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**the
Artling**

An Interview with Wu Chi-Tsung



Wu Chi-Tsung, "Cyano-Collage 001"(2016), 180cm X 407cm, Cyanotype photography, Xuan papers, acrylic gel. Image courtesy of the artist.

Multimedia contemporary artist, Wu Chi-Tsung is well-known for his experimental work and his attention to detail for each project that he undertakes. Combining traditional and contemporary art forms from the East and West, he transforms his inquiry into the methods used in producing and interpreting images into an art form. The Artling team had the opportunity to speak with him and find out more about the artist's creative practice, his inspirations and fascination with light.

Last updated: November 13, 19

SEANKELLY

First, could you tell us what motivated you to study art and become an artist? Did you grow up with a substantial exposure to art, or was this something you developed later in life?

I was a hyperactive kid, and around the age of 4 or 5, I started to become interested in drawing. My parents discovered that it was the only way to calm me, so they encouraged me to continue drawing and study art. I enrolled in the art class in middle school, began special art education and graduated from the university as an art student. I might consider myself as an artist cultivated by a typical college in Taiwan.

You received your BFA at the Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan, specializing in oil. Of all the mediums, why did you choose to study oil painting?

TNUA trains artist in traditional media. However, I had an open-minded oil painting teacher, CHU Teh-I who took on students focusing on installations, videos and other art forms.



Artist Wu Chi-Tsung. Photographed by Chen You-Wei.

Today, you have worked with and experimented with so many different media: from video, to installations, to plexiglass, and so much more. How does your training in traditional painting continue to inform your artistic practice even as you develop towards new mediums?

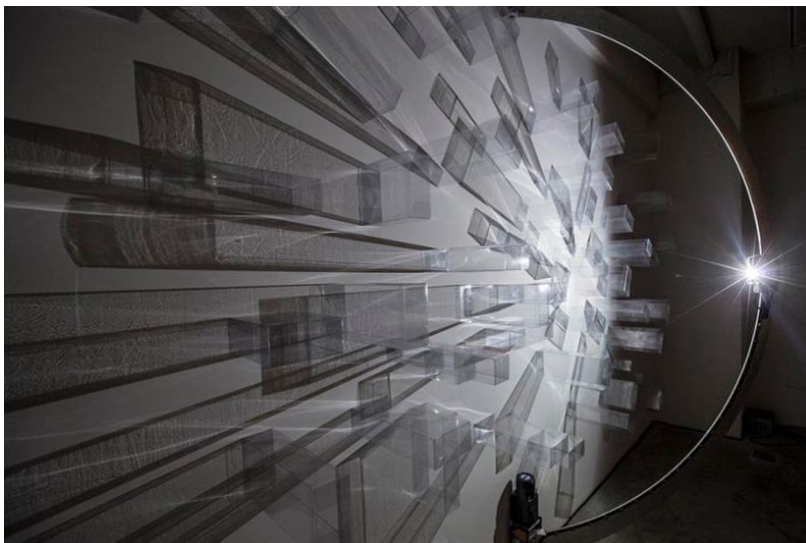
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I actually never used plexiglass. In fact, I didn't have any toys or games at home, as my parents thought that these things would limit the creativity of children. My father loved to make or repair things and therefore we had all kinds of tools around the house. I started dismantling and assembling my own creations, a retrospection of sorts. Looking back, it was indeed a wonderful environment for an artist to grow up. For me, creating works with my own hands comes naturally, generating interest the principles behind the operation of things. Every new creative plan is a brand-new study, which slowly accumulates, expanding the understanding of different technologies and materials, and at the same time, continuously uncovering the possibilities of artistic expression.

Can you share more about your artistic technique? You use a lot of experimental methods on many media; how do you start to explore a new medium? Do you have an idea and you find the best medium to convey it? Or does your explorations into the properties and limits of a medium reveal something to you that becomes a work of art?

The opportunity for innovation comes from a variety of possibilities - concepts, materials, or technologies. Each piece is a unique experience, usually motivated by light-hearted curiosity. The process starts of like a game, as long as you maintain an open mind, you will see many unexpected possibilities. For example, my Wire Series which began at the university, originally started with a projector. As the project developed, I found myself getting acquainted with principles surrounding the production of images. Another example is my installation, Dust, which emerged as an unexpected discovery when the camera and the projector are in feedback. For the Still Life Series, I initially wanted to translate Ink Art into Video. This intention ultimately affected my entire creative process and I revisited the link between art, cultural tradition and my own identity.



Wu Chi-Tsung, "Crystal City Series", (2009-2016), Installation, Track, Motor, LED, Plastic, dimensions variable.

Your "Crystal City" series uses light and transparency to create these amazing refractions- almost like painting with light. How did this work come about?

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In the beginning, it was purely because of curiosity that I was studying LED lights. As the light has a cold and sharp texture, unlike all previous light sources, and I thought there was a kind of "digital sense," so I wanted to adopt LED into my work.

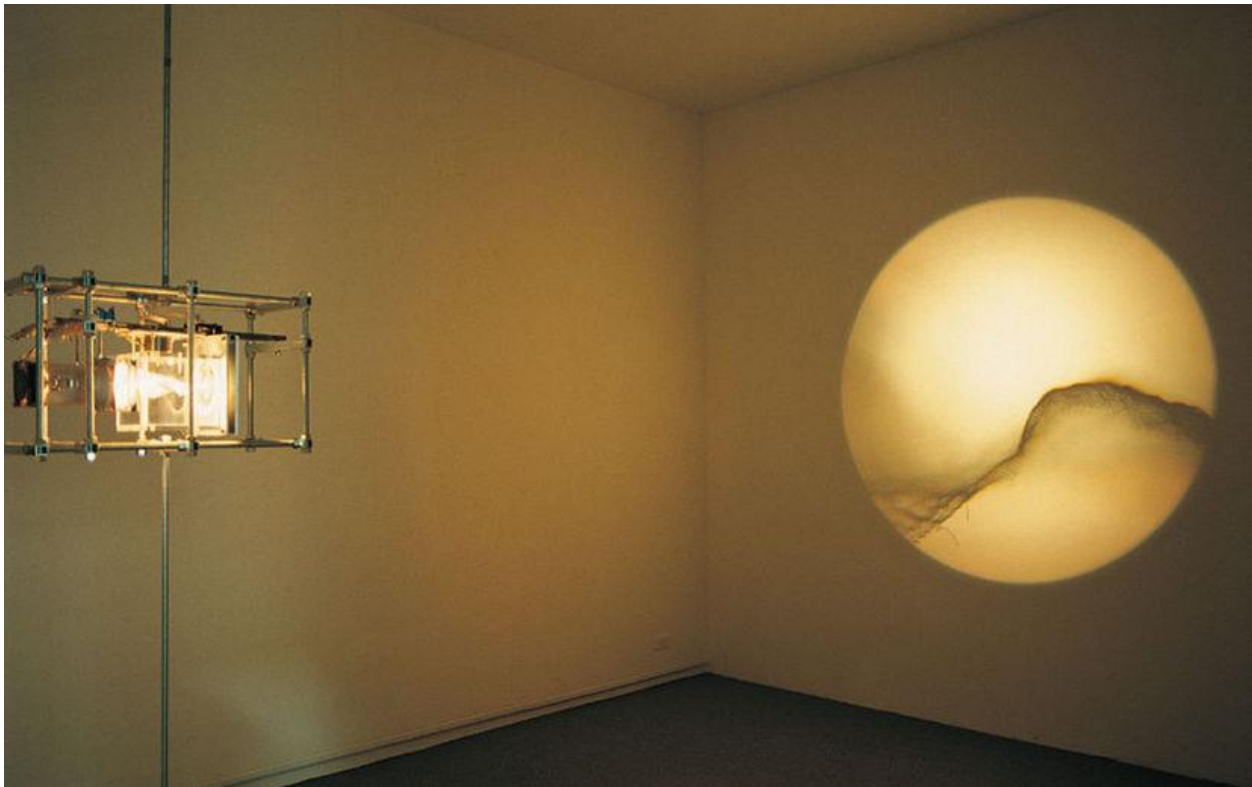
Later, PP & PE plastics were discovered. As they were made cheaply and quickly, there were many textures and defects that were not easily seen with the naked eye. The sharp LED light presents a very thick and solid image, contrary to the relationship between objects and images as we see them.

I used what I learnt to develop the "Crystal City" Series.

For the structures and forms that form the 'cities' in "Crystal Cities," was it inspired by any city in real life or was it a fantasy city that you thought up?

Visual art has never associated with space. However, in our contemporary life, there is an invisible spatial dimension - Cyber Space, which is a phenomenon that I am particularly interested in. The birth of the Internet was only 30 to 40 years old, but it is now an essential part of most people's lives.

Work, social, leisure and entertainment - I can't measure how much time our spiritual consciousness are occupied by these events each day. Crystal Cities thus describes another world hidden behind the material world we know as reality.



Wu Chi-Tsung, "Wire I" (2003), metal glass acrylic, dimensions variable.

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Light is often something which you use in your work: it is almost a medium unto itself, casting shadows, diffusing refracting, reflecting and printing. It also gives your work a sense of existing temporarily, and in turn a sense of longing. What relationship do you think the light has to your work?

As mentioned earlier, I am particularly interested in the principle behind the systems and mechanisms of things. Light is the foundation of vision and sight, however I rarely deal with light directly. The focus of attention is usually on images because they reflect how humans see, understand, and imagine the world. Through an image, what we see and process in our minds are visualized and solidified.

What are some things that are currently inspiring you and your work?

An open and international art environment in Berlin.



Wu Chi-Tsung, "Still Life 006 – Chrysanthemum" (2017), 1920 x 1080 FullHD Mpeg2

What do you think is your biggest challenge as a contemporary Chinese artist? For other younger artists do you have any advice for them?

Haha, sorry I'm not a contemporary Chinese artist. Not even a Chinese artist for sure (maybe not so contemporary as well).

To be honest, I have been struggling between traditional and contemporary art, also between oriental and western culture, for really long time. In these couple years I realized that they are all part of me. Perhaps I belong somewhere in-between - a kind of a cultural hybrid. That sounds very Taiwanese and Asian, haha!

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I try to find a balance between old and new, which is the core of my work in the past few years.

My advice for young artists is that the globalized contemporary art world has two aspects. While art accelerates communication, it also created a vast illusion which fictionalized a furnace that wiped out regional and cultural differences, absorbing the resources of the world, and destroying the art traditions and ecology of around the globe constantly, which causing contemporary art became a two-year fashion show.

I often laughed at previous artist careers and devoted their whole life to writing, as writing a novel like Ulysses, to construct their complete worldview. And today, the way of writing is like writing a complaint and renouncing article on the facebook...

Anyway, it is where you are that makes you see what others can't see, make you unique, and the creation rooted in it will make sense to you and others, whether it is the ground or the world, or the future.

What are you currently working on? Are you experimenting with any new mediums you haven't explored? What are your plans for the future?

I am always exploring many different things at the same time. The funny thing is, in all my studies, I spent much more effort on traditional oil painting than anything else surprisingly! Haha!

Although I am very familiar with the different forms of contemporary art, I like traditional art, old media and technology more than the new one. Because early techniques carry past cultural-historical memories and precious wisdom. I hope my art to become a bridge that runs through ancient and modern times, spanning between east and west.

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