

CENTER STAGE


needed to give the pillars and corners early-modern ornamentation. Originally, the ornamentation wasn't part of the plan, but we eventually used it to resolve those surfaces, experimenting bit by bit with different possibilities for construction.

The artist also wanted weak lights to project hints of color onto the surfaces of the walls. Video projectors are clearest in dark spaces, but the color on the wall needed a certain brightness. This equilibrium was hard to achieve, but we finally found a few points onto which we could reflect faint light, allowing different colors

to be seen from different angles. This also allowed for the ornamentation in the corners and on the pillars to be seen. This entire project was conceived and executed from ceiling to floor to walls. It was very complex and drawn out, but an interesting process nonetheless.

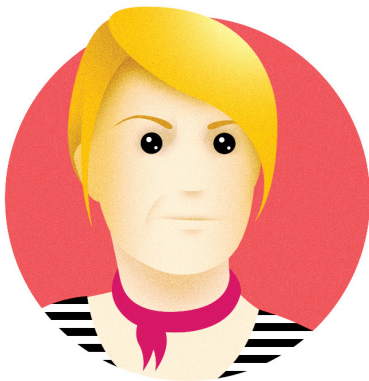
How do you view Shanghai's current art environment?

Davide Quadrio is a curator and founder of Arthub Asia, a production and curatorial proxy active in Asia and worldwide. He is Associate Editor of KALEIDOSCOPE Asia.

It's a big improvement from what it was before. All types of art spaces, galleries and museums have improved in both number and quality. Commercial spaces like K11 have suddenly incorporated art in a unique way, while other places don't have this polished quality. But Shanghai's objectively limited, in that it doesn't have as many artists as Beijing, which is important. Only with an abundance of artists can there exist a dynamic art environment. 

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Maria Lind
in conversation
with Korean
painter
JOUNGMIN YI



FOCUSING ON ART'S IMAGINATIVE QUALITIES, SOCIAL IMPACT AND ACTIVE RELATIONSHIP TO THE FUTURE, THE CENTER STAGE SERIES DIRECTS OUR ATTENTION TO THE QUESTION: WHAT DOES ART DO?



There is figuration in your paintings, yet they are gestural and somehow abstract, often showing fragments in series. How do you decide what to paint?

I don't think of my paintings as being figurative or abstract—I hope they fall

somewhere in-between. Most of my works start from questions conjured up between social circumstances and personal lives. It's hard to find good answers quickly to those

questions, but certain images arise in the process of thinking about them, and they eventually take on certain forms.

In the beginning, I try to make a loose plan. Then I walk around it, both physically and mentally. But what I consider most important is to open the result before deciding on the final form. Making gradual decisions about the final form is my favorite part of the process. The series of paintings entitled "Walking-Form," for instance, comes from fragments of images recalled from walking in the streets of Seoul, where I did a residency. The trees lining some of those

streets have very interesting forms, as they've had to adapt to urban surroundings like small courtyards and allies. I really liked their shapes, and they appear in my paintings in different ways.

But the walking does not mean just physical walking. It's not about moving with a certain aim. It's about trying to go somewhere beyond my own conventions.

Previous page: *On the Flatness and the Flattened World*, 2015
Down and right: *Walking-Form*, 2014-15

Can you elaborate further on this connection between walking and painting?

Walking without purpose is not easy, since we are surrounded by many powerful purposes. It is closer to performing penance than an idling pastime of a flaneur, which means that it's sometimes a struggle. My paintings have many references, but they never start with sketches. They are full of possibility of failure; the process makes me follow familiar images in my head, so it is dangerous and adventurous at the same time.

Walking without purpose is not easy, closer to performing penance than an idling pastime of a flaneur



Maria Lind is the Director of the Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, and an independent curator and writer. She was appointed Artistic Director for the 2016 Gwangju Biennale, to be held from 2 September–6 November.

What technique are you using?

Brushstrokes are important to me. *Jun-beop* is always an interesting reference for my paintings. It's one of Oriental painting's traditional techniques, a manner of brushstroke traditionally used in painting landscape to demonstrate the texture of the nature—mountains, rocks, earth, etc.—as well as to give a sense of volume. Ink wash painters spent years practicing basic brush strokes to refine their brush movement and ink flow. But Oriental painting is not concerned with representation of objects—instead, it tries to express the essence of the object and capture its spirit. I think it gives them abstract attributes from the beginning. This is impressive to me, but I don't have any ambition to continue this tradition. I just studied traditional brush strokes because I found it interesting, and I apply them towards drawing what I have encountered during the day.

The titles are evocative, and relate to events of shared concern in a society



Next page: *All of a Sudden*, 2015
All images courtesy of the artist

like Korea—e.g., *Stupid Forms and Words which I Cannot Bring Myself to Say*, *Endless Thinking*, and *Becoming Barbaric*. Even when more personal, they connect to difficult and even traumatic events. How do the titles work for you?

I think the title of my painting is like “a subject of a painter (*Hwa-je*).” I guess you have seen some calligraphy and red stamp in traditional Oriental paintings. The letters usually contain the topic of painting. I use my titles to indicate something behind the image on a plane. I hope it helps the viewers to find clues, but I also hope it keeps them from believing the image too easily.

Can you tell me a bit more about the “Roof-top Trilogy”?

For several years, huge development projects initiated as part of the government and city beautification plan made big trouble. I tried to consider the situation from three rooftop scenes I personally experienced. Part one features paintings of the Yongsan Tragedy, an accident that happened on a Seoul rooftop in 2009, where five protesters and a policeman

were killed, and many others were injured. When I saw the news photos, I felt like I was in a Kafka novel. It’s like bizarre black comedy. Part two is *A short piece of music for the rooftop*, featuring sound and an installation. It started from a record released in 1978 in Japan. I found it by chance at the rooftop of the Okin Apartments demolition site. It reminded me of Korean modern history, and the nostalgia of an anonymous resident. I made new sound with a young musician Taehyun Choi based on two original songs on the record. Part three is about my mother’s rooftop garden, abandoned after my brother’s sudden death. After cutting hay and making a hay ball, I moved her rooftop earth, put it into boxes and



applied various earth revitalizing methods. After the exhibition, the earth returned to her rooftop and I made a new small garden for the two of us.

In addition to having your own painting practice, you are also part of the collective Okin. How do these two aspects of your work relate to one another?

They speak to two different practices that are related in some aspects and affect each other. My personal works are focused on my own views and expres-

sive methods, whereas the work of Okin Collective is more spontaneous. Both are about conceiving better future, but it's still a matter of constant negotiation between the two. Okin's work deals with core issues, such as gender problems, independent production, social rights, surplus and multi-culture—all of which are driven out to the periphery of Korean

Joungmin Yi (Korean, b. 1971) is an artist who lives and works in Seoul. Her work will be exhibited in the 2016 Gwangju Biennale.

society—but we're interested in finding ways to share what we are thinking and doing with other people. For example, we made an installation by transferring our Internet radio program, entitled *Hear the Ground Sing*, to the exhibition space. We tried to utilize the radio station as a medium itself. The day before recording a given episode, the installation was transformed into a live studio. As guests arrived, the installation created numerous invisible networks, which reached out infinitely beyond the exhibition space, creating several opinion flows outside of the exhibition space.

Your comment about conceiving of a better future relates to one of the tenets of the 11th Gwangju Biennale: namely, the question of what art does—not in a utilitarian sense, but what an artwork might achieve, even if it does not aim at being critical or specifically engaged. What do you think your work “does”?

In January, when I joined the gathering of artists invited to the Biennale, I could see this concern reflected in the programming; it seemed to make an intimate connection with local communities, favoring small gatherings over press conferences and media play. Many people have critical views of a visual spectacle like a biennale, but I hope this approach represents a positive change.

In the end, I think my works have been trying to engage on the level of sensation. Many of us are going through tough times, but we have no good answers to the problems they raise. Art does not give up questioning, even in the face of conflicts—it seeks different ways to reflect on ourselves and reach broader understandings. That’s why I still do this job. ☺

ECOSYSTEM

William Zhao meets Mimi Brown and Christina Li, the minds behind Hong Kong's SPRING WORKSHOP



WITH ASIAN CULTURAL SCENES DOMINATED BY PRIVATE FORCES AND INVESTMENT, THE ECOSYSTEM SERIES BRINGS TOGETHER INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS TO DISCUSS HOW COLLECTING CAN HELP PROMOTE A HEALTHY ART ECOLOGY.

On a beautiful late-February afternoon in Hong Kong, I invited Spring Workshop’s Mimi Brown and Christina Li to share their insights on the progress of the art initiative. It was a good time to revisit some interesting topics with Mimi, whom I had last interviewed three years ago, and to see how the organisation has upheld its mission to create programmes that encourage alternative art experiences for both artists and the public. I was also happy to learn that Christina, who had worked with the or-

ganization prior to her appointment as Director, has programmed the space in a way that contributes powerfully to developing the city’s art community.

Mimi, I know you are from the U.S. and have a musical background as a composer. How did you end up founding Spring Workshop in Hong Kong?

MB: I moved to Hong Kong in search of adventure. When I arrived ten years ago, I couldn’t find the music scene I was looking for, but I did discover a magical art scene. I met Claire Hsu at Asia Art Archive and Tobias Berger at Para Site Art Space, and started attending every talk at those two spaces that I could, rapidly getting to know the artists, curators and art practitioners working in Hong Kong. As I began to understand and appreciate the arts ecology here, it made sense to start an organization that could offer extra space and scope to Hong Kong’s non-profit landscape. I also wanted the chance to play with the way that audiences encounter art.

But music and the visual arts are quite different, aren’t they?

MB: Music and visual art are cousins. I see ev-

Mimi Brown and Christina Li are respectively the founder and director/curator of Spring Workshop, Hong Kong. Spring Workshop is a non-profit arts space committed to an international cross-disciplinary program of artist and curatorial residencies, exhibitions, music, film and talks.