of men's pay but also because textiles require intense patience due to its manufacturing properties being highly repetitive and detailed.

To expand the point that the textile industry is socially viewed as a women's industry, Wang argues that 'women are always the main labour force in the labour-intensive textile industry; "Textiles" and "women workers" can even be joined as one term'.<sup>15</sup> There have been some discussions about the fact that work is gendered in society, such as that textile manufacturing is generally considered to be women's work and that it is a low-skilled job. Pamela Abbott, Claire Wallace and Melissa Tyler argue this kind of occupational division by stating that:

Feminists have argued that some types of 'women's work' are *essentialised*, that is socially constructed according to the skills associated with women's biological roles as actual or potential mothers e.g. nursing, primary schoolteaching; or according to women's bodies – women are thought to be naturally good at sewing or typing because of their 'nimble fingers' for instance.<sup>16</sup>

The KMT, a patriarchal party and government, also engenders the sexual expectation of women's work, e.g. to sew and to make clothes.<sup>17</sup> An example of this can be found in the aims of the development of Taiwan's first women's

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<sup>14</sup> Wang, S. C., op cit, p 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Abbott, Pamela, Claire Wallace and Melissa Tyler. *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives. Third Edition*. Oxford: Routledge, 2005, p 241.

<sup>17</sup> The discussion about women and textiles will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4, where I specifically examine textiles, as a form of art for women. In this chapter, my focus will be mainly on the subaltern status of the women's labour force in textile production during Taiwan's industrialisation and how women artists have responded to their lives.

group, the Chinese Women's Anti-aggression League (CWAL), established in 1950. As has already been addressed in the introduction, the CWAL was founded by Chiang's wife and aimed to voluntarily provide materials for military needs, including producing clothes for dependents and orphans. Even though the CWAL was a semi-official club for upper or at least 'middle-class'<sup>18</sup> women, women in the club were 'discouraged from participating in paid employment'.<sup>19</sup> According to Wang, the impact of the CWAL shows that '[y]ounger women who grew up under the KMT regime were less likely to hold paid employment after marriage than women of the older generation who developed their identities in the 1930s'.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is not only the social and cultural ideology that engenders the ideas that women should not be paid or paid well, but political patriarchy also deepens this kind of uneven treatment towards women. In fact, the global market also generates this kind of patriarchal capitalist ideology, which increases the labour burden in the developing nations in order to maintain the cheap costs of products and the market for the developed nations.

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<sup>18</sup>Although the term 'middle-class' is a problematic concept, it is usually understood to refer to the 'white-collar' class, who are above the working class and below the upper class. Terence Chong argues that the 'class' system fits into Southeast Asian society in the following way:

According to Marxist theory, a 'class society' is characterised by the conflict, tension and struggle between groups of people. Each group shares similar means of production and, consequently, a particular 'class consciousness'. Framed accordingly, the middle class, as with others, is assumed to be homogeneous whereby people are believed to share the same interests and values just because they are from similar economic backgrounds. This is highly problematic in Southeast Asia where ethnicity, religion, and language play important roles in social groupings.

In simple terms, therefore, the middle class are those who receive secondary or higher education and have ownership of cars and property. Hence, they have the financial ability to afford luxuries, such as clothes, jewellery and holidays. Chong, Terence. *Southeast Asia Background Series No9: Modernisation Trends in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005, p 49.

<sup>19</sup> Wang, S. C., op cit, p 47.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Before shifting my attention to argue the status of the women labour force in the textile industry in Sinjhuang, I outline women's participation in industry in Taiwan by citing Norma Diamond's observation:

One of the factors underlying Taiwan's industrial growth over the past two decades has been the availability of a pool of underemployed, young workers who will accept relatively low wages, who are unlikely to raise demands for higher pay, shorter hours, or seniority benefits and who, in many instances, expect only short-term employment. Women are a significant segment of this industrial work force.<sup>21</sup>

Diamond's research has suggested the situation that Taiwanese working-class women have experienced and this condition is seen as a form of patriarchy that oppresses women's economic status. Apart from working as low-skilled and low-paid labourers during Taiwan's industrialisation, most of the women are also mothers, daughters-in-law, and wives, from which roles they are still experiencing traditional patriarchy from Han culture. As a consequence, Taiwanese working-class women suffer not only from double colonisation but also the third layer of oppression, patriarchal and even global capitalism.

### **The Subalterns and Women of the Developing World**

Sinjhuang is located on the West side of the Tamsui River, which separates Sinjhuang from the Taipei metropolis. It takes around thirty minutes to travel on the bus from Taipei's main station to Sinjhuang, however, the differences in living standards and the quality of life between these locations is like the contrast between the developed and the developing Worlds. Taipei city is a

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<sup>21</sup> Diamond, Norma. 'Women and Industry in Taiwan' in *Modern China*, Vol 5, No 3, July 1979, p 317.

modern, commercial and developed metropolis where Taiwan's essentially political and economic centres are located, whereas Sinjhuang is a typical busy industrial town full of traffic, factories and blue-collar workers. As already demonstrated in the introduction, Taiwan is not evenly developed, and when travelling between the cities and the less modern counties, it is like moving between the developed and the developing Worlds. The difference between Taipei and Sinjhuang is an example of this observation.

In the first chapter, I used the term 'subaltern' to refer to Taiwanese women who experienced trauma and oppression because of the 228 Incident; here the term applies to Taiwanese women as a disempowered group of people who are viewed as victims of the capitalist system.<sup>22</sup> In *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* (1988), Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that "third world" women as a homogeneous "powerless" group are often located as implicit *victims* of particular cultural and socio-economic systems'.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the women's labour force which works for the textile industry in the Sinjhuang area can be considered both as women of the developing region and as subalterns.

During an interview with Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean in 1993, Spivak has explicitly suggested that women labourers in Southeast Asia are good

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<sup>22</sup> Both Wang Jin-Hua and Chien Ying-Ying have used the term 'subaltern' to label Taiwanese working-class women but they have never clarified this term, nor have they explained the reason why this term is appropriate to describe the situation of the women's labour force in Taiwan. See Wang, J. H., op cit, p 66 and Chien, Y.Y. (2000), p 90.

<sup>23</sup> Mohanty categorises 'Third World women' as victims of male violence, the colonial process, the Arab familial system, the economic development process and the Islamic code. For a detailed discussion, refer to Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' in Lewis, Reina and Sara Mills (eds). *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Edinburgh University Press, 2003, p 54.

sources as the subject for subaltern studies. She stated that '[i]f one wants to look at the construction of the subaltern subject in neo-colonialism, that whole area of Southeast Asia is wonderful, especially [books written] from the women's labour point of view'.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence, it is appropriate to adopt the concepts of subaltern, originally referring to the awakening-consciousness of peasants in India, for the investigation of working-class women in Taiwan. The method I have employed from the *Subaltern Studies* group is to re-construct the historiography of the hidden women's labour force in Taiwan's economy. Women artists' practice visualises this situation by making the concealed 'voices' heard and visible.

Further to the argument regarding the subaltern in Chapter I, I now explore this term in more depth, with regard to how it relates to women in economic history. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Spivak proposes two questions concerning the possibility of the subaltern speaking: '[h]ow can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? [and] [w]ith what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak?'<sup>25</sup> Spivak points out two crucial aspects here, when she argues that the subaltern does 'talk' but wonders in what voice can they 'speak'? From Spivak's arguments related to 'talk' and 'speak', I have observed that the freedom to 'speak' indicates a certain power which formulates some ideas to the viewer, whilst the simple ability to 'talk' does not present any political meaning. Spivak's contemplation is on how the 'utterance' can be perceived to become 'speech'. Spivak further

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<sup>24</sup> Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean 'Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors' in Landry and MacLean (eds), op cit, p 293.

<sup>25</sup> Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p 27.

suggests that:

[S]ome of the women on the pyres did actually utter. The actual fact of giving utterance is not what I was concerned about. What I was concerned about was that even when one uttered, one was constructed by a certain kind of psychobiography, so that the utterance itself [...] would have to be interpreted in the way in which we historically interpret anything.<sup>26</sup>

To make the subaltern 'speak', Chang Yuan-Chien visualises and represents the stories of the working-class women (for example, through metaphorical installation or photographic documents), through which the means to 'touch' and to 'interpret' the consciousness of the labouring women is shown. The historiography of the hidden women's labour force during Taiwan's 'economic miracle' is still under construction and visual exhibitions are contributing towards identifying their voices, which were formerly mute behind the so-called 'gloriousness' of economic development. I suggest here that the ignored group, which was not recorded and perceived as the core concern, could utilise marginal voices in its narration of the history-writing of Taiwan's economy. But it is clearly evident that the visualisation of the experience of working-class women exposes the subalternity (the existing but often ignored reality of Taiwan's society) to the public and to history-writing. Exhibitions become a means that provide a different view of the interpretation of written history, which was itself undertaken simply to record the quantity of industrial production rather than the contribution from, and the hardship of, the actual physical labouring. At this point, I suggest that visual art has directly recorded the documentary staging of the reality, whilst (subaltern) theory offers the

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<sup>26</sup> See Landry and MacLean, op cit, p 291.



conceptual link between both visualisation and existent lives. To clarify this point further, I shall investigate the exhibition in the following section.

Sinjuang is an industrial town where the textile industry represents the major business and type of production, therefore Chang aimed to develop a conversation between visual artists and the women's textile labour force in order to express her concern for the women on the margins of society.<sup>27</sup> In addition, she tried to motivate the locals to be concerned for their living environment during and after Taiwan's economic miracle.<sup>28</sup> To emphasise this point, I consider some of Chang's statements:

Having lived for several years in the more modern and liberal cities, New York and Tokyo and after my return to Taiwan, I suddenly felt interested in those that are marginal and subaltern and actually exist in Taiwan's society. I feel guilty about being ignorant of those aspects of society which are disadvantaged in my own motherland.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, the curator's motivation behind the organisation of this exhibition comes from her own 'cultural shock' over the differences between the so-called 'élite' and the working class. Thus, curiosity about and the consideration for the subalterns and 'women of the developing world' were the driving forces behind the show. Therefore, the evidence of the curatorial statements has suggested that in this exhibition, there exists a clear concept of binarism: centre (Taipei city, where Chang is based and which is the major political core of Taiwan) and margin (Sinjuang, an industrial town inhabited

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<sup>27</sup> See Chang, Y. C., *op cit*, p 339.

<sup>28</sup> The curator asserts in the curatorial statements that through the display of the exhibition, she wishes to inspire the locals to care about the environment of the city county. *Ibid.*, p 338.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

mainly by the working class and the subalterns). Thus, I emphasise here that the significance of the show was to debate the discourses of class and gender; the exhibition was curated to recognise the working-class women living in rural places and labelled as the disadvantaged class. By revealing the unseen women's labour force's difficulties and the fact of being the victim of the phallocentric social and economic structure, Chang has successfully exposed the marginal issue to the attention of the middle classes.

This exhibition exposes the lives and the reality of the working-class women, who have been subservient during Taiwan's industrialisation and who have been excluded in the élitist social and economic ideology. Chien Ying-Ying points out that what this show has addressed is to 'confirm the subjectivity of the subaltern'.<sup>30</sup> By the means of exhibition, the subaltern, or the silent (working-class woman) has become the subject, i.e. the spotlight and the theme of the show.

### **Lords of the Rim**

The exhibition, *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself*, was held at the Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre in Taipei county between 20 December 1997 and 18 January 1998. According to Chang, the title of the exhibition comes from Sterling Seagrave's 1995 publication, *Lords of the Rim*.<sup>31</sup> This book addresses how Chinese merchants and the élite removed themselves to the edge of the central regime in Chinese history, as early as from the Shang dynasty (1523-1028 BC). Those merchants, who ostracised themselves from

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<sup>30</sup> Chien, Y.Y. (2000), op cit, p 90.

<sup>31</sup> The curatorial declaration can be found in Chang, Y. C., op cit, p 339. In addition, Seagrave's *Lords of the Rim* was published by Corgi in London in 1996.

China's policies for thousands of years to avoid excessive public demonstrations of courtesy and obedience, became mobile, resilient and hard to detect. Seagrave's arguments in *Lords of the Rim* refer to wealthy merchants from long ago in China's ancient history, to today's overseas Chinese businessmen, all of whom have been active and powerful around the Pacific rim.

Therefore, 'Lords' refer to the middle classes who have kept moving away from the political centres and who have stayed overseas to seek advantages in order to expand their businesses and personal benefits. However, in direct contrast to Seagrave's use of the term, the 'Lords' of Chang's concept indicate the blue-collar women workers in the textile industry. Not having power and not being influential, those women are actually not 'Lords' at all. On the contrary, they are the ones who lack any power in terms of management, and who have been suppressed in the business world. Nevertheless, even though those women are disadvantaged, they have played a significant part in Taiwan's industrialisation, and they are the 'heroines' that have contributed to Taiwan's 'economic miracle'. Furthermore, owing to their marginal position in society, working-class women have what could be seen as the advantage of mobility. Thus, although being marginal in terms of their geopolitical location, they are as significant as their male counterparts who are usually at the management level and are the 'lords' of Taiwan's economic structure. I assume therefore that Chang used the term, 'lord', to offer a reverse standpoint in viewing the position of working class women in the manufacturing industry. Without a fundamental labour force, the 'economic miracle' would have remained as nothing more than a government plan, without ever really coming

into being. Perhaps, the curatorial strategy could have made more of the significance of this term.

The seven women artists who were invited to participate in the show came from Taiwan (Wu Mali, Hou Shur-Tzy, Lin Chun-Ju and Shu Maggie Hsun-We), Japan (Shimada Yoshiko), Korea (Ahn Pil Yun) and the US (Judy Chicago). The choice of these Taiwanese artists was not unexpected, as they are some of the very few established artists whose works have clear connections with gender politics in mid-1990s Taiwan. Apart from Judy Chicago, all of the invited artists were based in East Asia where industrialisation became the major governmental strategy after the Second World War. In other words, for most of the artists participating in the show, rapid industrialisation is a part of their nations' recent economic history and, more importantly, they have lived through a period of major industrialisation that greatly changed the shape of their society.

Chang recalls that she was invited by Tsai Jian-Fu, who was the director of the Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre at that time, to curate an exhibition to create a connection between Sinjhuang and Taipei city.<sup>32</sup> The strategy of using the fame of well-established East Asian artists, as well as the world-renowned Judy Chicago, effectively brought attention to the industrial town of Sinjhuang. The show not only aimed to visualise the unseen working-class women's lives in Sinjhuang but also intended to promote the name of Taiwan by well-known international artists, Judy Chicago, Shimada Yoshiko and Ahn Pil Yun. Therefore, this exhibition both exposed the lives and situations of the

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<sup>32</sup> Chang, Y. C., *op cit*, p 339.

disadvantaged women's labour force and promoted the name of Taiwan in the global artistic environment.

Judy Chicago exhibited her completed projects, including the *Through the Flower* (1973), the *Powerplay* series (1983-1987), the *Thinking about Trees* series (1993-1997) and a setting of the *Dinner Party* (1974-1979), which were displayed both in the Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre and the Hanart Gallery in Taipei city. The space in the Hanart Gallery was specifically arranged for Chicago, aiming to support the main scene of the event in Sinjhuang and to create a kind of 'connection' between the two locations, the Taipei metropolis and Sinjhuang. However, I would argue that Chicago's involvement in the project did not accord with the curator's themes of expressing the subaltern status of the women's labour force in the textile industries in Sinjhuang. Rather, it created a peculiar scenario whereby Chicago's participation signified a greater élite power, which made no attempt to interpret the Taiwanese women's labour force. It was the Asian women artists who interviewed and talked to local women in Sinjhuang in order to understand the life of working-class women. Chicago's contribution illustrated the great differences between margin (Taiwan) and centre (the West) and simply amplified the contrast between Sinjhuang and Taipei, in the show.

As already addressed in the introduction, the West has become the new imperial power that largely influences and, to some extent, unifies the appearances of global culture. The fear of *not being Western or even White enough* can be seen in this show and it is a paradoxical conflict in the complex psychological inferiority found in Taiwan's artistic field. I suggest that the

curator's inclusion of Chicago (as one of the pioneering Western feminist artists) was a strategy to 'upgrade' this show to what could be considered a global level, and to present herself as an international curator. In consequence, the adoption of using Western artists and choosing Western 'styles' could be said to devalue Taiwanese women artists as the subaltern in the frames of global art.<sup>33</sup>

At this point, I should underline the fact that the philosophical and psychological condition of feeling inferior to the West, and therefore being eager to duplicate Western styles, is one of the dimensions of the complexity of Taiwanese culture. I suggest that the multiple conditions of Taiwanese culture include diasporic experience, especially in the aspects of education and training in the West. It is interesting to note that most of the established Taiwanese artists and curators were trained in the West before starting their careers in Taiwan, so their viewpoints and interpretations of Taiwan are different from the majority of Taiwanese people who have never been (or seldom go) outside of the island. I propose that this situation constructs what Taiwan is and the curation of this exhibition (and all other shows featured in this thesis) expresses this fact.

### **Visualising the Subalternity**

Before examining some artworks, I should stress that this exhibition has a strong connection with local fabric industry community. The curator received

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<sup>33</sup> I have recently discovered that Elsa Hsiang-Chun Chen, a Taiwanese art historian and critic, has also proposed a relevant view to my argument regarding Chicago's involvement in the exhibition. She states that '[i]n essence this [Chicago's participation] shows clearly the way in which the art community in Taiwan has in the long term internalised its dependence on the cultural order of European and US hegemony'. Chen, Elsa Hsiang-Chun. 'Reading Feminist Dimensions of Contemporary Art in Taiwan' in Huangfu (ed), op cit, p 78.

a great amount of support from several local textile companies, a local reading club and Fu Jen Catholic University Textiles Department.<sup>34</sup> The exhibition was supported by the Sinjhuang City Council and was held at the Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre, the only state-run art space in the region. Moreover, owing to the fact that the Centre is a multi-purposed space, where a local library and a theatre are located, the exhibition (with no tickets required) attracted a large number of viewers, including regular visitors, children, adults, males, females and people from different professions and classes.

Works exhibited included two and three dimensional pieces, throughout two separate rooms on the ground floor of the gallery space. In order to argue how Taiwanese women artists explore 'voice-consciousness' to let the subaltern speak, I examine in more detail a representative sample of works in the show. The first artist under investigation is Hou Shur-Tzy, who exhibited *Labours and Labels* (1997).

Hou Shur-Tzy, like many of the active women artists in Taiwan, was educated in the US, for her Master's Degree in Arts following a Bachelor's Degree in philosophy at the National Taiwan University in 1985. She returned to Taiwan in 1994 and began her career as a fine artist, mainly using photographs as the medium to express her concepts. The work, *Labours and Labels III* [fig 19], is a series of thirty pieces, which take the form of photographs documenting the women's labour force in textile factories in Sinjhuang. Each photograph indicates different fabric work carried out by women in the factory, including

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<sup>34</sup> The list of firms involved can be found in the list of acknowledgements published in the exhibition catalogue.

sewing, cutting, ironing and labelling. To emphasise the quantity of production, underneath each photograph, the artist indicates the amount of work that the labouring women produce: '10,000 cutting a day', '500 ironing a day', '200 dozens of polo shirts a month' and '2000 label-sewing a day'.<sup>35</sup> The work, *Labours and Labels III*, has now been collected at the Fine Art Museum of Taipei.

In *Labours and Labels II* [fig 20 and fig 21], a woman looks thoroughly preoccupied with her work, sewing a large piece of cloth on a sewing machine. The photograph is shown in black and white, so that the various colours of textiles in the factory are ignored, forcing the viewer to focus entirely on the reality of the labour itself. In the photograph, another piece of cloth is placed on the table and the woman, with her hair tied-up, seems to be very carefully pulling the cloth while the needle of the machine rapidly repeats its up and down movement. A fan, which has not been switched on, is right behind her and suggests that the environment for work is unpleasantly hot in the summer. The photograph is a small scene but represents women's massive contribution to the labour force during Taiwan's industrialisation.

On both sides of the photograph, the artist collects and shows dozens of labels, which indicate the origins of where products are produced, such as, for example, 'Made in Taiwan', 'Made in Chang Ho', 'Made in Italy', 'Made in China', 'Made in Indonesia', etc. Hou pinned short red threads under the labels that show the names of towns in Taiwan where the products are made.

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<sup>35</sup> See Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre. *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself*. Exh. Cat., Taiwan, 1998, pp 46-49.



Juxtaposing the labels and the photograph narrates both the real scene of production behind the labels and the manufacturing reality of the women from the developing world. The neglected scene of labour in the textile industry is exposed to the viewer, the majority of whom are middle-class consumers. Hou uses documentary photographs to 'touch the consciousness' of the subaltern women and to confront the visitors, through which the historiography of the working woman has been recorded. Most importantly, this exhibition was political and powerful in terms of arousing the public's attention to the real life of the lower classes, who have been forgotten under the 'glory' of Taiwan's 'economic miracle'.

Besides the physical hard work, working-class women experience another hardship - that of the labour of childbirth, highlighted in the following work. Lin Chun-Ju's installation, *Birth* (1997) [fig 22-24], is very different from Hou's documentary photographs. Lin is renowned for her installation works, made of textiles and fabrics, thus her involvement in this exhibition was not unanticipated. *Birth* is entirely made up of fabric and bobbins, using industrial hardware and output as artistic materials. Lin carefully arranges a pile of colourful cushions, beanbags and cloth on the floor with dozens of black bobbins on the walls surrounding them. Lin connects the fabric on the floor and bobbins on the wall with bright red threads, by which she creates a scene reminiscent of blood-vessels, flesh and the formation of a new life.

Instead of stereotypical and bloody images of women giving birth, the work, *Birth*, is presented in a beautiful and colourful piece. With various colours and textures of the fabrics, the work gathers a mixture of diverse products from

textile industry. There are major elements of this piece: bobbins and clothes; hard/solid and soft/flexible. Three white connected walls in the background and a large pile of colourful clothes on the floor form a stable installation, which makes the structure of the space calm and well-balanced. However, several red threads and items of clothing make the connection between the walls and the large pile of clothes on the floor, through which there exists a kind of tension and strength from the extension and stretching of the fabric.

Chang states that 'with the concept of women's production in the [textile] industry, and for a baby, Lin Chun-Ju installed the space to resemble both a factory and a maternity room'.<sup>36</sup> The work refers to two kinds of production, both of which require a great amount of physical effort: making a living in the factory and giving birth in the maternity room. Lin demonstrates that there are two aspects that dominate the lives of working-class women in Sinjhuang: to be a good textile labourer and a good mother. However, it is hard to be both pregnant and a blue-collar working woman at the same time.

Before the *Labour Standards Act* was passed in 1984, there was rarely any protection or benefits for working-class women during their pregnancy. It was very common that they were forced to quit their jobs, because the factory owners wanted to avoid the inconvenience of a temporary loss of their labour force. When the *Labour Standards Act* was announced, but before the revised version was made and passed in 2001, according to the law women labourers were only given thirty days of maternity leave. Furthermore, the fines, used to punish those factory owners who did not provide women with

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<sup>36</sup> See Chang, Y.C., op cit, p 340.

sufficient maternity benefits, were very low.<sup>37</sup> *Birth* demonstrates the difficulty that working-class women experience in maintaining their socially expected role as a mother whilst being oppressed in the male-centred working environment.

Wang Shih-Chih interviewed some women labourers at the Dung Yang and Fu Chang textile factories located in Taoyuan county<sup>38</sup> concerning their experience of giving birth and maternity leave. One of the interviewees said that:

We always keep working until the moment when we are going to give birth and it is the same for everyone [...] We have never stopped working before the labour pains begin as we dare not take our maternity leave earlier. We were only entitled with thirty days for maternity leave [before 2001].<sup>39</sup>

This interview demonstrates that the oppression of women from the developing world derives from the hierarchical structure of organisation, which

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<sup>37</sup> According to the database of *Taiwan Women Web*, before 2001, the penalty against factories' own unofficial regulations, which allow them to sack married and pregnant women, was either too low or unclear. The Web states that 'the penalty was just between 2,000 to 20,000 Taiwanese dollars (around £30 - £300), which is insufficient to stop the employers from treating women unequally and without respect'. For detailed information, see 'Taiwanese Women's Treatment in 1998: Women and Law', Taiwan Women Web, [http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/womenweb/st/98/st\\_law.htm](http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/womenweb/st/98/st_law.htm), consulted on 14 May 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Both the Dung Yang and Fu Chang textile plants were shut down in 1996. Owing to the increased interest in cheaper overseas labour forces, mainly in China and South Asia the owners decided to move their factories outside of Taiwan. However, according to the records, the Taiwanese labourers (mainly women) who devoted most of their youth working in these factories did not receive any redundancy payment and there were 21,878 factories that were closed down for the same reasons between January and November 1996. This situation has worsened the lives of working-class women in Taiwan. For more information, see He, Yan-Tang. 'The Situation of Unemployed Women Labourers During the Period When their Employers Close Down the Plants' in The 2<sup>nd</sup> National Women's Conference, <http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/nwc/nwc2/work2.htm>, consulted on 14 May 2007.

<sup>39</sup> See Wang, S. C., op cit, pp 36-7. This interview was conducted and published in 1997. According to the revised *Labour Standards Act* announced in 2001, maternity leave has currently been extended to 60 days.

determines a female workforce and formulates their work as a part of the machines in the factories. The machines that never stop *mechanise* and *objectify* women's bodies, which are expected to work continuously even during their pregnancy. Women have become a part of the machine which works mainly for the benefits of capitalism and the wealth of a nation during industrialisation. Women, therefore, merely serve the patriarchal society that expects them to be productive, by contributing labouring for the textile industry and by producing new lives.

The experience of working-class women in Taiwan is a typical example in the developing world. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park address this condition in developing countries by stating that:

Following independence from colonial rule, these [developing] countries set out on the path of a 'development' targeted primarily at economic growth, and committed to a modernisation consisting of technological advancement, industrialisation and urbanisation.<sup>40</sup>

According to Rajan and Park, the development of industrialisation and urbanisation is a national target to help the developing countries move away from poverty after gaining political independence. Such development has largely relied on women thanks to their inherent qualities of 'hard work, thrift, sacrifice to family interests, cooperation [and] pragmatism'.<sup>41</sup> During industrialisation, Taiwanese women, especially those from rural areas, have been increasingly given the status of the subaltern and have been victimised

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<sup>40</sup> Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder and You-me Park. '*Postcolonial Feminism/ Postcolonialism and Feminism*' in Schwarz and Ray (eds), op cit, p 64.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p 65.

under the patriarchal social values. The work, *Birth*, visualises this reality and the marginal aspect of Taiwan's society.

Finally, I have chosen Wu Mali's work, *Stories of Women from Sinjhuang* (1997) [fig 25 and fig 26] as the final piece of visual evidence to support my arguments in this chapter. Similar to her piece, *Epitaph*, Wu once again used text and a video to express her concerns about forgotten women, and this time, in the context of Taiwan's economic history. In *Stories of Women from Sinjhuang*, Wu puts up cloth, woven with text and patterns of flowers, on the three walls, constructing a U-shape space. On walking into the space, the audience is surrounded by the dark red cloth, forming a kind of wall paper that is attached to the whole length and width of the walls with various patterns of flowers and leaves in lighter colours. Similar to *Epitaph*, Wu installed a screen and a projector at the middle of the space, and she showed a short autobiography of a woman textile worker who had devoted all of her youth to the textile industry in Sinjhuang. In order to analyse this piece in more depth, it is useful to cite some of the text:

I first came to work at textile plants in my teens. I worked everywhere: Taoyuan, Sinjhuang, and Shulin. They were all wearing and demanding job[s]. [...] Because my husband's income was poor, we managed a garment factory for a living. Suddenly those good old days in textiles were gone. I ended up divorcing my husband [who] has the custody of the children and he still owns the factory. As for me, although I have lived for the past 20 years in Sinjhuang, I desperately need to get away from it. None of the good feeling remains. The truth is Sinjhuang has cost me my life, my youth. I lost everything in the end.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lin, Margo and Wei Ying-Hui (eds). *Wu Mali: Treasure Island*. Taiwan: Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts. Exh. Cat., 2002, p 55.

This rather depressing autobiography from the woman is shown on the screen and this kind of method is similar to Wu's work, *Epitaph*, both of which uncover the stories of subaltern women's lives. More stories of similar women's lives are woven and brought to light on the walls. To be specific, the strength of this piece depends largely on the use of words and the simple installation of its setting. It is this kind of modest way of presentation that highlights powerfully and explicitly the hard life of women on the margins of society, as the approach directly points at the essential motif of the work.

The other important element of this piece is the sound of a sewing machine. The continual, repetitive and even tedious sound keeps repeating and repeating in the space, as if it were the sound of the process when the text itself was woven into the cloth. A sense of déjà vu of the scene at a textile factory appears and the mechanical sound is very powerful as it symbolises the mechanised lives of working women in the labour-intensive textile industry. The text, cloth and the sound construct a scenario, which presents the life, the work and emotions of the labouring women in Sinjhuang. The subalternity and marginal stories in the development of Taiwan's economy are therefore shown and expressed in this artwork, through which what had previously been forgotten has therefore been revealed through visual art.

### **Reconsideration of Subjectivity**

Rajan and Park begin their essay, *Postcolonial Feminism/ Postcolonialism and Feminism* (2000), by introducing some inspiring arguments:

Postcolonial feminism cannot be regarded simply as a subset of postcolonial studies, or, alternatively, as another variety of feminism. Rather it is an intervention that is changing the configurations of both postcolonial and feminist studies. Postcolonial feminism is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neo-colonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights.<sup>43</sup>

Both neo-colonialism and colonialism, which appears with the force of political occupation, are intersected with the discourses concerning the colonised and the colonisers in the fields of gender, nation, class, race and sexuality. Postcolonial feminism is concerned with women's lives and roles within the new structure of power related to the issues listed above, and it includes the discourse of the women's labour force in Taiwan. Spivak has clearly indicated that labouring women in the developing world are the worst sufferers of global capitalism by stating that 'the worst victims of the recent exacerbation of the international division of labour are [Third World] women'.<sup>44</sup> Spivak further asserts that the '[Third World] produces the wealth and the possibility of the cultural self-representation of the "First World"'.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it is the developing world, especially its women, who contribute the major amount of labour to the global market but meanwhile they also endure the suppression of their male counterparts. Nevertheless, the obstacle they are experiencing also comes from Western women whose culture, art and even fashion have given those working-class women a kind of psychological dilemma about whether or not to be Westernised.

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<sup>43</sup> Rajan, Sunder and Park, op cit, p 53.

<sup>44</sup> Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York and London: Methuen, 1987, p 167.

<sup>45</sup> Spivak (1990), op cit, p 96, original emphasis maintained.

The exhibition, *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself*, is a visual interpretation of the questions of postcolonial feminism and it specifically explores the positions of Taiwanese women living outside of the metropolis. The most significant contribution that the show has made is that it exposes the silent women of the developing region. The perspective that Chang adopts addresses Taiwanese women's subalternity, not from the points of view of nation and nationalism (which the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* in the first chapter has covered), but from the contradictions between the developed and the developing World (as mainly economic consumers and producers).

Owing to the fact that this exhibition was the first event to deal with this subject and that it was supported by the mayor of Sinjhuang and several local textile companies, the show received a lot of attention from the local and national press. However, after the exhibition was over, there have been hardly any shows held and organised on similar topics and concerns. This is owing to the fact that since many of Taiwan's companies have moved their capital and factories abroad, the labour market in textiles and other labour-intensive industries have declined on the island. The concerns towards working class women have shifted from being about their suffering as mechanised objects to their becoming unemployed and anxious in the diminishing job market. I foresee and suggest that future curatorial concern surrounding working-class women would be centred on this aspect and influences on their lives.

Indeed, this show provides an example that enables me to view Taiwan's society with a broader perspective, by acknowledging the hard work and hardship of the working-class women during Taiwan's industrialisation, as well



as demonstrating the 'reality' of the marginal part of society. This attitude echoes what Rajan and Park have argued: 'a postcolonial feminism that addresses the issues concerning the most "backward" parts of the world may claim the most advanced understanding of the contemporary "reality"'.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, it is clearly conspicuous that the organising of *Lords of the Rim* is based on the concepts of postcolonial feminism to motivate the re-consideration of the position of Sinjhuang, as a 'lord' and as a subject. Ultimately, I am emphasising that this exhibition intended to create a very positive impact by looking at the marginal issue of society and by exposing a hidden economic identity of the women's labour force in the global economic system, through which what has been forgotten as the crucial subaltern part of existing fact of Taiwanese presence is being re-shaped.

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<sup>46</sup> Rajan and Park, op cit, p 66.

## **PART II: Colonial Heritage**

### **3**

#### **Colonial Space: *Sweet and Sour Yeast* (2001-2002)**

In this chapter, I am examining the exhibition *Sweet and Sour Yeast* [fig 27], held at two alternative art spaces in Taiwan during 2001 and 2002. This exhibition was curated in two former colonial buildings built during the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan in the early twentieth century. These spaces are now known as Taipei's Hua-Shan Arts District, which was originally built to house a wine factory, and the Kia-A-Thau Art Village in Kaohsiung, which was previously a sugar factory. Both factories were abandoned when the development of high technology became the economic policy of the Taiwanese government. Each art space is mainly organised and administered by women artists. The inspiration for the exhibition derived from the smell and flavour of the factory spaces and also the function of yeast, which is used in the wine making process. The title of the exhibition, *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, is taken from one of the famous desserts produced in the sugar factory.

Taken as the symbolic theme of this show, 'yeast' played an important role in both spaces. The most popular dessert produced by the Kia-A-Thau sugar factory was sweet and sour yeast ice cream [fig 28 and fig 29], which was made from sugar and yeast by fermentation. Similarly, the winery that was the forerunner of the Hua-Shan Art District required another kind of yeast to brew the wheat and rice during the winemaking process. Yeast is a kind of organism which can survive and keep reproducing itself by interacting with other ingredients. The physical properties of yeast enable a process to take

place which provides a metaphor of regeneration and mutual support. The newspaper, *China Times*, described the exhibition's use of the concepts of 'yeast' and 'connection' in the following terms:

The exhibition was organised on the theme of 'connection' and focused on the role of 'being a woman'. The organism, yeast, keeps producing by connecting rather than eating or killing others. Women artists hope to work with each other through this exhibition and then create more exposure and become stronger.<sup>1</sup>

A dictionary definition regarding the properties of yeast serves to illustrate the appropriateness of its application in these metaphorical senses. According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, yeast is 'a microscopic single-celled fungus capable of converting sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide; any unicellular fungus that reproduces vegetatively by budding or fission [...]'.<sup>2</sup> The most commercially significant use of yeast is to ferment the sugars of rice, wheat, barley and corn in order to produce alcoholic drinks; in addition, yeast is widely used to raise dough for baking. By consuming sugar, yeast keeps reproducing itself and growing, whilst at the same time it produces alcohol and carbon dioxide. At this point, it is worth noting that a key property of yeast is that it keeps connecting with itself in order to survive and that the speed at which yeast reproduces depends on the temperature and the environment. This characteristic is similar to the strategy employed by women artists through the use of exhibitions, i.e. they connect with each other and gather together in order to develop, survive and, ultimately, to be seen.

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<sup>1</sup> Chen, Shi-Lin. 'Women Artists and Sweet Dialogue: Interacting through the Exhibition Shown at the North and the South of Taiwan' in *China Times* on 5 November 2001, p 14.

<sup>2</sup> Pearsall (ed), op cit, p 1658.

The curator of *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, Chang Hui-Lan, addressed the idea of connection and explained in the exhibition catalogue that 'this exhibition joined not only the two alternative spaces together, but also connected every woman artist, through which a more complete body was created to express their artworks'.<sup>3</sup> The simple-unit organism, yeast, by connecting itself with many other units, becomes stronger and more complete. This exhibition operated as a prime mover (like yeast) to initiate action and then assembled other elements (history, nature and people) in order to present the issues of gender and even national identity. It provided audiences with visible artworks and promoted a series of emotional and mental responses, such as a sense of nostalgia, concern for the natural environment and ideas of how to combine the old and the new, at a time when Taiwan was beginning to rediscover its roots.

Both the feminist content of the show and the use of old buildings from the colonial period promoted a sense of nostalgia and a re-interpretation of Taiwan's long colonial history. Here, I am emphasising that the importance of using former colonial buildings was intrinsic to the exhibition, and a further essential consideration was the process by which the Taiwanese could re-establish their location within colonial history.

Through this show, I found that the Taiwanese views of binary relationships have changed. The term 'binarism' has been widely used in postcolonial

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<sup>3</sup> Chang, Hui-Lan. 'Sweet and Sour Yeast: A Sweet Conversation between Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory and Taipei Winery' in Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society, *Sweet and Sour Yeast: A Sweet Conversation between the Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory and the Taipei Winery*. Exh. Cat., Kaohsiung, 2002, p 10.

studies to indicate the most extreme forms of paired opposites: sun/moon, white/black, day/night, civilised/primitive, colonisers/the colonised. The term 'binarism', in the context of this exhibition, refers to the division between the people who were labouring in these factory buildings (the Taiwanese) and those who controlled them (i.e. the Japanese). Since that time the oppositional relationship in the production of sugar and wine has changed, so that it no longer benefits the colonisers.

Further consideration must be given to the terms 'binarism' and 'dualism' before the implications of this show and its locations can be discussed. According to Richard A Watson, the term 'dualism' may be defined as follows:

Dualism is related to binary thinking, i.e., to systems of thought that are two-valued, such as logic in which theorems are valid or invalid, epistemology in which knowledge claims are true or false, and ethics in which individuals are good or bad and their actions are right or wrong.<sup>4</sup>

Watson further points out that 'western philosophy continues to be predominantly dualistic, as witnessed by the indispensable use of two-valued matrices in logic and ethics'.<sup>5</sup> According to Watson's arguments, Western ideology divides the world into paired logical opposites, including right and wrong, up and down, male and female and mind and body. Hilary Robinson also argues that Western ideology is based on binary relationships and asserts that 'it is widely understood that western (Euro-centric) culture is predicated

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<sup>4</sup> Watson, Richard A. 'Dualism' in Robert Audi (ed). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p 245.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

upon a value system of binary oppositions'.<sup>6</sup> Under dualism, the superior position, or subject, is emphasised whilst the marginal part, or object, is subaltern. It is believed that the colonised, being those who are relegated to the margins, are the object and the colonisers, who are in the position of control, are the subject. It is postcolonial theories that challenge the division of relationships into subject and object and propose instead the existence of a state of hybridity in the space between both ends. In the case of the exhibition, those two ends comprise the Taiwanese people (or the object) and the buildings (or subject).

The term 'postcolonial', in the definition used by Ashcroft et al, refers to 'all of the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day'.<sup>7</sup> One of the elements that characterises postcoloniality, from the start of colonisation to the present, is hybridity. Hybridity is the response to the hegemony of the colonisers, and through hybridity, the binary orders are dislocated. Some examples which demonstrate the presence of hybridity include new forms of language (a mixture of Taiwanese with the imperial language, Japanese), living habits and culture. Homi Bhabha's foreword to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) describes an image of a colonised man:

The representative figure of such a perversion, I want to suggest, is the image of post-Enlightenment man tethered to, *not* confronted by, this dark reflection, the shadow of colonised man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance,

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<sup>6</sup>Robinson, Hilary. 'Reframing Women' in Hilary Robinson (ed). *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968-2000*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, p 535.

<sup>7</sup> Ashcroft et al (1989), op cit, p 2.

disturbs and divides the very time of his being.<sup>8</sup>

For Bhabha, the colonised man is the one who lives in the in-betweenness amidst different boundaries and the one who is experiencing hybridity, which is a mixture of his own cultural traditions and the colonial influence. I propose that the colonised man can be used to describe the Taiwanese and this show is a physical example to prove this argument. Today, these sugar and wine factories no longer exist to make profits for the colonisers; rather I argue that they have become the interface through which Taiwan may address its own identity. Thus, for the Taiwanese, using these buildings has become a strategic means of re-considering and re-naming the legacy of Japanese colonisation and of acknowledging the existence of mimicry in the hybridised Taiwanese culture.

In this chapter, I consider the history of these buildings and how the re-use of these specific colonial buildings for a different function became the method to address the topics of postcoloniality and identity. Additionally, the ways in which women artists have responded to the issues of identity are also discussed.

### **Colonial Buildings and Identity Discourses**

The Hua-Shan Arts District, formerly known as the Taipei Winery [fig 30 and fig 31], is located at the centre of Taipei city. It was built in 1916 during the Japanese colonial period and in 1945 the Chinese Nationalist government took

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<sup>8</sup> Bhabha, Homi. 'Foreword' in Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated from the French by Charles Lam Markmann. Foreword by Homi Bhabha. London: Pluto Press, 1986 (first published in 1967), p xiv.

over control of the buildings and renamed them the Taipei Winery. The factory ceased production in 1987 because of the awakening consciousness of the need for environmental protection and the expansion of the urban space, which forced the pollutant-producing factory to be moved to a rural area. As a result, this space became the most capacious derelict site in the centre of Taipei. In 1997, a few artists discovered it and realised that it would be perfectly suited to house a multi-purpose arts and performance space. Soon afterwards, Tang Huang-Chen, who was the first chairperson of the Association for Cultural Environmental Reform, Taiwan,<sup>9</sup> gathered artists from all fields and inaugurated the site under the designation of 'Hua-Shan Arts District'.<sup>10</sup>

The Kia-A-Thau Art Village is located at the Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory [fig 32 and fig 33], which was finally shut down in 1999.<sup>11</sup> The Sugar Factory was established in 1901, also during the era of Japanese colonisation, and it was

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<sup>9</sup> The Association of Cultural Environment Reform, Taiwan, was originally established in 1998 to safeguard the future of the Hua-Shan Arts District as a centre dedicated to visual art, performance art, films, architecture and art education. From 1999 to 2004, the Association was appointed to run the District by the Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan, and now it continues to serve its aim of protecting the artistic and cultural environment in Taiwan. For more information, see the Association's website: <http://www.art-district.org.tw/>.

<sup>10</sup> In 2004, the Taiwanese Government planned to remove the old buildings from the Hua-Shan Arts District and made arrangements for the site to be redeveloped for a new museum. This has aroused a serious debate between artists and the government. The artists would like to keep the old winery in the belief that it is what makes the alternative space special and gives it so many possibilities. Furthermore, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) had already been built in 2000 to serve as the exhibition space for contemporary art. It seems, however, that the government would rather spend a huge amount of money on a brand new, but unnecessary, art museum than support artists, private galleries and artistic events. The final decision of the Taiwanese government about the future of the space has not yet been made and the artists will keep on fighting to save it.

<sup>11</sup> The area of the Kia-A-Thau Art Village was sold to the Kaohsiung Mass Rapid Transportation Company (MRT) by the Kaohsiung County Government. Some of the spaces have been removed and are now being replaced by the construction of the MRT. From 2007 when the MRT is expected to begin operating, the area will be occupied by modern railways and parking lots for the use of the numerous passengers. Today, there are still several artistic events happening in the Kia-A-Thau Art Village although the natural environment has already been damaged by the ongoing construction.



built in order to increase the benefits accruing to the Japanese economy from sugar production in the service of Japan's pursuit of economic imperialism. According to Huaeh Hua-Yuan's *History of Taiwan's Development* (1999), Japan intended to develop sugar cultivation for the following reason: '[a]fter occupying Taiwan, Japan emphasised the sugar industry as important for economic development, in order to increase Japanese capital investment in Taiwan and to decrease expenses of purchasing sugar from abroad'.<sup>12</sup> As to how Japan controlled the sugar market and production in Taiwan, Huaeh further argues that:

In 1905, the Governor-General in Taiwan announced Regulations of Banning Sugar Factories which included rules about capital assistance, materials protection, market control and new factory protection, and they excluded Taiwanese-owned factories from these official benefits and protection. [...] In 1912, the Governor-General in Taiwan declared a law to prevent the Taiwanese from organising their own sugar businesses and capital; in addition, their businesses (not only sugar businesses) had to be established under Japan's control in order to survive.<sup>13</sup>

During the period of Japanese colonisation between 1895 and 1945, the office of the Governor-General was established in order to control Taiwan and to make Taiwan a part of the empire of Japan. The Taiwanese were used as low-paid labourers and suffered the status of second-class citizens whilst Japan's development of the island was done merely in pursuit of its own benefit. The sugar factory came to represent and symbolise this un-balanced relationship and the history of colonisation. As Taiwan moved towards modernity, the old warehouse for storing goods and the accommodation for the

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<sup>12</sup> Huaeh, Hua-Yuan. *History of Taiwan's Development*. Taipei: Sanmin Publisher, 1999, p 141.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

factory's employees were replaced with up-to-date buildings.<sup>14</sup> In 1996, the Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society was founded in order to preserve the historical buildings, which were used as the Association's administrative offices and to house its documentary archive.

Many people who lived in the vicinity worked in this factory for most of their lives and under the suppression of the various colonisers, the people were influenced by a number of different cultures and languages in succession. When different forces occupied the area, these people needed to unlearn what had been engendered in their minds during the previous colonisation and needed to embrace the ideology of the new colonial power. However, the buildings, as symbols of the coloniser's violence and oppression, survive as expressions of the characteristics of political and cultural transference.

In *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1994), Homi Bhabha addresses colonial subjectivity and hybridisation by relating it to the discovery of a Bible translated into Hindi, which describes the influence exerted in India by the British by means of Christianity. In addressing the influence of British colonialism, Bhabha quotes from some conversations that took place during the journey of an Indian catechist and were recorded in *The Missionary Register* (1818):

'Pray who are all these people? And whence come they?' 'We are poor and lowly, and we read and love this book'. - 'What is that book?' 'The book of God!' – 'Let me look at it, if you please'. Anund, on opening the book, perceived it to be the Gospel of our Lord, translated into the

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<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, when the KMT arrived in Taiwan, they intended to establish architecture with the purpose of worshiping the 'gloriousness' of Chiang Kai-Shek and Sun Yat-Sen. Therefore, in order to set up other colonial symbols in Taiwan, the KMT tore down Japanese colonial architecture and designed its own, representing the new political power.

Hindoostanee Tongue, many copies of which seemed to be in the possession of the party: some were PRINTED, others WRITTEN by themselves from the printed ones.<sup>15</sup>

The discovery of the translated Bible, for Bhabha, is at once 'a moment of originality and authority'.<sup>16</sup> The discovery of this book resembles the discovery of colonial power and the book is representative of the colonial desire to implant the colonisers' religion and ideology. The discovery of the two factory buildings brings to mind Bhabha's arguments about the discovery of this book, since they both symbolise the coloniser's authority. In order to underline this point, Bhabha's perspective needs to be taken into account. He observed that 'the immediate vision of the book figures those ideological correlatives of the Western sign – empiricism, idealism, mimeticism, monoculturalism [...] – that sustain a tradition of English 'cultural' authority'.<sup>17</sup>

The establishment of these factory buildings implied not only the Japanese invasion of Taiwan's economy but also the embodiment in these two locations of Japan's cultural involvement. The themes that Bhabha has addressed concerning British colonial rule in India and the perspective that he takes on hybridity from India's experience of colonisation provide the Taiwanese with an angle from which to consider their own particular position in colonial history.

In the forms of the factory buildings and the translated Bible, colonial experience is made visible. According to Bhabha, when addressing the

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<sup>15</sup> See *The Missionary Register*. London: Church Missionary Society, January 1818, pp 18-19, cited in Bhabha (1994), op cit, p 146.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p 145.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p 150.

manifestations of colonisation, there is 'the more ambivalent, third choice: camouflage, mimicry, black skins/white masks'.<sup>18</sup> For Bhabha, a sense of hybridity appears when colonisation starts and he does not agree with the argument proposed by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). Fanon alleged that '[h]owever painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: [f]or [a] black man, there is only one destiny [a]nd it is white'.<sup>19</sup> Although Fanon's book is acknowledged to be the first publication to have addressed the subject of postcolonialism, postcolonial scholars emerging since the late 1990s, believe that there are no simple states of 'completely white' or 'completely black' but rather a condition of 'in-betweenness' that arises between colonisers and colonised. In order to respond to this argument, I continue to explore some of Bhabha's discussion in *Signs Taken for Wonders*.

Firstly, Bhabha suggests that 'the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference'.<sup>20</sup> For Bhabha, the ambivalence existing between the 'original' and 'authoritative' is the chief mark of the phenomenon of colonisation. Here, 'original' refers to the origins and traditions of the colonised, whilst 'authoritative' means those which are implanted by the colonisers. The factory buildings erected in these two locations symbolise the colonial presence and the effects of Japanese authority, which signifies the ambivalence that Taiwanese people had felt towards it since colonisation started. The Governor-General of Taiwan introduced Japanese culture,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p 172.

<sup>19</sup> Fanon, op cit, p 10.

<sup>20</sup> Bhabha (1994), op cit, p 153.

language and architecture to the island, in a similar way to that employed by the British to implant Christianity and the English language in India. The factory buildings served as the means by which the Japanese could insert their systems into Taiwan and thereby allowed the Japanese empire to develop the area for economic purposes. As a consequence of colonisation, differences become apparent between the original and the authoritative powers and the resultant hybrid appearance has to be found in order for the colonised object to survive.

People living around the factory buildings established a kind of mimicry in their adaptive form of life style, which was an ambivalent or hybrid condition intermediate between their origins and the authority. Moreover, new adaptations arose in these spaces when the people adjusted their lives and culture in order to survive. For example, they were forced to use Japanese as the official language whilst the Taiwanese language was still used at home or between friends, which resulted in the emergence of a Taiwanese-style Japanese created under colonial control.<sup>21</sup> In appearance, therefore, the Taiwanese mimicked the forms of Japan whilst the essence of being Taiwanese was still preserved while being hidden within their minds. In terms of ambivalence and mimicry, Jacques Lacan asserts in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1978) that:

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<sup>21</sup> Apart from the language, another example of hybridity can be found in the style of local inhabitants' houses. During Japanese colonisation, the Taiwanese tended to partly adapt the style of Japanese official buildings, known as 'Tropical Colonial Architecture'. This kind of architecture is itself a form of mimicry of the buildings built by the Dutch in South Asia and it contains a series of pillars and arches. Further information can be found in Lin, Ruei-Tai. *Introduction of Cultural Environment in Kia-A-Thau*. Kaohsiung: Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society, 2001, p 50.

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an *itself* that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of being mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.<sup>22</sup>

For Lacan, mimicry serves to harmonise the self and the other. It is mimicry that harmonises the essence of the original. The buildings of the wine and sugar factories are the buildings erected by the oppressor to dilute the consciousness of being Taiwanese during colonisation. Apart from accepting the presence of the buildings, the people of Taiwan were forced to rely on colonial industry and thus to embrace colonial influences in terms of culture and language, which created a kind of mimicry that harmonised their own ideology with that of the colonisers. In 1945, after Japan unconditionally surrendered at the end of the Second World War, Taiwan was returned to China according to the decision made by the Allies during the Cairo Conference in 1943. After fifty years of colonisation under Japanese imperialism, the Taiwanese had hybridised themselves into a state of Japanese-ness and this displacement was rendered visible by the warehouse buildings.

The factory buildings, as a signifier of colonial power, provided the local inhabitants with a regime governed by regulations and discipline, which transformed the origins of the colonised into a form of hybridity. Following Bhabha's argument, therefore, the colonised of this region wore a mask composed of mimicry and hybridity. The evidence does not support the

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<sup>22</sup> Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Jacques-Alain Miller (ed). Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1978, p 99.

absolute white-or-black argument proposed by Fanon but testifies instead to a mixture of elements derived from the indigenous local and previous colonial cultures. This phenomenon can be observed in the language, customs, culture and architecture of Taiwan that have been retained since the Japanese period.<sup>23</sup>

As 'hybridity' has already been used as a term to denote the state of cultural presentation deriving from colonisation, I now examine the definitions of this term and how it might be applied to the contemporary Taiwanese social environment. The word 'hybridity' is a derivative of the word 'hybrid'.<sup>24</sup> The dictionary definitions of 'hybrid' are 'the offspring of two plants or animals of different species or varieties' and 'a thing made by combining two different elements'.<sup>25</sup> In brief, hybridity results from what is mixed or combined, whether the term is used in biological or figurative senses. The arguments adduced previously indicate that the factory buildings became hybridised with their environment because of the different cultural and political involvements in their regions. The 'offspring' which those regions have created is constituted not only by the physical buildings themselves but also the abstract elements made up of language and culture.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha regularly employs the term 'hybridity' and one of its definitions is that:

[h]ybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that

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<sup>23</sup> For more details, see Lin, R. T., op cit.

<sup>24</sup> See Pearsall (ed), op cit, p 695.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rule of recognition.<sup>26</sup>

Following Bhabha's argument, the idea of hybridity for the Taiwanese is to bring into play their knowledge of the former power of the Japanese colonisers, from which a sense of recognition of themselves (as subjects) is created. In my view, the re-use of postcolonial buildings for this exhibition estranges the viewers from their previous knowledge of colonial binary orders and creates a new relationship between the present and the past, by which the concept of hybridity appears. I have argued that this show drew its power from the combination of colonial buildings (which have long and complex narratives), contemporary concepts and new interpretations of the meanings of art and belonging. What this signifies is that the show correlates the colonial memory, a sense of national identity and contemporary art aesthetics. Moreover, I am emphasising that the exhibition has demonstrated the fact that Taiwan's society is indeed experiencing hybridity, in the spheres of culture and ideology. A new understanding of identity, then, is produced when the solid binary system disappears and when the past authority has been denied. It follows, therefore, that the exhibition is a visualised form of interpretation of the social and political environment.

The re-use of colonial buildings as a strategy for declaring national identity has occurred in several developing cities, including cities in Taiwan, in the post-Second World War era. In his article, *Urbanism and the Dominance Equation* (1992), Nezar Alsayyad characterises the way in which the colonised

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<sup>26</sup> Bhabha (1994), op cit, p 162.



use colonial ideology and objects by asserting that:

When the people of the dominated, colonised societies started to rebel against this colonial world order (mainly in the first half of the twentieth century), they had little to cling to in their drive to establish their own sovereignty, and they were forced to use the ideology and terms of the existing colonial world, with its baggage of concepts like independence, national identity, and freedom. In the struggle for independence, the dominated people had to envision their new societies based on the terms of their former colonisers.<sup>27</sup>

The new interpretation of colonial architecture brings developing nations a sense of national identity in cases where the buildings physically represent both their colonial past and the new understanding that they have of themselves. Stuart Hall argues that identity is always blurred by stating that '[i]dentity is composed of more than one discourse, as composed always across the silences of the other, as written in and through ambivalence and desire'.<sup>28</sup> The use of the factory buildings as the location for the exhibition not only declared the power of Taiwanese women artists' collective efforts but also became the strategy by which to assert their national identity. According to Hall, identity is a vague concept and through the re-use of colonial buildings, a clearer image of national identity is presented by means of art.

It is widely recognised that people from the developing world are those who have experienced colonisation and who also started to seek their national identity on gaining their independence after the Second World War. The

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<sup>27</sup> Alsayyad, Nezar. 'Urbanism and the Dominance Equation' in Alsayyad, Nezar (ed). *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1992, p 19.

<sup>28</sup> Hall, Stuart. 'Old and New Identity, Old and New Ethnicities' in King, A. (ed), op cit, p 49.

Taiwanese are categorised in this group. During the post-martial law era, Taiwan has been considering its independence in terms of culture and nationalism and it has succeeded in separating itself from its previous coloniser, Japan. The use of the factory buildings embodies the dilemma confronting the Taiwanese in that they are forced to face their suppressed colonial history, whilst at the same time, coming to terms with their own subjectivity as the former objects of colonial subjugation. Alsayyad further asserts that in 'much of the "so-called" Third World today, societies are grappling with national identity. They face a dilemma over which parts of their colonial history to appropriate as part of their national identity'.<sup>29</sup> The factory buildings of the Hua-Shan Arts District and Kia-A-Thau Art Village symbolise both the invasion by the Japanese colonial power and the determination of the Taiwanese to deny and re-interpret Taiwan's past in order to find their national identity.

Since martial law was finally repealed in 1987, the Taiwanese have been very eager to construct as many modern buildings as possible, in terms of various physical facilities, in order to cut the ties with the colonial past, and to establish the authenticity and origins of their ethnic and cultural roots. The old buildings are associated with the violence of the imperialists and their re-use challenges dualism and the accepted binary positions. The Taiwanese have appropriated them in order to 'operate' these spaces differently so that the senses and flavours emanating from these buildings are no longer indicative of colonial production but are integrated with Taiwan's growing economy. In short, the Taiwanese want to reject the psychological imprint inherited from their colonial experience but they wish to embrace its economic and physical

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<sup>29</sup> Alsayyad, op cit, p 20.

legacy.

Bhabha's description of the colonised man refers to the situation of being hybridised and to the internal turmoil and struggle that arises from being split between the past state of authenticity and the present experience of oppression. This is the process of being hybridised and the disruption of the subject by the other. For the Taiwanese during and after Japanese colonisation, there were hardly any signs of pure Taiwanese tradition, especially in the regions where colonial buildings were erected and colonial economic systems were established. I see this exhibition as a physical manifestation of the notion of hybridity because it encompasses the location of the exhibits in the cross-cultural myth. Whilst Japanese-ness is inevitably an important element of this exhibition, one other interesting phenomenon is worth noting. All of the artists exhibited in this show have chosen Western forms of method to present their works, such as, for example, installation, photo-print and multi-media, which are derived from neither Japanese nor Chinese influences. This reveals the fact that in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, in addition to the previous colonisers, the West has become yet another source of imperial influence on the island.

### **Women Artists' Involvement**

A new understanding of authority and a sense of national identity emerged as Taiwan moved towards the post-martial law era. Taiwanese women, being inferior in their status to men according to Confucian philosophy, had experienced not only political colonisation but also a subaltern status as a result of patriarchal values. Some explanation of the Confucian influence,

imported by the Japanese, is necessary in order to demonstrate that the Taiwanese have adopted Confucianism not only from China but also from Japan. Regarding Confucianism's development in Japan, Chilla Bulbeck states in her 1998 book, *Re-orienting Western Feminisms*, that '[...] the Meiji (1868-1912) rulers adopted Chinese Confucianism's emphasis on women's obedience to husbands and seniors [...]'.<sup>30</sup> With respect to the limits imposed on women by Chinese Confucianism, an example given by Bulbeck is helpful:

[...] from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Neo-Confucianism, or the revival of Confucianism with its 'tenet that man is superior and woman is inferior', celebrated women who cut off their ears or killed themselves rather than face the shame of surviving rape or widowhood.<sup>31</sup>

Although several examples of the influence exerted by patriarchal Confucianism in Taiwan have been given in the introduction, I shall consider some arguments about patriarchy that Melissa Brown advances in *Is Taiwan Chinese?*. Brown discusses the way in which patriarchy determines a person's ancestral classification and observes that '[g]iven Han patriarchal practices, someone with a Han father and non-Han mother was historically classified as Han; someone with a Han mother and non-Han father was not'.<sup>32</sup> Brown further points out that 'Han families are patrilineal, patriarchal, property-holding units, typically run by a senior male member. These patricorporations are the foundation of a petty capitalist political economy which operates by exploiting the labour of females and immature males within

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<sup>30</sup> Bulbeck, op cit, p 27.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p 25.

<sup>32</sup> Brown (2004), op cit, p 26.

the family'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, apart from colonisation, Taiwanese women have also been discriminated against by the long-lasting patriarchal ideology in Taiwan's society. The subordinate status given to Taiwanese women is similar to that conferred on colonised people, therefore the exhibition, *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, provides aesthetic inputs to reveal the awakening power of womanhood in the post-martial law era.

In the essay *Gender and Race* (2006), which covers various arguments regarding identity and forms of oppression, Elizabeth Spelman suggests that 'there's sex and race and class; there's sexism and racism and classism'.<sup>34</sup> Taiwanese women experienced all three forms of oppression and were considered to have low status in the social, racial and gender spheres. Taiwanese women underwent and survived a 'double colonisation', having been submitted to two forms of domination: patriarchy and imperialism. In the exhibition, *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, Taiwanese women were both re-constructing their position in the binary system, augmented by the colonial past of the exhibition spaces, and concentrating the power of women artists in order to be seen and understood in a patriarchal society.

This exhibition project was proposed and largely administered by women; similar women's involvement in alternative spaces can be also found in the West. The idea of re-using old buildings and exhibiting in non-public museums started in the late 1960s in the West, emerging as a part of the early

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp 194-195.

<sup>34</sup> Spelman, Elizabeth V. 'Gender & Race' in Morgan, Sue (ed). *The Feminist History Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p 274.

feminist movements.<sup>35</sup> In the 1960s in the US, the fight for civil rights for women and the controversy about America's participation in the Vietnam War between 1959 and 1975 encouraged women artists to create art concerning 'politics, autobiography, sexuality, nature and history and mythologies, both personal and social'.<sup>36</sup> However, since the exposure given to women's art was not as great as it is now, the artists, and especially those who were at the margin, needed to seek alternative spaces for their shows. In the 1960s and 1970s, Western women artists promoted their projects in alternative spaces such as those at The Woman's Building in Los Angeles (1973-1991). In Taiwan, the development of Hua-Shan Arts District in 1997 echoed this trend.

Government systems, as part of the established order, could be described as symbols of masculinity, so women, being marginalised both culturally and ideologically, needed to seek new opportunities in order to be heard. For Taiwanese women, showing their work in these two spaces lent women's art a new concept of Taiwanese identity. This exhibition provided the artists and their audience with a chance to re-consider their history and, simultaneously, to understand their roles both as women and as Taiwanese.

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<sup>35</sup> Regarding the initial use of alternative spaces in the West, Sheila Pinkel asserts that '[t]he transgressive imagination [...] became the terrain for frontiers of meaning, even though in the 1960s artists had few places to exhibit these works'. Pinkel gives an example of the first (feminist) performance shown in alternative spaces by stating that '[i]n the late 1960s, Barbara T. Smith began doing performances in alternative spaces intertwining autobiography and sexuality, as a way to claim her right to her evolving erotic imagination'. See Pinkel, Sheila. 'Women, Body and Earth' in Malloy, Judy (ed). *Women, Art and Technology*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003, pp 35 and 37.

<sup>36</sup> See Pinkel, *ibid.*, p 35. Furthermore, it was not only in the artistic community that people intended to examine the issues listed in the text. There existed several social and political debates in America during that time. For example, Pinkel indicates that '[t]he social and political upheaval of the 1960s led to protests for free speech and against the Vietnam War, [...] national movements in support of civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, hippies and flower children'. *Ibid.*

Chang Hui-Lan spontaneously provided the Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society with a great amount of administrative support and was subsequently installed as the director of Kia-A-Thau Art Village. In order to promote public awareness of the Village, Chang first organised this show at the Hua-Shan Arts District, which is the first and largest government-funded alternative art space in Taiwan and had already gained a good reputation.<sup>37</sup> Both of these exhibition venues are colonial factory buildings but the Hua-Shan Arts District is located at the centre of Taipei whilst the Kia-A-Thau Art Village is on the outskirts of Kaohsiung. The cooperation between a well-known space in the north and a new space in the south permitted a successful strategy to be achieved for implementing the curatorial concepts.

Chang is based in Kaohsiung and the show was originally organised for the first group show of the Taiwanese Women's Art Association (TWAA), which was established on 23 January 2000 at the Hua-Shan Arts District, and whose members are mainly based in Taipei. According to the minutes of the TWAA's committee meeting held on 22 September 2001, the show *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, was funded by the National Cultural and Art Foundation, which provided 200,000 Taiwanese dollars (approximately £3,333), the Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society (KATCS), which gave 70,000 Taiwanese dollars (in the region of £1,166) and Ms Tsay Tzong-Fen, who donated 6,000 Taiwanese dollars (around £100).<sup>38</sup> The Association employed Mr Wong Jeng-Kai as an

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<sup>37</sup> As Taipei is the capital of Taiwan, it gathers the most important resources of the nation and has the advantage of being the first city for cultural and economic developments. Thus, the Hua-Shan Arts District has been one of the most popular topics of discussion in Taiwan's artistic community since its establishment in 1997. The cooperation between the District and the Kia-A-Thau Art Village has helped the Village to become well-known, especially since it is located in a rural area and is newly developed.

<sup>38</sup> The figures can be found in the minutes of the TWAA's committee meeting of 22 September

administrative assistant to help to organise the show.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the theoretical considerations, *Sweet and Sour Yeast* was curated with the aim of inviting women artists from the north, south and centre of Taiwan to participate and to present both in terms of aesthetics and their academic contribution. The following paragraph from the minutes proves this point:

This exhibition is curated to join creativity by women artists from the north to the south of Taiwan by the methodology of curating, art criticism and research. In terms of research, there will be some cooperation with the Graduate Institute of Comparative Literature at Fu Jen Catholic University.<sup>40</sup>

In order to increase the academic input into this show, a seminar, which was held at the Kia-A-Thau Art Village on 13 December 2001, was organised to discuss the exhibition. The people who were invited to the seminar included Chien Ying-Ying (Professor at the Graduate Institute of Comparative Literature at Fu Jen Catholic University), Lin Pey-Chwen (Chairperson of TWAA), Joan Stanley-Baker (Professor at the Institute of Art History and Art Criticism of Tainan National College of the Arts), Bettina Flitner (German feminist artist), Sabine Hagemann-Ünlüsoy (Director of the German Cultural Centre, Taipei), Jian Wen-Min (Director of the Digital Kaohsiung County Museum of Natural History), Shen Yi-Chun (President of Kaohsiung Xin Tang Primary School),<sup>41</sup>

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2001, held between 10.30am and 1.30pm in the meeting room of the Hua-Shan Arts District. The chair of this meeting was Lin Pey-Chwen who was also the chairperson of the Association.

<sup>39</sup> See the minutes. Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Kaohsiung Xin Tang Primary School was initially established under the Taiwan (Kia-A-Thau) Sugar Company in 1947 and was given to the government of Kaohsiung county in 1968. The word, Xin, has the meaning of 'being prosperous' whilst the word, Tang, refers to 'sugar'. The



Lin Ruei-Tai (President of the KATCS), Jiang Yao-Shian (Director of the KATCS) and Chen Sheng-Song (President of Kia-A-Thau Art Village).<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting to notice that most of the speakers invited to the seminar were from Kaohsiung and had local geographical connections with the Art Village. In addition, apart from the National Cultural and Art Foundation, it was the KATCS that sponsored the show and the artist who contributed some funding is also based in Kaohsiung. It was the curator's intention to make strategic use of the name of the well-known Hua-Shan Arts District and the show actually served mainly to help establish the reputation of the Kia-A-Thau Art Village.<sup>43</sup>

The curatorial concepts emphasised the personal characteristics of women artists, which include a fondness for gathering things, emotional expressiveness and a love of nature. In Western feminist writings, some feminists have argued that men and women exhibit different aesthetic impulses. For example, in *Woman as Artist* (1972), Judy Chicago argues that:

[Men] are brought up not to cry, not to express emotion and therefore they remain emotionally infantile. [...] Women, however, are brought up with a different orientation, toward feeling and away from abstract thought.

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school is located next to the Kia-A-Thau Art Village in the area of the old sugar factory. More information concerning this school can be found in its website: <http://163.16.17.80/singtang/>.

<sup>42</sup> The list of invited speakers can be found at Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society. *Sweet and Sour Yeast: a Sweet Conversation between Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory and Taipei Winery*. Exh. Cat., Kaohsiung, 2002, p 61.

<sup>43</sup> This exhibition was the first show to be held in the Art Village, thus it attracted many local sponsors and support from the surrounding region. Thanks to the efforts of the curator, artists and local/ national institutes, the Village had become the third alternative art space in Taiwan and this show was organised to make the space more visible.

Therefore, women often approach art-making more directly and see it as a vehicle of feeling.<sup>44</sup>

Women are more sensitive to small details of their environment apprehended through their five senses and are more willing to expose their feelings and emotions. Women, as 'others' (read: inferior), are often classified as being closer to nature, instinctual and fluid and they are often placed outside the centre of power. The relationship between men and women echoes that between colonisers and the colonised, which was addressed earlier in the text.

An example of the influence of Confucianism concerning the different views taken towards women and men can be found in the Chinese language. The written character for 'Ming' (明), meaning 'brightness' or 'enlightenment', comprises two ideographs, that of the sun on the left and the moon on the right. While discussing the indications that this character gives about the approach to the different gender characteristics, Erich Neumann asserts in *The Fear of the Feminine* (1994) that:

For men as for women, wholeness is attainable only when the united opposites day and night, above and below, patriarchal and matriarchal consciousness attain to the generativity peculiar to them and complete and fructify each other.<sup>45</sup>

For the Chinese, the sun refers to men whilst the moon stands for women. Accordingly, men are considered to be positive, full, bright and superior,

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<sup>44</sup> Judy Chicago 'Woman as Artist' in Robinson (ed), op cit, p 294.

<sup>45</sup> Neumann, Erich. *The Fear of the Feminine: and Other Essays on Feminine Psychology*. Translated from German by Boris Matthews, Esther Doughty, Eugene Rolfe and Michael Cullingworth. Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1994, p 118.

whereas, women are negative, incomplete, dark and inferior. In short, women are regarded as being the 'other' in relation to men and are situated on the darker, more negative side of the world order. The stereotypical images given of women are usually demeaning and Chinese-influenced societies such as that in Taiwan hold unbalanced views of gender, as addressed above. Thus, Taiwanese women tend to be treated as objects on the margins of the social structure and to share the fate of women from Taiwan's colonial past, which is to be controlled by another stronger power.

Another example which illustrates the effects of Chinese patriarchal ideology can be found in Confucian philosophy. The recorded opinion of Confucius on women is that '[i]t is only women and petty persons who are difficult to provide for. Drawing them close, they are immodest and keeping them at a distance, they complain'.<sup>46</sup> In addition to classical philosophy, modern Chinese thinkers also hold the same views towards women. To prove this statement, I would like to discuss one of the most influential and famous Chinese writers and critics of the twentieth century, Lu Xun and the views that he has expressed:

According to the ideas of present-day moralists who have stipulated the definition of chastity, generally speaking a chaste woman never remarries nor does she elope with another man after her husband has died. The sooner her husband dies and the more impoverished her family is, the more magnificent is her chastity. There are two more kinds of rigorously chaste women: the first one kills herself when her betrothed or husband dies, whether she has married him yet or not; the second one, when confronted by a rapist who will defile her, manages either to commit suicide or to have him take her life in the struggle to resist him.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ames, Roger T. and Henry Rosemont. *The Analects of Confucius: a Philosophical Translation*. New York: Ballantine, 1998, pp 17 and 25.

<sup>47</sup> Lu, Xun. *Complete Works of Lu Xun*. Beijing: People's Press, 1981, p 117.

The examples given above illustrate the severity of the attitude existing both in China and Taiwan of the male-controlled orders towards women. It is shocking to discover that it was not only in the distant past but at least until the last century that Confucius-influenced society continued to hold women in low esteem, just as Confucius and his followers had done in around 500 BC.

### **Art and Representation**

Having considered gender relationships and binarism, I now resume my appraisal of the show in terms of the artworks. This exhibition tended to be multi-sensory rather than merely visually stimulating, which meant that many of the artworks on display responded to the exhibition's location and explored a variety of ideas linked to time, space and history. The curatorial concepts and the exhibited works introduced ideas relating to haptic aesthetics. James Gibson points out that '[t]he word *haptic* comes from a Greek term meaning "able to lay hold of".<sup>48</sup> Although the term 'haptic' originally refers to the sense of touch, Gibson defines 'haptic system' as '[t]he sensibility of the individual to the world adjacent to his body by use of his body'.<sup>49</sup> The haptic system for Gibson refers to the whole gamut of sensory experiences obtained by the body, including sight, smell, taste and hearing, which can be controlled. David Prytherch and Bob Jerrard, who were post-doctoral fellows at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, maintain in their 2003 article, *Haptics, the Secret Senses; the Covert Nature of the Haptic Senses in Creative Tacit Skills*, that:

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<sup>48</sup> Gibson, James Jerome. *Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966, p 97.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Although vision is generally considered the most significant and dominant sense initially, a deeper practice analysis reveals that the haptic senses are at least as critical as vision, which appears to function primarily as a monitor of progress.<sup>50</sup>

Prytherch and Jerrard emphasise the importance of the other haptic senses, apart from the visual, including taste and smell, and claim that they are as critical as vision. The smells and tastes associated with the factory buildings, even though they were no longer produced there and had long since disappeared, inspired Chang to organise the show,. Therefore, I am proposing that the buildings' colonial history, their old style of architecture and the haptic senses that their products had once stimulated, are the dominant factors behind the visual exhibition held there, all of which encourage the audience to re-consider Taiwan's history and identity.

An investigation of some of the works exhibited is essential in order to amplify my previous discussion. Before my visual analyses of the selected works, I am briefly introducing how artworks were shown and installed in these two locations. Works exhibited in this show included two-dimensional paintings, photographs, three-dimensional installations and multi-media works [fig 34]. All of the works were shown in one major warehouse in Taipei, whilst in Kia-A-Thau, the participating artists had more choices in terms of the locations of exhibiting and installing their works inside or outside of two warehouses, in addition to some space between the warehouses and the old railway tracks.

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<sup>50</sup>This paper was delivered at the conference *Euro Haptics* which was co-hosted by Trinity College Dublin and Media Lab Europe, held between 6 and 9 July 2003. The essay can be found at Prytherch, David and Bob Jerrard. 'Haptics, the Secret Senses; the Covert Nature of the Haptic Senses in Creative Tacit Skills', <http://www.eurohaptics.vision.ee.ethz.ch/2003/10.pdf>, consulted on 19 September 2006.

For example, Lin Pey-Chwen's *Baby: Back to Nature* (2001) [fig 35-37] was installed both inside and outside of a warehouse in Kia-A-Thau. In other words, artists were given more choices when making decisions of how to present their works. In the following analyses, from the twenty-three artists involved in this event, I consider five women artists' works, which fit more closely to the concerns of the curatorial statements and my exploration of this show.

Lin Ping is one of the women artists who returned to Taiwan's artistic community in the early 1990s and who introduced feminist philosophy to Taiwanese society during the early post-martial law era. In order to engage with her chosen concepts, Lin Ping mainly used ready-made objects and installation, (a trend developed in the West), as her media and method of work. It should be noted here that the use of abandoned factory buildings has encouraged the trend towards installation in Taiwan. Apart from the alternative spaces used for this show, several art spaces which had been transformed from factory buildings abandoned by the railways were set up, including Stock 20 in Taichung Railway Station (2000-), the Art Site of Chia-Yi Railway Warehouse (2000-), Fangliao F3 Art Venue (2001-), the Art Site of Hsinchu Railway Warehouse (2003-) and the Art Village of Taitung Railway Warehouse (2004-).<sup>51</sup>

Firstly, I analyse Lin's work, *Interior* [fig 38 and fig 39], which is made up of

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<sup>51</sup> The alternative spaces listed in the text are abandoned factory buildings in railway stations and were transformed into artistic spaces under the policy of the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan. More information about these spaces can be found at: Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan, 'Plans for Art Villages of Railway Warehouses', [http://anrw.cro.cca.gov.tw/ch5/a\\_railwayart/mainframe.htm](http://anrw.cro.cca.gov.tw/ch5/a_railwayart/mainframe.htm), consulted on 24 October 2006.

several transparent plastic boards and lights. I have chosen this work to be the first example because the forms and methodology utilised closely echo the central concept of combining colonial history, people, buildings and geography. Most importantly, this work uses light as the key element to link haptic aesthetics.

Twenty-seven light boxes were hung randomly on the wall, mostly portrait, with a few landscape. Each box was connected by power leads, which were used to transfer the electricity to each light bulb. Heat, light and electricity were therefore linked, creating a network, reminiscent of a large damaged computer keyboard, suspended in the unlikely surroundings of an old and historical warehouse. Lin located symbols of biological cells and organisms on each semi-transparent board of the light boxes. Those symbols created by drawing or printing were the only recognisable figures in this piece and the light radiating from behind furnished these cells with light and heat, as signs of life. Warmth and heat, spreading out from the light boxes, reminded me of the process of wine brewing with yeast. This piece provided the audience with an unusual sensory experience, compared to other works, and this fits the curator's attempt to test how sensory experience (sweet and sour) inspires aesthetic creativity.

In this piece, Lin did not concern her work with issues directly related to the physical space and the concepts of postcoloniality; rather, to a certain extent, she associated her work with themes surrounding our living world and social issues. According to the artist's statement, her intention of creating this work was to reveal the micro-world where things shift and wander in order to live and

exist. Lin states that 'now is the time when minds and bodies are lost and isolated'.<sup>52</sup> 'Now' in the statement means the time when martial law was suspended and when Taiwan started to develop democracy for its own people after hundreds of years of colonisation. The new-found freedom from the Japanese and the Chinese Nationalist governments, however, brought disorder and chaos to the 'infant-like' society, which led people to distrust one another. This is the condition that the artist is describing in her statement about feelings of isolation and loss among bodies and minds. Through the presentation of her work, especially by employing the device of linking 'lights', which are often used in Buddhist temples to imply hope, Lin proposed to connect shifting elements together to create a sense of harmony among people. The connector between each light bulb and box evokes the link between the individual yeast culture and its networking nature.

The only foreign artist to participate in this event was Joan Pomero (a French woman artist living and working in Taiwan) and her works, *Quietly Exsanguinate* [fig 40 and fig 41] and *Steam-side* [fig 42 and fig 43], used fabric to incorporate her ideas of the exhibition place. In *Quietly Exsanguinate*, Pomero installed material shaped like a large flower on the floor and placed some purple and pink liquid in the centre, which was continually being absorbed, thereby creating a beautiful effect. The flower consists of four petals in the shape of a cross. It is clear that some sponges were hidden within the white cloth petals, through which the purple and pink liquid could be absorbed easily by the cloth.

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<sup>52</sup>Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society, op cit, p 26.



Time is an important element in this piece, as this work keeps changing its colour and appearance with the flow of time. The involvement with time in this piece has a link with the ideas of 'history' as history is made up of what has happened in the passing time flow. The gradual expansion of ink on the cloth records the fading of time, which connects this piece with the physical surrounding, the former colonial buildings. In addition, the work simultaneously bore a resemblance to the process of wine production, when yeast expands in size, and to a woman's sex organ during menstruation. As to *Steam-side*, the work consists of a long piece of white cloth hung from the wall and spreading onto the floor. It utilises soft fabric to imply the properties of softness, fluidity and flexibility. In this work, the artist sets out to revisit scenes from the past when the sugar and wine factories created a lot of steam during the production process. By this symbolic and metaphorical way of representing the past, Pomero helps the audience to recall the old days.

For Pomero, she believes that no individual is 'an island',<sup>53</sup> and s/he needs to have connections with other people. Through her works, she wanted to reveal the relationship among human beings and how they are interconnected with each other. Through her choice of soft and flexible fabric as the medium, her works manifested gentle and smooth properties of materials, which provided the audience with a different haptic experience than that found in Lin's work.

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<sup>53</sup> Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society, op cit, p 22. The quote derives from John Donne's (English, 1572-1631) famous saying and the original text is that '[a]ll mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language [...] No man is an island, entire of itself [...] any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind [...]'. Cited from Abrams, M. H and Stephen Greenblatt (eds). *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol 1. New York: Norton & Co., 1962, p 1107.

Having described Pomero's works, I need to examine some of the discussion about the issues surrounding womanliness in order to support my argument. An essential proposition is that the issue of womanliness belongs to the discourse of 'gender' rather than 'sex'. Gerda Siann addresses the differences between gender and sex in *Gender, Sex and Sexuality* (1994):

**Sex** is defined as the biological differences between males and females and **gender** is the manner in which culture defines and constrains these differences; not only differences in the manner in which women, in general, live their lives compared to men in general, but also differences in the manner in which individuals view both themselves and others [...].<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the properties of 'womanliness' are categorised as issues of gender. When stating that some characteristic features of womanliness are that women are by nature soft, fluid and changing, the argument is based on the determination of what constitutes women's gender compared to that of men, who are regarded as 'tending towards domination, violence and over-rationality'.<sup>55</sup> The view that women and men are essentially different in their nature has deep historic roots in both Western and Non-western literature, philosophy and ideology. Although I have addressed gender differences in the preceding text, some arguments expressed in the West in the nineteenth century should also be borne in mind. Siann takes issue with Sigmund Freud's approach to gender by stating that:

The differences that [Freud] identified reflected the echo[e]s of nineteenth century Europe – women were by nature more passive than men and thus

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<sup>54</sup> Siann, Gerda. *Gender, Sex and Sexuality: Contemporary Psychological Perspectives*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1994, p 3.

<sup>55</sup> The description is given by Gerda Siann. *Ibid.*, p 7.

less well suited to life outside the family circle. Men, on the other hand, were by nature active and more suited to dealing with the world outside the family.<sup>56</sup>

Even though I do not agree with Siann's arguments above, her analyses outline the stereotypical divisions of differences among men and women. Women have different characteristics from men, which are developed not only by social expectations of gender (according to Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*) but also as a result of human nature (Freud's arguments). There is 'normalised' femininity in women's works and Pomero's works reveal this characteristic, which can be seen in *Quietly Exsanguinate* and *Steam-side*. These works reveal a sense of beauty and elegance, which is at variance with the sense of struggle and pain that is evident in the work of some feminist artists in the West. The artists who participated in this show did not express the suffering of women in their subaltern status in an 'ugly' way but simply and gently exposed women's strength and ability to transform colonial architecture for their aesthetic and political purposes. The women artists' involvement in these spaces led them to create objects which respond to the environmental and historical atmosphere and at the same time express their ideas of womanliness, based on an essential understanding of gender differences. Pomero uses objects and installation to indicate femininity, whilst Chou Wen-Li (the next artist to be discussed) uses the skills of photography to represent women's bodies, by which Chou mainly focuses on the themes of body and senses.

Chou exhibited a photographic print, *Visual Taste* [fig 44] which was one of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

only two two-dimensional works in the show. In her artist's statement, Chou argued that 'when transforming the senses of smell and taste into a form of sight, one creates a series of imagination and fantasy on which people can gaze to fulfil their desire'.<sup>57</sup> For the artist, seeing a woman's body was like tasting sweet and sour flavours, the tastes of which reminded her of the image of women's breasts. The breasts depicted in the printed photograph are shown in pink, in contrast to the dark background, and the nipples are covered with coloured squares. The way in which the photograph was taken was similar to the effect of an X-ray and was shown in a long horizontal piece of paper. Chou's use of these images alludes to the fact that women have been regarded as objects to be seen and watched.

The method of Chou's work responded to the challenge issued by the feminist artists of the 1970s, who intended to reclaim female bodies for women by representing them in their works. Chou claimed that enjoying sweet and sour flavours is similar to viewing women's breasts. Feminist artists who have used the body as the medium for announcing their feminist arguments include Hannah Wilke with her poses and performances for the camera (*S.O.S. Starification Object Series*, 1974-1982) and Cindy Sherman's performances of deconstructing women's bodies (*Complete Untitled Film Stills*, 1977-1980).

Chou's intention to unveil women's breasts during the exhibition deconstructed the idea that 'the nude is for pornography'. The praise for women's breasts responded to Joanna Frueh's statements in *The Body through Women's Eyes* (1994) that '[f]eminist artists transformed the female nude, and in so doing

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<sup>57</sup> Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society, op cit, p 43.

became “cunt-positive”.<sup>58</sup> For the artist, presenting breasts is done not only to transform women’s bodies into the subject but also to connect people’s sense of taste with vision. Since this exhibition is about a women’s gathering, the idea of using a sensitive topic from a woman’s body is to respond to the curatorial nature of this show and to visualise Chou’s imagining having the tastes of sweet and sour flavours. As I have addressed in the Introduction, people living in a more rural area (i.e. Kia-A-Thau) are more conservative than those in the cities, so this piece is the interface through which Chou challenges the traditional perception of a woman’s body. By enlarging the size of the breasts, the intention to deconstruct the viewers’ discernment of a woman’s body is conducted. The breasts shown in an indirect way in this piece become the means by which Chou refashions the audience’s views towards a woman’s body and what can be identified as art instead of pornography. Ultimately, this work creates complex conditions of mixed feelings, which can be described in a Chinese proverb, *Suan Tian Ku La* (sour, sweet, bitter and spicy).

The other artist who used a photographic print as her medium is the curator, Chang Hui-Lan. In *Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory in the Hua-Shan Winery* [fig 45 and fig 46], Chang showed a photograph of the Sugar Factory in the Hua-Shan Winery, in which she tried to juxtapose one space with another in a single image in order to stimulate the audience’s sense of humour. In her statement, Chang proposed that ‘the photography linked the two spaces and caught the frozen moment at one space which was presented at the other by the skill of

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<sup>58</sup> Frueh, Joanna. ‘The Body through women’s Eyes’ in Broude, Norma and Mary D Garrard (eds). *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, Publisher, 1994, p 192.

photography. The frozen and “dead” moment therefore became alive’.<sup>59</sup> Her present involvement in the old spaces inspired the artist to make a light-hearted contrast between the two locations. For Chang, heavy and serious deliberations about colonial history were not the motif of her work. On the contrary, she intended to make works simply about the physical objects, i.e. the factory buildings themselves. For Chang, her response to the idea of ‘connection’ was to present one space inside the other, playing with the colonial spaces for the sake of fun and joy. Furthermore, she inverted the real situation by showing an image of the wine factory inside the sugar factory.

### **Postcoloniality, Gender and Visual Art**

Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff state that ‘[r]acist and sexist attitudes characterise the same mentality. They sometimes appear in the same passage and are unconsciously paired’.<sup>60</sup> Taiwanese women have experienced both racism and sexism, and sexual discrimination is still deeply rooted in many people’s values and lives. However, bearing in mind that, as Virginia Woolf pointed out, ‘[o]ne cannot grow fine flowers in a thin soil’,<sup>61</sup> it is clear that the subaltern status of Taiwanese women’s global situation has enriched their essential characteristics and therefore their artistic presentation. In other words, it is apparent that their complicated history has in fact provided a rich and fertile artistic scene, rather than a barren one, as might have been imagined. It is evident that the exhibition, *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, has de-constructed Taiwan’s colonial history by using buildings established by its

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<sup>59</sup> Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society, op cit, p 40.

<sup>60</sup> Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff, ‘Art Hysterical Notions of Progress and Culture’ in Robinson (ed), op cit, p 173.

<sup>61</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *Women and Writing*. London: Women’s Press, 1979, p 54. Also cited in Minha, Trinh T. (1989), op cit, p 7.

colonisers. In addition, the gathering of women artists demonstrated the fact that women, although considered to be the subaltern part and fulfilling subordinate roles in Taiwanese society, can essentially use their differences to develop their own identity. 'Sweet and sour yeast' therefore denotes not only the food ingredients physically used in these factories but serves as an important symbolic agent for the Taiwanese to seek their gender and national identities.

In this exhibition, sensory experiences provided the interface for Taiwanese women artists to address gender identities and this inspired me to explore the discourses of their political and historical arguments via visual art. With the increasing influence of globalisation on the island, the desire to seek a Taiwanese identity has become even more critical. The show, *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, is an attempt to configure Taiwan's identity strategically by re-interpreting colonial buildings and, although this was not a specific intention of the curatorial project, it did reflect Taiwan's desire to seek its own identity, especially in the globalised world environment. Taiwanese women artists living and working in this society at this time needed to re-consider their locations in terms of traditional and modern values and pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. The priorities and projects that occupy curators and artists confronting the twenty-first century have become to a large extent exhibitions such as this one, which was concerned with postcolonial and feminist themes in order to bring these issues from marginalised locations, to the attention of the wider artistic and academic community.

As already addressed, this show was organised specifically to promote the

new art space, the Kia-A-Thau Art Village, and therefore the reactions from the local communities in the Kia-A-Thau region and the after-event responses to this project are worth investigating. After the occurrence of *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, several exhibitions and events were immediately organised, following the method of adopting its cultural heritage (i.e. the former sugary industry) as the means to develop its unique local characteristics. These events include the selection of the artists-in-residence scheme between late 2001 and 2002, the *Art Festival of Air Raid Shelters in Kia-A-Thau* in March 2002 [fig 47 and fig 48] and the 2<sup>nd</sup> *World Art Collective* (performance festival) in April 2002 [fig 49-51].<sup>62</sup>

After the staging of *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, the various cultural events, mentioned above, themselves resemble the power of yeast, connecting with each other in order to present a sense of local identity through cultural creativity surrounding the theme of the previous sugar industry. In Kia-A-Thau, the succession of cultural events have been held with enthusiastic support from the local communities, evidence of which can be seen from the local inhabitants' active engagement with the events, in terms of visiting the exhibitions, participating in the performances and workshops, all of which are free and fully sponsored by the local government, the Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society and the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan. The avid involvement in the cultural events in this area demonstrates local people's consciousness for cherishing this unique colonial heritage from the Japanese period, which has

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<sup>62</sup> The artist-in-residence scheme later became an ongoing project which invites artists to live and work in the Kia-A-Thau Art Village. For more information regarding this scheme and the other two events mentioned in the text, see Kia-A-Thau Cultural Society. *Special Volume for Events at the Kia-A-Thau Art Village*. Exh. Cat., Kaohsiung, 2002.



developed into a kind of local identity. Indeed, *Sweet and Sour Yeast* acts as an agent that motivates a new interpretation of local people's identity in terms of how they see their position in the physical colonial environment. Furthermore, I demonstrate that contemporary Taiwanese culture can be viewed via the re-consideration of physical colonial space and that Taiwanese presence is hybridised between colonial heritage and contemporary ideology, which can even be seen in a local community, such as Kia-A-Thau.

## 4

### **Micro Space: *BuBaoFu* (2003)**

In this chapter, I address the notion that ‘fabric’, as a valid material, is being politicised as a modern artistic material for contemporary Taiwanese women artists. It has only recently been explored by contemporary Taiwanese women artists and recognised by Taiwanese art critics and art historians. However, whilst fabric art, an aspect of colonial heritage from both the Chinese Han and Japanese colonisation, has been practiced on the island for hundreds of years, this particular medium was only first used as a curatorial theme for a women’s group exhibition held at a government-funded gallery as recently as 2003.<sup>1</sup> The show was entitled, *BuBaoFu*, curated by Lin Ping and was held at the alternative space, Stock 20, which dates from the 1930s. It was built during the Japanese colonial period and was originally a warehouse used to store goods at the Taichung railway station [fig 52 and fig 53].<sup>2</sup>

Having addressed the impact of Japan’s colonisation on visual presentation in the previous chapter, I should investigate how fabric art utilises a cultural heritage in a way that hybridises Taiwanese women’s artistic creation. The concepts of this chapter follow the route mapped-out in the previous chapter, to address the ambivalence of contemporary Taiwanese culture and art hybridised by its colonial history. In this chapter, the colonial subjectivity includes Chinese Han and later Japanese fabric heritage, both of which

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<sup>1</sup> Before the show *BuBaoFu* was held in May 2003, there were several group and solo exhibitions, which were also organised based on the use of the material, fabric, but *BuBaoFu* was the first event that combined the issue of gender and fabric as a curatorial theme.

<sup>2</sup> For further details regarding this space, see the database of the National Cultural and Arts Foundation, [http://www.ncafro.org.tw/news/index\\_news.asp?ser\\_no=197](http://www.ncafro.org.tw/news/index_news.asp?ser_no=197), consulted on 10 April 2007.

become key elements contributing to the diversity of contemporary Taiwanese women's art practice, and to the development of Taiwan's cultural identity.

Before analysing *BuBaoFu*, I explore how the concept of femininity has been re-positioned in fabric art in contemporary Western art, from which I have found comparisons between the development of Taiwanese and Western women's fabric art. Furthermore, I explore the relationship between fabric and femininity, and the concepts of 'micro space', proposed by Lin to indicate 'women's domestic space'.

### **Colonial Heritage and Fabric Art**

For the sake of clarity, a simple definition of fabric is as follows:

Fabric - material produced by weaving or knitting textile fibres; cloth<sup>3</sup>

An informal and more inclusive definition of fabric suggests that it can be understood as 'a thin, flexible sheet of material with sufficient strength and tear resistance (especially when wet) for clothing, interior fabrics, and other protective, useful, and decorative functions'.<sup>4</sup> 'Fabric art' is understood as artworks which are related to fabric, including embroidery, weaving, knitting, needlework or cloth. Since the 1970s, the variety of fabric art has changed its forms and it has begun to be represented in large pieces, such as installation around the themes including emotions, sexuality and narratives.<sup>5</sup> Fabric art, as a form of art rather than for purely domestic purposes, has become more

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<sup>3</sup> Pearsall (ed), op cit, p 507.

<sup>4</sup> Humphries, Mary. *Fabric Reference*. New Jersey: Upper Saddle River, 2004, p 6.

<sup>5</sup> See Schoeser, Mary. *World Textiles: a Concise History*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2003, pp 202-213.

comprehensive and multiple.

Before looking at the relationship between colonial heritage and fabric art in Taiwan, it is interesting to trace the origin of fabric art and how it has been developing and changing in human history. Lanto Synge argues that the earliest piece of needlework came about as a result of the human need for warm clothes, stating that '[t]he earliest needlework was of a plain, practical nature, done with strong fibrous materials such as hair, to join skins and furs for clothing, and embroidery was used to strengthen parts subject to greater wear'.<sup>6</sup> Having fulfilled the basic need to produce warmth and protection for the skin, decorative arts in fabric gradually emerge and become a feature of people's lives and religions. It is only within recent decades that fabric art has been given a place in 'fine art' rather than simply being defined as a 'craft'. The division between these two different functions of fabric lies in whether it is used in a political context (as 'fine art') or in a domestic context (as 'craft').

In various kinds of fabric art, I would particularly like to consider the change in attitudes towards embroidery as it has been widely used in contemporary Chinese fabric art, (as for example, the case of lotus shoes, which are a powerful signifier of women's suppression in Han culture, a topic which will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter). Nearly every race and culture has its own kinds of traditional embroidery which is predominantly produced and maintained by the women. Thus, when investigating fabric art, we cannot ignore the issues of femininity and the debates around whether embroidery is

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<sup>6</sup> Synge, Lanto. *Art of Embroidery: History of Style and Technique*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2001, p 13.

an art or a craft. Rozsika Parker proposes that embroidery has been viewed as a sign of femininity by stating in *The Subversive Stitch* (1984) that:

[E]mbroidery was supposed to signify femininity – docility, obedience, love of home, and a life without work – it showed the embroiderer to be a deserving, worthy wife and mother. Thus the art [embroidery] played a crucial part in maintaining the class position of the household, displaying the value of a man's wife and the condition of his economic circumstances.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the fact that China, Japan, India and several other cultures have strong traditions of fabric art, to demonstrate the relationship between femininity and fabric art, I have specifically chosen Britain as an example, where there has been a long history of embroidery since as early as the mediaeval period.<sup>8</sup> Until the twentieth century in England, women's fabric works provided beauty and comfort for the domestic environment, demonstrating their love and devotion towards their husbands and to ensure the identity of femininity. According to Parker, the range of twentieth-century embroidery is enormous and it is practiced professionally by artists, dressmakers, embroiderers, teachers, and by millions of women as a 'leisure art'.<sup>9</sup> Parker further asserts that 'the twentieth century [...] accepted embroidery as evidence of the naturalness of femininity'.<sup>10</sup> Another example

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<sup>7</sup> Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: The Women's Press Limited, 1984, p 11.

<sup>8</sup> The reason why I chose Britain as an example to address the concepts of femininity and embroidery is that Britain has the tradition of producing high quality embroidery for religious purposes and to serve the royal family and the upper classes. One piece of evidence to support my selection is that 'one of England's greatest cultural achievements and contributions to world art has been her production of superb ecclesiastical vestments, particularly between 1250 and 1350'. See Synge, op cit, p 40. Moreover, it is interesting to make some comparison of the development of fabric art between Taiwan and Britain where I am currently based for my PhD research.

<sup>9</sup> See Parker, R., op cit, p 189.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

defining the connection between fabric art and women can be found in British educational policy. In Britain, after the Education Act of 1902, the curriculum for all girls in secondary school included needlework, while boys did woodwork.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the class division characterised the attitudes of girls' fabric works. For girls who were born into working-class families, needlework was connected to domestic work in preparation for their future as wives, mothers or domestic servants; for those of the middle class, needlework was increasingly taught as an art, following the principles established by the Glasgow School of Art.<sup>12</sup> Fabric handiworks played a significant role in women's lives, and the skill would be taught not only by mothers but also in schools. Moreover, society in general placed great emphasis on embroidery as a social necessity and one of the signs of being a good woman was being good at embroidery, either as a daughter, a mother or a wife.

When the Women's Movement started in the 1970s, the way in which women looked at embroidery changed. Parker explains this phenomenon by looking at the artist, Kate Walker, (who has employed embroidery in a fine art and feminist context in England since the early 1970s), and records Walker's statement about embroidery in which she asserted that:

I have never worried that embroidery's association with femininity, sweetness, passivity and obedience may subvert my feminist intention. Femininity and sweetness are part of women's strength. Passivity and obedience, moreover, are the very opposites of the qualities necessary to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p 188.

<sup>12</sup> In *The Subversive Stitch*, Parker addresses the fact that Ann Macbeth, who was in charge of classes for the Glasgow School of Art, developed a way of teaching fabric art and it still forms the basis of contemporary embroidery instruction in school education in Britain. Parker, R., op cit, pp 186-188.

make a sustained effort in needlework. What's required are physical and mental skills, fine aesthetic judgement in colour, texture and composition; patience during long training; and assertive individuality of design (and consequent disobedience of aesthetic convention). Quiet strength need not be mistaken for useless vulnerability.<sup>13</sup>

Kate Walker is a feminist, who determined not to reject femininity, but to remove the negative connotations of it. Lin Ping keeps a similar perspective when looking at fabric art and with this positive view towards fabric creation, the show was mounted to praise the 'strength' of femininity. Before moving on to further argument, I shall explore the term 'femininity' and how it has been addressed by feminists and how it is related to embroidery.

The term, femininity, is defined as 'a set of rules governing female behaviour and appearance, the ultimate aim of which is to make women conform to a male ideal of sexual attractiveness'.<sup>14</sup> This definition is constructed based on one of Simone de Beauvoir's well-known aphorisms: one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. Therefore, females (biologically defined) are not necessarily connected to femininity and the ideas of women (socially constructed). Marxist feminists also contribute their views toward femininity and regard its ideas as the product of women's oppression from the family and from patriarchal ideology. Parker argues how 'family' inferiorises women defining them as in the working class. She asserts that '[t]he family was identified as the place where the "inferiorised psychology" of women was reproduced and the social and economic exploitation of women as wives and

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<sup>13</sup> See Parker, *ibid.*, p 207.

<sup>14</sup> See Gamble, *op cit*, p 230.

mothers legitimised'.<sup>15</sup> As a result, women's embroidery has been viewed merely as a sign of femininity and as a means to contribute to domestic services for their husbands and children.

Furthermore, embroidery used to be produced by disadvantaged women in British history from the end of the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. Embroidery not only signifies femininity but also refers to women's work, as craft, as opposed to fine art, (read: men's work). Fabric work was even hierarchically categorised as craft, which was less valuable than painting and sculpture – again, in other words, men's art. Apart from Walker's positive statement confirming the strength and value of embroidery in the 1970s, Parker also describes how embroidery was given new meanings and different perspectives by hippies in the 1960s, stating that:

For the hippy era, embroidery symbolised love, peace, colour, personal life and rejection of materialism. [...] For men who embroidered, and wore embroidery, it signified the taking-up of femininity and enjoying it. [...] For men, long hair and embroidered clothing constituted a rebellious gesture against a hierarchical, puritanical, masculine establishment.<sup>16</sup>

During the hippy period, embroidery was categorised as a sign of individuality and freedom, which changed the traditional interpretation of needlework. Embroidery was not only recognised as an expression of femininity but was given political meaning to declare one's will to resist institutional ideologies.

The landmark feminist art project that carried so-called crafts into the heart of

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<sup>15</sup> Parker, R., op cit, p 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p 204.



the fine art world was *The Dinner Party*, which was first exhibited at the San Francisco Art Museum in 1979. It was conceived by Judy Chicago and was performed by more than four hundred women and men. On an equilateral triangular table, there were arranged thirty-nine place settings, each commemorating a particular goddess or woman in Western history. Each setting included a goblet, cutlery and a china plate, which represented a symbol-laden portrait of a mythical, legendary or historical woman. The plates were placed on embroidery that celebrated traditional women's crafts. Chicago, describing the fabric work in *The Dinner Party*, notes that:

We examined the history of needlework – as it is reflected in textiles and costumes, sculptures, myths and legends and archaeological evidence – from the point of view of what these revealed about women, the quality of their lives and their relationship to needlework.<sup>17</sup>

Since the celebration of embroidery in *The Dinner Party*, and the division between 'home and work' or 'craft and art' have become more challenging, there have been more various kinds of contemporary fabric art being created. The revolution to re-value needlework has been happening in the West since the 1970s, but it was not until the late 1990s that Taiwanese women artists caught up with this trend.

Apart from the fact that the aboriginal Taiwanese are skilful in fabric works which forms an important function of decoration in their lives, the Han is also a group which has viewed fabric art an essential part of their culture. Since the Han immigrated to the island in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan's fabric work has been

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<sup>17</sup> Chicago, Judy. *Embroidering our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework*. New York: Anchor Press Doubleday, 1980, p 24.

viewed as an important kind of feminine and domestic women's handiwork. According to Chang Mei-Yun, who is the director of the International Embroidery Research and Development Centre in Tainan,<sup>18</sup> her research has shown that embroidery was already well-developed in Taiwan by 1622, but its subsequent colonial history has brought the island many new embroidery styles. In his well-known *General History of Taiwan* (1920), Lien Heng describes how:

Women in Taiwan don't weave much, but are fond of embroidery. The quality of their embroidery is very fine and delicate, almost surpassing that of Hunan and Jiangsu [provinces]. Ladies of note have a high regard for the quality of Taiwanese women's work. [...] Women in Tainan are especially good at embroidering flowers and plants.<sup>19</sup>

Inevitably, Taiwan has been greatly influenced by its previous links with China. The Chinese Confucian ethics have placed great emphasis on needlework skills, as the followers of Confucius believe that '[t]he ideal woman was known not for her beauty or appearance but for her "womanly work" (nügong), which could mean mending a sock, sewing a garment, spinning thread, weaving cotton cloth [...] and shoe-making'.<sup>20</sup> Thus, *n ü gong* (read: women's handiwork) is seen as more important than their appearance and their skills of

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<sup>18</sup> This centre was established as an educational institute within the Tainan University of Technology in 2002 and has collections of 1,593 kinds of embroidery stitches. The centre aims to teach and maintain traditional embroidery stitches and also to identify embroidery skills from the aboriginal Taiwanese. The other educational institute for studying and researching fabric art in Taiwan is the Graduate Institute of Applied Arts – Fibre Programme, based in the National Tainan University of the Arts, established in 1996. Their students and staff members have regularly exhibited their fabric works in Taiwan since the mid 1990s. Chang's argument concerning Taiwan's embroidery history in the 17<sup>th</sup> century can be found in Cheng, Zoe. 'A Stitch in Time' in *Taiwan Review*, Vol 157, No 3, March 2007, pp 48-53.

<sup>19</sup> Lien, Heng. *General History of Taiwan*, <http://ef.cdpa.nsysu.edu.tw/ccw/02/taiwan3.htm>, consulted on 17 April 2007. Also in Cheng, Z, *ibid*. I need to explain that Hunan and Jiangsu provinces are considered as the most influential regions for the fabric industry in China.

<sup>20</sup> Ko, Dorothy. *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001, p 79.

*nügong* are understood merely for the sake of domestic purposes, as ‘crafts’ and were signified as femininity. Confucian ideology towards women’s needlework is similar to that in the West.

Before addressing how the Taiwanese have developed a hybridised form which distinguishes themselves from the original colonial authority (the Chinese, and later the Japanese fabric heritage), I would like to investigate how fabric work has been signified as a symbol of inferiority and domestic production for women in Confucius-influenced society, and how the discourse of gender has been involved in this argument. In *Confucianism and Women* (2006), Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee argues how different expectations of work are given in terms of gender by asserting that:

Having a proper distinction between genders was what separated the Han from its neighbouring barbarians. [...] In the traditional account, the gender division of labour is defined in terms of the idea of *nangeng nuzhi*, that is, man ploughs and woman weaves.<sup>21</sup>

Confucius (551-479 BC) emphasised different rules that different genders and classes should obey.<sup>22</sup> For example, Rosenlee further details how, in ancient Chinese history, different jobs symbolically applied to different genders. She asserts that:

The imperial annual sacrificial ceremony in which the emperor’s ritual ploughing in the fields during the spring is paired with the empress’s symbolic act of tending silkworms reflects this traditional account of the

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<sup>21</sup> Rosenlee, Li-Hsiang Lisa. *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, p 80.

<sup>22</sup> Ames and Rosemont, op cit, p 1.

gender division of labour.<sup>23</sup>

Since proper gender distinction is viewed as a sign of civilisation in Confucianism, the differentiation between men and women determines their different jobs, which they are expected to perform as a norm and as being civilised.<sup>24</sup> Fabric works are thus considered to be women's labour in Confucianism-influenced societies including not only China but also Korea, Japan and Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the idea that women are categorised to produce fabric works has been implanted in Taiwan's society since the Han's emigration to the island, as well as during Japan's colonisation.

With regard to Japanese influence on Taiwan's fabric art, Chang Mei-Yun, a Taiwanese embroiderer educated in Japan, has conducted some important research which was published in 1995 in her book, *Jen Sin Jen Ching: Art of Embroidery*. Chang argues that Japan, as a nation, is fond of women's handiworks, especially using embroidery for clothes, socks, handbags, handkerchiefs, scarves, etc, and that the Japanese policy to Japanese Taiwan has helped the development of fabric art on the island.<sup>26</sup> She explains that 'in

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<sup>23</sup> Rosenlee, op cit, p 80.

<sup>24</sup> In order to explain the argument that 'gender distinction is viewed as a sign of civilisation for Confucianism', it is worth looking at some length at how Rosenlee interprets Confucian concepts of *li* (read: politeness):

*Li*, as a means to differentiate, to draw boundaries, is then understood as originating in the need for social division of labour in order to achieve social harmony and good governing. *Li* holds the key to social and political cohesion because *li* is a body of normative expressions and institutions that defines as well as reflects one's unequal yet reciprocal social status and kinship role in relation to others. [...] In short, the proper distinction between genders is an integral part of good governing, and hence is a defining feature of civilised human society as opposed to the primitive mode of life that makes no distinctions among the unequals.

Rosenlee, op cit, pp 75-77.

<sup>25</sup> Details of the regions which have been influenced by Confucian philosophy, can be found in Ames and Rosemont, op cit, p 1.

<sup>26</sup> Chang, Mei-Yun. *Jen Sin Jen Ching: Art of Embroidery*. Hsinchu Cultural Centre, 1994, p

Taiwan's schools today, skills of traditional Japanese embroidery are still taught in "home education" classes'.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, with Taiwan's colonial heritage and Confucian ideology, Taiwanese women's fabric arts, including stitching and sewing, have kept the traditional Chinese and Japanese custom and style alive. On important holidays or occasions, women would wear a special scarf they have made themselves in order to show their faith and love towards their partners or husbands. Girls would be taught to make their own wedding dresses, clothes and shoes when they were very young. In addition, until their weddings, these handiworks were very private and secret and were only shown and shared with their mothers and grandmothers.<sup>28</sup> The most popular subjects for their fabric works were dragons, the phoenix, birds and flowers, all of which are seen as symbols of good luck and prosperity.

Thus, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women's handiworks have been considered to be part of the cultural and colonial heritage of the island and even during the KMT's period, several institutes which support and promote fabric handiworks and art were established on the island. For example, the Taiwan Province Handiwork Research Institute was established in 1973, constituting the first governmental research organisation for professional fabric art. In 1990, The Museum of Weaving and Knitting Handicraft, the only museum for handicraft, was established in Taichung, with the aim to collect, research and publish works and events about fabric. In 1992, the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan initially organised the 'Folk Craft

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Embroidery and needlework as preparation for women's wedding ceremonies were viewed as a secret before weddings. See National Taiwan Craft Research Institute, <http://www.ntcri.gov.tw>, consulted on 20 March 2007.

Awards', which was later called the 'Traditional Craft Awards' (1998-2000) and the 'National Craft Awards' (2001-present).<sup>29</sup> All of these competitions, which include a session for fabric works, focusing on contemporary craft creation, aim to hybridise traditional and contemporary concepts of needlework and to indicate the ideas of Taiwan's cultural identity.<sup>30</sup> The institutes and awards listed above manifest the fact that Taiwan's officials intend to seek contemporary fabric works which demonstrate Taiwan's hybridised culture, through which a sense of national identity is stimulated via a new understanding of colonial heritage. Women artists, not only those whose works combine traditional Han embroidery skills with modern Taiwanese cultural symbols, but also those who tend to be totally westernised, were all invited to participate in the exhibition, *BuBaoFu*. I argue how their artworks signify the characteristics of hybridised culture and layered cultural representation in Taiwan.

### ***BuBaoFu***

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The exhibition title, *BuBaoFu*, suggests two aspects that the curator, Lin Ping, wishes to illustrate. One is to evaluate fabric as an artistic material; the other is to discuss the abstract space that has limited Taiwanese women's daily lives

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<sup>29</sup> More details about these institutes and awards can be found in Chen, Jing-Lin. *The Prominent Categories of Taiwanese Art: The Ingenuity of Fibre Artists*. Taipei: National Cultural Association, 2006, p 153.

<sup>30</sup> Full details about how the jury will select the awarded works can be found from the press release of the Fifth National Craft Awards, posted by the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan. [http://www.cca.gov.tw/app/autocue/news/culture\\_news\\_template.jsp?news\\_id=1117706732132](http://www.cca.gov.tw/app/autocue/news/culture_news_template.jsp?news_id=1117706732132), consulted on 18 April 2007.

in the past.

The spelling of the exhibition title, *BuBaoFu*, is written according to the pronunciation of the original title in Chinese words, '□□□□', rather than to its definitions. There are two different meanings by the pronunciation of the title. '□□' is written according to PinYin, a pronunciation system to transform symbols into sounds for the benefit of people learning the Chinese language, and it indicates two different words: 'no' and 'fabric'. There are also two definitions of the phrase '□□' (BaoFu): 'a bag made of cloth for carrying stuff' and 'burden; worry; trouble'. Therefore, *BuBaoFu*, as symbolised by the sound of the words, refers to dual meanings: 'having no burden' or 'a handbag of cloth'. With the use of PinYin rather than specific words, the curator's intention to play around with the meanings of the title becomes clear.

Apart from challenging the notion of fabric work (for example, the debates on dual meanings about the exhibition title), Lin Pin explains another motivation for her choosing fabric as the title for this exhibition, and this is that fabric may also be seen as a sign of showing consideration and care for other people. When interviewing Lin (herself a mother of two children), I was told that she originally used cloth for her babies' nappies in the 1970s, when there was no disposable alternative. Even though the cloth nappies were carefully washed, there were still some stains that showed a sense of the passing of time and it was this that greatly attracted and touched the curator. Similarly, for nurses in hospitals, cloth has been widely used in the care of patients. Moreover, cloth is the most common material used by people to remove dirt, and all of these

factors have encouraged Lin to arrange this exhibition.<sup>31</sup>

The exhibition *BuBaoFu*, which was held between 3 and 30 May in 2003, was curated to re-think the significance of 'micro space' close to women by using fabric as the artistic material. During the interview with Lin, I was told that the idea of 'micro space' was inspired by the German curator, Hilde Léon, who participated in the *8th International Architecture Exhibition: NEXT* in 2002. Léon encouraged young students to explore the concepts of space in various forms by providing them with a small-scale model of the architecture of the German pavilion. It was the basic and small shape that inspired numerous ideas. Lin was moved by Hilde Léon's concept and then thought of organizing an exhibition with a similar idea. The term 'micro space', used by Lin, can be found in as small a space as inside handbags to as big as a domestic space, including spaces in the kitchen, bedrooms and living rooms, where women, traditionally perceived, spend most of their lifetime. This exhibition was mounted in order to memorialise how women in different generations have interpreted this 'micro space' and created artistic works through it.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, through this exhibition, Lin managed to reveal unlimited emotions and spirits through revisiting minor and domestic spaces and objects.

One of the central motifs used by the exhibition was 'women's handbags'. For Lin, 'women's handbags' reminded her of how her grandmother dressed herself before going out. Lin claimed that there were two things that her grandmother would always have carried whenever she went out, and they

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<sup>31</sup> 'Interview with Lin Ping', Taichun, 10 October 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



were an umbrella and a handbag made from a piece of cloth. Taiwanese (Han) women in the past hid their treasures in this small handbag and carried it wherever they went.<sup>33</sup> In the small and limited space of this handbag, women kept their dreams and practicalities, for example a letter from their partner, a pair of earrings, a handkerchief or the money needed for that day. One of the few spaces a woman could call her own was compressed into this micro space shaped merely by a piece of cloth. The handbags have become a metaphor for Taiwanese women in the past as the space where they could keep their personal treasures, which was very important to them. This micro space, made by a piece of cloth rolled around a woman's arm, could also be seen as very large because, in the past, what was kept inside represented the dreams and property held by a woman.

The idea of women's 'micro space' hidden within their handbags and within their domestic space is also inherited from Han culture, which limits women within the concepts of *nei* (read: being inward), as opposed to *wai* (read: being outward) for men. The micro space, defined by Lin, is the only space given to women within the accepted social and political context of Confucian society. Rosenlee makes this point more clear by declaring that:

The shared western image of China as a stagnant civilization frozen in time and surrounded by rigid walls and gates is, in part, supported by the perception of Chinese family and social structure in which both man and woman have their separate places defined by the line separating the *nei* from *wai* with no transgression permitted.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> This kind of handbag was used for women before modern western alternatives were introduced in Taiwan.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenlee, op cit, p 69.

As already addressed, the vivid division between domestic and non-domestic spaces for women and men has been seen as a sign of civilization, separating the Han from the 'barbarians' (those outside of Han areas). Within the category of 'nei', traditional women in Taiwan are limited to a small space – a house, where they practice fabric works and undertake domestic labouring. The traditional social restrictions applied to women have limited women into 'micro space', existing in domestic realms. The value that the artists participating in this exhibition have contributed is that through the concepts of 'micro space' and 'nei', women are exploring the ideas of 'wai': political issues and cultural identity. Thus, fabric and cloth have carried special meanings for women in the past and provide today's women with special life experiences and a political means to re-consider their roles in society.

When comparing traditional women's life experience in the West and the East, it is crucial to recognise how differently women have lived but that they all have resisted a similar kind of sexual oppression operating in their respective cultures. Around thirty years later than contemporary women's fabric art first appeared in the West in the 1970s, Lin Ping has the same attitude as Kate Walker, even though they grew up under two different cultures, but they both have lived through a time when fabric works were labelled as a woman's gender characteristic as determined by a patriarchal ideology. The femininity of needlework in the East and the West could be seen as an advantage, rather than a weakness when being used by women artists. The artists both from the East and the West could give the audience and history a new and positive perspective to re-judge the fabric works. Thus, the evidence has suggested

that the exhibition, *BuBaoFu*, was conceived in order to carry out this positive input for contemporary fabric creation.

In male-centred Taiwanese society, men are expected to be brave and ambitious, while on the contrary, women are imagined in more limited and domestic spaces, such as the house. In addition, they have stereotypical job choices and are discouraged from educational opportunities. Women have tried to use their wisdom to widen the 'micro space' of their daily lives (the Wan Bu studio is a good example and will be discussed later) and work much harder than men just to achieve equal pay and equal respect. However, as I have already addressed, diasporic Taiwanese experience has introduced Western aesthetics to the island, Western women's movements and philosophies have become yet another form of colonial power that influences contemporary Taiwan's society. Taiwanese women of the younger generation, who were born in the 1980s and who are sometimes called 'the generation of strawberries' (i.e. being fragile, easily bruised), have more equal opportunities with regard to education and have more freedom to choose their future, instead of it being determined by their families and patriarchal limits. Due to Taiwan's economic boom since the late 1970s and the progress of democracy in Taiwan's society from the 1990s, the Taiwanese are now experiencing a 'golden age'.<sup>35</sup> Younger Taiwanese do not have clear concepts of national or gender identity and this phenomenon has reflected on the way they create their artworks, which tend to embrace internationalism and Westernisation.

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<sup>35</sup> The term, golden age, comes from Nicholas Kristof's description of modern Taiwan's society and he states that 'China has 4,000, maybe 5,000, years of history, but it has never had an era like that in Taiwan today. There has never been a time when people were so wealthy or so free. Living conditions are so great! [...] It's a golden age'. Kristof, Nicholas D. 'A Dictatorship that Grew up' in *New York Times Magazine*, 16 Feb 1992, pp 16-17.

Thus, there exists a large generation gap between women in Taiwan.

As a result, 'fabric' is no longer a symbol of burden for the young Taiwanese women artists, such as Shen Fang-Jung, whom I investigate later in this chapter. For them, fabric is merely an artistic material instead of being a sign of patriarchal pressure. This is the reason why Lin used PinYin instead of specific Chinese words for the exhibition title, because the dual definitions indicate different perspectives that women in different generations hold when considering 'fabric'. Thus, by collecting various kinds of presentation to create art with fabric, the exhibition reveals the fact that fabric, as a colonial heritage from the Chinese and the Japanese, has been gradually re-interpreted by Taiwanese women in different generations and the display of artworks demonstrates the power of re-considering the colonial influence, which has hybridised the material with contemporary Taiwanese people's lives.

Seven artists were invited to participate in this show and their works were produced through tailoring, sewing and several other techniques which are related to textiles.<sup>36</sup> The works were shown in various ways, including the combination of oil painting and embroidery, installations made of cloth and handiworks, a documentary film and a collaborative project. The film was the

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<sup>36</sup> According to my interview with Lin Ping, she explained to me the reason why she did not decide to participate in this show as both an artist and a curator. Also being a practising artist, Lin regards arranging this exhibition as a form of artistic creation in another form. When 'art' is viewed as a concept, there are many different ways to approach it. Artists would use different materials to create their own artistic works, while the curators create their art by the concepts, through which they conduct the exhibitions. For Lin, her ideas of fabric arts have been realised by the way she has conceived this exhibition, rather than any real visible material. Therefore, when curating this exhibition, Lin seriously considered whether to show her own artistic works in the gallery together with other artists as she has been a successful fabric artist as well. However, she eventually decided to be simply the curator of this show, as a result of which, in her opinion, she could arrange all the artistic works in the gallery more objectively.

record of the collaborative project, conducted by the artist Wu Mali, whilst the remainder of the works were created by single artists. The works were either hung on the wall or installed on the floor and from the ceiling of the exhibition space, through which the audience could wander around in the gallery space surrounded by different works. The multiplicity of the works demonstrates the diverse approaches towards fabric, whilst indicating inconsistent perspectives of viewing the colonial heritage from artists of different generations.

As this space has been fully funded by the Council for Cultural Affairs, since its opening in 2000, it is open to the public without any need to purchase tickets. Additionally, the gallery is located next to the railway lines at Taichung train station; consequently, it is exposed to hundreds of passengers every day. Thus, this space attracts not only those who specifically go to see the show because of their interest, but also those who visit the venue without even knowing that the gallery exists. As a result, this exhibition attracted hundreds of visitors of all ages, social classes and from all walks of life.

In order to demonstrate the curator's concepts of this exhibition, I have selected some artistic works to introduce. I shall discuss *Spiritual Quilt* (2001) by the artist, Wu Mali, the *Festival* (2000) by Deng Wen-Jen and *The Starfish Series* (2003) by Shen Fang-Jung.

*Spiritual Quilt* (2001) [fig 54 and fig 55] was produced based on a community project produced by eighteen Taiwanese women, organised by the Taipei

Awakening Association and conducted by Wu Mali from late 1999.<sup>37</sup> This work is composed of two parts: a fifty-six minute documentary film shown on the wall, and a big cushion in the shape of a heart with several small red heart-shape pillows inside, displayed on the floor.<sup>38</sup> The documentary film was produced based on the recording of the workshops during 1998 and 2003. The film connects several scenes of different stages of the workshops, during which the participants shared their life stories, their views of society, and their creativity in how to transform clothes into a piece of art. The fifty-six-minute film links the key moments of the participants' change in their conceptions of art and even their views towards being women, mothers and daughters-in-law.

This work has two dimensions: aesthetic consideration towards a new presentation of fabric art as well as social involvement with a women's group. This project, working with a women's group, was entitled the 'Wan Bu Studio' and was produced by the woman director Jian Wei-Shin. The film recorded a group of women mainly living in the Taipei metropolis and how they shared their life experiences through working together with cloth. The film was shown as a celebration of the Taipei Awakening Association's ten-year anniversary and was then used in Wu's *Spiritual Quilt*.

The words, 'Wan Bu',<sup>39</sup> are composed of two separate words: Wan (play; to

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<sup>37</sup> The definition of the quilt is that 'the work must possess the basic structural characteristics of a quilt. It must be predominantly fabric or fabric-like material and must be composed of at least two full and distinct layers, which are a face layer and a backing layer. These two layers are held together by hand, machine-made functional quilting stitches or other elements that pierce all layers and are distributed throughout the surface of the work'. See Quilt National. [www.quiltnational.com](http://www.quiltnational.com), consulted on 2 February 2005.

<sup>38</sup> This piece of work was originally created for a group exhibition held in the Taipei Contemporary Museum in 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Here, the words, Wan Bu, are spelt according to the PinYin system.

entertain oneself; have fun) and Bu (cloth; fabric; textiles); therefore, the term refers to 'having fun with cloth', which signifies a playful experience, a free spirit and a new relationship (different from traditional understanding) between women and fabric. In *Women's Experiences of Lives and Their Dialogues with Fabric*, Wu Mali writes about 'Wan Bu':

It [the Wan Bu Studio] could be described as a creation of the Taipei Awakening Association. It provided women with a special and private space by collecting women artists, fabric arts and community organisers through the interface 'Wan Bu'. 'Wan Bu Studio' was performed by organising talks, studios, solo/group creation and exhibitions. Although its original theme was to cherish the unwanted stuff (cloth) from the community, how women help each other and share their emotions became the core concepts of Wan Bu Studio.<sup>40</sup>

The Wan Bu Studio was initiated by Shiu Heng-Shu, a member of the Taiwan Awakening Association and wife of a fabric businessman in YungLe market; the members of the Association are mainly housewives.<sup>41</sup> Shiu collected a great amount of unwanted cloth from many fabric shops and managed to transform the material into artistic works. Wu Mali gave this piece of work the title *Spiritual Quilt* and for her, each quilt represents a story from each woman's life.<sup>42</sup> According to Gretchen Giles, 'the very nature of the quilt as an object brings up comforting, domestic images. Quilts are used to comfort, to ensure succour against cold nights. They are crafted to warm a baby, to embrace a new marriage'.<sup>43</sup> This project, also named '*Awakening From Your Skin*' by

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<sup>40</sup> See Wu, Mali (ed). *Women's Experiences of Lives and Their Dialogues with Fabric*. Taipei: Fembooks, 2003, p 11.

<sup>41</sup> The YungLe Market is the most important and biggest fabric market in Taipei and is located in YungLe community.

<sup>42</sup> Wu Mali, 'The Apocalypse of Wan Bu'. <http://giotto.artouch.com/story.asp?id=2004111857039360>, consulted on 26 November 2004

<sup>43</sup> Giles, Gretchen. 'Blanket Concept'.

Wu, envisions the comfort and the warmth from a quilt through the touch between our skins and the fabric. Wu interprets the quilt as the skin which covers our body and protects it from the dirt and germs in the atmosphere. Wu Mali inspired the women in the studio to create art by making their modern quilts, which are traditionally viewed as domestic objects.

The process was very moving because you were exposed to everyone's story of life. For example, the quilt made by YanLin looked very clean and pure, but it was decorated with many dry leaves. It revealed a statement of death.<sup>44</sup>

During the project at the Wan Bu Studio, the women had an opportunity to reveal their emotions and feelings by creating their own quilts, which reflected their lives and roles as housewives. By exhibiting their works in the public spaces when the project was finished, they shared their life experiences with the public and then received more mental support from other women, and even from men. Their lives are not just limited to the kitchen or the living room; on the contrary, they started to communicate with the wider society by the interaction between their works and the audiences. These women, mainly housewives, found the confidence which had been lost when they were over-occupied with domestic work. The self-awakening of these women has been very significant in Taiwanese society as it revealed that even ordinary women had the chance to express themselves. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s when Taiwan started to become democratic, it was mainly those in the upper layers of the social structure (who were born in the 1950s and 1960s)

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[www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/03.24.04/womans-work-0413.html](http://www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/03.24.04/womans-work-0413.html), consulted on 31 Oct 2004.

<sup>44</sup> From the dialogue of Wu Mali in the film by Jian Wei-Shin.



directed women's movements. However, through this project women from all kinds of classes and backgrounds were encouraged to reconsider themselves, which helped Taiwanese women to develop a consciousness of the self. Thus, through this project, the curator's intention to broaden the concepts of 'micro space' was conducted.

Wu Mali's earlier artworks address the relationship between women, the concepts of nation and the working class, for example, in the works *Epitaph* (1997) and *Stories of Women from Sinjhuang* (1997). Her works reflect the history of Taiwanese women but they are only from her personal perspective as an educated middle-class woman, rather than for Taiwanese women in general. This project has allowed Taiwanese women to become the subject and to tell their own stories, with the support of Wu who directed and harnessed the strength of the women in the community.

There have been several art events concerned with modern quilt making and exhibitions in Western (women's) art history. The *Quilt National*, the first ongoing biennial exhibition of non-traditional (contemporary) quilts, initiated in America in 1979, was conceived and organised by quilt artists Nancy Crow, Harriet Anderson, Françoise Barnes and Virginia Randles.<sup>45</sup> It has become

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<sup>45</sup> The *Quilt National* is the brainchild of fibre artist Nancy Crow who was living in Athens in Ohio in the late 1970s. She and Harriet Anderson, Françoise Barnes and Virginia Randles were making quilted objects that featured unfamiliar patterns. These *contemporary quilts*, as they were called, were not meant to be bedcovers, and they were not welcome at most quilt shows. Crow believed that the world needed an exhibition that would showcase quilts that were designed for walls rather than beds. They then found a dairy barn in Ohio, which had been abandoned for nearly ten years, and transformed it into *The Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Centre*. This new art centre has become the exhibition space for the *Quilt National* since then. The *Quilt National* and *The Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Centre* have played an important role in the field of modern quilt art. See 'Quilt National'. [www.quiltnational.com](http://www.quiltnational.com), consulted on 2 February 2005.

an important international exhibition of quilts, and attracts many quilt artists across nations; for example, *Quilt National 95* drew 1,230 entries from 613 quilt artists from fourteen countries.<sup>46</sup> The contemporary quilts have been produced by women of different races and from different cultures since the 1970s and their approaches to create them are different depending on diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Despite the fact that the creation of Wu's *Spiritual Quilt* is around thirty years behind the first contemporary quilt art piece, this work has de-constructed what the Han Chinese and Japanese considered the process of fabric works, i.e. being private, domestic and 'inwards'. To summarise, through *Spiritual Quilt*, what traditional women consider as a burden and as 'micro space' has been deconstructed and via a group project of ordinary women, the division of art and craft has, once again, been denied. Furthermore, I argue that Wu's quilt-making project can itself be regarded as an example of the imposition of Western feminist practice in Taiwan.

The following artworks to be considered were created by Deng Wen-Jen and her works are often produced on a small-scale and with a combination of oil painting and embroidery, which is very different from Wu's project. Deng started to combine native Taiwanese cultural images and ideas with her oil painting, after returning to Taiwan in 2000, having lived and worked in France for eight years. Deng's works debate the serious discourses of gender and sexuality, but at the same time most of her works are very decorative, utilising various bright colours, often associated with more trivial works. Deng uses

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<sup>46</sup> 'A history of the quilt', [www.hlla.com/reference/artquilt.html](http://www.hlla.com/reference/artquilt.html), consulted on 31 Oct 2004.

cultural symbols such as traditional Chinese words, lotus shoes, a china plate and Taiwanese food totems to imply human sexual desire and to explore Taiwan's cultural identity. She combines oil painting and embroidery skills to create artworks metaphorical of sexuality. With delicate traditional sewing handiwork and fine oil painting skills, she creates eye-catching food images and also addresses the pleasure of passion and the remembrance of the past.

She showed several works in the exhibition, one of which is titled, *A Three-inch Lotus Shoe* (2000) [fig 56 and 57]. In *A Three-inch Lotus Shoe*, a pig's hoof in a lotus shoe and an aubergine in dark colours is the major subject in the image. A china plate, originated from the Qing Dynasty, and totems of vegetables as the background are also depicted in the work. The delicate, cell-like images on the shoe echo the ones in the background, although those on the shoe in the foreground are produced by embroidery whilst the background is produced by oil paints. They both show a sense of cheerfulness, decorativeness and carefulness, which are in contradiction to the roughness and casualness of how the pig's hoof and the aubergine are created. Moreover, the monochrome china plate forms a sharp hard edge against the background 'wallpaper'. In summary, Deng skilfully combines embroidery, oil painting, and the contrast of colours to create a powerful image which becomes a perfect example to illustrate how Taiwanese artists' works have been blended by traditional Taiwanese cultural symbols, Chinese and Western aesthetics.

On the right hand side of the china plate, Deng transcribed a poem, following the style of traditional Chinese ink paintings. It reads 'Nangang soy sauce;

wine-stewed pork chops; delicious aubergines and a hot oven ready to roast'.<sup>47</sup> The depiction of 'stewed pig's hoof', the main object in the work, is a popular dish in Taiwanese cuisine, and it is often accompanied by noodles. Both elements of the dish act as a metaphor for the people who eat it as having longevity. Traditionally, Stewed pig's hoofs with noodles have been served at (especially old) people's birthday parties in Chinese and Taiwanese societies. Pig's hoofs symbolise physical strength as they are the parts that support the weights of pigs' whole bodies whilst, (long) noodles signify longevity in Chinese/Taiwanese culture. This kind of noodle is also entitled 'longevity noodles'.

In her work, the pig's hoof has been replaced by a traditional Lotus shoe for women, which has been decorated with totems of flowers and vegetables. All of the terms in the poem are related to cuisine and cooking, through which Deng provides the audience with the images of food, not only from visual representation but also from the metaphors of the words themselves.

Deng spends a great amount of time stitching every tiny woolly line into the cloth before stitching it onto the canvas, through which the delicacy of traditional women's embroidery is exposed. A Taiwanese feast in terms of vision and imaginary food is expressed in this work and the combination of the East (an embroidered lotus shoe) and the West (oil painting) presents a form of hybridised contemporary artistic language.

Here, it is worth investigating 'foot-binding', a symbol of women's custom in

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<sup>47</sup> Translated from the poem in the work. Nangang is a district at the edge of Taipei city.

traditional Chinese Han culture, and it indicates Deng's intention of addressing sexuality. Research has confirmed that foot-binding was introduced to fulfil a male fantasy to turn women into an object of their desires. Before Japan's colonisation of the island, Taiwanese women were taught to bind their feet as a result of the influence of Han culture. According to Dorothy Ko, foot-binding began to spread in Chinese culture around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; when girls were five to six years old, their mothers and even grandmothers would start to teach them how to perform foot-binding.<sup>48</sup> Historically, between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries in Taiwan, 'the smaller the feet you had, the more sexually attractive you became' was a typical men's principle for determining a woman's beauty. Foot-binding expresses not only social expectation towards women's sexuality but also women's skills of working with textiles, which received 'high cultural and economic value in a Confucian society'.<sup>49</sup> The shoe for foot-binders is called the Lotus shoe and this cultural heritage signifies the influence of Chinese Han influence on the island and the use of the shoe in this work de-constructs the limitations of this old custom.

For Deng, to be both a good cook and an attractive woman are qualities only to satisfy men's desires. Deng's works suggest that the smells, colours, tastes and shapes of food have the same sensuous stimuli as those of the woman's body. With elaborate handiwork, the artist demonstrates the topic of 'Eat, Drink, Man, Woman' (*Yin Shi Nan Nu*), which originally comes from one of the Confucian books, *The Principles of Manners (Li Ji)* (c. 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century BC).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ko, op cit, pp 52-58.

<sup>49</sup> See Ko, ibid., p 54.

<sup>50</sup> Deng Wen-Jen chose 'Eat, Drink, Man, Woman' as the topic of her solo exhibition at the 26

Confucius addresses the idea that 'there is no difference among people that the desires for food and sex are the same. In addition, the need for both of them is essential for being a human'. In *A Three-inch Lotus Shoe*, Deng joins these two needs (food and sex) together and demonstrates the necessity of being a human.

Moreover, through the juxtaposition of Chinese embroidery, the metaphor for Taiwanese cuisine and the skills of Western oil paintings, the artist has hybridised three different cultures within her works. It is evident, therefore, that in Deng's work, Bhabha's ideas of mimicry and hybridity have appeared.

Apart from *A Three-inch Lotus Shoe*, Deng exhibited another powerful work, *Betel Nut* (2003) [fig 58], which also addresses the issues of food and sexuality. Produced with cloth in bright colours, *Betel Nut* symbolises a kind of popular 'snack', but it also indirectly implies sexual desire, mainly for the working-class male in Taiwan. *Betel Nut* illustrates how the betel nut (also known as Taiwanese chewing-gum) looks: an opened nut with a dark green shell and with seeds around the core. The four pink corners around the nut are like the wrapping paper, with which the 'betel nut girls' (*binlang hsishi*) wrap and sell betel nuts from their roadside booths. The betel nut booths are usually built as glass boxes, decorated with neon lights and are often located by main roads at the edge of city centre or in the countryside, where they are predominantly patronised by lorry drivers and other working men [fig 59 and fig 60].

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Galleria d'Arte in Taiwan from 1 to 30 December 2004. It is also worth noting that this term was also adopted by Ang Lee as the title of his 1994 film of the same name, produced in Taipei.

The betel nut booths are usually attended by young women who literally just wear underwear or bikinis, allowing most of their bodies be exposed to the public. According to Huang Wan-Tran's report in the *Taipei Times*, this particular aspect of the sex industry initially appeared in Guoxing township, Nantou County, in the late 1960s and has been popular with male customers since then.<sup>51</sup> This modern sex industry was established via betel nut booths and it is now generally perceived by most Taiwanese that those who buy betel nuts are people who intend to enjoy a prolonged close 'gaze' at the girls rather than to simply buy the nuts. The artist has used acrylic to paint the dark shadow under the core element of the work as the nut itself signifies a woman's sexual organ rather than food, i.e. the product they sell is 'sex' rather than 'nuts'. Moreover, the bright colours of the artwork echo the colours of red-light areas where the sex industry is located. Once again, Deng has selected the 'betel nut' to address the issues of sexuality and the female body.

The issues of body and sexuality will be argued in more detail in the following chapter on the *Taipei Biennial 1996* but here I would like to investigate how Taiwan's cultural symbols (stewed pig' hooves and betel nuts), traditional embroidery skills (as a colonial heritage) and western aesthetics, are hybridised in Deng's works. Even though in the previous chapter, I have addressed the concept of 'hybridity', I need to emphasise this point in detail when analysing Deng's works.

Ien Ang gives 'hybridity' a simple definition by stating that:

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<sup>51</sup> Huang, Wan-Tran. 'Why Pick on Betel-Nut Beauties?' in *Taipei Times*, Taipei, Monday, 12 March 2007, p 8.

Hybridity – simply defined, the production of things composed of elements of different or incongruous kind – instigates the emergence of new, combinatory identities, not the mere assertion of old, given identities, as would seem to be the case in ultimately essentialist formulations of identity politics [...].<sup>52</sup>

According to Ang, hybridity is composed of different elements and if using Deng's works as an example, 'hybridity' is shown through the composition of Taiwanese food totems, the Chinese (Han) lotus shoe, colonial embroidery influences and western oil painting. It is interesting to note that even after living and working in France for eight years, Deng finds her major artistic language from her homeland – Taiwan. When investigating her works, I can find historical, colonial and current western impacts on the island, and all of these differences are visualised in her works. Ang further argues that hybridity should 'live with and through' difference rather than 'overcome' it.<sup>53</sup> Ang's words have clearly indicated Taiwan's current social environment, which echoes how Deng's works are formulated, i.e. to embrace differences rather than to conquer them. From Deng's works, I emphasise the significance of the fact that different influences have been joined together to create a new appearance and the existence of various cultural impacts on the island are equally integrated.

Deng's art has promoted traditional embroidery works to the level of contemporary fine art and has visualised the hybridised Taiwan's current social and artistic environment, which is the existence of old and new, East and West.

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<sup>52</sup> Ang, op cit, p 194.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



However, some artists choose to embrace a completely Western style in their work when confronting Taiwan's chaotic social phenomenon. Different methods and metaphors that artists adapt to create their works have indicated the fact that in Taiwan's society, there exists a generation gap which reflects not only on the different ideologies of different generations, but also on the different methods with which artists present their works. To make this point further, I would like to consider Shen Fang-Jung and her work, *The Starfish Series* (2003) [fig 61]. Having been born in 1980, Shen was the youngest artist participating in the show and her work indicates the younger generation's involvement in fabric artistic creation.

Her large-scaled work, *The Starfish Series*, an installation shown in the ceiling space, connected other works shown on the wall and the floor, bringing together all the artistic works as a whole piece according to the curator's concept of the exhibition. The audiences could walk easily around the exhibition and look at the works which were carefully installed in the space.

Having been born in the 1980s, Shen describes herself as having had no significant experience of sexual and social pressures, therefore, for her, 'fabric' is merely a choice of material which doesn't carry any other metaphorical significance.<sup>54</sup> The implications of using fabric are very different from those women artists who were born into older generations, (such as Wu Mali and Deng Wen-Jen) because the younger artists have grown up in the time following the suspension of martial law, and when globalisation and

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<sup>54</sup> Shen, Fang-Jung. *The Penetration of Flexibility – out of Studio: Artworks by Shen Fang-Jung*. MA Dissertation. Hsinchu: National Hsinchu University of Education, 2006, p 11.

multiculturalism have changed Taiwan's landscape and environment. Her work, *The Starfish Series*, with its shape similar to nerve endings and being made with colourful elastic nylon cloth, are highly decorative and like the properties of the fabric itself, it is flexible enough to be installed in any part of the exhibition space.

Shen selects completely western forms to present her art, which conceals her Taiwanese past. It is interesting to discuss both of their works together as they perceive themselves and their art so differently. By juxtaposing their works, I have observed that under the vast western influence of the post-martial law era, Taiwanese artists either determine to hybridise what they have gained from the past with new knowledge from the West, or to be completely Westernised in order to show their 'internationalised-ness' and 'new appearance' in contrast to their previous history. Through two different (political) strategies of approach to the international art world, Taiwanese artists have developed diverse routes to confront the future: one is like Deng's route, to hybridise the past and present; the other is like Shen who thoroughly adopts/adapts Western-ness to demonstrate her new-ness and separation from the colonial history.

Fabric, as viewed by different generations, can be explained from various perspectives. The attitude of younger Taiwanese women artists has been much more light-hearted; sometimes they are like young children, having fun and talking amongst themselves. With the rapid change of the social and cultural environment in Taiwan, multiple expressions of artistic works have been shown simultaneously, as the diversity of artistic languages also mirrors

the social phenomenon in Taiwan, i.e. changing and without a definite ending. Thus, fabric, being an artistic material, has been used by different artists and through various methods to demonstrate Taiwan's contemporary culture and position in the world.

### **Another Form of Hybridity**

No one today is purely *one* thing. [...] Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. [...] Survival in fact is about the connections between things.<sup>55</sup>

I conclude this chapter by looking at Edward Said's powerful words, which indicate the fact that people are connecting differences in order to survive and to develop their own identity and culture. Said has argued that no one today is exclusively one thing, thus for the Taiwanese, they are not simply Han, Japanese or Westernised but they are a kind of hybridised version of all of these elements. The Taiwanese, therefore, find their cultural identity from various elements of colonial heritage, and through contemporary fabric artistic creation, they find a method of 'survival' in terms of art and culture. Therefore, I propose that Deng Wen-Jen's works are the ones that most closely parallel the concepts of Said, and demonstrate postcolonial scholars' theories of hybridity and mimicry. That is, Deng has contributed the nature of Taiwan's hybridised culture to the global art world and has created the hybridity of what

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<sup>55</sup> Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1993, pp 407-408.

she perceives Taiwan to be. However, Shen simply participates in the contemporary art world without any critical consideration of her own difference from the rest of the artists in the globe. Therefore, according to Said's argument that 'no one today is purely one thing' (I see 'one thing' as one cultural influence), I suggest that when confronting the globalised world, only artworks that have diverse and explicit cultural and ethnic characteristics will be remembered and cherished.

To emphasise this point, I am giving an example of one recent Taiwanese exhibition, *Taiwan: Betel Nut Beauties*, held at the Centre Culturel de Taiwan à Paris between 6 March and 2 April 2008. The exhibition, sponsored and organised by the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts and the Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan, exhibits works created by six Taiwanese artists, including Den. According to the Centre's newsletter, this exhibition was curated specifically to manifest Taiwan's unique culture regarding the betel nut industry and aims to visualise Taiwan's differences through the means of exhibitions.<sup>56</sup> The curation of this show demonstrates the fact that only when a nation can view its own unique culture with appreciation and is aware of how to promote its different characteristics, can it survive in the competitive global art market. Clearly, artists like Deng, are those who know how to combine and hybridise their special cultural symbols and modern aesthetics, through which their works can be cherished and recognised internationally.

In my previous chapter, I looked at how colonial buildings can become a physical manifestation to address Taiwanese cultural identity and in this

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<sup>56</sup> Newsletter of the Centre Culturel de Taiwan à Paris, dated 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

chapter, fabric art is the means for me to address the same issue, owing to the fact that fabric is also an element of heritage from the colonial past. Apart from the political discourse behind this exhibition, I would like to go back to re-examine the curator's concept of micro space and its relationship with women artists.

From *Spiritual Quilt*, to *The Starfish Series*, argued in this chapter, Taiwanese women artists have expanded the idea of 'micro space'. The indoor (micro-spaced) activity in the past has been explored through the means of the exhibition and the political metaphors given to the works. Fabric works have therefore been promoted from being 'craft' to being 'fine art'. The other important observation in the show is that women artists from different generations have different perspectives from which to create fabric artworks. Hence, fabric, as an artistic medium, has been utilised as a political means and has erased the traditional division of nei/wai and indoors/outdoors. 'Micro space' is therefore being explored and broadened and it is not just limited within handbags or domestic space. In other words, I am ultimately demonstrating that 'micro space' can actually be enlarged to express women's identity and that women's contemporary fabric art is the visual presentation of hybridity of being Taiwanese, a mixture of colonial heritage (fabric) and contemporary aesthetics.

To conclude this chapter, I should stress that this show actually follows the spirits of the Wan Bu Studio as a community project, because Lin Ping also organised a workshop for making handbags on the opening day of the exhibition (3 May 2003). By arranging this workshop, Lin brought together not

only the artists who participated in the debates surrounding 'micro Space', but also the general public who experienced the journey of how to expand the concepts of *nei* and domesticity, to *wai* and publicity through producing fabric art. The curatorial ideas of the exhibition were both to exhibit established artists' works and also to create the opportunity for the audience (whether young, old, men or women) to engage with producing fabric works, through which the concepts of 'micro space' were certainly enlarged during the realisation of the exhibition.

The next themes to be considered in my research are sexuality and body, which have been suggested when looking at Deng's works and which have been used as a part of the curatorial themes in the first *Taipei Biennial*, held in 1996. In the following chapter, my focus will shift from colonial heritage to the discourse of globalisation as it is essential to explore how current urban development has influenced women's artistic creation and how 'sexuality' and 'body' became the topic of the exhibition.

### **PART III: International Perspectives**

#### **5**

#### **Globalisation and Urban Culture: *Taipei Biennial 1996***

We must [also] accept that, in our century, the balance has shifted. The ratio of what is settled to what has travelled has changed everywhere. Ideas, objects, and people from 'outside' are now more – and more obviously – *present* than they have ever been.<sup>1</sup>

To begin this chapter, I have quoted Anthony Appiah from his Foreword to *Globalization and Its Discontents* (1998), expressing the fact that we are living in a mutating world where things keep travelling, shifting and influencing each other; essentially this is the phenomenon of globalisation. Since the late twentieth century, the improvements in everything from transportation to wireless connections have helped people in most parts of the world travel and communicate in a much easier way. As a result, people, objects and ideas are transferred much more quickly and the relative distance between every individual has become much smaller. Therefore, the world seems to have become *one* whereby the centre and the periphery connect and rely on each other much more than before. The Asia-Pacific region used to be outside of the centre of the world economy and culture, and it is only recently that it has gained the world's attention, mainly as a result of its rapid economic development and the influence of globalisation. Thus, the Asia-Pacific region has increasingly received attention because of its growing economic power and its emerging artistic creation.

The Asia-Pacific region, under the trend of globalisation in the past few

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<sup>1</sup> Appiah, K. Anthony. 'Foreword' in Sassen, Saskia. *Globalisation and Its Discontents*. New York: The New Press, 1998, Foreword.

decades, has seen its major cities, which serve as business hubs for their nations, transform rapidly to upgrade themselves to become developed areas. Cities in this region have been gathering their nations' most important resources, whilst they endeavour to create their own character through the information and fashions that have been moving between geopolitical territories. Whilst globalisation and urbanism are changing the landscape in the Asia-Pacific region, there exists a competition among nations whereby they are all striving to show their individuality under these global trends. Hence, the competition can be seen in the areas of economic and military development, through to the arts and culture, as these provide the main lenses through which nations can be viewed. Large-scale international exhibitions have, therefore, been organised under this kind of ideology and since 1996, the *Taipei Biennial* has been organised to respond to this trend insofar as it exists in Taiwan.

Kim Hong-hee, an important Korean curator and the Artistic Director of the *Gwangju Biennale 2006*, asserted in her paper at the 94<sup>th</sup> College Art Association Annual Conference that 'international biennials arose in order to serve as a new impetus from the conceptual background of third world discourses and post-colonialism'.<sup>2</sup> Apart from cultural presentation and competition, the *Taipei Biennial* is also arranged as a governmental strategy to seek to construct a Taiwanese national identity separated from its colonial past. With the increase of capitalism and urbanism, one of the postcolonial issues is to search for specific realities and identities in the developing world,

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<sup>2</sup> Kim, Hong-hee. 'The 6<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale 2006 from the Perspectives of "Shift of Centre"', conference paper. *College Art Association 94<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference*, 22-25 February 2006, Boston MA, USA.



and Taiwan has been included in this since the 1990s. Therefore, the theme *Quest for Identity* was chosen for the first Taipei Biennial because this had been the major topic of discourse for the Taiwanese in the post-martial law era. The theme also covered the identity of gender and it was the first exhibition in the history of Taiwan's art that overtly drew attention to gender issues.<sup>3</sup> Under the influence of these world trends, the biennial was thus arranged not only to reflect the government's cultural policy but also the issues of gender which were addressed through the specific curatorial themes.

As it underwent the processes of globalisation and urbanisation, Taiwan experienced its 'economic miracle' in the latter half of the twentieth century. Its speedy growth has brought about an increase in the number of middle-class women, many of whom wanted to create a new way of life, which would be superior to and go beyond their previous state of subordination by men. Accordingly, many women have changed their personal appearance in order to make themselves look like one of the *élite* and they have even re-assessed their own positions when comparing those of Western women. Therefore, feminists, especially middle-class feminists, are now re-thinking their status and also considering how to combine and re-interpret traditional ideas, which are deeply rooted and have hardly changed in Taiwanese society over hundreds of years. The changes in society and women's awakening since the late 1980s have contributed to the creation of the first women's exhibition concerning feminist issues.

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<sup>3</sup> As already explained in the introduction, Wang Jin-Hua suggests that the Taipei Biennial 1996 was the first exhibition held in an official space in Taiwan to include gender as a curatorial theme. In addition, Wang indicates that this show 'brought many debates on the politics of body, which had never happened in Taiwan's artistic field before'. Wang, J. H., op cit, p 6.

In this chapter, I am dealing with the first *Taipei Biennial* held in 1996, looking specifically at how this exhibition was arranged and presented. The main heading of the *Taipei Biennial 1996* was '*The Quest for Identity*'. Under this title, four themed categories were curated, namely '*Identity & Memories*', '*Visual Dialogue*', '*Our Environment & City Life*' and '*Sexuality & Power*'. The curator of '*Identity & Memories*', Tsai Hung-Ming, demonstrated the link between identity, the interpretation of memory, history and art. '*Visual Dialogue*', curated by Lee Jiun-Shian, addressed the ways in which artists combined their materials and concepts to create 'Taiwanese art'. The curator of '*Our Environment & City Life*', Lu Kuang, demonstrated the relationship between urban Taiwanese art and modernisation. Finally, the category, *Sexuality & Power*, was curated by a male curator, Shieh Tung-Shan, and this show was the first to bring gender issues into a public space.<sup>4</sup> Eight women artists participated in this category to express their views of gender and its main arguments, centred on the body. As a result, through this category, Shieh challenged our ways of contemplating the body and its roles as both an object and a subject. By looking at *Sexuality & Power*, the focus was placed on Taiwanese women's approaches to re-interpreting themselves and to re-examining their roles under the influences of globalisation and urbanism.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the effects of globalisation and urbanism in the Asia-Pacific region and the reasons why the biennials have become important events in the region. I then examine the category *Sexuality*

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the information of each category in the exhibition, see Taipei Fine Arts Museum. *Taipei Biennial 1996: the Quest for Identity*. Exh. Cat., Taipei, 1996.

& *Power* by looking at women artists' works. In addition, I specifically explore the means by which Taiwanese women have reacted to this global trend and how women artists have expressed their opinions in terms of art, and finally how women artists have visualised the intersectional nature of contemporary Taiwanese culture.

### **Globalisation and Urbanisation**

There are several definitions of globalisation, similar to those applied to the term, postcolonialism, but one particular perspective is surely related to Marxism and neo-Marxist theories of development and under-development which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>5</sup> According to this line of thinking, globalisation sets out to combine all aspects of the world together, to erase each nation's boundaries and to achieve a worldwide free exchange of goods, information and ideology. Roland Robertson, in describing globalisation, states that 'as a concept [it] refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'.<sup>6</sup> Globalisation therefore acts to integrate the ideas and nations of the world into a unified whole.

Having exerted an increasing economic influence on the West in recent decades, the Asia-Pacific region has had a tendency towards globalisation in terms, for example, of its governmental systems, social values and popular cultures. Apart from this, globalisation has also accentuated a trend towards

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<sup>5</sup> This is discussed by Dean Forbes in his essay 'Globalisation, postcolonialism and new representations of the Pacific Asian metropolis' in Olds, Kris, Philip F. Kelly, Lily Kong, Henry Wai-Chung Yeung and Peter Dicken (eds). *Globalisation and the Asia-Pacific: Contested Territories*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p 239.

<sup>6</sup> Robertson, Roland. *Globalisation, Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage, 1992, p 8.

urbanisation in the region, under which some places are prioritised for progress whilst others are ignored. During the 1980s and 1990s, many cities have developed in the Asia-Pacific region and as a consequence its population has shifted mainly to those areas. Some figures serve to illustrate this vertiginous phenomenon. In 1970, the Asia-Pacific region counted only eight cities of more than five million inhabitants but today there are more than thirty. Among the most populous cities are Bangkok, New Delhi, Calcutta, Seoul, Jakarta, Osaka-Kobe, Manila, Bombay, Madras and Karachi, each of them being inhabited by at least ten million people. In China, Beijing has a population of fifteen million and there are twenty million people living in Shanghai.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the Asian-Pacific metropolises, combining most of the nations' populations and resources, are at the centre of the region's globalisation process. Taipei, being the capital of Taiwan, has therefore been in the spotlight of the Taiwanese government's policy and has been the major recipient in the distribution of social resources.

Whilst globalisation, urbanisation and the explosive expansion of urban spaces have been the most dynamic and challenging issues in the Asia-Pacific region today, modernisation and cultural re-interpretation are also taking place at a rapid speed. In this region, a new understanding and new models of modernisation have been experienced and people, including artists, have been finding their own voices to negotiate this phenomenon. In the 1980s, 1990s and today, the rapid and sustained pace of economic and political growth in four countries in the Asia-Pacific region has resulted in them being referred to as the 'Asian Dragons'. These four dragons (Singapore, Hong

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<sup>7</sup> See Cities of Asia, <http://whc.unesco.org/events/asiaciti.htm>, consulted on 29 March 2006.

Kong, South Korea and Taiwan) have forced a major re-think to be undertaken on the subjects of modernisation and development. Consequently, under the influence of globalisation and urbanism, many people from these nations are moving around the globe, crossing borders and propagating new ideas, languages and cultures which have been juxtaposed and hybridised in local areas. Jen Webb makes the following observation regarding nations in the globalised environment:

This, the blending of foreign and local to make a new form, is evident in the contemporary work of artists who are rarely just local, national or global in their approach, but who manifest the effects of a two- or multi-way traffic in the flow of cultural ideas and images.<sup>8</sup>

Under globalisation, things have therefore been changing in the Asia-Pacific region; i.e. old cultural forms have been replaced or reinterpreted and new forms of cultures and values have been produced. This has had the effect of imposing pressures on artists but also of stimulating them to create new art. Webb also suggests that 'artworks can act as "vehicles of social meaning" which both represent and realise "the world", and as a corollary can confirm (or deny) the stories of nationhood'.<sup>9</sup> Apart from this, a distinctive body of art can contribute to the identification of nationhood. Moreover, art can be used as a tool to promote images of a nation and art also represents the manner in which artists expose themselves to the world. Those works of art which have been selected for exhibition to the world reveal the most common forms of consciousness in a nation, or they are strategically arranged to express a

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<sup>8</sup> Webb, Jen. 'Art in a Globalised State' in Turner, Caroline (ed). *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*. Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005, p 42.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p 30.

nation's image of itself.

Under globalisation, modernisation and urbanism, the traditional forms which have survived have been forced to change to fit into modern ideology, as frequently happens in the postcolonial world. As Arif Dirlik notes, 'the release of post-coloniality from the fixity of [the] Third-World location means that the identity of the post-colonial is no longer structural but discursive'.<sup>10</sup> Identity issues in this region have become complicated and plural while information and ideas are moving across boundaries. Therefore, identity can be seen in the discourses of nationhood, gender, culture, religion and ethnicity. Thus, I am emphasising the significance of the fact that, as one of the main issues in the developing areas, identity has played an important role in globalisation ideology. Postcolonial discourses resonate with concerns of identity in order to transform the origins of their locations in the world and to re-fashion the conception of its tradition in the developing world. Through globalisation, postcolonial discourses have been increasingly conducted in the Asia-Pacific region and binary oppositions, such as those between coloniser/colonised and centre/margin, have become controversial. Artists in this region have joined together in order to de-construct the long-established values and positions by organising artistic events. Hence, the phenomena of biennials and triennials have arisen.

Since artistic events can function as one of a nation's strategies for raising issues and attracting the attention of the public, international exhibitions in the

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<sup>10</sup> Dirlik, Arif, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 20, Winter 1994, p 332, also cited by Hoogvelt, op cit, p 168.

Asia-Pacific region have been very active in this way and have developed more self-recognition for each nation during postcolonial times. In her conference paper, Kim Hong-hee argued that 'it can thus be understood as a natural phenomenon that non-Western countries in the postcolonial period should have sought for a re-arrangement of the hierarchy in the world's art and culture by setting up new biennales'.<sup>11</sup> In this way, biennials serve not only as an artistic event but also as the means for nations to express their identity and strength.

In recent years, there have been several biennials and triennials held in the Asia Pacific region, including the *Busan Biennale* (Korea, 1981-), *Fukuoka Triennial* (Japan, 1999-), *Guangzhou Triennial* (China, 2002-), *Gwangju Biennale* (Korea, 1995-), *Hong Kong Art Biennale* (Hong Kong, 1975-), *Shanghai Biennale* (China, 1996-), *Singapore Biennale* (Singapore, 2006-), *Taipei Biennale* (Taiwan, 1996-) and the *Triennial of Chinese Contemporary Art* (China, 2002-).<sup>12</sup> They have created a kind of event that is specific to the Asia-Pacific region. The rapid expansion of international exhibitions in this region has reflected the radical transformation of contemporary Asian art and even the characteristics of their traditions. These exhibitions also appear to be the arena in which competition in the contemporary art scene is played out among nations. As one of the important indications of nationhood is the recognition accorded to the identity of its art and culture, many governments in the region have set up funds and organisations to arrange their international biennials and triennials. For example, the first *Singapore Biennale 2006* was

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<sup>11</sup> Kim, op cit.

<sup>12</sup> See 'The List of Important Contemporary Biennales, Triennials and Exhibitions in the World', <http://www.taipei1212.blogspot.com/2004/12/blog-post.html>, consulted on 17 August 2007

provided with a generous budget of over 2 million US dollars.<sup>13</sup>

In Taipei, when Chen Sheui-Bian was elected as the mayor of Taipei city in 1996, he established many institutions and events to promote the consciousness of a localised Taiwan (one of the Democratic Progressive Party's chief political ideas, in opposition to its rival, the KMT party). As a result, the *Taipei Biennial 1996*, with a theme entitled, *The Quest for Identity*, was an example of his political concepts, and a fund from the Taipei city government was set up to support this exhibition. The *1996 Taipei Biennial*, as an official event, had significantly directed the artistic environment in Taiwan and from that year, a yearning for identity has become the main philosophy for artists, curators, museums and critics to work towards. I suggest that this show was a conjunction of current international globalised trends, a promotion of the cultural image of the Taipei metropolis, the awakening of Taiwanese identity consciousness and the artists' presentation and experiments in the postcolonial and post-martial law period.

### ***The Quest for Identity: Power & Body***

The biennial exhibitions have contributed some of the major shows held by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum since 1984. These have included the *Contemporary Sculpture in the ROC [Republic of China] Exhibition* (1985-1991), *Contemporary Art Trends in the ROC* (1984-1986) and *Modern Arts New Prospects Exhibition* (1988-1994). In 1992, these shows were combined to form one major show, which was entitled the *Contemporary Art Biennial*

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<sup>13</sup> Choy, Lee Weng. 'Barely Alive: Funding for Independent Art in Singapore' in *Art Asia Pacific*, No 47, Winter 2006, p 26.



*Exhibition*.<sup>14</sup> In 1996, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum replaced its previous competition-led shows with a themed exhibition and it started to invite artists to respond. One part of the biennials' missions was to introduce Taiwanese artists' works to the rest of the world and also to promote their artistic representation of contemporary practices. Consequently, one of the strategies was to fill the Taipei Fine Arts Museum's space with the works of as many artists as possible. Thus, one hundred and twenty artists were invited to join the *Taipei Biennial 1996* and their works were shown in most of the exhibition spaces in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

This chapter aims to examine how, through the first *Taipei Biennial*, Taiwanese women artists have searched for their gender identity, and I will address this fact by looking in detail at the category *Sexuality & Power*. However, before investigating this category, I need to clarify the main term, identity, which was used to designate the whole exhibition with the purpose of exploring the curatorial concepts.

As has already been addressed in Chapter 1, identity has been a highly sensitive and popular issue in the spheres of politics, society and culture in Taiwan. Consequently, it is hardly coincidental that identity served as the subject of this first themed biennial. A metaphor from a traditional Chinese saying reads that when lacking a clear identity, people are like 'an orchid without roots'. The saying is derived from the fact that a plant without roots is very weak, therefore, people without an identity are in a similar situation.

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<sup>14</sup> See Fine Arts Museum of Taipei, *1996 Taipei Biennial: The Quest for Identity*, exhibition catalogue, 1998, preface, p 3.

Without a definite identity or solid sovereignty of a nation, people are likely to adhere to whatever is in power or in fashion. For example, owing to Taiwan's colonial history, there is no precise definition of 'what Taiwan is' but anything can be an influence on Taiwan. Kurt Brereton describes this situation by stating that:

Taiwan has no beginning and no end: Taiwan is made up of an endless and infinite series of conjunctions – comings and goings in between here and there, this and that, somewhere between China and Japan, East and West, tradition and innovation, modern and post-modern, dependence and independence. Such a state of passing involves a sense of disappearing, fading away or dying out.<sup>15</sup>

As Taiwan's colonial history has contributed to this kind of social phenomenon, the strong influence of globalisation makes it more challenging for the Taiwanese to seek a sense of identity for themselves. The Taipei Fine Arts Museum, therefore, intended to search for something that was solid and applied to most Taiwanese, and it was apparent that identity was what the curator of each category was aiming for. It was not until the Taipei Fine Arts Museum started curating themed exhibitions in 1996 that an increase in the number of curators began to emerge who could arrange shows strategically to raise issues that made Taiwanese people re-consider their environment. *Sexuality & Power* was the first official women's exhibition in which the debate was explicitly about the body and power. Shieh thereby announced that there were many connections between feminism, power and the body in contemporary cultural discussion. The issues covered by the show include heterosexuality, homoeroticism, homosexual politics, body political aesthetics,

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<sup>15</sup> Brereton, op cit, p 61.

women's politics, the body and power.<sup>16</sup> From the curator's introduction to this category in the *Lion Art* magazine, the main theme chosen to connect all of the works is 'power'. He asserts that 'power did not only refer to that from political systems but also referred to what was created from knowledge and language'.<sup>17</sup> This concept is inspired by Michel Foucault's theory about the relationship between Power and Knowledge. I propose here that for curators, exhibitions provide the audience with knowledge of curatorial concepts and the shows themselves become a form of power for the curators to engender ideology in society. The category *Sexuality & Power* suggests that power exists in the sphere of sexuality and for several feminist philosophies, power also has a strong link with feminism. In the following argument, I address feminist perspectives on the issue of power, before going on to discuss another term, body.

Power is often regarded as an essential concept in social and political theory, and some definitions of power should be outlined before I discuss it any further. According to Amy Allen:

Some theories define power as getting someone else to do what you want them to do (power-over) whereas others define it more broadly as an ability or a capacity to act (power-to). Many very important analyses of power in political science, sociology, and philosophy presuppose the former definition of power (power-over).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Li, Yu-Lin (ed). *1996 Taipei Biennial: Identity of Taiwan's Arts II*, Taipei: Fine Arts Museum of Taipei, Exh. Cat., 1996, p 197.

<sup>17</sup> Shieh, Tung-shan. 'The Age of Finding Bodies: An Introduction of "Sexuality & Power"', in *Lion Art*, No 306, 1996, p 77.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, Amy. 'Feminist Perspectives on Power' in Edward N Zalta (ed). *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Winter 2005 Edition)*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2005/entries/feminist-power/>, consulted on 19 April 2006.

The basic power that everyone has is to be able to do something (power-to) but feminists tend to conceive of power as the state in which one has the capacity to impose one's will on others (power-over). According to Allen, the main ways in which feminists have conceptualised power are: 'as a resource to be (re)distributed, as domination, and as empowerment'.<sup>19</sup> For liberal feminists, power is conceptualised as the ability to distribute social resources among men and women, whilst others view power not as a resource or critical social good but instead as 'a relation of domination'.<sup>20</sup> Feminists have often used several terms to describe this kind of relation, including oppression, patriarchy, subjection and subaltern, all of which have frequently been used in my research. Under this definition, power is exercised in an unbalanced way between two groups and the 'power-over' is imposed on the one who is weaker and in a lower situation. As a result, domination is created in this kind of unfair relationship. Radical feminists criticise this kind of domination and think that the formula is usually one of male domination over women in the socially and culturally rooted environment. In the early 1990s, Taiwanese women tended to be radical feminists and women artists' works were created to highlight the situation of imbalance in the sexual relationship between men and women. In *Sexuality & Power*, women artists' works were designed to criticise male domination and to seek their gender identity, and indeed for Taiwanese women artists, their artistic creativity is a kind of empowerment for them to re-elucidate the dominant relationship with their counterparts - men. In *Sexuality & Power*, Shieh proposed two main topics from feminist discourses that would allow

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See Allen, *ibid.*

artists to debate and empower their works to have an influence on Taiwanese society. Sexuality and power, as a result, became elements that were clearly inseparable from one another. The body, being the major object under review according to the curator's concepts, became the main theme for artists to express their views through visual art.

As 'body' is the factor that links all of the works together, it is essential to address it as a theme, an object, a subject and as a symbol for women artists, since the body has been one of the most significant topics of feminism since the late 1960s. The body was also the key object for Taiwanese women artists to use to articulate their feminist critique in the early and mid 1990s. Some investigation of how the body is perceived and how other people have used 'body' in their arguments may help us to analyse women's works in this category. Mary Douglas, an anthropologist, argues that 'the body is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body'.<sup>21</sup> The body is central to what we eat, how we dress and the daily rituals with which we enact our lives. Furthermore, I suggest that the body is also the interface by means of which our culture is presented: how we live and even what we look like. According to Charles Rosenberg, 'the body was seen, metaphorically, as a system of dynamic interactions with its environment'.<sup>22</sup> Our bodies need the warmth that is provided by clothes, air to breathe, water to drink and food to eat. They

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<sup>21</sup> Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2002, p 3.

<sup>22</sup> Charles E Rosenberg, 'The Therapeutic Revolution: Medicine, Meaning and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America' in Vogel, Morris J and Charles E Rosenberg (eds). *The Therapeutic Revolution: Essays in the Social History of American Medicine*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1979, p 5.

rely greatly on the natural environment as they require a specific climate in order to survive. Hence, in my view, the body symbolises what we are, but the physical differences between males and females and the different interactions they have with the environment have produced their own specific characteristics.

Being physically weaker than males, females have been taught to stay at home to raise children and do housework, whilst males have been taught to work (hunt) in society (nature).<sup>23</sup> As a result, the body has been symbolised by different characteristics and different expectations determined by culture and nature. One example of a major difference between male and female is menstruation, a subject which several women artists have explored in their works.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the body has been used as an object of pornography and the dominant point of view for such voyeurism is usually that of males looking at females. Erotica is, however, different from pornography. Audre Lorde states that 'the erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power'.<sup>25</sup> Many feminist women artists in Taiwan have often used erotica to criticise the social environment and men's values towards women, such as Chou Wen-Li's *Visual Taste* (2001) and Deng Wen-Jen's *Betel Nut* (2003). The works they have created are powerful because they question the line drawn between erotica and pornography, as judged by the viewers. Their works also directly and

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<sup>23</sup> Similar themes have been argued in Chapter 4 with the concepts of 'nei' and 'wai'.

<sup>24</sup> Some examples are Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1999) and Joyce Wieland's *Woman and Fox* (1986).

<sup>25</sup> Lorde, Audre, 'Use of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power' in Conboy, Katie, Nadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury (eds) *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p 278.

sharply criticise reality by focusing on subjects which might be considered as being taboo or scandalous. For example, Yen Ming-Hui's works (which will be discussed in greater detail in the latter part of the chapter) often showed naked bodies to the public, although she argued that they constituted neither erotica nor pornography. Even though society criticised her for exposing naked bodies in public, which prompted debates regarding pornography, she argued that she used 'essential bodies' to address the basic nature of human beings. Here, art became a sort of power for the artist that made people think, argue and respond. I therefore emphasise that body, as one of the most important subjects for art, creates a space for different voices and ways of thinking to interact, from which power emerges in the course of the unresolved arguments.

In *Sexuality & Power*, thirty artists were invited to participate in the show, of whom eight were women: Chien Fu-Yu, Lai Mei-Hua, Lee His, Lin Li-Hua, Lin Pey-Chwen, Shu Maggie Hsun-We, Tang Chiung-Sheng and Yen Ming-Hui. The involvement of women artists' in *Sexuality & Power* was the highest compared to the other categories in the exhibition. However, the percentage of women artists in this category is a highly distorted 26.6 percent. According to the number of women artists in the other categories, details of which are given in Table 2, it is evident that women artists' involvement in the *Taipei Biennial 1996* was very low, making up only ten percent of the total number of artists represented. The figure indicates that the artistic field in the mid 1990s was mainly dominated by men (all of the curators in each category are men!) and the category *Sexuality & Power* was the first exhibition that invited more women to participate in official exhibitions. The quest for gender identity is,

therefore, clearly revealed.

Table 2. Women Artists' Numbers in the Categories of the *Taipei Biennial 1996*

Category	Male Number	Female Number	Total Number	Total Percentage
Identity & Memories	20	1 (Wang Chun Hsiang)	21	4.7%
<i>Visual Dialogue</i>	35	2 (Lin Chun-Ju and Chen Chin)	37	5.5%
<i>Our Environment &amp; Our Life</i>	29	2 (Wang Te-Yu and Kuo Chuan-Chiu)	31	6.5%
<i>Sexuality &amp; Power</i>	22	8	30	26.6%
Total Number	106	13	119	10.9%

### ***Sexuality & Power***

As has already been argued, this category was curated so as to respond to the themes of identity, gender and body under the influences of globalisation and urbanism. The women artists, taking part in this category, gave expression to the perspectives that they took on this social phenomenon by combining their modern input into traditional ideology. Most of the works in the category were two-dimensional and they were mainly oil paintings. At the beginning of the post-martial law era, the Taiwanese artistic field absorbed Western traditions of oil painting, for various reasons but chiefly in order to declare their independence from Chinese painting styles. Women artists invited to display in this category comprised the very few women who were active in exhibitions and their works proposed the radical ideology of challenging the patriarchal prejudices of Taiwanese society. In other words, the invited women artists in this exhibition were the very few who were active at that time, so the selection of the artists was different from the way in which curators have selected artists



for exhibitions since the late 1990s. In the following section, I shall firstly introduce the work of Chien Fu-Yu, a feminist photographer, before moving on to discuss the women painters.

Identity of gender can be addressed by looking at some photographs by Chien Fu-Yu. Being a photographer and the current chairperson of the Awakening Foundation (a centre for progressive feminist activities in law, politics, society, culture and educational change, established in Taipei in 1987), Chien has taken photographs of Taiwanese women from all walks of life, including doctors, artists, sportswomen, musicians, nurses, teachers, chefs, mothers, women working in the rice fields and those worshipping in the temples. These photographs have been published in the *Awakening Foundation Magazine*, which was first printed in 1982. In the *Taipei Biennial 1996*, she exhibited several photographs of élite Taiwanese women born during the Japanese occupation [fig 62 and fig 63]. Her subjects include Yao Min-Hsuan, Taiwan's first woman news reporter after Taiwan's Retrocession in 1945, Chen Hsin-His, the first Taiwanese woman poet, who devoted her life to promoting poems about Taiwan after the Chinese nationalists took over Taiwan, and Chan Hsin-Mei. Born as a princess of the aboriginal Taiwanese Tayal tribe, Chan devoted her life to maintaining the traditional handicrafts and culture of her group.<sup>26</sup>

Chien Fu-Yu thus started her career as a photographer for the first feminist publication in Taiwan and she wrote short articles as introductions to these

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<sup>26</sup> See Chien, Fu-Yu. *Women • History: Sixty-Six Taiwanese Women's Photographs and Stories*. Taipei: Tipi Publisher, 2004, p 6.

women. Through Chien's photographs, the history of Taiwanese women's images was compiled and the artist captured the changes in women's modes of dress and fashion from the 1980s to the present. Her works have been gathered together in several albums, showing the different appearances of women in all areas and of different ages. Though having no complicated skills or techniques, Chien took photographs that were vividly familiar to her audience. If globalisation is to rebuild the life styles and ideology of people in Taiwan, Chien's portrayal of these bodies in her ideology is intensely precious. They form a virtual genealogy of those moments which have passed and have become history; through her work, traditions and cultures have been kept alive. Here, I demonstrate that the significance of her works, which present a documentation of the faces of Taiwanese women during the period of urbanisation, have formed an important part of the *Taipei Biennial 1996*, and have shown to the world both where Taiwanese women have come from, and their location in the history of Taiwan.

Here I argue that photographs are seen as the means, through which Chien has recorded the history of Taiwanese women. The concepts that Chien archived in the faces of women of different generations, professions, classes and even ethnic origins is similar to the attitude of the artists in the first two chapters, who have re-written Taiwan's historiography in order to rediscover the voices of the hidden women. Additionally, after having taken the photographs in this series for a period of twenty years (from 1982 to 2002), Chien published *Women • History: Sixty-Six Taiwanese Women's Photographs and Stories* (2004), a

selected collection of stories and photographs of sixty-six Taiwanese women.<sup>27</sup>

Originally trained as a painter in ink and silk paintings, Lin Li-Hua was invited to show her work, *Ye Zi-Mei and Mona Lisa* (1995) [fig 64]. Through this work, Lin criticised the influence of the press over values in Taiwanese society and how people appreciated the beauty of women. The woman on the left of the image is Ye Zi-Mei, who was a popular Taiwanese film actress. With her 'sexy' dress and heavy make-up, worn while posing in front of the neon lights of a nightclub, she displayed a typical kind of Westernised feminine beauty. This kind of Western dressing-up can be traced back to the influence of American culture in the 1950s and 1960s, at which time there were many American soldiers based in Taiwan during the Vietnam War.<sup>28</sup> In that period, girls who intended to attract American soldiers would dress up in styles which they thought replicated those of Western women. Even until the early 1990s, the Taiwanese thought that exposing women's bodies was what people regarded as a Western characteristic. Since the mid 1990s, an increasing number of films and TV programmes from the US have been shown in Taiwan and the impact of these has exercised control over the public's view towards foreign concepts of beauty. Additionally, heterosexual males' desires also strengthen this kind of gaze at the female body. The artist, Lin Li-Hua, challenged this

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> When North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, the US President, Harry Truman, intervened and dispatched the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Straits to prevent the forces of communist China from crossing to take over Taiwan. Taiwan therefore became a military base for the US during the 1950s in its struggle to maintain democracy in the Asia-Pacific region. From 1965 to 1972, American soldiers in the Vietnam War treated Taiwan as a holiday resort. There were about 500,000 American soldiers involved in the War, of which 210,000 came to Taiwan for rest and recuperation. The situation continued until 1980 when diplomatic relations between the American and Taiwanese governments officially ceased. During the time when thousands of Americans were staying in Taiwan, many nightclubs, pubs, restaurants and shops were opened with help from the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (a part of the American military units). See Formosa Television News, <http://www.ftvn.com.tw/Topic/CaringTW/TWnotes/0412.htm>, consulted on 2 June 2007.

ideology and raised questions about how women's bodies can be interpreted.

Lin also depicted another image beside that of Ye Zi-Mei, this one being the image of an overweight Mona Lisa. Being one of the most recognisable women in art history, Mona Lisa represents the archetypal noble, educated, middle-class and beautiful woman. What kind of confusion would occur in viewers' minds when they found that the ideal woman had increased significantly in weight? Does the body's appearance exclusively determine how attractive a woman is considered to be, and is the power of beauty stronger than a woman's intelligence and abilities? Through this work, all of these questions are exposed for the viewer to consider.

Lin also showed a further work, which warrants some comment. *Time Has Given Us Different Faces* (1994) [fig 65] reveals the inner myths of women in modern society. Being a wife, mother and daughter-in-law herself, Lin Li-Hua's early works depicted pretty young women in a Chinese style. They are reflections of her own image and life and they were created in the form of traditional Chinese silk paintings. In *Time Has Given Us Different Faces*, the artist placed two women in the background, dressed in the style of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), an era during which art and culture were highly developed and appreciated. The woman in the foreground, in the black dress, looks as if she is lost in her personal thoughts and worries. The contrast between these women makes the onlooker wonder what has made this young woman so preoccupied. Perhaps the answer comes from the rapid changes taking place in Taiwan's contemporary environment. In the following section, I aim to address the rapid social changes in contemporary Taiwan.

Taiwan's rapid industrialisation and the precipitate growth of its economy have affected people's lives greatly. Since globalisation has become one of the most essential Taiwanese government's policies, traditional ideology and its advocates face the challenge of how to change Taiwan's appearance to adjust to modern trends. Women, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, are strongly influenced by Confucianism which, for thousands of years, has cultivated the belief that women are inferior to men and that ignorance in women is regarded as a virtue. Taiwanese society expected that women should be clever enough not only to absorb modern knowledge but also to maintain the traditional values. Thus, from the distant past to the twenty-first century, women have constantly had to change their faces and bodies, but challenging patriarchal values has only become a serious task for them in the past forty years.

The next woman artist I shall introduce is Lin Pey-Chwen. The motifs of her work, *Antithesis and Intertext* (1995) [fig 66 and fig 67], echo those of Lin Li-Hua's *Yei Zi-Mei and Mona Lisa*. Both of these works were created in order to question the myth of beauty. Lin Pey-Chwen combined Confucian literature, women's portraits and embroidery skills to challenge men's views of beauty in women. In *Antithesis and Intertext*, the idea of using an arrangement of traditional Chinese fans was adopted to install the work. In the top left-hand part of the work, Lin arranged five images inside water lilies, depicting the conventional notion of beauty in women's faces in contemporary Taiwan. These are Western women's faces with large blue eyes, thick eyebrows, blond hair, high noses and full lips. In the bottom left-hand part of the work, Western women with large breasts are shown, whilst high-heeled shoes are presented

in the water lilies above. In the top right-hand section of the work, five representative Oriental women's faces grow from the water lilies, illustrating the stereotypical view of ancient beauty. Such Oriental beauties were said to have 'willow eyebrows, apricot eyes and a cherry mouth' (these were the terms used to describe a beautiful woman in classical Chinese Literature). Lotus shoes are placed in the central part of the right-hand section. Such shoes served as the tools by means of which women in both China and Taiwan, obtained the small feet that entitled them to lay claim to beauty and a superior status.

Some passages of text have been screen-printed and inserted amongst the images in order to emphasise the metaphors of the images. The text shown on the left gives instructions suggesting methods for enlarging the breasts such as 'increasing the height, enlarging the sizes, re-sculpting the shape of the breasts and lightening the colour of the nipples'.<sup>29</sup> The text on the right is about a woman's (Chin Shu Hsin's) experience of foot-binding:

I lived in a village called Font Head in the Ping His region, when I was a child. Small bound feet were always seen as a symbol of beauty in my village. My mother performed the binding for me when I was only six years old. My feet were washed firstly in warm water and my four toes were forced to bend inwards to the centre of the foot and then bound with strips as tightly as possible [...] I felt sick and was unable to walk [...]<sup>30</sup>

The text and images refer to a practice whereby women's bodies were

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<sup>29</sup> Lin, Pey-Chwen. *The Position of Women in Taiwan's Social Structure Reflected in Contemporary Arts Practice*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wollongong, Faculty of Creative Arts, Australia, 1996, p 117.

<sup>30</sup> Ke, Chi-Sheng. *Three-inch Golden Lotus Shoes*. Taipei: Business Information Magazine Publisher, 1995, p100. Also cited in Lin, P. C., *ibid.*

reconstructed in an artificial way in order to be seen as a beautiful object. The text presented by means of embroidery on satin has a strong link with the metaphorical content of this work. Lin Pey-Chwen criticised women who followed the public values by deforming their bodies in order to meet the social standards of having a perfect and beautiful body. By challenging this male-oriented ideology and the influences of the mass media, her works gave rise to a debate in a still conservative Taiwanese society in the mid 1990s.

In Lin's doctoral dissertation, she confirmed that what inspired her to work in feminist research was her own experience of gender oppression in society. Lin's impulse to be a feminist artist is typical of the early post-martial law Taiwanese women artists, most of whom had endured difficulties due to patriarchal hierarchy. She states that:

I finally realised that although with all my best intentions and personal efforts to overcome traditional female submission, I still could not change the fixed and conventional definition and role of a woman. For example, I suffered misunderstanding and took the blame from my husband because I put more time and energy into my artworks instead of into childcare [...]<sup>31</sup>

Being one of the first Taiwanese feminist women artists, Lin's earlier works were created primarily to challenge patriarchal values in Taiwan. From *Antithesis and Intertext*, she criticised the 'materialised female bodies' and the male's gaze in modern society, which was restricted within Confucian values. After the feminist movement was launched in Taiwan in the late 1980s, Taiwanese feminist artists argued that gender issues should be the main

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<sup>31</sup> Lin, P. C., op cit, p 4.

theme of their works, but they have recently shifted their attention to the underprivileged parts of society, such as to the working-class women, as demonstrated above, in chapter two. In Lin Pey-Chwen's recent works, the artist has switched her focus away from essential feminist issues to a consideration of the subject matter related to society. The purpose of discussing this work is to illustrate the fact that contemporary feminist women artists have expressed their concerns and criticisms with regard to wider parts of society, instead of merely to gender issues.

Lin's *Beautiful Life* (2004) [fig 68 and fig 69] was created for a group exhibition called *Nexus: Taiwan in Queens* held at the Queens Museum of Arts in New York in 2004. Through this work, the artist transferred her concern from gender issues to express a more wide-ranging social conscience. *Beautiful Life* was a large-scale installation and was shown in the traditional way of Chinese paintings, whereby paintings are hung from the ceiling and supported by wooden poles at the top and bottom. This work resembles a Chinese landscape painting produced during the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1234). She uses digital techniques to print newspaper cuttings on vinyl, which represents a modern landscape instead of an ancient one. The tones and colours of the newspaper cuttings were similar to those of old ink-on-paper paintings, resulting in a modern high-tech artwork, which created a sense of the antique and the traditional. When looking more closely at the work, the viewers realise that the text comes from recent newspaper cuttings and notice that they reflect the problems and circumstances of modern Taiwan. With the indistinct and intense text of the print, a sense of the chaos and disorder of Taiwan's current predicament is depicted.



A feminist woman artist's concern has thus gone beyond the gender boundaries, and women, as a subject, have become sufficiently confident to adopt a higher viewpoint and observe matters that transcend gender, society, nature and politics.<sup>32</sup> Examining Lin's works is like looking at the development of Taiwanese women artists as a whole, and the way in which feminist women artists have acquired a new perspective concerning their environment as gender issues have become a less serious problem. In the development of feminism, 'first-wave feminism lobbied for enfranchisement and for equal assessment of professions and property for women while second-wave feminism urged for liberation from the oppressiveness of a patriarchal society'.<sup>33</sup> Lin's *Beautiful Life* has demonstrated that Taiwanese women artists have surpassed the periods of first-wave and second-wave feminism and their focus has gone beyond gender issues to the wider frames of society. Less than ten years has elapsed between the dates when the two works, *Antithesis and Intertext* and *Beautiful Life*, were created; I propose that this indicates the fact that the development of Taiwan's women's art has accelerated greatly within a short period of time.

The next artist to be considered is Yen Ming-Hui, whose work, *A Man and a Woman* (1988) [fig 70] was exhibited at the *Taipei Biennial 1996*. Yen Ming-Hui is also one of those women artists who returned to Taiwan after living and studying abroad in the late 1980s. She started her career as a feminist

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<sup>32</sup> Lin Pey-Chwen's other work, *Baby: Back to Nature* (2000), shown in *Sweet and Sour Yeast* (2000-2001), also echoes this attitude.

<sup>33</sup> See Pilcher, Jane and Imelda Whelehan. *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. London: Sage, 2004, p 144.

artist by creating paintings with figurative images of fruits, which are reminiscent of sex organs. One of her most famous works, *Three Apples* (1988) [fig 71], has half an apple in the middle, while two whole apples are placed in front. The cut apple which is partly hidden at the back shows its core in a triangular shape framed by the two fruits at the front. The three bright-red apples occupy nearly the whole space of the painting, and this gives the viewer a strong sense of fullness and tension. Through the artist's painting skills, the images are represented in great detail and the core obviously acts as a metaphor for a woman's genitals and anus.

In *A Man and a Woman*, the artist illustrates a man and a woman on the left and right sides of the image, separating their bodies into four sections. Here, Rene Magritte's surrealist style is used to present details of objects. Several other objects are connected to imply complete bodies; roses, a cat, a suit, a portrait of a Western man, a woman's face with sun glasses, a woman's breasts, bottom and bare feet are all depicted in this painting. Having been trained in Western painting for her first degree and having received a master's degree in New York, Yen has good oil painting skills to record details of objects. In *A Man and a Woman*, the female's genitals are not shown, however, a yellow ribbon is tied around a highly detailed penis, reversing the traditional focus, which would normally have the woman exposed and the man hidden. Yen has been described as 'the first female artist in Taiwan to express an explicitly feminist creative consciousness'.<sup>34</sup> As she is the premier feminist artist, whilst expressing her feminist opinions she has encountered a lot of difficulties from

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<sup>34</sup> Lu, Victoria. 'Striving for a Cultural Identity in the Maze of Power Struggles: A Brief Introduction to the Development of Contemporary Art of Taiwan' in Gao, Minglu (ed). *Inside Out: New Chinese Art*. Exh. Cat, University of California Press, 1998, p 170.

the art establishment and the public, however, when discussing the history of early feminist arts development in Taiwan, Yen is the one artist who cannot be ignored.

In Yen's works, fruits, bodies and other objects are treated symbolically so as to express her views of the body and exposure, for which similar examples may be found among Western feminist artists, as will be discussed below. The American feminist artist Judy Chicago states that 'I felt myself to be both the image/surface and the artist working on that painting simultaneously. The canvas was like my own skin; I was the painting and the painting was me'.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, another woman artist, Georgia O'Keeffe, who spent much of her time painting flowers with a gender metaphor, denied the relationship between her works and femininity. In *Through the Flower* (1975), Chicago asserts that 'O'Keeffe [...] resisted articulating her commitment to a female art, despite the fact that her work clearly reflects that commitment'.<sup>36</sup> In Taiwan, there are also several women artists who have denied the remarks that their works were relevant to feminist or gender discourses, although they revealed the strength of femininity or feminism. For example, Yen Ming-Hui refused to be labelled as a feminist artist but affirms that the fruits in her works are metaphors for women:

When painting fruits, I often felt as if I was painting a woman, although I was not sure if I was painting another woman or myself. [...] Sometimes when men and women were together, men would make women think that they were like fruits: delicious, sweet, soft and juicy. The reason why I

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<sup>35</sup> Chicago, Judy. *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*. New York: Penguin Books, 1975, p 142.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p 177.

depicted grapes resembling human breasts was merely by instinct. In my experience, it was like 'eating grapes' [when men were with women]. Allow me to say that it was a praise for women!<sup>37</sup>

By creating images of fruits, Yen expresses the essence and desires of women's bodies through sensory experiences of sight, taste and touch. By creating figurative fruits and human bodies, she dilutes the suppression and tension of sexual desires. However, the styles of her works have raised controversial debates in the conservative social environment of Taiwan during the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

In Chinese (Han) philosophy, bodies should be covered as much as possible and it is generally discourteous to have any bodily contact between men and women in public. In Confucianism, a proverb, which has been practised for thousands of years, says that 'no gazing is polite' (*Fei Li Wu Shi*). In Chinese philosophy, it is not appropriate to look at women's bodies, nor to discuss them in the public realm. This value is similar to the tenets of a religious belief and it conforms with Buddhist principles. Buddhist nuns and monks cover up all gender characteristics; no hair is tolerated on the head and only baggy gowns are worn. They seem to repudiate the biological differences among human beings and actually they disregard all of the desires of being human. However, Buddhists are viewed as those individuals who have the highest morals in Chinese-influenced society and their ideology suppresses Taiwanese society's wish to view bodies and to express one's sexuality and desires. As a result, Yen's works were hardly accepted by many people and

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<sup>37</sup> Yen Ming-Hui 'Grapes • Human beings • Glass with Night Lights' in Hui Huang Shih Tai. *Yen Ming-Hui Art Catalogue 1988-90*. Taipei, 1990, no page numbers.

she was seriously criticised as 'a yelling, failed and devoured woman'.<sup>38</sup>

Apart from her artistic style, Yen made her unsuccessful marriage the subject of her works and also published articles in newspapers after divorcing Jang Jen-Yu, a well-known male artist. However, having been called a feminist artist, she insisted that she was a 'humanist' artist, as what she is concerned with is merely humanity rather than sexuality:

A few people viewed me as a painter with a topic of sex; in fact, I am a painter concerned with humanity. Sexuality is a part of humanity. Having painted women's breasts or a man's penis does not mean that I am painting sex (if so, it is like putting the most important part of being a human to the lowest level: biology). What I do is to address the fact that humanity in society has been limited to the frame of sexuality; therefore, both men's and women's lives cannot be developed completely and it has sacrificed the meaning of each individual simply to maintain the propagation of human beings.<sup>39</sup>

Feminism falls under the larger umbrella of humanism, as it seeks what should be provided to women (who are regarded as inferior and subalterns). What Yen argues through her works is that the 'other' should be as important as the 'subject' and there should be a balance in terms of power in gender issues in society. Sexuality and sexual characteristics, as elements of humanity, deserve to be paid equal attention as integral parts of our lives.

In Yen's works, she likes to juxtapose objects to form a balanced arrangement.

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<sup>38</sup> Hou, Yi-Jen. 'Are the Hidden Voices Heard: A Discussion about Art and Life with Yen Ming-Hui' in Hou Ke International Art. *Yen Ming-Hui Art Catalogue*. Taipei, 1995, p 5.

<sup>39</sup> Yen Ming-Hui. 'Water, Moon, Dream and Shadow: On a Solo Exhibition of "Empty Flowers Series"' in Hou Ke International Art, op cit, p 10.

For example, in *A Man and a Woman*, the images of the male and the female figures are arranged evenly over the whole area of the painting, and other objects are balanced with each other by their colours and shapes, implying that the world is composed of both simple and complex binary relationships. Yen addresses the fact that men's and women's bodies both exist in nature, although males are granted the central position, both in Eastern and Western traditions. Her works do not comply with society's traditional expectations of what women artists should create - usually landscapes, still lives, flowers and nature. On the contrary, her works are so powerful as to unveil women's bodies, by which a certain power is exerted to force society to inspect the hidden, inner force, nature and mystery of bodies.

When Taiwan's society was still very conservative in the early 1990s, artists began to give expression through their paintings to issues relating to the body. Accordingly, some artists chose to address this topic in an indirect way, that is, to manifest it through an imaginary body rather than realistic images of the body. In this category, another artist and painter, Lai Mei-Hua, exhibited her work *Face of a Woman* (1995) [fig 72]. Lai Mei-Hua's works are different from Yen Ming-Hui's, even though they both use body as a theme for their works. Although she was one of the artists who started to create works relating to gender and bodies in the early 1990s, Lai did not receive as much criticism as Yen owing to the fact that she used illustration skills to present sexuality symbolically. Both Yen and Lai received their bachelor's degrees from the National Taiwan Normal University but they have each created their own styles according to their different characteristics and methods. Unlike those by Yen, Lai's works are suggestive of illustrations for stories, full of imaginary colours,

de-constructed shapes and fairy-tale creatures, such as, for example *Happiness* (1990) [fig 73]. In *Face of a Woman*, the artist twists and deforms the shape of a face, so that it looks as if it is scowling and distressed. The artist herself describes this work in the following terms: '*Face of a Woman*: the hopeless souls, full of desires, sadness, suffering, anger and despair. To tear the well-known face and to further explore the complicated inner world of women'.<sup>40</sup>

In this painting, heart-shaped lips or labia can be seen at the centre of the painting and the eyes which are depicted to their right, look resignedly at the viewer. The painting looks as if it was the artist's dream, a dream in which the whole world was turning round, and furthermore, it resembles the thoughts of a woman in pursuit of her memories. According to the artist's statements, this is a woman's face showing sadness and this sadness perhaps results from the suppression of her sexual instinct.

For feminists, oppression comes not only from men but also from other women including their mothers, sisters and colleagues, who drag them back in obedience to their traditions and insist on the acceptance of domination. For those feminist artists who initiated the debate about gender and body in the early and mid 1990s, their battle was fought both with their male counterparts and also with other women who prevented them from succeeding. One example can be seen in Lai's experience. In *Power of Women's Creation* (1994), Lai asserted in an interview that '[o]ne day I created a painting. After

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<sup>40</sup> Taipei Fine Arts Museum, *Mind and Spirit: Women's Art in Taiwan*. Exh Cat., Taipei, 1998, p 119.

seeing it, my Mum said “disgusting” and then went back home. She never came to see my exhibition’.<sup>41</sup>

Although martial law was lifted in 1987, the Taiwanese artistic field did not respond to the political changes spontaneously because Taiwanese society was not completely liberal. According to Wang Yako, Chiang Wen-Yu, a Taiwanese scholar, explained that:

It was not until 1994 that Broadcast and Television Laws were abolished and since then, programmes in the Taiwanese language, concerning politics and social discussions were legally allowed in society. From 1995 or 1996, all sorts of voices were able to be heard and society started to pay attention to more aspects of groups of people in Taiwan.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from several essential publications on feminism and the grassroots associations related to gender, which mushroomed within a short period of time, social transformation on gender issues was initially brought into the public realm.<sup>43</sup> Feminists were essentially looking at the social and cultural differences between men and women resulting from their biology. In *Reframing Women* (1995), Hilary Robinson addresses the binary relations existing between men and women:

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<sup>41</sup> See Hou, Yi-Jen. *Power of Women's Creation*. Taiwan: Hsin-Sheng-Tai Art Space, 1994, p 77.

<sup>42</sup> Wang, Y., op cit, pp 230-231.

<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that since the mid 1990s, there have been more and more discussions about gender in Taiwan's society. It is not only because of the lifting of the Broadcast and Television Laws but also because of several influential books on gender issues being published, including *Report of Taiwanese Women's Living Conditions: 1995* (China Times Publishing, 2005), *Feminist Theories and Trends* (Fembook Publisher, 1996), *Women, Nation and Caretakers* (Fembook Publisher, 1997), etc. Additionally, with the increasing number of higher-educated women returning to Taiwan from abroad (mainly from the US), several women's associations, both grassroots institutions and educational units, were established to change the unequal situation of Taiwanese women. See Wang, Y., *ibid*, pp 169-257.



Binary positions have been mapped onto each other, leading to ever-increasing polarity, with the male/rational/mind/culture axis claiming supremacy over that which it can then call 'Other' and relegate to subordinate and marginal positions: the female/emotional/body/nature axis.<sup>44</sup>

In this statement, women's characteristics are clearly confirmed. Whatever their race, class or age, women tend to be regarded indiscriminately by men as 'Other'. Mary Kelly argues that 'the specific contribution of feminists [in the field of performance] has been to pose the question on the construction not of the individual but of the sexed subject'.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, 'sexed' has been the main focus of discourse in feminist discussion and 'others/object' is used for the key arguments about the power of sexuality. Feminists in the 1970s clearly proposed the question of identity, both with regard to gender and body; moreover, 'body' has been chosen by several Western women artists as the theme to express their views when creating art.

The woman's body, being an object of male artists' preoccupation, has been central to Western and Eastern art history. As has been widely discussed, women have always been the object of nude and erotic art, created by both the Old Masters (all men) and modern men's pornography magazines, whilst men have always been those who have painted and gazed at naked women and dominated the art markets. In Chinese art history, although most women in ancient paintings were not depicted in the nude, they needed to be very slim, engaged in some form of handicraft or shown within a natural setting to conform to men's standards of female beauty. In the East and West, women

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<sup>44</sup> Robinson, op cit, p 535.

<sup>45</sup> Kelly, Mary. *Imaging Desire*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1996, p 95.

have been objects in art history in various ways. In *Sexuality & Power*, the work of one male artist, Hou Chun-Ming, explores the suffering of men whose women have abandoned them following the awakening of feminist consciousness. His work attracted much public attention as it criticised feminism, which conflicted with the perspectives argued by Shieh and most other women artists. Nevertheless, Hou's work provided a different space for the audience to consider positions for each gender in the mid 1990s. In his work *New Paradise* (1996) [fig 74 and fig 75], Hou uses woodblock prints to produce images of women and men accompanied by some statements of his viewpoints. In *New Paradise*, he states that men and women were originally created by God to be a complete unit but women cut the link between them and left in order to search for independence. The statement shown beside the images claims that:

No one can interrupt and no matter how much it costs, women are going to fight for their equal rights. Losing the love of the vagina, even a strong man cannot tolerate this kind of pain. Women, however, luckily got a penis from men and became stronger.<sup>46</sup>

The way in which Hou presents this work is an example of how men considered feminists in Taiwan in the mid 1990s. In other words, they were thought of as being ugly, frightening and monstrous. Whether it was deliberate or not that Hou exhibited this work to smear the image of feminists, he and Shieh had created a dialogue with the public to consider to what extent feminism could be accepted in Taiwanese society.

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<sup>46</sup> The statements are written in the artist's woodblock print.

Moira Gatens describes the ways in which women, who dare to let their different voices be heard, are treated in society, and it is interesting to cite her words at some length:

In our relatively recent history, the strategies for silencing those who have dared to speak in another voice, of another reason and another ethic, are instructive. Here I will mention two strategies that seem to be dominant in the history of feminist interventions. The first is to 'animalise' the speaker, the second, to reduce her to her 'sex'. Women who step outside their allotted place in the body politic are frequently abused with terms like: harpy, virago, vixen, bitch, shrew; terms that make it clear that if she attempts to speak from the political body, about the political body, her speech is not recognised as human speech.<sup>47</sup>

Hou's work expresses this kind of male anxiety when women start to be conscious of their freedom and voice. The evidence suggests that in the mid 1990s, Taiwanese men could not accept and tolerate the growing feminist ideology when they were confronted with the new appearances and values of women. As all of the curators in each category in the *Taipei Biennial 1996* were male, I argue that in the mid 1990s, the Taiwanese artistic field was still male-dominated although they had shown their willingness to embrace Western feminist ideas by curating a show with concepts of gender. The result, in the mid 1990s, was that a male curator's approach to devising a feminist exhibition was not as complete as he had planned.<sup>48</sup> Lisa Tickner states that 'Living *in* a female body is different from looking *at* it, as a man.

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<sup>47</sup> Gatens, Moira. 'Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic' in Conboy et al (eds), op cit, p 84.

<sup>48</sup> Here, I need to explain that I do not mean that male curators cannot organise feminist shows. Exhibitions will only be directed and curated in a more mature way when society has become liberal enough to accept the feminists' intentions and to cooperate with them.

Even the Venus of Urbino menstruated, as women know and men forget'.<sup>49</sup> The decision, therefore, to engage Shieh as the curator for the category, *Sexuality & Power*, confirms the fact that the Taiwanese artistic community was still at the early stage of developing feminism in the mid 1990s.

In my view, the category *Sexuality & Power* served as an important starting point for women artists to consider their artistic creation, how to demonstrate their political views as feminist artists and how to adapt their works to visualise the social and cultural surroundings in the mid 1990s. With the increasing influence of globalisation, the re-interpretation of Westernisation and traditions and the change in women's social/political classes in Taiwanese society, a broader understanding for women to create and express their art and attitudes has come into being. It seems to be ushering in a new age when women can finally overcome their traditional absence from Taiwan's art history.

### **Identity Within Globalisation**

With rapid social change and the surge in economic growth, the Taiwanese should endeavour to re-position those aspects of their ethnic and cultural inheritance which are authentic and local, to avoid being culturally colonised once again by the trends of globalisation and Westernisation. In describing Taiwanese society, Kurt Brereton states that 'the very idea of a single Taiwan is an abject fiction or utopian ideal [that] falls far short of the political and social reality of what being on the island means today'.<sup>50</sup> In short, the ideas of

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<sup>49</sup> Tickner, Lisa. 'The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists Since 1970' in Betterton, Rosemary (ed). *Looking on Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*. London: Pandora, 1987, p 238.

<sup>50</sup> Brereton, op cit, p 62.

Taiwanese presence are still (and constantly) being formulated. In consequence of this fact, the efforts of re-considering and visualising what can be viewed as hybridised and transformed Taiwanese culture and identities, is a task for contemporary Taiwanese artists to work towards.

The *Taipei Biennial 1996* was the first official exhibition to announce the demand for identity at a time when the Taipei government had grasped the fact that one of the most important issues for societies in the Asian-Pacific countries to consider seriously, when confronting globalisation, was the quest for their own identity, individuality and national culture. Terence Chong shows that, according to the British political theorist Anthony Smith, some of the characteristics needed for the development of a sense of national culture and belonging are

the existence of social ties in the form of shared belief and myths of ancestry; a sense of common history and destiny; shared language and religion; identification with a specific geographical territory, all of which allows societies to form an ethnic [identity].<sup>51</sup>

Given that Taiwan's political identity is vague, one way of promoting Taiwan's image as a sovereign state is to organise major artistic and cultural events, such as the *Taipei Biennial*. They permit themes such as national and cultural belonging and shared memories and history to be presented. Hence, I am emphasising that art is a gentle but strong tool, which engenders both curators' and artists' concepts about society and it gradually affects the viewers' ideology locally, nationally and globally. The *Taipei Biennial*, is the means

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<sup>51</sup> Chong, op cit, p 29.

which utilises the idea that Taiwan, as an autonomous unit and community, is capable of expressing its people's sense of belonging and identity. The *Taipei Biennial* has thus become an agent for embodying the government's strategy for confronting globalisation and the changing world situation.

Before I conclude this chapter, I suggest that *Sexuality & Power* was arranged to fill the gap of a lack of curatorial themes on issues of gender in Taiwan's official galleries, and that it came about as a result of a large number of essays on women's art frequently published in *Artist* magazine between 1993 and 1995.<sup>52</sup> Articles on women's art were rarely published in Taiwan before the early 1990s. This exhibition was the spark which ignited the demand for themed women's exhibitions in Taiwan and this is the reason why I chose this show as the starting point for my research. *Sexuality & Power* has had a significant impact on women's shows in Taiwan. Despite the fact that there is some criticism about how Shieh was appointed as the curator of this category,

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<sup>52</sup> Articles on (Taiwanese) women's arts published in *Artist* magazine before 1996 include Victoria Lu's *The Development and Enlightenment of Chinese Women's Art* (1993) and *The Dialogue between Woman Artists and Writers* (1993); Lu Tien-Yen's *Enthusiasm and Catharsis – Self-portraits and Ego Images of Lin Pei-Chun* (1993); Hou Yi-Jen's *The Power of Women and the Legend of Cures – the Reasons why Women Need to Congregate* (1994); Lai Ming-Ch's *The Social Status and Limitation of Women Artists – a Study of the Paintings of the Huang Sisters in Shulin in the 1930s and 1940s* (1994); Lin Pey-Chwen's *Is Abstract Expressionism in Opposition with Feminist Art?* (1994) and *A Study of Female Identity, as Judged by the Standards of Beauty from the Distant Past till Nowadays* (1995); Shih Jui-Jen's *The Confrontation of Life and Nature – a Critique of the Art Exhibition by Chiu Tzu-Yuan* (1995), *Some Thoughts on 'Feminine Art' in Taiwan and Their Potential Development* (1995) and *No Scaffolds – "Women's Awareness" Has Started* (1995); Fu Chia-Hui's *Re-examining Femininity and Feminine Arts – a Discussion of the History and the Theory of Feminine Arts Constructed by Griselda Pollock* (1995); Hou Chun-Min's *Feminism is a Strategy* (1995); Wu Mali's *We Are Women and We Are very Great! – on Miriam Schapiro, a Leader of Feminist Arts in the 1970s* (1995), *There was a Movement of Feminist art in history – on Faith Wilding, a Tutor of Feminist Arts* (1995), *Retrospection and Introspection of American Feminist Art and Education in the 1970s* (1995); Hsiao Chiung-Jui's *Establishing a Viewpoint on Femininity* (1995); Hsieh Hung-Chun's *Searching for a Balance* (1995); Lin Chun-Ju's *A Study of Self-esteem and the Identification of Beauty from the Series of Work "Lilies" – the New Art Exhibition by Lin Pei-Chun* (1995); Kao Chien-Hui's *A Debate on "Greatness" – a Discussion of Popular Exhibitions and Lectures on Gender* (1995); Tao Tzu's *Hermaphrodites – a New Viewpoint on Feminist Art* (1995); Wang Chia-Chi's *Vision and Difference – a Discussion of Several Exhibitions by Contemporary Women Artists* (1995).

this exhibition has encouraged more and more curatorial women's shows in Taiwan from the mid 1990s. Here, it is interesting to make the connections between *Sexuality & Power*, the *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition* and *Lords of the Rim: in Herself/ for Herself* as the last two shows have strong concepts to construct what was ignored in the *Taipei Biennial 1996*. Wu Mali denounces the role of Shieh and the structure of the Biennial by asserting that '[this show] looks more like a report of severe sexual discrimination in Taiwan'.<sup>53</sup> The presentation of this show was an early trial for organising a 'women's' show and even though the curatorial concerns were not complete, this show did contribute to the promotion of Taiwan in the international art scene. From 1998, the *Taipei Biennial* has been conducted by two curators: one Taiwanese and one established foreign curator. Additionally, the *Taipei Biennial 1998* was designed as an international show by inviting artists from the island and from abroad, through which the government's ambition is expressed to promote Taiwan's images as a globally independent entity.

As cities begin to expand, to develop and to create their own unique characteristics and properties, the women in this kind of environment are required to adjust their way of thinking in order to catch up with the new trends in urban areas. It is in this context that a re-interpretation of traditional values is essential in order to survive. Thus, women in urban areas have the possibility of de-constructing the old values that have been imposed upon them and this has encouraged more and more women's art exhibitions, providing them with a chance to transform the traditions of their worlds.

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<sup>53</sup> Wu, Mali. 'There Isn't Enough Femininity behind the 1996 *Taipei Biennial*' in *China Times*, 24 August 1996, p 39.

Through large-scale exhibitions, a new appearance of women's art is emerging and it is becoming a powerful means to encourage the public to re-consider sexuality and gender identity. Most importantly, contemporary exhibitions visualise Taiwanese women's lives and culture, and what is perceived as the complexity of being Taiwanese.



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**Cyberfeminism and Discourses of Identity:**

***From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age (2003)***

In 2003, the first Taiwanese women's technology exhibition, *From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age* [fig 76], was held in the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts [fig 77], organised by the Taiwanese Women's Art Association (TWAA). This was its second annual members' exhibition and was on show between 8 May and 27 July 2003.<sup>1</sup> The subtitle of this show was 'The First International Women's Art Festival in Taiwan' and the show was curated to echo the celebration of Women's Day.<sup>2</sup> The curator, Chen Elsa Hsiang-Chun, invited Taiwanese women, and women artists living and working in Asia, to respond to the phenomenon of developing high technology and cyberspace in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in Taiwan. The theme of the show was to investigate how technology has increasingly influenced lives of women and how cyberspace has changed women's attitudes to sexuality and identities.<sup>3</sup> This exhibition included many installations and technological artistic works, very different from what women were creating in the mid 1990s, and different from what I have examined in previous chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> The first members' exhibition was entitled, *Sweet and Sour Yeast: A Sweet Conversation between Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory and Taipei Winery*, held at the Hua-Shan Arts District in Taipei and the Kia-A-Thau Art Village in Kaohsiung in 2001 and 2003. More details are given in Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> International Women's Day takes place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April every year but the date did not match the time scheduled for the show. Nevertheless, another important day for women in Taiwan, Mother's Day, influenced by American culture, is on the second Sunday of May each year. The exhibition, hence, responds to Mother's Day rather than International Women's Day, even though the latter is used as the title for the show.

<sup>3</sup> Chen, Elsa Hsiang-Chun. 'Cultural Transition in the Technological Age: *From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age*' in Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts. *From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age, The First International Women's Art Festival in Taiwan*, 2003. Exh. Cat., Kaohsiung, 2003, pp 16-17.

In this chapter, I investigate how the Taiwanese government is focusing its nation's resources on technology and how the direction of this development becomes a trend not only in Taiwan but also in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. I then argue the relationship between technology and women by relating the story of Ada Lovelace and her discovery of the significant link between weaving and computer science. A new binary order established via technology will be demonstrated with a comparison of the binary relationship in gender. Before looking at some artworks as evidence for my argument, I argue that issues affecting the minorities and the identity of Taiwanese women (as one of the main labour forces in the industry of global computer production) are becoming seen in cyberspace.

### **Cyberspace and Visual Art**

Chen invited the well-known cyberfeminist artist, Faith Wilding, to publish her article, *Where is Feminism in Cyberfeminism?*, in the exhibition catalogue. As a result, the term, cyberfeminism, became the main theme around which the show was organised. Cyberfeminism, which first appeared as a phenomenon in the 1970s but only began to be discussed in the early 1990s, argues that the internet and technology have provided women with a new means of addressing gender issues.<sup>4</sup> Cyberfeminism responds to contemporary global art trends and emerges with the increased interest in technology. The use of cyberfeminism as a focus for this exhibition marks recognition of the fact that technology has played an important role in Taiwan's society and that

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<sup>4</sup> In *On the Matrix: Cyberfeminist Simulations*, Sadie Plant stated that '[t]he cyberfeminist virus first began to make itself known in the early 1990s.' See Kirkup, Gill, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden (eds). *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp 265-266.

technology has been one of the Taiwanese government's primary policies for developing the island.

The notion of cyberfeminism as a theme in Taiwan is provoked directly by the change of government's policies and indirectly by the growth in people's wealth, which allows them to afford computers and broadband facilities, whilst the trend of industrialisation in the Asia-Pacific region has brought technology to people's lives. In many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, IT and high technology have become a major strategy for their respective governments to develop their nations' economy and environment. This trend has been developed as the strategy to promote the images of many nations in Asia, including South Korea, Japan, Singapore etc, and to upgrade each nation from *developing* to *developed* status through the growth of their economy. As a result of the Taiwanese government's decision to develop high technology as a means to survive in the global economy, a cyber-world has, therefore, influenced most people's lives in Taiwan. This phenomenon is evident in the everyday use of microwave ovens, televisions, radios, computers, air conditioners, etc. The power and influence of government policy encourages the idea of a media environment, which has facilitated the rapid growth of wireless communication and cyber culture. After hundreds of years of colonisation by different nations and cultures, Taiwan eventually decided to embrace technology in order to catch up with the globalised world environment after gaining its democracy and freedom in 1987.

Cyberspace and technology have provided us with an indefinite space which anyone from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds has the chance to

access; therefore, once people are on-line, there is no geopolitical division of race, gender and colour. In *East Asia, Globalization and the New Economy* (2006), Gerard Adams asserts that '[n]ew communication and networking technologies enable East Asian countries to participate more easily, more effectively, and more widely in the "new economy" and e-business world'.<sup>5</sup> According to Adams's argument, East Asian countries are experiencing an e-world where things can be communicated and transported by technology and this phenomenon has also facilitated women's exposure to the easily-accessed and imaginary world, created by technology and the internet. Consequently, how women consider their traditional roles will be interpreted in this inorganic environment: cyberspace.<sup>6</sup>

In Taiwan, the first technology exhibition, *French VIDEO Show*, was shown in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in 1984.<sup>7</sup> This exhibition initially brought Western ideas of video and high-tech works to the island and introduced a modern artistic language to Taiwan's art circles. Since then, kinetic art, light art, cybernetic art, neon art, video art and high-tech art have been widely experienced and explored by Taiwanese artists. It was after the Taiwanese government's policies announced the importance of technology as a part of the

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<sup>5</sup> Adams, F Gerard. *East Asia, Globalization, and the New Economy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p 4.

<sup>6</sup> Either inorganic or non-organic environment refers to the situation where things are not organic and do not include living creatures or animals in nature. As a result, inorganic environment shows neither the difference between sex/gender nor any human characteristics; only cyborgs exist there. Inorganic environment in the text means the time when the transference of information and the use of technology have dominated our lives rather than the contacts or exchange of individuals. This environment is what I define as 'cyberspace'.

<sup>7</sup> Chen Wen-Yao noted that the first technology art exhibition in Taiwan was *French VIDEO Show* shown in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and although the show only lasted for nine days, it made the term 'tech art' well known in the artistic field. Chen, Wen-Yao. *Beyond the Deception of a City without Residents – A Critique of Yuan Goang-Ming's Solo Exhibitions 'Human Disqualified'*, MA Dissertation. Taiwan: Tainan National University of the Arts, The Graduate Institute of Art History and Art Criticism, 2001, p 56.

nation's development that technological arts started to receive more sponsors than ever, which has therefore created a trend to which artists, art critics and curators devoted much more attention.<sup>8</sup> The interest in technology arose in the artistic field not only because of the improvement of facilities and science but also because of the increase of public funding for projects relating to high-tech art. For example, this show was funded by several government institutions, including the Ministry of Education, the Council for Cultural Affairs of Executive Yuan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bureau of Cultural Affairs of Kaohsiung City Government, the Cultural Bureau of Kaohsiung County Government and the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Taipei. In addition, the exhibition was successfully supported by several private sponsors.<sup>9</sup>

In 2002, Taiwan's authorities launched the six-year *Challenge 2008 Development Plan* to 'foster the creativity and talent Taiwan needs to transform itself into a green silicon island'.<sup>10</sup> When arguing that art is one of the

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<sup>8</sup> In recent years, there have been several foundations and institutes established with an aim to support the development of high-tech art in Taiwan. These organizations include the Yageo Foundation and the Asian Cultural Council in Taipei. From 2002, the Yageo Foundation and the Asian Cultural Council started a co-operative project, entitled the Yageo Tech-Art Award, to annually sponsor a Taiwanese artist for a six-month residency in New York, which suggests the fact that technological arts have more advantages, in terms of public attention and funding than traditional art. Further details can be found at <http://www.yageofoundation.org>. Before the award was established, it has been a kind of phenomenon in Taiwan's artistic community that art creation and curatorial projects based on technology, rather than traditional materials, tend to receive more funding and awards from the National Art and Cultural Foundation and major competitions held in the museums.

<sup>9</sup> The list of sponsors can be found in the exhibition catalogue, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts. Ibid., p 172. After the exhibition finished, the TWAA was awarded a grant to help to cover the loss caused by the unexpected influence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which was spreading on the island during the period when the exhibition was being held. The TWAA was sponsored for the sum of 58,685 Taiwanese dollars (approximately £948) by the National Culture and Arts Foundation in August 2003 and the funds were to cover the loss of organising an international conference regarding the exhibition. The loss included the expenses of publicity, insurance, tickets and travelling for speakers.

<sup>10</sup> This statement is cited from Brereton, op cit, p 189. The background of announcing this policy can be found from the huge amount of Taiwan's export business of electronic and electrical products. According to the data of the Taiwan Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers Association (TEEMA), the production of electronic and electrical products in Taiwan in 2005 was worth 1,707.6 billion US dollars (about £883.68 billion), which is about

interfaces through which to observe a nation's ideology and cultures, this exhibition has indicated that technology has become one of the most popular mediums for Taiwanese women artists to consider their roles in the twenty-first century.

According to Faith Wilding, the question of how to define cyberfeminism is related to two aspects contemporary women are working with: 'new technologies and feminist politics'.<sup>11</sup> For Wilding, cyberfeminist artists are those who use technology as an interface to address their political views of feminism. Therefore, they need to use technology as the means, through which they express their opinions about gender and sexuality. Contemporary women artists involved in the exhibition, *From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age*, either adopted technology as the media to address their creative ideas, or argued feminist politics via traditional interfaces, such as paintings and collage (eg. Hsieh Juin Hung-Chun's works), which are contradictory to the ideas of 'using technology as a means'. In my view, the selection of Taiwanese artists for this show was on the basis of the members' show of the TWAA, meaning that Chen did not strictly adhere to Wilding's definitions of what cyberfeminist works should be.

Donna Haraway states in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) that 'late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly

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48.2 percent of the whole industrial production in Taiwan, which is around 48.1 percent of the total value of the export industry. These figures can be found at the website of the TEEMA, 'The Success of the International Exhibition for Taiwan's Electronic Production in Autumn: Direct Future Trend of Industrial Business', <http://www.teema.org.tw/events/moreinfo.asp?autono=3090>, consulted on 26 Nov 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Wilding, Faith. 'Where is Feminism in Cyberfeminism?' in Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, op cit, pp 34-39.

ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed'.<sup>12</sup> Haraway's argument indicates a phenomenon, created by machines, that technology has diluted the distance between organic (nature) and non-organic (artificial); flesh (mind and self-developing) and cyborgs (metal and externally designed). What technology has contributed to human life is not only to provide it with physical needs (ie. music from the radio; visual entertainment from the television) but the invention of cyborgs (what Haraway has described as 'a creature in a post-gender world'<sup>13</sup>) which has given people a different world where there is 'no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts'.<sup>14</sup> For Haraway, it is 'cyborg' that creates this kind of 'utopia' and to describe cyborg, she states that:

A cyborg is a hybrid creature, composed of organism and machine. [...] Cyborgs are post-Second World War hybrid entities made of, first, ourselves and other organic creatures in our unchosen 'high-technological' guise as information systems, texts, and ergonomically controlled labouring, desiring, and reproducing systems.<sup>15</sup>

Cyberspace provides us with an imaginary world in which to explore the information shifting within the electronic space. The improvement in science after the Second World War started to change people's lives; for example, cyborgs provide people with labouring assistance. According to Haraway, the invention of cyborgs becomes essential as they are designed to combine

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<sup>12</sup> Haraway, Donna J. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991, p 152.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p 150.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p 1

human bodies and machinery to perform the jobs that people program them to do. Cyberspace, which is based on the World Wide Web, is similar to the notion of cyborgs, having neither individual characteristics nor gender discourses. In cyberspace, every individual functions as a simple unit to communicate and transport their information via electricity and power leads.

In the fast changing age of technology and cyberspace, people are experiencing an imaginary world where information and ideas can be transferred within seconds and where beliefs about traditions and the past can be more easily debated. Moreover, according to Haraway, technology can lead us to a world where there are no debates regarding issues of gender and even no conflict between traditions and modernism as the division of values does not exist in cyberspace.

Taiwanese women living today are fortunate enough to use technology as a means to re-consider what has been given to their roles from colonial history and patriarchal society, because the very freedom of the cyber world has allowed them to do so. *From My Fingers* demonstrates the fact that Taiwan is embracing the age of cyberspace and that women artists are taking advantage of this development to re-interpret the traditions and social structures under which they exist. In the following section, I begin to de-construct gender's expected orders and roles in cyberspace by looking at binary relationships both in sexuality and technology.

## **Binarism and Women**



The zeros and ones of machine code seem to offer themselves as perfect symbols of the orders of Western reality [...] [a]nd they make a lovely couple when it came to sex. Man and woman, male and female, masculine and feminine: one and zero looked just right, made for each other: 1, the definite, upright line; and 0, the diagram of nothing at all: penis and vagina, thing and hole...hand in glove. A perfect match.<sup>16</sup>

Technology is made up of a binary opposition: 1 and 0. This relationship is often used in feminist arguments, and as a result, there exists a kind of connection between technology and gender through the understanding of their structure: binarism. Although it is impossible to calculate the real number of people who are accessing cyberspace, it is estimated by Sadie Plant that '50 percent of the Net's users are women'.<sup>17</sup> It is possible that men pretend to be women in cyberspace in order to chat with other women and vice versa, however, this percentage still tells us that cyberspace is equally taken control of by both women and men. Men and women at this moment become equal parts as the two key elements, 0 and 1, in technological space. Through *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture* (1997), Sadie Plant's inspiring argument initiated my examination of the relationship between technology and women.

Man once made himself the point of everything. He organised, she operated. He ruled, she served. He made the great discoveries, she busied herself in the footnotes. He wrote the books, she copied them. She was his helpmate and assistant, working in support of him, according to his plan. She did the jobs he considered mundane, often the fiddling, detailed, repetitive operations with which he couldn't be bothered; the dirty,

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<sup>16</sup> Plant, Sadie. *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture*. London: Fourth Estate Limited, 1997, pp 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p 112.

mindless, semi-automatic tasks to which he thought himself superior.<sup>18</sup>

The citation above is what Plant describes as the established order between men and women. In my previous chapters, I suggested a number of examples of Western and Confucian philosophies to reveal the interaction of binarism. Here, a new perspective from which to investigate gender and binary relations appears when the symbols of technology imply the differences of sexuality. Plant describes 1 as reference to men and 0 to women, through which good couples (read: as the norm) perform a relationship: one is in control and the other follows. The relationship of zeros and ones reminded Plant of the 'Western' world order and the logic of things; furthermore, they prompted her conclusion that women occupy the inferior position. She uses the relationship between the machine code, 1 and 0, to explain her argument of how the binary relationship between men and women works. According to Plant, women are in the supportive position assisting men as if '1' is the centre, whilst '0' is the margin.

Zeros and ones, the essential and only electronic units in technology, make Plant juxtapose her arguments with gender. Technology itself is considered as men's science, however, computers and technical products are mainly assembled by women labourers. It is mainly men who develop technology and it is mostly women who do the labouring work to produce it. However, the first program in computer science was invented by a young woman, although most of us believe that computing and technology are examples of masculinity and patriarchy. In an interview with Zoey Kroll in 1997, Plant asserted that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p 35.

'[w]hen I found that [the] Victorian teenage girl (Ada Lovelace) had effectively invented the first computer, or certainly written the first computer software, it was obviously an amazing discovery'.<sup>19</sup> Ada Lovelace, being the key figure of Plant's *Zeros + Ones*, produced the first example of what came to be known as a computer program in 1833,<sup>20</sup> one hundred years before even computer hardware was created. Lovelace understood the mechanical functions of the Jacquard Loom [fig 78], a machine which revolutionised weaving production during the first and second industrial revolutions,<sup>21</sup> and saw how the punch-card system of control could be applied in terms of what we now understand as a basic computer program. The mechanism of the Jacquard Loom determines complex thread patterns by means of the absence or presence of the holes in punched cards, and it demonstrates the possible application in another context – the development of the first computing logic. It can be argued, therefore, that the initial connection between women and technology can be traced back to Lovelace's discovery of the functions of the loom, and that this represents an essential element in the discussion of women's relationships with technology. Plant asserts that:

The yarn is neither metaphorical nor literal, but quite simply material, a gathering of threads which twist and turn through the history of computing, technology, the science and arts. In and out of the punched holes of automated looms, up and down through the ages of spinning and weaving,

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<sup>19</sup> Kroll, Zoey. 'Technically Speaking: An Interview with Sadie Plant by Zoey Kroll', updated in 1999, <http://www.penelopes.org/archives/pages/ntic/newmed/sadie.htm>, consulted on 11 Aug 2006.

<sup>20</sup> More details can be found in Plant, op cit, pp 5-9.

<sup>21</sup> George P. Landow introduced the 'Jacquard Loom' and explained that it 'proved important in both the first and second industrial revolutions - the first because it demonstrated the mechanization of textile production, leading to British cotton factories; the second, because its punch-card control system later proved important in early mainframe computing'. Landow, George P. 'Punch Card Loom Jacquard', <http://www.victorianweb.org/technology/jacquard2.html>, consulted on 18 Aug 2006.

back and forth through the fabrication of fabrics, shuttles and looms, cotton and silk, canvas and paper, brushes and pens, typewriters, carriages, telephone wires, synthetic fibres, electrical filaments the World Wide Web, the Net, and matrices to come.<sup>22</sup>

Weaving is traditionally considered to be women's practice; Ada Lovelace, found the important function from it and transformed it into an important element in the history of the invention of computing. In *Zeros + Ones*, Plant collected Lovelace's notes on how she designed an engine with the punch-card system, from which it can be shown that effectively, she wrote the first simple computer program, some one hundred years before the computer, as we know it, was invented. It is worth citing Plant, who highlighted some of Lovelace's ideas, as follows:

"Certain stuffs require for their fabrication not less than *twenty thousand* cards," and because their repetition "reduces to an immense extent the number of cards required," the Engine could "far exceed even this quantity".<sup>23</sup>

What she contributed to computing technology suggests the fact that computers are not simply men's inventions and that a woman's intelligence (Lovelace's invention) plays an essential role in its history. Lovelace's contribution to computing programs freed women's hands and feet from the weaving process, therefore, the inventions of computing and the Jacquard Loom have similarity in reducing women's physical labouring.<sup>24</sup> As the computing industry becomes one of the living necessities of the twenty-first

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<sup>22</sup> Op cit, p 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that there were many male weavers, however, weaving was mainly considered to be women's work.

century, it is interesting to recall that the invention of technology was, initially, to create a world where bodily labour, especially women's, could be replaced. In the twenty-first century, when technology has been upgraded to assist people with most parts of their lives, it is interesting to see how artists respond to this phenomenon. The exhibition, *From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age*, was curated under these circumstances and it considered what women's next role will be after their bodily labouring has been freed from its physical work in Taiwan.

Having developed the link between women and technology, I shall now examine some characteristics of cyberspace, existing between the computer screen and the keyboard. Nina Wakeford addresses the notion that in the technological era, there is no in-betweenness, halfway nor even negotiation. She argues that 'increasingly cultural criticism is questioning essentialist perspectives on technology which links it inescapably with masculinity, men's activities and the absence of female participation'.<sup>25</sup> In this cross-cultural and cross-national space, problems of subjectivity disappear and there are no limits within this new world. On the internet, the instant transference of sounds and images dilute the differences of time and geographies in two different locations and give women a different perspective from which to explore gender discourses. Julian Stallabrass responds to this argument by stating that:

The greatest freedom cyberspace promises is that of recasting the self: from static beings, bound by the body and betrayed by appearances, net

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<sup>25</sup> Wakeford, Nina. 'Gender and the Landscapes of Computing in An Internet Café' in Kirkup et al (eds), op cit, p 291.

surfers may reconstruct themselves in a multiplicity of dazzling roles, changing from moment to moment according to whim.<sup>26</sup>

In the world of cyberspace, there are no clear lines between every individual and everyone can get involved in conversations in all sorts of topics at any time. A re-interpreted understanding of gender and differences has been created and the exhibition, *From My Fingers*, was inspired by this new exploration of the world order. More importantly, Chen brought questions about how women's lives have been changed in this kind of technological age and how women's artistic creation can intervene in Taiwan's social environment.<sup>27</sup> Apart from the curator's concepts for the show, I am actually more interested in 'coloured' women's involvement in the cyber world.

In 'a Cyborg Manifesto', Haraway describes the roles of 'coloured women' in the computer assembling industry and proposes that:

'Women of colour' are the preferred labour force for the science-based industries, the real women for whom the world-wide sexual life market, labour market and politics of reproduction kaleidoscope into daily life [...] young Korean women hired in the sex industry and in electronics assembly are recruited from high schools, educated for the integrated circuit.<sup>28</sup>

Haraway argues that whilst white, male, middle-class men and women are enjoying the convenience and adventure of cyberspace, coloured women are labouring in industry to produce these facilities. Those women are usually

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<sup>26</sup> Stallabrass, Julian. 'Empowering Technology: The Exploration of Cyberspace' in *New Left Review*, No 211, May/June 1995, p 15.

<sup>27</sup> This curatorial arguments can be found at the curatorial statements published in the exhibition catalogue. See Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, op cit, p 22.

<sup>28</sup> Op cit, p 174.

employed to do the job because they are globally considered to be 'cheap' labour forces. Consequently, Haraway further addresses the point that "women of colour" might be understood as a cyborg identity, a potent subjectivity synthesised from fusions of outsider identities [...].<sup>29</sup> The paradox between women of the developed and the developing worlds (who are the main labour forces but not necessarily technology users) is the key element in this chapter. The coming of industrialisation and the invention of computing has served to alleviate some of the burden of human labouring, but in reality it has also brought more suffering to many women of the developing world, rather than providing them with any sense of enjoyment through the hardware that they produce. Nevertheless, this situation is changing gradually because, in the developing nations most heavily involved with technology, the number of middle-class women has increased and they are no longer an element of the labour force; now they too can use the technology that they have helped to create as a means of improving their own lives.

Due to a different social background than the West, women of the developing world have different perspectives from which to confront cyberspace. I am interested in their attitudes towards cyberspace and how they consider their identity within their industrial business and how they express their perspectives through art. To continue and to give further arguments on this issue, I need to address the relationship between the problems of minorities and cyberspace.

### **Cyberspace and the Problems of Minority**

Those who were colonised in the past and who still live in the developing areas,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

have the chance to communicate with those who were their previous colonisers at an equal level in this unlimited cyberspace. Beth Kolko, Lisa Nakamura and Gilbert Rodman explore discourses of problems related to the minorities by relating it to cyberspace, which

can provide a powerful coalition building and progressive medium for 'minorities' separated from each other by distance and other factors. On the other hand, these nodes of race in cyberspace are marked as being parts of the whole, islands of otherness in a largely white, male, and middle-class cyberspace.<sup>30</sup>

Kolko, Nakamura and Rodman address the fact that in cyberspace, minorities and the inferior (read: in terms of races, colours and classes) are given equal opportunities to those who are superior in society and the world orders. As a result, the chance exists for every individual from any part of the world to become a part of 'the whole' in cyberspace. The label of 'being a minority', therefore, does not exist in the cyber world. It is in cyberspace that Taiwanese women can search for and discuss information beyond the social moral ideology and it is only in cyberspace that it is easier for Taiwanese women to communicate outside the geographical boundaries of the island, especially when they are not provided with the convenience to travel freely outside of the island.<sup>31</sup> Because of the use of high-tech means of communication, the differences in biological and cultural appearance will not be easily noticed when they are simplified as images and text shown on a screen. For example, when logging-on to internet discussion forums, most individuals are

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<sup>30</sup> Kolko, Beth E, Lisa Nakamura and Gilbert B Rodman (eds). *Race in Cyberspace*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000, p 9.

<sup>31</sup> As Taiwan is not internationally recognised as a nation with sovereignty, the Taiwanese people need to seek a visa to travel to any country in the world, except for Japan.



represented as a title rather than by their real names and the title usually consists of English letters despite the fact that English is not their mother tongue. Regarding the fact that English is the most common language used in cyberspace, I shall further address this point in the later part of the argument. In addition to the titles used on the web, many people prefer to choose an image, known as an avatar (usually something other than a photograph of themselves), with which to be identified.

Technology provides artists with the possibility to explore their imaginations and ideologies; it becomes a kind of vehicle to carry artists' cultural elements and sources, through which to address their individuality. The question of identity and race within cyberspace and technology is rarely discussed in academia, as it is a new territory of knowledge, only emerging since the 1990s when globalisation became the key element to bring the world to cyberspace. It has now become a global phenomenon that most people communicate more often through emails (rather than by posting a letter), check news and the weather forecast on-line, make their holiday travel bookings through a website, manage their savings by internet banking, etc. For feminists in the developing area, their concerns are not only how they can be heard and seen via technology but also how their concerns about feminism can be addressed through it. For instance, Radhika Gajjala examines how postcolonial feminism (ie. feminism for women from materially disadvantaged regions, so-called 'Others' to the West) can be exposed through the effects of technology, and she asks:

Will women all over the world be able (allowed) to use technologies under

conditions that are defined by them and therefore potentially empowering to them? Within which Internet-based contexts will women of less material and cultural privilege within 'global' power relations be able to develop collaborative work, and coalitions, to transform social, cultural, and political structures?<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, when most of the 'headquarters' of the internet are based in the developed world, we should consider what kinds of perspectives do women from the developing world hold when they are in the process of being seen and getting near to the core of power.<sup>33</sup> When the middle-class women of the developing world have increased in number, they are more likely to be heard and seen than they have been in the past. However, the way that the subaltern can be heard via technology is problematic and I propose that by researching how Taiwanese women artists use the term, cyberfeminism, in their art, we can observe the struggle of the Others as they manage to move closer to the core and to be viewed through the means of Westernisation (e.g. being able to use English and being aware of Western culture).

In recent years, Taiwanese women artists, as inferior in gender and as people of the developing world, have contributed to the arguments about how technology and computers can reshape their lives and the public's ideology. Traditional positions of subjectivity and objectivity in real life dilute their positions in cyberspace as biology and culture can no longer determine who is able or allowed to participate in the world of technology. Nevertheless, I suggest that some characteristics of minority have been kept, and this will be

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<sup>32</sup> Gajjala, Radhika. *Cyber Selves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2004, p 93.

<sup>33</sup> Gajjala uses the word 'headquarters' to describe the most important parts of the geographical locations which control the internet world. Ibid.

discussed in a later part of this chapter. In my view, a new perspective of postcolonial feminism is generated in the age of cyberspace and moreover, we are all creating the history of this theory either as scientists, the public, historians or artists.

### **A New Appearance of Identity**

In this section, I aim to address the importance of issues of race in relation to cyberspace. When acknowledging that cyberspace is generated in the West, we must also acknowledge that this happens at the expense of low-wage women in the developing world. Computers have been a revolutionary element for postmodernism in the West, but for those women producing the hardware, it is merely a means of making a living. I intend to explore how Taiwanese women's art practice is effecting a change as Taiwan's growing economy enables them to 'use' rather than to 'produce' computer related materials for a living. I emphasise that there are surely issues of identity and hybridity contingent with applications of technology, as explained by David Crane:

It should not surprise us, then, that representing the otherness of cyberspace might involve forms of racial and ethnic otherness – especially hybridity, with its negotiation of identity and difference. Nor is it surprising that hybridity would be privileged, celebrated and even fetishised in the attempts to portray the shifting boundaries of an emerging postcolonial global economic structure and especially a resistance to that structure.<sup>34</sup>

Identity discourse occurs when people seek a position for themselves in historical and cultural environments and it usually presents itself in the form of

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<sup>34</sup> Crane, David. 'In Medias Race' in Kolko et al (eds), op cit, p 90.

hybridity. Hybridity, a presentation of transformation and resistance to confront changes and invading forces in terms of culture and politics, emerges to show subjectivity of ones' strength. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam indicate that 'women of colour might be understood as a cyborg identity, a potent subjectivity synthesised from fusions of outsider identities'.<sup>35</sup> I suggest that there exists a different way than that in the West for Taiwanese women to 'enjoy' the cyber-constructed world and specifically for Taiwanese artists to use technology to create art. I propose three stages of the relationship between Taiwanese women and technology: they firstly 'suffer' from labouring in factories, then 'own' the facility when they become wealthier and finally 'enjoy' the technology, for example to create art with it. With the boost in economic development and with government's policies after the lifting of martial law, Taiwan is moving further into the age of technology under the influence of a belief that geographical and political boundaries disappear in the imagined cyber-world. Artworks in the exhibition are clear evidence of the changing characteristics and ideologies of Taiwan, which are revealed through the means of technology.

### **From My Fingers**

Eight Taiwanese women artists and seven women artists from countries in East and Southeast Asia were invited to participate in this show, including Hsieh Juin Hung-Chun, Hsu Su-Chen, Tari Ito (Japan), Lin Debbie Tsai-Shuan, Liu Shih-Fen, Phoebe Ching Ying Man (Hong Kong), Ling Fan, Mina Choen (Korea), Varsha Nair (Indian working in Thailand), Joan Pomero (French but

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<sup>35</sup> Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge, 1994, p 174.

working and living in Taiwan), Margaret Tan (Singapore), Shirley Tse (Hong Kong), Wang Tsui-Yun, Wang Tzu-Yun and Wu Mali [fig 79].<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Chen invited two women artists' groups from Kaohsiung and Taipei, each of which created a collaborative work to respond to the curatorial themes. The women artists' groups were entitled *Black Cats at Takao* and *Sin Log Gi*. Since this exhibition was organised as the second members' exhibition of the Association of Taiwanese Women Artists, the choosing of Taiwan's artists has been based on a selection from among its members.<sup>37</sup>

The *Black Cats at Takao* was composed of eleven artists, including Chang Hui-La, Chen Ming-Hui, Chen Yi-Fang, Chiu Yu-Feng, Chiu Tsu-Yuan, Chuang Tsai-Chin, Huang Ying-Yu, Lai Fang-Yu, Lin Li-Hua, Liu Su-Shin and Tsay Tzong-Fen. The work, *Black Cats' Virtual Adventures* [fig 80-82] imagines various humorous ways that people (especially housewives) can access computers and the Internet in their everyday life. It also explores the uneasiness of being watched by CCTVs, which are hidden in many corners of public space in Taiwan. The group, *Sin Log Gi*, was organised in 2001 with the intention of using multi-media as the means to create three-dimensional works, computer interactive programs and theatre writings. *Sin Log Gi* was a cooperation between three artists, namely Wu I-Chien, Cheng Huang-Ching and Tsao Lo-I. Their work, *Workshop for Evolution – Phase I* (2003) [fig 83 and fig 84], an interactive multi-media piece, makes experiments dealing with how pregnant women's emotions, food, and external elements, such as weather, can affect babies' reactions in the womb.

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<sup>36</sup> All of them are Taiwanese, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>37</sup> The exhibition, *Sweet and Sour Yeast* (2001-2002) was the first members' group show of the Association of Taiwanese Women Artists.

*From My Fingers* was shown in all exhibition rooms of the first floor of the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts with governmental support from the newly-established Bureau of Cultural Affairs in Kaohsiung City and the museum itself.<sup>38</sup> There are several gallery rooms on the first floor of the museum and visitors can walk from the first room to the last one or vice versa, as the entrance and the exit are connected with each other. The exhibited works were presented and displayed in various ways and some independent rooms have been specifically built for the use of video projection and multi-media works. Like most official galleries and museums in Taiwan, this exhibition is open to the general public free of charge.

To support the show, a series of educational programmes, workshops for art creation and talks, were organised by Chang Jin-Yu. However, with the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Taiwan, these programmes were cancelled and the intention of Chen and the Association to promote Taiwanese women's arts to an international level did not receive the expected attention.<sup>39</sup>

In this chapter, I select some particular works that support my argument that

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<sup>38</sup> Regarding the support stated in the text, the curator reported in a committee meeting that 'due to the newly-established Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the show was highly supported by it and the museum.' See the minutes of the committee meeting held on 21 February 2003 at Sinpink Art Space in Kaohsiung and published by the Association in April 2004.

<sup>39</sup> According to World Health Organization (WHO), SARS first became a threat globally in mid March 2003 after its first known case in Guangdong province in China in November 2002. More information can be found in: [http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/WHO\\_CDS\\_CSR\\_ARO\\_2004\\_1.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/WHO_CDS_CSR_ARO_2004_1.pdf), consulted on 8 January 2007 and Hsieh Ying-Hen et al, 'SARS Outbreak, Taiwan 2003', <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol10no2/03-0515.htm>, updated on 31 March 2004, consulted on 8 January 2007.

women's art practice provides evidence of aspects of the theory outlined above. The first artist's work to be considered is Liu Shih's *Fen's Gift* (2003) [fig 85-88], a documentary film and installation. The piece was presented in a separate room specifically built for this work. Walking through an arch-shape gate, the visitors entered a dark room with two main walls at the front and the back. Two screens were arranged, one on each wall. One of the films is a continual video of a woman's eye which keeps blinking and looking at the other screen, while the other (main) film is about a baby which was born severely disabled (having no skull bones to protect her exposed brain) and who lived for just twenty-six hours. The main film was carefully produced, so that it resembles a kind of animation of a fairy story. At the end of the main film, a pigeon, hand drawn by the artist, appears from the baby's exposed brain and flies away. The artist asserts in her statements that the pigeon represents the life of the baby who died the next day.

Liu is a nurse working in an obstetrics and gynaecology department, and many of her works are created based on her professional experience and are made with technology related to medical science. In the exhibition catalogue, she outlines her concepts for creating this work:

This infant uttered its first cries at 9:08 in the evening. It was missing its cranial bones and its cerebrum was poorly developed. The rose-red membrane covering its brain tissue was exposed in a gap in its forehead. [...] Its intact brainstem was still able to maintain such signs of life as the child's body temperature, pulse and breathing. Since such a child cannot live for very long, her parents decided to let her die a natural death. [...] Her image will linger forever in my mind as a sorrowful yet poignant

memory.<sup>40</sup>

The documentary film of the baby was shown in frames like an eye, presenting a kind of hybridity between a living creature and technology. The way the work was presented relates to the artist's professional background as a nurse and is typical of the trend that embraces technology. According to the artist's statement, the baby lived for just over one day and the technology of producing the film captures the pleasure of the few moments of her life.<sup>41</sup> The film was shown through a square-shaped window in an oval monitor housing hanging from the ceiling. The monitor resembled a person's eye reflecting the image when looking at this child. The screen on the opposite side of the wall shows a film of a real eye and the context of the main film represented the images reflected in the eye of a loving mother, looking at her child. A maternal concern for this disabled child encouraged Liu to record and represent this short life through the means of technology, and the work is the combination of feminine consideration and technology.

The work creates a form of space-like atmosphere and the baby in the film resembles a cyborg creature (because of the unusual appearance of the baby and the special effects of beautifying the film). The artist has effectively transformed a baby into a cyborg, a mixture of technology and human. Haraway asserts that '[t]he cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of

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<sup>40</sup> Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, op cit, p 90.

<sup>41</sup> The baby was born at 9.08pm on 23 August 2002 when Liu participated in a caesarean operation, and she died at 11.15 on the evening of 24 August 2002. She was 2,188 grams in weight when she was born. For more information regarding this matter, see the artist's statement in the catalogue. Ibid.



historical transformation'.<sup>42</sup> For Haraway, 'cyborg' resembles the combination of reality and imagination and a challenge between borders of organism and machines. Thus, this concept of cyborg appears similar to Donna Haraway's definitions whereby the baby in the film is an image of the real and of the artist's imagination.

The borders between machines and organisms have shifted and become blurred as Taiwan moves through the age of technology. Women's attitudes to traditions (ie. being considerate, thoughtful, careful etc.) remain the same even though the concerns of the cyborg and cyberspace are influencing and changing their lives everyday. In my view, the characteristics of women-ness have not been changed but that they have been shown via another interface, technology, which reveals the fact that it is impossible to materialise the humans' world by computer science. Ultimately, despite the fact that technology can provide people with various functions in their lives, it will not replace people's emotions, such as, for example, love.

Another artist who also used 'a baby' as the theme for her work is Lin Debbie Tsai-Shuan, who exhibited *Vacuum – Impressional Temperature* (2003) [fig 89-91]. *Vacuum* is an arrangement of one hundred and one transparent glass dolls, connected by shining light leads in an independent dark room. The dolls (and the leads) are displayed randomly on a large stage, similar to one for performance in a theatre. The small doll-like sculptures form a repetition of a simple unit: a robot. Lin describes these dolls as 'sexless, with no particular status, [...] continuously absorbing nutrients from the matrix via umbilical

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<sup>42</sup> Haraway, op cit, p 150.

cords'.<sup>43</sup> The shining, hot leads transport not only light but also heat from the physical properties of electricity. The dolls (robots) stand in the background where the light is continually turned on and off, as if they are soldiers or basic machine units. A sense of suffocation fills the space whilst the extreme visual and sensory experiences stimulate the viewers' minds and senses. The artist's intention is to simulate the form of a child (the glass doll), who absorbs nutrition (light) from its mother (the abstract concept of the origin). Lin addresses this idea and describes this work in her artist's statement:

The illumination is sometimes bright and sometimes dark, starting and stopping the energy of life. Like the slow breathing of an infant sleeping soundly, the steady rhythm radiates the temperature of breath. We face the mother, the point of origin, the mysterious attractor.<sup>44</sup>

In science fiction, invariably robots are imagined as being asexual; in *Vacuum*, non-sex cyborgs are produced to indicate the artist's intention to reveal the 'stream of consciousness'. In the flyer of the artist's solo exhibition, *Vacuum State*, held at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 25 October – 7 December 2003, Yang Chih-Fu, a Taiwanese art critic, describes Lin's works in the following terms:

More accurately [...] the dolls can be seen as a single entity in motion whose image is arrested in time. It resembles 'the rendering of consciousness' or the rendering of 'stream of consciousness', [w]hich allows it to pass through objects without limitations of space or time.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, op cit, p 80.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Details cited from the publicity flyer.

Through the materials of technology, Lin fabricates fluid and feminine characteristics (i.e. softness, shifting and unstableness) from what is seen as cold and masculine science. Dolls can be seen as a symbol for femininity and childhood and the artist transforms them into cyborgs, which refer to herself as both a woman and a machine. Yang further argues that '[t]he exhibit of *Vacuum* is not about the physical heat of light, but is a network of [optical] light linked together, [which] draws the spirit's warmth to the hub of the network'.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the dolls (cyborgs), become the interface for the artist to trace her childhood and her roots; electricity becomes the fluid material through which she moves, as if a part of the stream of consciousness.

*Vacuum's* complicated arrangement of leads implies a utopia where there are no limitations or obstacles for communication and travel. The light and heat coming from the leads and the reflection of the light from the dolls, makes the exhibition space full of tension and thrills, through which the state of a vacuum appeared, because for the artist, the state of being full and that of being void have the same sensory experience. The artist explains this concept by noting that '[a]lthough it strikes you initially as bright and boisterous, in fact it is abnormally quiet'.<sup>47</sup> In other words, the state of vacuum is the result of all the busy and noisy interaction between electricity and objects. The rash and rapid transportation of power and electricity becomes absent and disappears when the speed and temperature reach a certain point. The philosophy to transform the 'mass of materials' into 'spiritual emptiness' comes from the thinking of a philosopher in the Song Dynasty, Ju Shi (1130-1200), and one of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

his sayings is that '[w]hen things reach their limit, they are forced to bounce back' (the original proverb is *Wu Ji Bi Fan*). This proverb is cited from Ju's famous publication, *Jin Sz Lu* (translated as 'a collection of thoughts').<sup>48</sup> Although the form and method used to create works such as *Vacuum* are inspired by the West, I suggest that artists from the East still hold the influence of Eastern philosophy which cannot be replaced simply by science and its absolute '1 or 0' relationship.

In my research, I have regularly addressed and employed the term, hybridity, the condition of trans-culture and in-betweenness in postcolonial studies. A good example of this concept can be found in this piece of work. *Vacuum* is created by means of Western materials, however, the artist intends to create a spiritual emptiness based on the philosophy of the East. To be specific, this work represents the combination of different cultures in the form of art and echoes Bhabha's concepts of the 'Third Space of enunciation'.<sup>49</sup> For Bhabha, cultural knowledge is ambivalent and is open for expanding regularly. Therefore, the combination between the East and the West is evidence of a contemporary cultural phenomenon. To take this argument further, I shall consider Bhabha's arguments regarding 'Third Space of enunciation':

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. [...] It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this

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<sup>48</sup> This information can be found in Tzeng, Rung-Fen (eds). 'Wu Ji Bi Fan', *Dictionary of Chinese Idioms*, an online resources established by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, <http://dict.moe.gov.tw/chengyu/pho/fsj/fsj34038.htm>, consulted on 8 January 2007.

<sup>49</sup> This term can be found in Bhabha (1994), op cit, p 54.

contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable.<sup>50</sup>

For Bhabha, the purity of culture and the inherent originality do not exist and it is the Third Space and in-betweenness of differences that carry the meanings of culture and its representation. As an example, the ancient proverb originated from Chinese culture is adapted in *Vacuum* to create a visual form of hybridity. The main curatorial theme addresses Taiwan's artistic and social environment, and thus I propose that the exhibition itself responds to Bhabha's concepts of hybridity because the Western concept cyberfeminism is used.

In *Vacuum*, the artistic concepts deny and ignore the sexuality of the glass dolls, unified as a group rather than as individuals, to absorb and transfer the light and heat. Through this method, there are no sexual characteristics of the dolls as they are more like an agent to enable these physical properties. The dolls, being cyborgs, are created as a non-organic family structure and have no origins of sexuality. The asexual dolls are symbols of post-human conditions, which are created by science rather than by a genetic family. For the artist, the dolls provide a means for her to present her fantasy of dreaming about the origins of her childhood; memories of being brought up by her grandmother in the US whilst her parents were busy at work.<sup>51</sup> *Vacuum* demonstrates the fact that sexual, racial and class differences of bodies in cyberspace will be unified when technology becomes a key part of our lives

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp 54-55.

<sup>51</sup> Teloma, "Who Am I?" on Lin Tsai-Shuan's Solo Exhibition, *Punctum*, updated on 28 April 2000, <http://www.wenxue.com/scene/b5/yuejing/whoami.htm>, consulted on 22 November 2006.

and for globalisation.

The final work to be addressed is *Secret of Miss W* (2003) [fig 92-95], created by Wang Tze-Yun. The main part of this work is a scrolling Light Emitting Diode (LED) display in the corner of a room fully painted in a fluorescent green colour. Wang deconstructs Chinese words by the Cangjie method, which is a system to divide Chinese words into several parts for use in the Microsoft Word program. Incomplete parts of Chinese words are shown in red moving across the scrolling LED display as if displaying information and secrets. According to Wang's statements, these symbols resemble 0 and 1, which are the most basic elements of information and technology and are the indispensable formation of meaning. Wang breaks meanings into pieces to represent how information is understood by simplified marks, through which she intends to protect her privacy and security in cyber space. The title of this work, *Secret of Miss W*, refers to the transformation of her private data into 'secrets' whilst being in the public cyber-world. Wang therefore, asks herself '[i]f I deliver some information through the internet, am I assured that it can be done in privacy? Or can I control the route of the delivery?'<sup>52</sup> As technology has become one of the most important parts of people's lives in Taiwan, the public (but invisible) cyberspace has inspired the artist to create this work.

This work provides an opportunity to address the identity of minorities. The use of symbols for Chinese words showing oriental cultural input in the technological installation works, which originated in the West. As the English

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<sup>52</sup> These questions are cited from artist's statements published in the exhibition catalogue. See Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, op cit, p 138.

language has become the most common language in the cyber world, the presentation of other languages reveals the existence of a difference from English culture and ideology. It is said that computer science is designed for English speakers and this is the reason why Chinese speakers needed to invent Cangjie for their communication in computer technology. Even though the form in which the artist chose to present this work has similarities with some Western artists' works, it is the use of the Chinese language which gives the work a new interpretation and a sense of cultural identity.

### **Cyberspace and the Intersectional Nature of Being Taiwanese**

*From My Fingers* (2003) received a lot of attention in the media, not only because of the fact that it is the 'first' international women's art festival but because its financial support from the 'first' Bureau of Cultural Affairs in Kaohsiung City Government also promoted the popularity of the show. The governmental involvement in the show definitely increased the exposure of the venture and the city mayor's and the chair of the Bureau's participation in the opening has demonstrated the fact that art can be used as a political tool to express the government's cultural policy.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that two minor projects were specifically organised to support this exhibition, including a group show, *Women in May*, held at the Kia-A-Thau Art Village, 17 May – 14 June 2003 and the *Big Quilt Project 2003* [fig 96], staged on the grass outside the Museum on 4 May 2003. Despite the fact that these two events did not respond to the curatorial theme of 'women and technology' in *From My Fingers*, they represent the local voice reacting to the major event. *Women in May* was mounted to exhibit works

created by twelve women artists from Kaohsiung while the *Big Quilt Project 2003* was a community project, where ninety women from several local social and educational groups were involved.<sup>53</sup> The organisation of these two projects largely increased the media and the public's attention to the show, *From My Fingers*, and women's art organised in Kaohsiung, an indirect result of which was that the administration office of the Taiwanese Women's Art Association was then moved from Taipei to Kaohsiung in 2005, when the chair of the Association was Hsu Su-Chen, an artist based in Kaohsiung.

It is evident that the influence of *From My Fingers* does not centre on the curator's main concerns for the current contemporary art trend, e.g. the adoption of technology as the media. Rather the press, the locals and the artists' field still focused on the power of women's gathering. This situation explains the reason why some exhibitions I have discussed in this research do not explicitly explore some of the significant theoretical arguments that I have emphasised.<sup>54</sup> In other words, women's group exhibitions are often simplified as women's gathering, by which some essential themes of the curatorial concepts are overlooked. I see this situation as a process of progression, which will gradually become mature and which, over time, the public will

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<sup>53</sup> According to the flyer of this event, these groups belong to the institutions which are ChengShiu Art Centre, Taiwanese Women Artists' Association, Association of Kaohsiung Modern Art, Group of Kaohsiung women Artists, Association for Art Appreciation, Kaohsiung Awakening Association, Association of Women's Welfares in Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung Monocotyledonous Orchid Association, Kaohsiung Community Association and Kaohsiung Lifeline Organisation. When this event was nearly finished, the curator Chen Yen-Shu asked every woman who took part to sign their names on a framed canvas beside the needles and threads they used for the quilt. The number was recorded by counting the number of signatures. This canvas has been kept as well as the big quilt in the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts.

<sup>54</sup> The obvious example is that in the show *Sweet and Sour Yeast*, the curator Chang Hui-Lan overlooked the significant meaning of using formal colonial buildings as the site for the exhibition. Instead, she simply focused on women's connection and power in alternative spaces.



become more aware of the curatorial concepts.

To conclude this chapter, I need to return to the main themes of *From My Fingers*: cyborg, cyberspace, women and identity. Since Ada Lovelace's discovery of simple computer logic in the mid nineteenth century, women's contribution to technology cannot be ignored. With the increase in, and the popularity of internet access, women's involvement in this electronic communication has attracted the attention of several scholars in the early to mid 1990s. Kolko et al confirm how those in academia began to write and argue about this area of knowledge by claiming that:

Mark Poster, Allucquère Rosanne Stone and Sherry Turkle (to name but a very few) began writing in the early to mid-1990s about the multiple and dispersed self in cyberspace – a fluid subject that traversed the wires of electronic communication venues and embodied, through its virtual disembodiment, postmodern subjectivity.<sup>55</sup>

Cyberspace, a knowledge area of cultural studies, has only been discovered in recent years, and this situation is similar to that of postcolonial theories, which started to be widely addressed from the late 1980s onwards. However, in the fluid cyber-world, the issues of race and identity in cyberspace matter no less than in real life. Even though anyone can hide their genetic characteristics, i.e. skin colour, age, hair etc, or even log-in to the world of the internet with anonymity, their experiences of being different can still be noticed in the cyber-world. The problems of race and the identity of the minority are addressed by very few scholars whose writings focus on cyber culture. This

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<sup>55</sup> Kolko, Nakamura and Rodman. 'Race in Cyberspace: an Introduction' in Kolko et al (eds), op cit, p 4.

situation reflects the fact that the first and second waves of feminism are mainly addressed by middle class and white women. These two waves of feminism often failed to include the problems of women of the developing world and it is only since the late 1980s that postcolonial feminists have started to include the topic of women from less material-privileged areas into academic research. Kolko et al assert that 'there is very little scholarly work that deals with how our notions of race are shaped and challenged by new technologies such as the Internet'.<sup>56</sup> One of the most influential publications concerning cyberspace and gender is Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, already cited frequently in this chapter and which primarily focused on the issues of gender rather than other topics of identity.

There are very few resources and discussions on which to draw when I address the significant role race occupies in cyberspace in the developing world. Even though I have addressed the problems of race in the previous chapters, the artworks I have selected as examples of my arguments only focus on women's views on the culture of technology rather than the discourse of race. As both Chen and the group of artists who participated in this exhibition are from the élite and/or the middle classes, they have not connected themselves with the working-class women, which is very different from the circumstances of the curator, Chang Yuan-Chien and the artists in the show, *Lords of the Rim* (1997-8), addressed in the second chapter.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p 8.

<sup>57</sup> I was invited to join the artist group, *Black Cats at Takao*, to create a big installation for this exhibition and I was also a member of the TWAA during the period when this exhibition was under curatorial discussion. Therefore, I had an opportunity to access the detailed information of how this show was curated and how the artists were invited for the show. In my experience of working with the invited artists and the curator, I observed that the gap between classes in Taiwan had made women in the upper class unable to understand the lives of the

Therefore, I argue that they either overlooked or ignored the situation of Taiwanese women who were not given consideration for this exhibition in spite of the fact that it was they who produced many of the technological facilities exported to the world market. Ironically, despite the fact that postcolonial theories have not been widely argued in cyber culture, we cannot deny the fact that as the English language is the most common and important language to be used on the internet, there exists a sense of re-recognition of one's identity, especially for those who are not English-speakers. Regarding the use of language in cyberspace, Mark Warschauer comments on the subject as follows:

As the saying goes, nobody on the Internet knows that you're a dog, nor can they easily determine if you're black or white, male or female, gay or straight, or rich or poor. But they can immediately notice what language and dialect you are using - and that language is usually English.<sup>58</sup>

Only when Taiwan started to seek its identity in the vast growth of the cyber-world, did it start to develop its websites in its own language, through which it is capable of generating its identity in the globalised world. In addition to using a nation's language, other than simply English, to develop an identity in cyberspace, the use of the language in women artists' works also achieves the same result. For example, in Wang Tze-Yun's *Secret of Miss W*, the elements of Chinese characters used, emphasise the difference of being Oriental even though the title of this work is still adopted from an English letter 'W' (the title of this work is in Chinese except the letter W). The idea,

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working class. The problems of women's labouring in the science industry were thus not explored and shown in the exhibition, *From My Fingers*.

<sup>58</sup> Warschauer, Mark. 'Language, Identity, and the Internet' in Kolko et al (eds), op cit, p 156.

'[l]anguage-as-identity'<sup>59</sup> can therefore be seen through *Secret of Miss W* and this work records who the artist is.

In 1996, Joe Lockard wrote that '[w]e are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth'.<sup>60</sup> Lockard's statements indicate a phenomenon that the new capitalism, made of machines and internet facilities, has invited everyone regardless of their race and gender, to create an utopia. This phenomenon is similar to that which has been provoked by globalisation, addressed in the previous chapter and which is the link that connects most people in the world. However, seeking individuality in globalisation is essential for a nation to establish its identity, and in cyberspace, people have a similar attitude in terms of looking for nationalism.

Postcoloniality and feminism therefore become essential themes to explore as Taiwan is experiencing urbanism, internationalism, industrialisation and cyberfeminism. Meanwhile, government policies have played a key role in deciding the directions for the nation and its social policies. When art is able to visualise the stories of a nation, international exhibitions become more and more important to promote artists and nation beyond geopolitical territories. As Taiwan's economy experiences its enormous boost, the Taiwanese have realised that production can be used for the sake of culture rather than simply for manufacturing development. As a result, I chose this exhibition as the final

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<sup>59</sup> The term 'language-as-identity' comes from Warschauer's 'Language, Identity and the Internet', to describe how languages signify historical and social boundaries. Ibid., p 155.

<sup>60</sup> Lockard, Joe. 'Babel Machines and Electronic Universalism' in Kolko et al (eds), op cit, pp 180-183.

show for this thesis in order not only to celebrate the First International Women's Day Festival in Taiwan but also to announce that by technological means, Taiwan finds that it can be known in terms of its economy, its culture *and* its arts.

## Conclusion

The impossibility of legitimate representations makes atopia a state of de facto without de jure - a place without its name can only be attended as an exception. [...] One can envisage that Taiwan is a non-national nation, or a nation without nationality, yet neither post-nation nor pre-nation: in short, an atopian state par excellence.<sup>1</sup>

This conclusion starts with an extract from Lin Hongjohn's curatorial statement for Taiwan's Pavilion at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennial 2007. His statement explicitly indicates that Taiwan does not have a defined title, which means that the sense of being Taiwanese is still in the process of being created. The title of Taiwan's Pavilion, *Atopia*, is itself a fabricated word. It does not have an explicit dictionary definition, and this further signifies the imaginary concepts of Taiwan and its lacking of a fixed cultural core. Lin's curatorial statement demonstrates not only the nation's state of becoming Taiwanese but also how uncertainly the island is situated in the current international arena.

The Janus-faced state, which is now Taiwan's experience, is actually firm evidence of the process and phenomenon of the hybridity that is happening in Taiwanese culture and society. Furthermore, the changing concepts of identity in Taiwan also reflect the condition of the in-betweenness of two states: colonisers/ the colonised, Japanisation/ Sinocisation, West/ East, urban/ rural, modern/ traditional and global/ local. What appears during the argument surrounding Taiwan's cultural identity and historiography differs according to

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<sup>1</sup> Lin, Hongjohn. 'Taiwan at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennial 2007', updated on 23 May 2007, <http://artipedia.org/artsnews/exhibitions/2007/05/23/taiwan-at-the-52nd-venice-biennial-2007/>, consulted on 5 June 2007.

the various perspectives with which we interpret the past and how we examine ourselves. The ideas of Taiwanese identities are formulated based on a consideration of Taiwan's previous colonial space, and its present assimilation of its position as the empowered subject. Nevertheless, I suggest that it is not possible to identify the absolute appearance of Taiwanese culture, as the characteristics of hybridity and in-betweenness are at all times in the process of being re-affirmed and re-adjusted.

Contemporary Taiwanese art has been transformed under the influence of postcoloniality and elements of the past, of Chinese/ Japanese traditions, of the present popular American culture and of electronic fashion, all of which have contributed to the new, hybridised depiction of Taiwanese identities. Taiwan's layered colonial history has contributed to the heterogeneity of its cultural and social ideology, which has spontaneously enriched the diversity and multiplicity of its art. Hence, this thesis contributes to the knowledge that formulates the intersectional possibility and the multiple meanings of visualised conditions in Taiwan's society. Moreover, this thesis gathers various cultural and social issues through a close observation of women's exhibitions. As I am not aiming to identify a singular interpretation for analysing the heterogeneous nature of Taiwan's society, I believe that the thesis is a valid academic exercise, which opens a field that lets us debate the complexity of Taiwanese identities.

The discourse of identity in terms of nation and culture is clearly the most challenging topic in the contemporary artistic field in Taiwan. However, when taking women's perspectives into consideration, the issue of identity becomes

yet more tangled because Taiwanese women have to endure another layer of colonisation; the colonisation of patriarchal ideology, influenced by Confucian philosophy. As already addressed in Chapter 1, Young indicates that the issues of women from the developing world cannot be examined from the sole perspective of anti-imperialism, and indeed, the discourses concerning women from the developing region extend the boundaries of feminism or nationalism. They should be included and juxtaposed with the realms of transnational and socio-economic politics.

Furthermore, national identity, feminist politics and cultural presentation in Taiwan must refer not only to the experience of the middle classes but also to the lives of those who are less privileged or in the minority, such as the working classes, the aboriginals and women. All of them are essential elements in the establishment of the understanding of Taiwanese identities, which is not derived simply from the cultural conflicts among the Hans who arrived on the island at different periods of time, nor between different political parties who hold diverse perspectives towards the issue of identity.

The forgotten position of the Taiwanese in the global environment has placed Taiwanese women in a geopolitically marginal situation. Notably, Stuart Hall has remarked that '[i]n the contemporary arts, I would go so far as to say that, increasingly, anybody who cares for what is creatively emergent in the modern arts will find that it has something to do with the languages of the margin'.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the margin is able to present itself in a more central position than before, especially in terms of contemporary art. Hall further indicates that 'the

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<sup>2</sup> Hall, Stuart. 'The Local and the Global: Globalisation and Ethnicity' in King (ed), op cit, p 34.



subject of the local, of the margin, can only come into presentation by, as it were, recovering their own hidden histories'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, contemporary Taiwanese women's art can only be valued by thoroughly discovering their hidden history, their roots and cultural language from its marginal position, from where it is viewed and noted from the centre of the globe (the West). Paradoxically, this relationship of power is the reverse of the form of old imperialism, in which the power lies in the centre and dominates the margin, whereas postcoloniality has de-constructed and returned the power to the once-colonised part. Consequently, the marginal (the subaltern, Other and the non-Western) can be appreciated only when they can see themselves without a mask and when they are aware of the value of the richness of their hybridised culture.

This thesis presents evidence that Taiwanese women have contributed to a wide range of possibilities that visualise the ambiguity of current Taiwanese society, and to re-fashioning the ideas of national and economic historiography. By visualising the hidden women in the suppression of historical narratives and economic development, Taiwanese women artists are unveiling the essential but disregarded part of Taiwan's subalternity and reality. Additionally, they are generating an open field regarding Taiwanese hybridised culture from the complexity of Taiwan's colonial heritage, current influential Westernisation and the unconstrained phenomenon of cyberspace. Moreover, it is clearly evident that globalisation and urbanism are re-shaping contemporary Taiwanese culture and manipulating women's lives, and women's exhibitions have visualised the differences that have been created under these two trends.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp 34-35.

### **Another Reflection on Westernisation**

Even though globalisation does not simply refer to Westernisation, when encountering this trend, Taiwan has chosen to transform itself into a Westernised society. We can observe this phenomenon not only in Taiwan's current popular culture but also in the artistic field, where art produces and imagines social meanings and expectations. As has already been demonstrated in Chapter 4, most of the young and even the majority of contemporary Taiwanese artists have discarded so-called traditional media, such as two-dimensional paintings, in favour of the use of modern Western techniques. This phenomenon is evident in the fact that there have been an increasing number of new media, high-tech and installation artworks emerging in Taiwan since the mid 1990s, which is as a direct consequence of several influential Taiwanese artists and critics returning to the island after completing their education in the West. The dominant power of Western aesthetics has indeed become another imperial power on the island, and with a bias towards Western forms of art, Oriental aesthetics and art practice have gradually become negligible in Taiwan's art market.

Imitating Western forms of installation and new media has become the tendency in the Taiwanese artists' community, and this phenomenon is apparent in the fact that in my body of research, the majority of the artworks shown in the themed exhibitions are either installation or multi-media works. The rapid change in the cultural and social environment of Taiwan in the post-martial law era has also revolutionised the procedures used by artists to present their works. However, I argue that in the age of globalisation in the twenty-first century, a priority for Taiwan should be to aim to develop its own

voice by presenting its distinctiveness and essential cultural conditions through its art. I emphasise that the search for Taiwan's identity should not merely be through the imitation of the West but, on the contrary, the value for each (especially, once-colonised) nation today rests upon the re-discovery and re-positioning of its past and contemporary values. Otherwise, just as Wang Jason Chia-Chi, a leading Taiwanese art critic, has indicated, art will only become 'glorious in appearance but empty and shallow in quality'.<sup>4</sup>

I suggest that the Taiwanese artists' practice of mimicking Western art disciplines is similar to Fanon's concept of 'wearing a white mask', which, in fact, is the result of lacking self-recognition. If contemporary Taiwanese art aims to get closer to the core of the world's attention, it is not through either reproducing the West, nor by isolating itself; rather, the sense of a re-positioning of cultural heritage as well as modern ideology is the means by which it can speak. Kitty Zijlmans claims that 'Third World cultures should make contemporary art from their own values, sensitivities, and interests. [...] the de-Eurocentrism in art is not about returning to purity, but about adopting postcolonial "impurity"'.<sup>5</sup> To be specific in this context, I suggest that in the post martial-law era, what would enable contemporary Taiwanese artists to speak globally is through visualising their own cultural position and their precious postcolonial 'impurity', in other words, by using their hybridised experience and the characteristics of in-betweenness of their culture.

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<sup>4</sup> Wang, Jason Chia-Chi, 'The Location of Taiwan: Miracles, the Media and Contemporary Art' in *ARTCO: Art Today*, March 2001, p 92.

<sup>5</sup> Zijlmans, Kitty. 'An Intercultural Perspective in Art History: Beyond Othering and Appropriation' in Elkins (ed), op cit, p 292.

## **Visualising Nation, Culture and Gender**

What this thesis contributes is an intersectional set of evidence and questions related to contemporary Taiwanese culture by juxtaposing postcolonial feminist literature with women's exhibitions held in the last decade or so. Theories, art and culture, which form a triangular relationship, have continued to interpret each other, whilst exhibitions (art) are the visual presentation of theories and culture. Although the exhibitions were curated based on diverse themes, they actually respond to each other across these three main categories: Re-positioning History, Colonial Heritage and International Perspectives.

There are some interesting points of comparison between the different shows. Firstly, the concept of developing a national identity is addressed in the 2.28 *Commemorative Exhibition* (1997), and it can also be seen in *Sweet and Sour Yeast* (2001-2002) and the *Taipei Biennial 1996*. I argue that the ideas of formulating an 'imagined community' in the physical colonial space is shown in *Sweet and Sour Yeast* whilst the *Taipei Biennial 1996* generates concepts of forming a nation's individuality and characteristics under globalisation and urbanism. Furthermore, the intention of developing a national identity can be achieved both internally (from a re-positioning of Taiwan's colonial narratives and objects) and externally (in the competition with other countries in terms of art). To be specific, I have observed that as Taiwan moves closer towards full democracy, Taiwanese artists' perspectives to seek a national identity have shifted from re-interpreting the island's history to juxtaposing itself with its competitors in the international art scene.

Secondly, a re-consideration of the contribution of the women's labour force in the developing world can be seen in *Lords of the Rim* (1997-1998), where the labour-intensive industry of textiles in the global manufacturing market is explored. *From My Fingers* (2003) explores the issue of identity in cyberspace, and I have included a consideration of working-class women (both as the producers of technological facilities, and as non-English speakers from the developing world) in order to demonstrate their subjectivity in the cyber world. In addition, I demonstrate that the appearance of Taiwanese presence is revealed not only through a manufacturing economy but also through how Taiwanese women have consumed and used technology to create their art, which is composed of both machine and culture.

Finally, fabric, as a new creative material for contemporary Taiwanese women artists, is investigated through researching the shows, *Lords of the Rim* and *BuBaoFu* (2003). In the show *BuBaoFu*, I argue that women's creativity can be seen in the re-interpretation of the previous colonial heritage, in fabric art, and in women's domestic space. Nevertheless, fabric art in *Lords of the Rim* refers to the means which artists adopt to re-position the history of the subordinate working women. When comparing these two shows, it is clearly evident that the rapidly changing society of Taiwan has indirectly influenced artists' viewpoints towards using fabric in their works. Fabric in *Lords of the Rim* demonstrates the struggles of subordinate working-class women whilst in *BuBaoFu*, it becomes a means through which the re-consideration of *nei* (inwards; domestic and private space) and *wai* (outwards; public and political space) is explored. Additionally, when juxtaposing these two shows, I see that the selection of different locations for curation has significantly shown the

diversity of how fabric (as an industrial and/ or artistic material) is perceived by artists and curators.

It is apparent that the themes for the earlier shows are centred more on national identity and nationalism whilst the later exhibitions focus more on the issues of the globe, which is evidence of the process of the maturing and transformation of the contemporary Taiwanese artistic community. Moreover, I suggest that the subject matter of Taiwanese women artists' works has been inclined to be more conceptual since Taiwan's society has become more liberal, and the characteristics of hybridity can be seen more obviously. Additionally, it should be noted that the establishment of the Taiwanese Women's Art Association in 2000 has played an essential role in Taiwan's art history, as it gathers women artists and organises exhibitions with more explicit concepts and themes, which help to expose their works both nationally and internationally.

To conclude this thesis, I shall suggest a possible route that contemporary Taiwanese (women) artists could follow to present themselves in the global artistic market in the future. Under globalisation in the twenty-first century, a conclusive 'white-or-black' dilemma does not exist, nor is there an absolute colonised object or colonising subject in the sphere of culture. Rather, a mixture of elements derived from the indigenous local and colonial cultures has come into being. This is the essential and precious property of hybridity and mimicry, which certainly provides an advantage for those contemporary Taiwanese (women) artists seeking to reach the core and centre of the international artistic market. Furthermore, what Taiwanese artists could

consider is not merely the issue of gender itself, but rather a more comprehensive and multi-disciplinary aspect to approach questions concerning sexuality. The discourse of gender does not exist on its own and as Taiwan moves towards becoming a more ethnically and culturally integrated country, the next challenge for the artists will be to deal with subject matter related not only to its previous colonial history, but also to the new colonial relationship emerging on the island, (a new structure of power between Hans and other ethnic minorities), and its competitors in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the rest of the globe.

## Glossary

The terms listed below are translated by the system of pinyin. Pinyin is a system of Romanisation of the Chinese language and was developed in the mid twentieth century in China. *Pin* means 'to spell', whilst *yin* refers to 'sounds'; thus pinyin is the method to represent Chinese characters with Latin letters according to how they are pronounced rather than what they mean. The terms in italics are phrases and dialects Romanised according to pinyin; the remainder are either Pinyin of people's names (family names first) or titles for places, institutions and publications in Chinese words. There are very few titles adapted from the English titles of their own sources rather than through pinyin.

ARTCO: Art Today

Association of Public Orders

Avant-garde publisher

*Ba-Tsuei*

*bensheng ren*

*binlang hsishi* 〇〇〇〇

Biographical Literature 〇〇〇〇

Black Cats at *Takao* 〇〇〇〇〇

*Bu Bao Fu* 〇〇〇

Cangjie 〇〇

Centre for Young Women's Development 〇〇〇〇〇

Chan Hsin-Mei 〇〇〇

Chang Fang-Wei 〇〇〇

Chang Hui-Lan 〇〇〇

Chang Hsiao-Yuan 〇〇〇

Chang Jin-Yu 〇〇〇

Chang Jin-Fen 〇〇〇

Chang Mao-Kuei 〇〇〇

Chang Mei-Yun 〇〇〇

Chang Song-Reng 〇〇〇

Chang Ta-Chien 〇〇〇

Chang Yan-Hsien 〇〇〇

Chang Yuan-Chien 〇〇〇

Chen Bi-Jian 〇〇〇



Chen Chien-Pei    □□□  
Chen Chin    □□  
Chen (Elsa) Hsiang-Chun    □□□  
Chen Fang-Ming    □□□  
Chen Hsin-His    □□□  
Chen Hsing-Wan    □□□  
Chen Hua    □□  
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Chen Hui-Hsin    □□□  
Chen I-Fang    □□□  
Chen Jing-Lin    □□□  
Chen Hung-Mian    □□□  
Chen Man-Hua    □□□  
Chen Mei-Rong    □□□  
Chen Ming-Hui (Ming Turner)    □□□  
Chen Po-Wei    □□□  
Chen Sheng-Song    □□□  
Chen Sheui-Bian    □□□  
Chen Shi-Lin    □□□  
Chen Shu-Jen    □□□  
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Chen Wen-Yao    □□□  
Chen Yen-Shu    □□□  
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Chen Yi-Fang    □□□  
Chen Yin-Huang    □□□  
Chen Ying-Di    □□□  
Chen Yu-Hsiu    □□□  
Cheng Cheng-Kung    □□□  
Cheng Chiung-Chuan    □□□  
Cheng Hung-Ching    □□□  
Cheng Shu-Min    □□□  
Chia-Lun Studio    □□□□□  
Chia-Yi    □□  
Chiang Ching-Kuo    □□□  
Chiang Kai-Shek    □□□

Chiang Shu-Ling    □□□  
Chiang Sung Mei-Ling    □□□□  
Chiang Tzu-Man    □□□  
Chiang Wen-Yu    □□□  
Chiang Yi-Hua    □□□  
Chien Fu-Yu    □□□  
Chien Tan    □□  
Chien Ying-Ying    □□□  
Chinese Women's Anti-aggression League    □□□□□□□□□□  
Chiu Kuei-Fen    □□□  
Chiu Tsu-Yuan    □□□  
Chiu Yu-Feng    □□□  
Cho Yu-Jui    □□□  
Chou Ling-Chih    □□□  
Chou Wen-Li    □□□  
Chuang Tsai-Chin    □□□  
*Chung-Wai Journal*    □□□□  
Chung Yu    □□  
Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan    □□□□□  
Daoxiang Publisher    □□□□□  
Deng Wen-Jen    □□□  
Disturbance Journal    □□□□  
Dragon Art Monthly    □□□□□□  
Du Tin-Tin    □□□  
Dung Yang textile factory    □□□□□  
Eastern Han Dynasty    □□  
Executive Yuan    □□□  
Fangliao    □□  
*Fei Li Wu Shi*    □□□□  
Fu Chang textile factory    □□□□□  
Fu Chia-Hui    □□□  
Fu-Hsi    □□  
Fu Jen Catholic University    □□□□  
Gao Show-Lien    □□□  
Ge Yung-Kuang    □□□  
Government Information Office, Taiwan    □□□□□□□□  
Guan Bi-Ling    □□□  
*guangfu*    □□

Gui Huo Alley    □□□  
Guoxing Township    □□□  
*Hakka*    □□  
Han    □  
Hanart Gallery    □□□  
He Yan-Tang    □□□  
Ho Li-Jung    □□□  
Ho-Tso-An Drama    □□□□□  
New Environmental Homemaker's Association    □□□□□□□  
Hou Chun-Min    □□□  
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Hsiao Chiung-Jui    □□□  
Hsiao Li-Hung    □□□  
Hsiao Shin-Huang    □□□  
Hsiao Wo-Ting    □□□  
Hsieh (Grace)    □□□  
Hsieh Juin Hung-Chun    □□□  
Hsieh Hui-Ching    □□□  
Hsieh Li-Fa    □□□  
Hsieh Pei-Ni    □□□  
Hsieh Tung-Shan    □□□  
Hsinchu    □□  
Hsin-Sheng-Tai    □□□  
Hsu Chia-Ching    □□□  
Hsu Chung-Shu    □□□  
Hsu (Maggie) Hsun-Wei    □□□  
Hsu Su-Chen    □□□  
Hsu Wei-Jen    □□□  
Hsu Ya-Ping    □□□  
Hua-Shan    □□  
Huaeh Pao-Hsia    □□□  
Huaeh Hua-Yuan    □□□  
Huang Chun-Pi    □□□  
Huang Hai-Ming    □□□  
Huang Li-Chuan    □□□  
Huang (Teresa)    □□□

Huang Yi-Shiung    □□□  
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Jiang Chung-Lin    □□□  
Jiang Yao-Shian    □□□  
Jiang Yi-Huah    □□□  
Jin Sz Lu    □□□  
*Jing Ji Qi Ji*    □□□□  
(Joan Stanley-Baker)    □□□  
Journal of Labour Studies    □□□□□□  
Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum    □□□□□□  
Journal of Taiwan Museum of Art    □□□□□□  
Ju Ming-Kang    □□□  
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Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts    □□□□□□  
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KMT's Department of Women's Affairs    □□□□□□□□  
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Lin (Debbie) Tsai-Shuan    □□□  
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Lu (Victoria) Yung-Chih    □□□  
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Luo Jen    □□  
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Ma Ying-Jeou    □□□  
*Mai Chun-Kuang*    □□□  
Mei-Mei Ma-Shan    □□□□  
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Nan Jeon Institute of Technology    □□□□□□  
Nantou County    □□□  
National Security Act    □□□□□  
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New Feminism    □□□□□  
*Ni He*    □□  
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Oracle Bone Scripts    □□□  
Pa-Tou-Tzu    □□□  
Pan Ping-Yu    □□□  
Peng-hu islands    □□□□  
Pu Hsin-Yu    □□□  
Qing Dynasty    □□  
Ran Mei-Su    □□□  
Ruan Shau-Fang    □□□  
Ruei-Sz-Ruo-Sz    □□□□  
Shang Dynasty    □□  
Shen Fang-Jung    □□□  
Shen Hsiu-Hua    □□□  
Shen Hsueh-Yung    □□□  
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Shieh Tung-Shan    □□□  
Shieh (Juin) Hong-Jun    □□□  
Shih Jui-Jen    □□□  
*ShihChing*    □□  
Shiu Heng-Shu    □□□  
Shiu (Margaret) Tan    □□□  
Shiu Shiau-Hui    □□□  
*Shu*    □  
Shu (Maggie) Hsun-We    □□□

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Sinjhuang Cultural Art Centre    □□□□□□□□

Society of Contemporary Art, Taipei (SOCA)    □□□□□□□□□□

Song Dynasty    □□

Su Chian-Lin    □□□

Su Chih-Che    □□□

Su Yu-Ling    □□□

**Suan Tian Ku La**

Sun To-Tzu    □□□

Tai-Cha    □□

Taichung    □□

*Tai-du*    □□

Tainan    □□

Taipei    □□

Taipei Fine Arts Museum    □□□□□□□□

Taishin Arts Award    □□□

Taitung    □□

Taiwan    □□

Taiwan Province Handiwork Research Institute    □□□□□□□□□□

*Taiwan Min Zhu Guo*    □□□□□

Taiwanese Aboriginal Cultural Conference    □□□□□□□□□□

Taiwanese Women's Art Association    □□□□□□□□

Tamsui    □□

Tamsui River    □□□

Tang Chiung-Sheng    □□□

Tang Shu-Fen    □□□

Tang Huang-Chen    □□□

Tao Tzu    □□

Tao-I chih-lueh    □□□

Taoyuan County    □□□

Tayal Tribe    □□□

Teloma    □□□

Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion

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Three Sage Kings and Five Emperors    □□□□

*Ti-Chan*    □□

*Tian-Gan Di-Jr*    □□□□

Tsai Hai-Ru    □□□



Tsai Hung-Ming    □□□  
Tsai Jia-Fu    □□□  
Tsai Ying-Jin    □□□  
Tsao Lo-I    □□□  
Tsay Tzong-Fen    □□□  
Tseng Ai-Tsen    □□□  
Tseng Jin-Mei    □□□  
Tseng Shai-Shu    □□□  
Tseng Yi-Hain    □□□  
Tseng Yu-Chuan    □□□  
Tseng Yu-Ping    □□□  
Tu Chia-Chi    □□□  
*TuHai* Three Masters    □□□□  
Tzeng Rung-Fen    □□□  
United Daily News    □□□  
*wai*    □  
Wang (Jason) Chia-Chi    □□□  
Wang Chia-Shien    □□□  
Wang Chih-Yao    □□□  
Wang Chun-Hsiang    □□□  
Wang Fu-Dung    □□□  
Wang Hsiao-Yung    □□□  
Wang Jin-Hua    □□□  
Wang Pin-Hua    □□□  
Wang Shih-Chih    □□□  
Wang Su-Feng    □□□  
Wang Ta-Yung    □□□  
Wang Te-Yu    □□□  
Wang Tsui-Yun    □□□  
Wang Tze-Yun    □□□  
Wang Ya-Hui    □□□  
Wang Ya-Ling    □□□  
Wang Yako    □□□  
Warm Life Association    □□□□□  
Wei Ying-Hui    □□□  
*weiseng-lang*    □□□  
Windows of Culture    □□□□  
Wong Jeng-Kai    □□□

Wu Diing-Wuu Walis    吳定武  
Wu I-Chien    吳宜  
*Wu Ji Bi Fan*    吳吉比番  
Wu Jin-Tau    吳金陶  
Wu (Joseph)    吳  
Wu Liang Shrine    吳良祠  
Wu Yin-Hui    吳音惠  
Wu Yung-Chieh    吳永吉  
Wu Mali    吳馬里  
WuSanLien Foundation    吳三連基金會  
*Xin Taiwan Ren*    新台灣人民  
*Yin Yang*    陰陽  
Yang-Chih publisher    楊志出版  
Yang Chih-Fu    楊志富  
Yang Shih-Chih    楊士志  
Yang Ya-Hui    楊雅惠  
Yao Jui-Chung    姚聚中  
Yao Min-Hsuan    姚敏軒  
Ye Zi-Mei    葉子梅  
Yeh Yu-Ching    葉宇清  
Yen Ming-Hui    顏明惠  
Yen Shiang-Luan    顏香蘭  
Yen Yen-Tsun    顏延尊  
*Yin Shi Nan Nu*    陰時男女  
Yu Hui-Jen    于惠仁  
*Yuan Chu Min*    原楚民  
Yuan Goang-Ming    袁光明  
Yuan-Liou    袁柳  
Yuan Shu-Chen    袁樹成  
Yueh Yi-Ping    薛易平

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## Appendix: illustrations<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

1. Map of Taiwan
2. Wu Diing-Wuu Walis. *The Invisible Project*, 2001-2002, video installation, size unknown
3. Wu Diing-Wuu Walis. *The Invisible Project*, 2001-2002, video installation, size unknown
4. The word 'man' in Oracle Bone Scripts
5. The word 'woman' in Oracle Bone Scripts
6. Ju Ming-Kang. *Three Generations*, 1946, woodblock print, 19.5 x 25

## PART I

### Chapter 1

7. Fine Arts Museum of Taipei, 2007
8. *2.28 Commemorative Exhibition: Sorrow and Sublimation*, exhibition entrance
9. Photograph of the 228 Incident taken in Taipei on the 28 February 1947, Photographer unknown
10. The scenario after the protest in the 228 Incident. Date and photographer unknown.
11. The DVD cover of the film, *A City of Sadness* (1989)
12. Wu Mali. *Epitaph*, 1997, installation, video, sandblasted glass with inscription, 300 x 350 x 400
13. Wu Mali. *Epitaph*, details
14. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Black Wall, Inside and Outside the Window*, 1997, mixed media installation, 450 x 300 x 250
15. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Black Wall, Inside and Outside the Window*, details
16. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Black Wall, Inside and Outside the Window*, details

### Chapter 2

17. A textile factory in Sinjhuang, 2003
18. A textile machine, 2003

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that measurements are given in centimetres.



19. Hou Shur-Tzy. *Labours and Labels III*, 1997, Gelatine Silver Prints, 17.8 x 12.7 x 30 pieces
20. Hou Shur-Tzy. *Labours and Labels II*, 1997, a photograph and dozens of labels on the walls, 96.5 x 96.5 (size of the photo)
21. Hou Shur-Tzy. *Labours and Labels II*, details
22. Lin Chun-Ju. *Birth*, 1997, textiles and installation, 500 x 500 x 300
23. Lin Chun-Ju. *Birth*, details
24. Lin Chun-Ju. *Birth*, details
25. Wu Mali. *Stories of Women from Sinjhuang*, 1997, multimedia and installation, 500 x 550 x 300
26. Wu Mali. *Stories of Women from Sinjhuang*, details

## PART II

### Chapter 3

27. Cover of the Exhibition Catalogue, *Sweet and Sour Yeast: A Sweet Conversation between Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory and Taipei Winery* (2000-2001)
- 28-29. Sweet and sour yeast ice cream, 2006
30. Taipei Winery (Hua-Shan Arts District), c. 1920
31. Hua-Shan Arts District, 2005
32. Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory (Kia-A-Thau Art Village), c.1910
33. Old office buildings of the Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory, 2006
34. A View of the Exhibition
35. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Baby: Back to Nature*, 2001, multi-media, 30 x 40 (each)
- 36-37. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Baby: Back to Nature*, details
38. Lin Ping. *Interior*, 2001, multi-media, 250 x 400
39. Lin Ping. *Interior*, details
40. Joan Pomero. *Quietly Exsanguinate*, 2001, textile rose and blue ink, 250 x 250 x 30
41. Joan Pomero. *Quietly Exsanguinate*, details
42. Joan Pomero. *Steam-side*, 2001, textile, 500 x 150 x 100
43. Joan Pomero. *Steam-side*, details
44. Chou Wen-Li. *Visual Taste*, 2001, photographic print, 120 x 360
45. Chang Hui-Lan. *Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory in Hua-Shan Winery*, 2001, photographic print and installation, 150 x 250 x 250

- 46. Chang Hui-Lan. *Kia-A-Thau Sugar Factory in Hua-Shan Winery*, 2001
- 47-48. Photographs of the *Art Festival of Air Raid Shelters in Kia-A-Thau*, March 2002, Kia-A-Thau Art Village
- 49-51. Photographs of the *2nd World Art Collective*, April 2002, Kia-A-Thau Art Village and Town

#### **Chapter 4**

- 52. Stock 20 (gallery main entrance), 2006
- 53. Stock 20 (café shop and side entrance), 2006
- 54. Wu Mali. *Spiritual Quilt*, 2001, cloth, sponge and a documentary film of Wan Bu Studio (also entitled Wan Bu studio, 56 minutes), 200 x 200 (size of the cushion)
- 55. Wan Bu Studio. Still images from the documentary film
- 56. Deng Wen-Jen. *A Three-inch Lotus Shoe*, 2000, oil painting and embroidery, 40 x 40
- 57. Deng Wen-Jen. *A Three-inch Lotus Shoe*, details
- 58. Deng Wen-Jen. *Betel Nut*, 2003, acrylic and fabric, 22 x 27
- 59. Betel Nut Girls. Photo taken in Taoyuan county, 2005
- 60. A betel nut, 2006
- 61. Shen Fang-Jung. *The Starfish Series*, 2003, fabric, around 80 x 80 x 60 (each)

### **PART III**

#### **Chapter 5**

- 62. Chien Fu-Yu. *Elite Women in the Early Times*, 1997, photographs, size unknown
- 63. Chien Fu-Yu. *Elite Women in the Early Times*, details (Chen Chin), photography taken in 1987
- 64. Lin Li-Hua. *Yei Zi-Mei and Mona Lisa*, 1995, mixed media, 91 x 65 (each)
- 65. Lin Li-Hua. *Time Has Given Us Different Faces*, 1994, acrylic pigments, 91 x 65
- 66. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Antithesis and Intertext*, 1995, mixed media, 420 x 270
- 67. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Antithesis and Intertext*, details

- 68. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Beautiful Life*, 2004, 32 panels of digital prints on vinyl, 300 x 90 (each)
- 69. Lin Pey-Chwen. *Beautiful Life*, details
- 70. Yen Ming-Hui. *A Man and a Woman*, 1988, oil painting, 213.5 x 130.5
- 71. Yen Ming-Hui. *Three Apples*, 1988, oil painting, 46 x 51
- 72. Lai Mei-Hua. *Face of a Woman*, 1995, oil on canvas, 145 x 112
- 73. Lai Mei-Hua. *Happiness*, 1990, oil on canvas, 91 x 65
- 74. Hou Chun-Ming. *New Paradise*, 1996, print, 190 x 216 (each)
- 75. Hou Chun-Ming. *New Paradise*, details

## Chapter 6

- 76. Cover of the Exhibition Catalogue, *From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age* (2003)
- 77. Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, 2006
- 78. Punch Card Loom Jacquard, Nineteenth century, England, Collection: Science Museum, London (Photograph by George P Landow, June 2000)
- 79. Entrance to the Exhibition, *From My Fingers*
- 80. Black Cats at Takao. *Black Cats's Virtual Adventures*, 2003, multimedia installation, size variable according to the exhibiting space
- 81-82. Black Cats at Takao. *Black Cats's Virtual Adventures*, details
- 83. Sin Log Gi. *Workshop for Evolution – Phase I*, 2003, multimedia installation and animation, size variable according to the exhibiting space
- 84. Sin Log Gi. *Workshop for Evolution – Phase I*, details
- 85. Liu Shih-Fen. *Gift*, 2003, multimedia installation, size variable according to the exhibiting space
- 86. Liu Shih-Fen. *Gift*, animation part of the work
- 87-88. Liu Shih-Fen. *Gift*, details
- 89. Lin Debbie Tsai-Shuan. *Vacuum – Impressional Temperature*, 2003, mixed-media installation, size unknown
- 90-91. Lin Debbie Tsai-Shuan. *Vacuum – Impressional Temperature*, details
- 92. Wang Tze-Yun. *The Secret of Miss W*, 2003, multimedia installation, size variable according to the exhibiting space
- 93. Wang Tze-Yun. *The Secret of Miss W*, details
- 94-95. Wang Tze-Yun. *The Secret of Miss W*, details (top: ceiling; bottom: entrance of the work)

96.     *Big Quilt Project 2003*, grass field outside the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts