

PRESS CLIPPINGS + PLAIN TEXT

Vancouver Perspective – 12 Women Artists

July 28–September 28, 1997

Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

Scanned press clipping from Charles H. Scott Gallery/Libby Leshgold Gallery archives with plain text versions.

- Page 1–4. Lu, Nancy T. “Vancouver female artists: Aware, Sensitive.” *The China Post*, 1997.
- Page 5–8. Pai, Maggie, “A View from Taipei.” *Artichoke*, fall/winter 1997.

Vancouver female artists: Aware, sensitive

By Nancy T. Lu
THE CHINA POST

A fascinating, exploratory journey into the hearts and minds of 12 women is what "Vancouver Perspective: 12 Women Artists" offers visitors at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

Expect, therefore, an awareness of and sensitivity to issues that are often enough rather universal.

Take Kati Campbell's untitled installation piece. A bed that is meant for a couple shows one pillow boxed in and fitted with an overhead light bulb.

Two persons regardless of how intimate they have been can end up subjecting each other to stress. They resort to isolation while remaining bound to each other.

The imagined picture of a husband and a wife sleeping on such a bed draws laughter at first. But on second thought, it comes across as a very sad commentary on deteriorating human relationship.

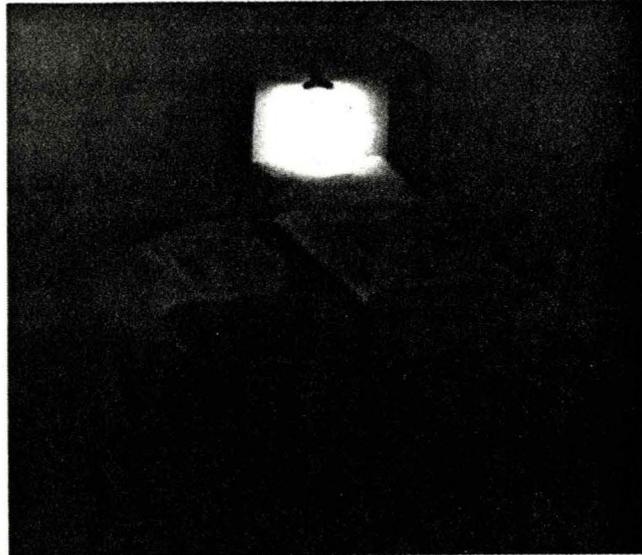
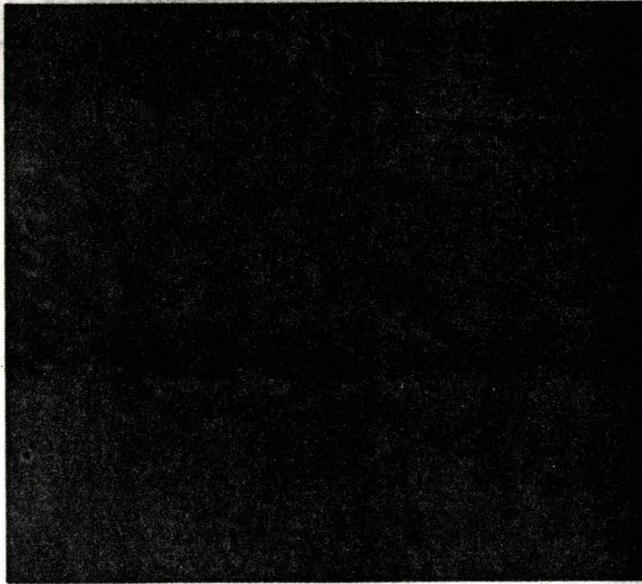
Renee Van Halm, one of the four visiting artists, hides the word "anger" in beautiful, stylized old script in her work of art for the group show. The fancy and elaborate writing is impossible to read.

Van Halm goes one step further in subjecting the word to special art treatment. She places it in a beautiful display window with studied lighting. The entire showcase requires artistic design.

As Van Halm put it, "Anger in a woman is often suppressed."

"Landscape art," Greg Bellerby, coordinator of the group show by women artists from Vancouver, explained, "is an important form in the art history of Canada. Vikky Alexander's work is about the loss of connection to nature."

Photo murals were very popular as decorating devices in the 1950s, according to Bellerby. They were used to bring the idea of nature especially into the basement homes. Vikky Alexander turned to photography to



Upper photo: Lucy Hogg's painting, which is characterized by big brush strokes and bright colors, is a critique of an erotic work of art in the Orsay Museum called "Birth of Venus."

Lower photo: Kati Campbell's untitled piece says something about the modern couple driven to isolation while remaining bound to the marital bed.

— TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM PHOTOS

create her work. But in between glimpses of nature are wooden panels.

Lucy Hogg's big painting has been the outcome of her direct experience in viewing "Birth of Venus" in the Orsay Museum in Paris.

"Lucy Hogg felt that the eroticism of the female nude was designed for the male viewer," said Bellerby. "As a woman, she was bothered by it. And so she went on to do a critique of the original painting. She tried to deconstruct the original notion of the

body by using big brush strokes and bright colors. These were intended to bring the viewers' attention to the surface of the painting."

Meanwhile Lorna Brown's "Mer (Sea)" — which rhymes with "mere," the French word for "mother" — highlights a seductive image of a woman's navel filled with water. "The technology of the ultrasound, originally used for military exploration, is now being redirected to the interior of the female body," remarked Brown.

Sharyn Yuen, an ethnic Chinese artist in Vancouver, has reproduced photographs from archives in her work. She found inspiration in the shelter set up in 1880 for pathetic homeless Chinese girls, aged 8 to 12, who were brought in illegally and sold to white slavery in Victoria, British Columbia.

Only two out of the six scrolls of handmade paper with reproduced photographs in the "I Cross the Ocean" series have made the trip to Taipei for the exhibition.

Vikky Alexander, Lorna Brown, Kati Campbell, Allyson Clay, Monique Fouquet, Lucy Hogg, Landon Mackenzie, Elspeth Pratt, Anne Ramsden, Renee Van Halm, Yoon Jin-Me and Sharyn Yuen are the artists featured in "Vancouver Perspective: 12 Chinese Artists." Most of them teach on the side. It is difficult to be full-time artists in Canada.

"The 12 artists cannot represent all the women artists in Canada but the exhibition reflects the diversity of the works by women artists and it shows the great range of their concerns," said Greg Bellerby, the curator of the project.

Bellerby pointed out the exhibition seeks to bring about a greater understanding of contemporary artists in Canada — especially women artists in the Vancouver environment. The hope is that it will invite the examination of various subjects and open up dialogues.

According to him, Vancouver is a young city undergoing changes. The fact that the inhabitants have come from many places has contributed to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the art exhibition.

"Vancouver Perspective: 12 Women Artists" will be on view at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum until Sept. 28.

The plan, announced Lin Man-li, the director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, is for 12 Taiwan artists to go to Canada in April or May next year for an exhibition and to continue the exchange being started with the ongoing show at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

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“Lucy Hogg felt that the eroticism of the female nude was designed for the male viewer,” said Bellerby. “As a woman, she was bothered by it. And so she went on to do a critique of the original painting. She tried to deconstruct the original notion on the body by using big brush strokes and bright colors. These were intended to bring the viewers’ attention to the surface of the painting.”

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A Group of sixty-seven, 137 colour photographs, 28 x 35.5 cm each, Jin-me Yoon, 1995.

A VIEW FROM TAIPEI

Vancouver Perspective was an exhibition curated in Vancouver and shown at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in Taiwan, June 28 - September 28, 1997.

In his forward to the exhibition catalogue, Charles H. Scott Gallery director Greg Bellerby noted that "the twelve artists represented in the exhibition reflect the diversity, quality and criticality of work by Vancouver women artists."

"Some of the concerns addressed in this exhibition range from issues of identity, as seen in the work of Jin-me Yoon and Sharyn Yuen. The domestic environment in relation to social, class and history is explored in the work of Anne Ramsden, Kati Campbell and Renee Van Halm. Women in the urban environment is the focus of Allyson Clay and Lorna Brown's work. Issues addressing western art history

dominate the work of Lucy Hogg and Elspeth Pratt, while Monique Fouquet looks at history from a personal, autobiographical stance. The work of Vikky Alexander and Landon Mackenzie questions the relationship between language, the representation of landscape, and ideas about place."

Vancouver Perspective was sponsored by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the British

Columbia Arts Council, and the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei. Mun-Lee Lin, director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, stated her hope that the exhibition would provide "a wonderful opportunity to examine the development of art by women in Canada...We are delighted that the *Vancouver Perspective* exhibition can provide the Taipei audience with the best opportunity to appreciate, to study, to meditate and to enjoy art, as well as culture."

How was this "wonderful opportunity" received in Taipei? *Artichoke* asked Maggie Pai, a Taipei art critic, to consider *Vancouver Perspective* from a Taiwan perspective.

Pai's response began with an apology: "I am sorry, but I simply cannot write a review of *Vancouver Perspective*. I have visited the show twice and have attempted several times to write, but words fail me. A weak show was exacerbated by a poor, incoherent installation, inadequately lit, set against the dirty, dingy cavernous walls of the museum. Too few works were shown with no linkage...Perhaps a better installation in a smaller space would have worked, but I am doubtful about that."

After mentioning that "probably the best work in the show, Sharyn Yuen's *I Cross the Ocean*, had been taken down because of unspecified water damage," Pai commented that the people she had spoken to were

confused about the exhibition's content. She asked, "What makes it womens' art?"

Pai points out that "Canadian art is not very familiar here, so the catalogue was not that helpful. Comments [specifically in Jin-me Yoon's artist's statement] about the Group of Seven are meaningless unless the artist's names are given. References to Emily Carr are...useless unless one has been to Vancouver. Certainly no one at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum has any idea of who she was." Without an understanding of our national art icons, it's not surprising that Jin-me Yoon's *A Group of sixty-seven* (1995) would appear as little more than 137 photographs.

One wonders what Taiwanese viewers thought of, for example, Elspeth Pratt's rough-constructed sculptural 'table,' *Lucky Me* (1992) or the accompanying artist's statement, a densely written text that commences with "Born from the critique of minimalist art production as a dominated practice, Pratt's work inhabits the space that was opened up by the plethora of discourses that challenged the autonomy and universality of modernist sculpture," and ends with "In combination with a disjunctive syntax and heterogeneous materials, her work maintains a resistance to symbolization and avoids the utterance of a closed statement, of a statement that would deny the complexity

and tenuousness of I, as the producer and product of the social edifice."

Pai closed her report by saying again that she was sorry, "but I can't write about something I myself find tedious and disappointing."

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ARTICHOKE FALL/WINTER 1997