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Taiwan 1987-2010**

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**ART AND CELEBRITY:
A STUDY OF THE CELEBRITISATION OF ARTISTS IN
TAIWAN 1987-2010**

YI-HSIN NICOLE LAI

**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

May 2011

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Westminster is solely my own work

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan in the post-martial law period since 1987. It analyses the different forces that have contributed to the construction of celebrity art as a prevalent phenomenon and explores its changing significance in Taiwan's contemporary art scene and society. Based on extensive primary evidence from different kinds of materials, including journals and newspaper articles, magazine reports, exhibition catalogues and reviews, television programmes and Internet resources, gallery and museum visits, and interviews with celebrity artists and curators, this thesis argues that the construction of celebrity art in Taiwan demonstrates a constant negotiation between artists' aspirations for celebrity recognition, media, corporate business and political interests. I argue that in the celebritisation process, businesses and corporations utilise art to cultivate a positive brand image, generate commercial activities, accumulate cultural capital and consolidate their power and influence. In this sense, celebrity art becomes an aspect of business operations, in ways that are similar to those criticised by scholar Julian Stallabrass's in the Western context. However, the development of corporate art intervention in Taiwan has distinctive features which are associated with the process of democratisation and its strong impact on the emergence of celebrity art. Furthermore, the government's promotion of celebrity artists has enabled it to promote its national political identity in the global arena. This relates especially to the changing political scene in Taiwan since 1987 in which that celebrity art has become a means for different political parties to express their political concerns. At the same time, these processes have empowered artists to engage with larger social, cultural and political forces, demonstrating the capacity of celebrity art to serve as a vehicle of new social and aesthetic values about issues such as gender and womanhood. Certain aspects of Taiwan's celebrity art also contribute to a new 'cool', largely young, and socially distinctive urban taste culture in Taiwan, by bringing innovative characteristics to Taiwan's art scene that bridge high and popular culture. The celebritisation of art in Taiwan thus has many similarities with those discussed by Walker, Stallabrass and other Western scholars with reference to Western tendencies, but is distinctive in its political and social-economic causes.

The first chapter introduces my aims and arguments, and gives an overview of the historical and political, media, institutional and global changes that facilitated the emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan. This chapter also describes my research methodology. Chapter two provides an analysis of relevant historical and theoretical perspectives on the construction of the celebrity and celebrity art, and examines their social, cultural and economic importance in both Western and East Asian societies. Chapter three to seven respectively examine different cases of celebrity artists, namely Lee Ming-sheng, Chu Cha-ray, Cai Guoqiang, Tang Huang-chen and the VT Artsalon group. Each of the cases exemplifies particular features—overlapping with and distinct from each other—of the concept of celebrity art in Taiwan. Through close examination of these cases, the thesis investigates an important aspect of Taiwan's changing art scene that has not to date featured in scholarly work on contemporary culture in Taiwan.

ROMANISATION

Although this thesis refers to the contemporary art scene in Taiwan, it uses the mainland Chinese *Hanyu pinyin* system of romanisation of Chinese characters since most readers are unfamiliar with Taiwan's system of romanisation. *Hanyu pinyin* is used for the romanised spelling of Chinese terms, names of authors and publications, news reports and so on. I retains other systems of romanisation in cases where these are the accepted forms (for example, Lee Ming-sheng, Chu Cha-ray or Taipei).

The footnote references include *Hanyu pinyin* romanisation and English translations of the original Chinese titles. The Chinese titles can be found in the Bibliography. Many of the English translations from Chinese publications are mine, but due to their length, I have not included the Chinese originals.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis looks into the emergence of celebrity art in the context of Taiwan in the post-martial law period since 1987. It analyses the different forces that have contributed to the construction of celebrity art as a prevalent phenomenon and explores its changing significance in Taiwan's contemporary art scene and society.

In contemporary mass media society, images of art and artists have become increasingly common across different communication channels. Artists appear on television programmes and in magazines, newspapers and other forms of mass media, seeking media exposure to promote their exhibitions and artwork, and cooperating with business-sponsored projects in planned media strategies to advance their own interests and desire for fame. Those artists who appear as celebrities, or who have been through what I call a 'celebritisation process', are prominent figures in media spaces, and are acknowledged by the public as '*yishu mingren*' (celebrity artists).

The phenomenon of the emergence of celebrity art is a global issue. John J. Walker, a scholar who looks into the concept of celebrity art in the Western art world, argues that the circulation of images and discourses that have created celebrities are inseparable from the modern development of technology and communication through the press, photography, radio, film, television, and the Internet.¹ Taiwan is no exception to participating in this global development of technology and communication, but its specific historical, political and social conditions caused 'celebrity art' to emerge only in the latter half of the 1980s and in ways that both overlapped with but also were distinct from the celebritisation of art in the West and other East Asian countries such as China and Japan due to its specific political and social environment.² In his book *Art and Celebrity*, Walker

¹ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 13-14.

² The contextual background of the emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

discusses the appearance of celebrity artists in the West from the early twentieth century on, from Picasso and Dali, to the very recent representatives of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin.³ Walker points out that a precondition for art stars⁴ is ‘mass media coverage that enables them to become famous far beyond their principal profession’.⁵ In Taiwan, the increasingly commodified and critical character of the mass media that has emerged since the early stages of post-martial law democratisation also plays a crucial role in the construction of celebrity art and in creating public recognition of the celebrity artist. However, other political, corporate and commercial factors are also important in explaining the celebritisation of art in Taiwan. The relative importance of these different factors in explaining the distinctive emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan is a key concern of this thesis.

Taking scholars and cultural critics’ analysis of celebrity art in both Western and East Asian contexts as its starting point, this thesis examines the emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan with a close study of five examples. I use the concept of celebrity art and the celebritisation process as a lens for understanding some of the key features of the production, circulation, presentation and consumption of contemporary art and artists in Taiwan, and its transformative characteristics in art production.

Based on extensive evidence from local and international media reports, gallery and museum visits, exhibition catalogues and reviews, and interviews with celebrity artists and curators, this thesis argues that the construction of celebrity art in Taiwan demonstrates a continuous negotiation between the different forces of artists’ desire for fame and the effects of media, corporate and business interests. In particular, corporations and businesses approach the celebritisation process as a means to advance their interests through a series of marketing strategies that use art and cultural activities and media cooperation to generate publicity. I argue that in the celebritisation process, businesses and corporations utilise art to cultivate a positive brand image, generate commercial activities, accumulate cultural capital and

³ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (2003).

⁴ Walker’s use of the term ‘art star’ here is called ‘celebrity artist’ in this thesis. The uses of the terms and the distinctions between them will be discussed in the Literature Review in chapter two.

⁵ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (2003), 14.

consolidate their power and influence. In this sense, celebrity art becomes an aspect of business operations, in ways that are similar to those criticised by scholar Julian Stallabrass's in the Western context. However, the development of corporate art intervention in Taiwan has distinctive features which are associated with the process of democratisation and its strong impact on the emergence of celebrity art. Furthermore, the government's promotion of celebrity artists has enabled it to promote its national political identity in the global arena. This relates especially to the changing political scene in Taiwan since 1987 in which that celebrity art has become a means for different political parties to express their political concerns. As one of my case studies will demonstrate, this also brings associated with social-economic influences in Taiwan in the 2000s. At the same time, these processes have empowered artists to engage with larger social, cultural and political forces, demonstrating the capacity of celebrity art to serve as a vehicle of new social and aesthetic values about issues such as gender and womanhood. Certain aspects of Taiwan's celebrity art also contribute to a new 'cool', largely young, and socially distinctive urban taste culture in Taiwan, by bringing innovative characteristics to Taiwan's art scene that bridge high and popular culture. The celebritisation of art in Taiwan thus has many similarities with those discussed by Walker, Stallabrass and other Western scholars with reference to Western tendencies, but is distinctive in its political and social-economic causes.

Although there are discourses on celebrity studies in the regional context of East Asia, including China, Japan and Taiwan, there has been limited academic attention to date to the phenomenon of celebrity art in Taiwan and its regional context. This thesis therefore sheds light on a process which is reshaping Taiwan's art scene. It is moreover particularly significant now in Taiwan, at a time when contemporary artists and art are seeking more display platforms, including exhibitions in museums, galleries and public spaces, biennales, festivals and other art activities, to present their artwork and themselves in national and international arenas. As museums and artists actively reach out to audiences to increase and cultivate art lovers, there are also increasing numbers of corporate attempts to use art and culture as a means to advance their own economic and cultural interests. Those transformations in the Taiwanese art scene underline the significance of the topic of this thesis.

Setting the Scene: The Background to the Emergence of Celebrity Art in Taiwan

The emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan is closely linked to specific features of Taiwan at a particular moment of its history and notably the processes of its democratisation since the 1980s. This section focuses on the specific aspects of Taiwan's political, social and cultural development, particularly since 1987, in order to show how Taiwan's processes of political and social change since 1987 have influenced cultural developments and to contextualise the distinctive character of celebrity art construction as it has occurred in Taiwan. These can be approached from six different perspectives: Taiwan's historical influences, cross-strait and global relations, the development of the mass media, corporate business and its growing involvement with art, the institutional arrangements concerning the emergence of new cultural spaces, and the globalisation of the Taiwanese art scene, and the transformation of social and gender values particularly concerning women's social role and position. As I discuss below in chapter three, the appearance of Taiwan's first celebrity artist corresponded with the political conditions of martial law in the early stage of Taiwan's democratisation, so it is to that I first turn.

Politics and art under martial law

Celebrity art in Taiwan first emerged in the 1980s in direct response to the period of martial law which came to an end in 1987. Before this, Taiwanese society had been subject to nearly forty years of authoritarian rule by the Kuomintang (KMT) regime (1949-1987). During this period, the KMT regime used its power to maintain political and social control through consolidating its one-party dictatorship system and suppressing all opposing speeches and actions. Under such conditions, writers, artists and other creative practitioners found themselves tightly constrained and without the possibility of acquiring spaces for individual critical expression. Famous artists at this time can be categorised into two main types. The first type refers to those whose reputation accumulated through their artistic achievement by

participating national exhibitions and art salons since the Japanese colonial period, such as artist Lin Yushan. The other type was characterised by their oppositional position to the government that was expressed through their artistic creations, such as Huang Yan and Zhu Ming-gang. In so far as celebrity is linked to global artistic commodification, the notion of the celebrity was not around Taiwan at the time.

The historical roots of the implementation of martial law and its impact in Taiwan have to be traced back to Imperial China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War when China ceded the island of Taiwan to Japan in 1895. Taiwan was then ruled by Japan until 1945 when Japan surrendered in World War II and returned Taiwan to the Republic of China (R.O.C.). Nationalist rule began in October 1945 after the end of World War II. During the immediate post-war period, the Nationalist Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) administration on Taiwan was repressive and corrupt, leading to extensive local discontent. Anti-mainlander violence flared on 28 February 1947, prompted by an incident in which a cigarette seller was injured and a passer-by was shot dead by Nationalist authorities.⁶ The incident, which was later known as '2-28 Incident' (*2-28 shijian*), triggered civil disorder and an open rebellion against the authorities lasted for several days. The uprising was violently put down by the military of the R.O.C., and in May 1949, martial law was officially implemented. Two decades of 'white terror' followed⁷, in which an estimated 18,000-25,000 people⁸ were killed and thousands more vanished or were imprisoned.⁹

During the period of the white terror, people lived in a state of political fear and spiritual oppression, and were under surveillance in every aspect of daily life. There was an official ban on mentioning the February 28 Incident in any form, and artists lived in conditions in which they had no freedom to create works of art, especially works that were recognised, or metaphorically implicated, as politically

⁶ Information from: Li, Xiaofeng. *60 fenzhong kuaidu Taiwanshi (Studying the history of Taiwan in 60 minutes)* (Taipei: Taiwan Interinds Publishing Inc., 2002).

⁷ In Taiwan, the 'white terror' is used to refer to the persecution of suspects of Taiwan independence and democratic reform and political movements by the Communist Party of Taiwan in the ROC government in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁸ Lai, Zehan. *2-28 Shijian yanjiu baogao (228 Incident Research Reports)* (Taipei: China Times Publishing Company, 1994).

⁹ Hou, Kunhung. 'Zhanhou Taiwan baise kongbu lunxi' (White Terror in Post-war Taiwan') *Guoshi xueshu jikan (Bulletin of Academia Historica)* (Taipei: Issue 12, 2006), 138.

sensitive. Some early examples include Huang Yan's *A Person Down, Millions of People Stand Up* (1948) and Zhu Ming-gang's *Persecution* (1948) that depicted scenes of persecutions which were banned during the white terror period and which could not be publicly displayed until 1999, years after the lifting of martial law, when the exhibition *The Others in Times—the Artistic Witnesses of the 228 Times* was held at the Taiwan Museum of Art.¹⁰



Figure 1. Zhu Minggang's work *Persecution* (1948)¹¹

Describing the political and social situation at the time, Hou Kun-hung, senior researcher at the Academia Historica, wrote that “During the White Terror era in the post-Second World War period, military command was more important than the law. Any person could be imprisoned for a minor unintentional event”.¹² Literary

¹⁰ Exhibition *Shidai de tazhe—2-28 niandai de meishu jianzheng* (*The Others in Times—the Artistic Witnesses of the 228 Times*) Taiwan Museum of Art, 10 February—3 March 1999.

¹¹ Image from Taiwan Museum of Art website.
http://www1.ntmofa.gov.tw/228/html/galview/a3_7.html. Accessed 30 August 2010.

¹² Hou, Kunhung. ‘Zhanhou Taiwan baise kongbu lunxi’ (White Terror in Post-war Taiwan) *Guoshi xueshu jikan* (*Bulletin of Academia Historica*) (Taipei: Issue 12, 2006), 138.

author, Ke Qihua¹³ described Taiwan as a ‘prison island’¹⁴ in the forty year period of the White Terror. In the conditions of the years immediately before 1987 when there were no obvious guidelines for what an artist could or could not do, because the KMT was still in power, so art and artists were not expected to be oppositional, political or socially critical. Performance artist Lee Ming-sheng frequently came across police who surrounded his challenging public performances, and who sometimes arrested him. The government’s approach to such acts of rebellion, which were mostly associated with intellectual circles, was to suppress them through imposing absolute control over the education system and through secretly dispatching personnel to monitor the behaviours and actions of teachers, students and other intellectuals.¹⁵ Despite constant surveillance of his work, Lee continued to carry out his performance art projects and in the process became a celebrity through the media’s coverage of him as an agitator.

According to Yao Jui-chung, an art critic and artist, the development of performance art in Taiwan had an important relationship with the political coercion limiting artistic and literary creativity.¹⁶ In his view, for those artists who consistently want to pursue new artistic expression, art became little more than a decorative pursuit since they could not use art to express their concerns about the existing political, social and cultural conditions.¹⁷ Some artists therefore started to group together and to use their bodies to express their artistic ideas in a form of art that by definition could not be preserved.¹⁸ Artist Chen Chiehjen presented a street performance art in 1983 that attracted many people’s attention; artists Zhang Jianfu, Lee Ming-sheng and Guo Shaozong tried to present street performance art with their bodies in 1984; and artist Lin Ju intentionally developed a contrary strategy that he

¹³ Ke, Qihua (柯旗化) was imprisoned twice due to the claims by the government of his oppositional political status in 1951 and 1961, described Taiwan as a ‘prison island’.

¹⁴ Hou, Kunhung, ‘Zhanhou Taiwan baise kongbu lunxi’ (White Terror in Post-war Taiwan) *Guoshi xueshu jikan (Bulletin of Academia Historica)* (Taipei: Issue 12, 2006), 138.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Yao Jui-chung’s book *Taiwan xingwei yishu dangan (Performance Art in Taiwan 1978- 2004)*. (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., 2005).

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

created the painting without having any contact with the outside world in 1985. Among those artists, Lee Ming-sheng was the most energetic and productive artist.¹⁹ Beside these political conditions that helped to foster the development of performance art, western influences were also important. At the same time, information about Western avant-garde art and performance art was transmitted and reported by Taiwanese mass media, and new artistic concepts were introduced to the Taiwanese art scene by those artists who were educated abroad and returned to Taiwan (discussed in later sections).

Most of Lee's works in the 1980s criticised the internalized constraints produced by the government's use of dictatorial power. His artistic career took off in 1981 with a series of reportage photographs. In 1982, when he followed a western performance artist to learn body language and physical performance, he felt strongly that photographs could no longer express his concerns about the contemporary social and political constraints.²⁰ From 1983, he started to use his body as a focus of his artistic activity. However, in the political environment at the time, Taiwanese artists had very little understanding of the specific form of performance art. Information about performance art was mainly reported and transmitted from the West, specially when Taiwanese performance artist Hsieh The-ching,²¹ whose performance art projects in New York raised enormous attention, attracted news reports and critical reviews in the 1980s.²²

The most outstanding feature of Lee's early work was that he challenged the political regime through performance art that focused on the idea of the 'repressed' body, in response to the wider social phenomenon of Taiwanese people living the internalized constraints produced by the government's use of the dictatorial power.

¹⁹ Ibid., 11-12.

²⁰ Lee, Ming-sheng. *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (Taipei: Tonsun Publication Company, 1995), 28.

²¹ Performance artist Hsieh The-ching was born in 1950 in Taiwan. Among the Taiwanese artists, although he is based in New York, he is constantly referred to as a pioneer performance artist. His famous works included *One Year Performance 1978-1979* (Cage Piece), *One Year Performance 1980-1981* (Time Clock Piece), *One Year Performance 1981-1982* (Outdoor Piece) and others. Information from Yao Jui-chung's book *Taiwan xingwei yishu dangan* (*Performance Art in Taiwan 1978-2004*). (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., 2005).

²² Information from: *ibid.* More information on the global influences on Taiwanese art scene will be discussed in the following sections in this chapter.

His manner of conducting his performance art projects was extremely radical at the time, since most were endowed with explicit political messages, such as his projects *Bundle 119* (1984), *Non-Running, Non-Walking* (1987), and *Medical Examination of Taipei Fine Arts Museu* (1987). His other performance projects, *Non-line* (1986), which he chose to perform on 28 February, was considered by the police as politically motivated. The police then kept him at home for the whole day and the performance was eventually cancelled. Also, in project *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* (1988), Lee explored the mechanisms of how aspiring politicians sought celebrity status and exerted their political power over the public. These 1980s performances not only presented the artist's stronger engagement with challenges to state power and the power of the institutionalised art establishment as Taiwan's democratisation was beginning to get under way; it also attracted mass media reports and the attention of passers-by contributing to what became his celebrity status.

With little understanding of performance art and the artistic merits of Lee's performances, especially in view of Lee's striking bodily engagement with the limits of his own physical strength, the public and the media invariably described him as a 'crazy' man (*fengzi*).²³ As I detail in chapter three, this kind of publicity for Lee commenced what I suggest was a process of celebritisation, in which Lee and his performance art gradually became well known and legitimated. Lee's performance art and his celebrity status in the late 1980s presented particular artistic perspectives on the social and political changes of the time, and clearly contrasted with his later celebrity status during the global biennale in the early 1990s.

²³ Lee's image as a crazy man left a deep impression in people's mind. Even years later in 2007, when media reports talked about him, it was as "crazy man Lee Ming-sheng is back", with the explanation that "in the early years when performance art was not recognised by the public, Lee Ming-sheng was often accused of being a crazy man". Information from, Chen, Shuying. 'Jilie tuibian, 'fengzi' Lee Mingsheng you mifang' (Radical transformation, 'crazy man' Lee Ming-sheng has secret recipe) *Yiwen xinwen* (Art and Cultural News) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 23 August 2007.

Cross-straits and global relations: the international political context of post-martial law art in Taiwan

The processes of Taiwan's post-martial law political reform were significantly influenced by cross-strait relations between Taiwan and China, and by Taiwan's global relations. These not only influenced Taiwan's diplomatic international status, but also had implications for the development of Taiwanese art, playing an important role in fostering the emergence of celebrity art and artists in Taiwan.

In 1949, while the Republic of China (R.O.C.) government led by the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan, the Communists proclaimed the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) in Beijing. Since then, there have been regular confrontations between mainland China and Taiwan and the relations between them have been characterised by high tension and instability. For political and military reasons, the two sides cut off transportation and communication, and the two governments continued in a state of war throughout the military crises of the 1950s. Politically, neither government recognised the existence and legitimacy of the other, and they became entangled in contest over which was the legitimate representative of China in the United Nations. In 1971, following a member's vote in the United Nations, the P.R.C. government became the legitimate representative of China, and the R.O.C. government had to withdraw from the UN. Thereafter, Taiwan's diplomatic relations with the major governments of the world were also broken off.

The R.O.C. government has repeatedly striven for renewed international recognition, and formally presented its will to rejoin the United Nations through its diplomatic relations with the other countries in 1993. Nonetheless, the political controversy between mainland China and Taiwan—the P.R.C. and the R.O.C. government—increased the difficulties of communication between Taiwan and international organisations such as the United Nations and WHO. The P.R.C. government did not agree that Taiwan should join international organisations with a political identity as a 'nation'. Therefore, Taiwan had to use the term 'Chinese Taipei' (*Zhonghua Taipei*) as a name to participate in international public events. This was due to the fact that, "the ROC leadership insisted that there be some kind of 'Chinese-ness' to the name under which the country competed. 'Taiwan' was simply

unacceptable to the authoritarian ROC government, therefore an ambiguous ‘Chinese Taipei’ name was created in March 1981”.²⁴

While the nation’s focus remained on this political objective to rejoin the United Nations and to regain international status, artist Lee Ming-shen’s participation in the Venice Biennale in 1993 gained international media exposure for Taiwanese art and artists, and for the national name of ‘Taiwan’. At the time, Lee’s international artistic achievements had considerable political implications for Taiwanese people, who praised him as a ‘national hero’. His international exposures through art and cultural activity also inspired the R.O.C. government to set up its own exhibition in the Venice Biennale in order to seek further international exposure. In 1995, in the next Venice Biennale after Lee’s attendance, Taiwanese art and artists had the opportunity to have their own exhibition in the Venice Biennale, organised by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM). However, although the TFAM consistently claims to have hosted a ‘Taiwan Pavilion’ in the biennale, the fact is that Taiwan was never registered as a national participant, but as a theme exhibition. This is also the reason that in the Venice Biennale, Taiwan’s exhibition had to include the name of ‘Taiwan’ in the exhibition title, in order to express its legitimate status.²⁵

Since the turn of the millennium, media outlets from almost every other country (apart from China) have been willing to refer to Taiwan as a nation, even though the *Taipei Times* has commented that, “it is galling that media outlets back home and Taiwan’s officials insist on using ‘Chinese Taipei’”.²⁶ Today, even though

²⁴ Lin, Catherine K. ‘How ‘Chinese Taipei’ came about’. *Taipei Times*. 5 August 2008.

²⁵ Taiwan’s participation in the Venice Biennale is in fact, negotiated between Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) and the local art association in Venice, and the agreement was to hire a revenue space by Piazza San Marco for ten years. Even so, Taiwan cannot promote its exhibition with the name ‘Taiwan Pavilion’. In Chinese media reports, the Taiwan Pavilion and the Hong Kong Pavilion both exist as local pavilions under the name of ‘Chinese Pavilion’. Information from, Yang, Enda. ‘*Leyuan hai duo yuan?—Dishijie Weinisi shuangnianzhan Taiwan guan*’ (Is the paradise still far?—10th Venice Architecture Biennale, Taiwan Pavilion) *Jianzhu (Dialogue)* (October 2006), 46-53.

For relative information, please make reference to: Ling, Meixue. ‘*Ma zhengfu pianren, Weinisi shuangnianzhan, meiyou Taiwan guan*’ (Ma Government is lying, there is no Taiwan Pavilion in Venice Biennale) *Yiwen ban (Art and cultural section) Ziyou shibao (Liberty Times)* 17 June 2009; and Venice Biennale official website: <http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/index.html>. Accessed 29 August 2010.

²⁶ *Taipei Times* points out that, “to avoid confusing its American audience, NBC television clarified each time the name was used that ‘Chinese Taipei’ referred to Taiwan. Japanese and South Korean television were more impatient and simply dropped ‘Chinese Taipei’ altogether in its reports, using

the name ‘Taiwan’ is more visible in various international forums and events, the debates about Taiwan’s political position continue, for instance when Taiwanese teams compete internationally.

As for cross-straits relations, after the lifting of martial law in 1987, the R.O.C government passed a new policy allowing the general public to visit relatives in mainland China, and civic organizations took the lead in cross-straits exchanges.²⁷ The cross-straits ‘three links’ (*san-tong*), included direct flights, direct post and direct shipping, were restored in 2008.²⁸ Although political relations between the two governments still remain tense, media, cultural, educational, religious and sporting exchanges and communication between China and Taiwan have increased throughout the 1990s and 2000s.²⁹ Taiwanese singers, television actors/actresses, and celebrities began to develop their careers in China. In 2008, the national museum in Taiwan, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (the TFAM), started to host solo exhibitions of Chinese contemporary artists in response to the cross-straits cultural exchange policy conducted by the KMT party.³⁰ Chinese artists, Fang Lijun and Cai Guoqiang, were respectively invited to hold solo exhibitions in the TFAM. Nonetheless, due to the large financial budgets and museum spaces offered to the Chinese contemporary art and artists, these exhibitions caused such controversy in 2010 that scholars in the art and cultural fields, artists, journalists, and politicians questioned the excessive cross-straits cultural exchange which made the TFAM a place for cultural

‘Taiwan’ instead.” Information from, ‘Editorial: Rest in peace, ‘Chinese Taipei’’, *Taipei Times*. 1st September 2004.

²⁷ In 1991, the P.R.C. government set up an organization, Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), in Beijing for handling technical or business matters with the R.O.C. (Taiwan). The R.O.C. counterpart to ARATS is the Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF). For further information, please see: Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council: <http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/>; and SEF website: <http://www.sef.org.tw/>. Accessed 18 January 2011.

²⁸ The ‘Three Links’ were officially restored on 15 December 2008, with the commencement of direct flights, shipping and post. Information from Wu, Fulong. *Globalization and the Chinese city*. Volume 7 of Routledge contemporary China series. (London: Routledge publishing, 2006), 162.

²⁹ ‘*Dao dalu de taibao chaoguo liangqianwan ren*’ (There are more than twenty million Taiwanese visitors to mainland China). *Liangnan quanxi de fazhan yu yanbian (The development of cross-strait relations)*. <http://big5.eastday.com:82/gate/big5/mil.eastday.com/eastday/mil/node3043/node13816/userobject1ai108985.html>. Accessed 18 January 2010.

³⁰ Please refer to the Taipei Fine Arts Museum website: <http://www.tfam.museum/>. Accessed 18 January 2011.

colonialism promoting the value of China.³¹ These discussions correspond with what Edward Vickers, a scholar in education who specialises on Taiwan and other Asian countries, has pointed out that, namely that museums in Taiwan—including art and cultural museums such as the National Palace Museum, National Museum of History (founded in 1955) and others—have responded to, or participated in, contemporary shifts in identity politics.³² This is demonstrated by the objects displayed and exhibitions held at the museums, as well as by the intervention of the political parties, which strategy was explicitly appropriated after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) came into power after 2000.³³ Vickers points out that,

Like their KMT predecessors, the DPP have made full use of the power to appoint museum directors wielded by the Education Ministry (in respect of most of the larger and older ‘National’ museums), the Council for Cultural Affairs (in respect of the Taiwan Museum and Taiwan History Museum), and the President himself (in respect of the National Palace Museum), in order to promote their cultural agendas.³⁴

As Vickers suggests, the strategy was particularly deployed by the DPP regime after they came to power, to promote a vision of ‘Taiwaneseness’.³⁵ The National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts is under the jurisdiction of the Council for Cultural Affairs, the TFAM is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Taipei City

³¹ Chen, Wei-chen. ‘*Jianren wenhua zhiminju de meishuguan—2009 Beimeiquan de cezhan guihua yu fantan*’ (The museum that holds a concurrent post of Bureau of Cultural Colonialism—2009 Taipei Fine Arts Museum’s curatorial planning and rebound). *Pobao (Pots Newspaper)*. 21 January 2010. <http://www.pots.tw/node/4198>. Accessed 18 January 2011; Frazier, David. ‘Plight at the museum’, *Taipei Times*. 17 January 2010.

³² Vickers, Edward. ‘Re-writing Museums in Taiwan,’ in *Re-writing Culture in Taiwan*, ed Fang-Long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul Tremlett, (London: Routledge, 2008), 83.

³³ The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is a political party in Taiwan, which was founded as an outside movement party during the Martial Law Period in Taiwan. It has traditionally been associated with strong advocacy of human rights and a distinct Taiwanese identity, including promotion of Taiwan independence legally. Between 2000 and 2008, the DPP became the Republic of China’s ruling party, and it is still the largest oppositional party after the step down in 2008. Please refer to the DPP website: <http://dpptaiwan.blogspot.com/>. Accessed 10 May 2011.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 83. Although the concept of Taiwanese ‘national identity’ was brought up by the DPP regime after 2000, the whole ‘bentuhua’, or indigenization movement, associated with the assertion of distinctive ‘Taiwaneseness’, dates back at least to the early 1990s, and was strongly supported by the KMT regime of Lee Teng-hui, the former president of Taiwan from 1988-2000. Although it was less explicit than that later given by the DPP, in the 1990s, President Lee proposed a new ethnic concept of ‘new Taiwanese’ (*xin Taiwan ren*). In this identity, whether mainlanders or Taiwanese, as long as one identified him/herself with Taiwan, and loved Taiwan, they were the ‘real Taiwanese’. Information from, ‘Lee Teng-hui devoted to promote localization and strengthen “Taiwan identity”’. <http://taiwannation.50webs.com/plee3.htm>. Accessed 10 May 2011.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

Government, and the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts is under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs Kaohsiung City Government, all demonstrating the close links between museums in Taiwan, the political regime and local government authorities. In 2008, after the presidential election, the DPP regime stepped down and the KMT regime came back into power, hence the cross-strait exchanges continued to be respected.

Besides the controversies concerning the issue of cross-straits cultural exchanges, literature and cultural critic Zhang Xiaohong and journalists Ling Meiyue and Zhou Meihui claimed that another problem was that the exhibitions in the TFAM were too commercialised (discussed in chapter five).³⁶ The exhibitions under criticism included Chinese artist Cai Guoqiang's retrospective exhibition in 2009 that involved the participation of his formal agent in Taiwan, the Eslite Gallery, and a series of promotional activities (discussed in chapter five). As a globally renowned Chinese artist, journalists claimed that spending a large amount of budget on Cai's commercialised exhibition was a kind of worship of the art star.³⁷

In Taiwan today, the commercialisation of exhibitions and the commercial promotion of artists are also influenced by other important factors, including the development of the mass media, the transformation of art institutions and business interventions in art. All these elements are considered in this thesis as significant forces in the construction of celebrity art in Taiwan, and will be discussed in the following sections.

Mass media developments and promotion of the celebrity artist

After Taiwan entered into the period of martial law in 1949 under its anti-communist policy, all main media channels were owned and monitored by the KMT party. The

³⁶ Zhang, Xiaohong. 'Pao meishuguan huo guang hualang' (Hanging out in the Museum or visiting art gallery?) *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)* A21. 28 November 2009.

³⁷ Chen, Wei-chen. 'The museum that holds a concurrent post of Bureau of Cultural Colonialism—2009 Taipei Fine Arts Museum's curatorial planning and rebound'. *Pots Newspaper*. 21 January 2010. <http://www.pots.tw/node/4198>. Accessed 18 January 2011; Frazier, David. 'Plight at the museum', *Taipei Times*. 17 January 2010.

major media agencies and their associations at the time were: *Central Daily News* (*Zhongyang ribao*)³⁸ in Taipei, owned by the KMT party; *Taiwan Shin Sheng Daily News* (*Taiwan xinsheng bao*)³⁹ belonging to the provincial government; *China Daily News* (*Zhonghua ribao*)⁴⁰ in Tainan and *News Taiwan* (*Taiwan xinwen bao*)⁴¹ in Kaohsiung, both of which were owned by the KMT. There were only two privately funded newspapers in publication, *Credit News* (*Zhengxin xinwen*)⁴² and *United Daily News* (*Lianhe bao*)⁴³. However, those two leaders of the private newspaper agencies later joined the KMT party and became the committee members of the party in the 1970s. Since then, the Government has had total control of the published discourses in newspapers and radio broadcasting,⁴⁴ by which the mass media in Taiwan became the propaganda machine of the party.⁴⁵

The contents of the media reports were also strictly controlled. Especially between 1949 and 1960 when there were many victims of political repression, newspapers and other media publications were prohibited from making reports on the related information. The freedom of discourse was only revived in the 1980s, related to the economic raise of the middle class who started to request political

³⁸ *Central Daily News* (中央日報, *Zhongyang ribao*) was founded in 1929 in Shanghai, and moved to Taiwan with the KMT party in 1949. In 2006, the publication was transformed into Internet-based news broadcasting.

³⁹ *Taiwan Shin Sheng Daily News* (台灣新生報, *Taiwan xinsheng bao*) was established in 1945, as the earliest funded newspaper in Taiwan.

⁴⁰ *China Daily News* (中華日報, *Zhonghua ribao*) was founded in 1946 as a local newspaper in Taiwan.

⁴¹ *News Taiwan* (台灣新聞報, *Taiwan xinwen bao*) was founded in 1961 as a local newspaper in Kaohsiung.

⁴² *Credit News* (徵信新聞, *Zhengxin xinwen*) was founded in 1950 and later, in 1969, the name was changed to *China Times* (中國時報).

⁴³ *United Daily News* (聯合報, *Lianhe bao*) was founded in 1951.

⁴⁴ In the martial law period, the ‘newspaper ban’, explained by lawyer Yu Yingfu that, at the time newspapers were controlled by limited licenses, limited copies and limited paper sheets. Limited licenses meant that it was impossible for news agencies to publish any other new newspapers; limited copies meant one agency was only allowed to run one printing factory and printed papers in controlled numbers; and limited sheets meant that every newspaper was only allowed to publish three sheets daily, exceptionally only one or one half sheet more would be allowed.

“Talking about Taiwan,” *Radio Taiwan International*, http://www.rti.org.tw/big5/recommend/taiwan/content/content_9.html. Accessed 2 June 2010

⁴⁵ “Talking about Taiwan,” *Radio Taiwan International*, http://www.rti.org.tw/big5/recommend/taiwan/content/content_9.html. Accessed 2 June 2010,

reform. It was not until 1986 when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) broke the bans and started to form its party, that the newspaper ban was lifted in 1988.⁴⁶

Although martial law was lifted in the late 1980s, radio channels and cable television channels were only reopened in 1993, after which the Taiwanese media started to develop rapidly and vigorously. The media agencies faced intensive competition, in part because of the high density of news channels—today Taiwan has eleven in competition.⁴⁷ Due to the highly competitive news environment, the content of the news became increasingly entertaining and sensationalist in order to attract audiences, which, in the view of some commentators, caused a real chaos in the media ecology.⁴⁸ Changes in the funding structure promoted the privatisation and commercialisation of media agencies, with the result that they became highly ‘manipulable’. With the intention of drawing economic capital investment, media agencies offered channels to different business interests to promote their advertising or produce television programmes corresponding with their business needs.⁴⁹ Political intervention is also a problem, leading to highly selective and biased news reports in favour of either the KMT or the DPP party, depending on the political commitments of the media agency in questions.⁵⁰ Under such circumstances, media

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The nine news channels include: TTV News (台視 *Taishi xinwen*), CTV News (中視 *Zhongshi xinwen*), CTS News (華視 *Huashi xinwen*), FTV News (民視 *Minshi xinwen*), PTS news (公視 *Gongshi xinwen*), TVBS news (*TVBS xinwen*), ETTV News (東森 *Dongsen xinwen*), Cti TV News (中天 *Zhongtian xinwen*), USTV News (非凡 *Feifan xinwen*), Era News (年代 *Niandai xinwen*), and SET News (三立 *Sanli xinwen*). Information from my own observation.

⁴⁸ Information from: Lu, Shixiang. *Cong habagou bian fenggou—Taiwan meiti luanxiang jishi (Turning From a Pug to a Mad Dog—Documentation on the Chaos of Taiwanese Mass Media)* (Taipei: Chienwei Publication, 2008); and Xu, Weizhong. ‘Guozheng pinglun: jie jue Taiwan meiti luanxiang zhi wojian’ (NPF Commentary: My Opinion on Settling the Media Chaos in Taiwan) *Caituan faren guojia zhengce yanjiu jijinhui (National Policy Foundation)* 15 March 2005. <http://old.npf.org.tw/PUBLICATION/EC/094/EC-C-094-020.htm>. Accessed 10 August 2010.

⁴⁹ Lu, Shixiang, *Cong habagou bian fenggou—Taiwan meiti luanxiang jishi (Turning From a Pug to a Mad Dog—Documentation on the Chaos of Taiwanese Mass Media)* Taipei: Chienwei Publication, 2008.

In 2004, the total amount of advertisements on cable television channels was 41.02%, in newspapers 26.7%, in non-cable television channels 13.94%, in magazines 13.3%, on radio 5.28% and on the Internet 2.5%.

⁵⁰ Xu, Weizhong. ‘Guozheng pinglun: jie jue Taiwan meiti luanxiang zhi wojian’ (NPF Commentary: My Opinion on Settling the Media Chaos in Taiwan) *Caituan faren guojia zhengce yanjiu jijinhui (National Policy Foundation)* 15 March 2005. <http://old.npf.org.tw/PUBLICATION/EC/094/EC-C-094-020.htm>. Accessed 10 August 2010.

channels are effectively propaganda tools for the political parties⁵¹, and for the corporations that choose to invest in them because of their support for a particular political party.⁵²

The condition of the Taiwanese media in the 2000s was criticised by the U.S. Department of State in a report in *2004 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, in which the word ‘erratic’ was used to describe the quality of Taiwanese news reports.

The quality of news reporting was erratic, and, at times, the media trampled on individuals' right to privacy. The media often taped and aired police interrogations and entered hospital rooms when the patient was unable to prevent this.⁵³

The Taiwanese social historian, Yao Renduo, shares a similar view:

no matter from which angle you examine it, Taiwanese society at this stage is, as American scholar Neil Postman describes, ‘amusing ourselves to death’. In the past period under the KMT dominance, the news was blocked to hide the truth. The whole community had only one single voice. But today, we have too much news and too much information.⁵⁴

The extremely entertainment-oriented media culture can be related to the paparazzi culture (*gouzi wenhua*) brought from Hong Kong in 2001 by the two media outlets *Apple Daily*⁵⁵ (*Pinguo ribao*) and *Next Magazine*⁵⁶ (*Yi zhoukan*) which have had

⁵¹ Some candidates even try to embed their political views in the story lines in soap operas to influence the much wider audiences. Various broadcasting methods have turned some of the politicians into celebrities through constantly showing their faces on television and broadcasting their names loudly through speakers on the street. Such ways of self-promotion were noticed by artist Lee Ming-shen, who later depicted the promotional strategy of the ‘political self’ in his art performance in 1988 that will be further discussed in chapter three in this thesis.

⁵² Lu, Shixiang. *Cong habagou bian fenggou—Taiwan meiti luanxiang jishi (Turning From a Pug to a Mad Dog—Documentation on the Chaos of Taiwanese Mass Media)* (Taipei: Chienwei Publication, 2008).

⁵³ *2004 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. 28 February 2005. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/42641.htm>. Accessed 30 June 2010.

⁵⁴ Yao, Renduo. ‘Yule zhisi de Taiwan’ (Taiwan, Amusing Ourselves to Death) *Nanfang kuaibao (Southern News)* 2 June 2005.

⁵⁵ *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) is a tabloid-style newspaper published in Taiwan and owned by the Hong Kong-based company Next Media. On the first day of its publication 2 May 2003, Apple Daily printed the highest number of copies with all colour pages and sold for the lowest price of NT 5 dollars (equivalent to GBP 0.1 pounds) in Taiwan. It is now sold for NT 15 dollars (equivalent to GBP

considerable influence on transforming Taiwan's media ecology, especially with respect to people who are famous, such as political figures, television news presenters and chairmen of corporations, whose actions are reported by those two media outlets that have dug into their personal lives and made them into celebrities.⁵⁷ After *Apple Daily* and *Next Magazine* started to operate in Taiwan, their influence led to further competition in the media industry. This on the one hand expanded the entertainment orientation of newspapers and the print media. On the other hand, it encouraged audiences' reading taste for the inside stories of celebrities.

Besides printed media and newspapers, the television ecology in Taiwan also underwent some transformations. Since the mid-2000s, due to the low budgets for producing television programmes and increasing public enthusiasm for discussing political issues, talk shows, including political commentary and entertainment talk shows,⁵⁸ have become a prevalent item on various channels.⁵⁹ The entertainment talk

0.3 pounds). In 2008, the annual number of copies of the *Liberty Times* was 699,706; and *Apple Daily* had copies of 510,702.

⁵⁶ As with *Apple Daily*, *Next Magazine* is also owned by the Kong-based company Next Media. Its first publication in Taiwan was on 31 May 2001. According to AC Nielsen, in 2006, had 1,413,000 readers between the ages of 12 to 65, which accounts for half of the total readers of magazines in Taiwan.

⁵⁷ After *Apple Daily* and *Next Magazine* joined Taiwan's media industry, stories about the private lives of celebrities become the focus of media reports. Whether a celebrity is injured, commits suicide, has an affair or other such events, media reports always devote a large number of page to report such events. Some people were not so well known, but turned into celebrities after being chased by the mass media. Such people include television news presenters, celebrities and other controversial figures. Information from my visits to Taiwan.

⁵⁸ Currently there are two categories of talk show programmes in Taiwan: political commentary and entertainment talk shows. The first category is often attended by political journalists, politicians and scholars in political studies. They are normally oriented to discuss the problems of the political parties, . There are two main reasons explaining the rise of political commentary talk shows — economic and political. Over-competition between media agencies caused the profits and advertising incomes to decline and so media agencies had to make programmes such as talk shows that had lower production costs. Also, due to the political transformation from authoritarian rule to democracy in Taiwan, the public was enthusiastic about participating in political discussions. The rise of the talk show could also be attributed to the desire to pry into people's private lives and gossip due to the change of the media ecology in Taiwan since 2003, especially after the inception of the newspaper *Apple Daily*.

The most popular television talk shows at the moment included *Kangxi Lai Le* (康熙來了, *Variety Show of Mr. Con & Ms. Csi*, since 2004), *Mala tianhougong* (麻辣天后宮, *Spicy Tin Hau Temple*, since 2004), *Woai heisehui* (我愛黑澀會, *Blackie*, since 2005), *Mofan bang bang tang* (模范棒棒糖, *Lollipop*, since 2006), *Daxuesheng le mei* (大學生了沒, *University*, since 2007), *Xinwen wawawa* (新聞挖挖哇, *News Wow-wow-wow*, since 2005) and others. These entertainment talk shows share the common feature of having one or two hosts with distinctive styles leading the discussions.

shows are particularly linked to the construction of celebrity art and artists, as I discuss below in the case studies of artists Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang.

The rise of talk shows and their impact on celebrities and artists have been critically discussed by the Internet critic, Zheng Guowei (nickname: Gui-gu-lai-xi):

Overall, we are seeing fewer and fewer artists [in the entertainment industry] perform their talents, whether live signing and on-stage performance, and instead we see more and more celebrities (in fact, most of the celebrities) sitting on chairs with leopardskin patterns, having conversations with hosts about their private life, or talking about taboos and spicy topics.⁶⁰

He further commented that,

talk shows transform celebrities from the role of ‘trafficking talent’ into ‘privacy trafficking’. In the information society, each person’s private life can be seen as a commodity ready to be leveraged, and the private life of a public figure promises a much higher yield. Therefore, managing their personal life has become the focus of celebrities who run their names like a business.⁶¹

Talk shows not only impact upon celebrities in the entertainment and film industries, but also on artists who have started to attend talk shows to promote their exhibitions and increase their publicity. Artist Chu Cha-ray, as I discuss in chapter four, is an example who participates in talk shows as a celebrity, joins discussions that relate to daily life and social issues, such as gender relationships, parent-child relationships, and new fashion trends. Another example is artist Cai Guoqiang, who actively joined a talk show programme to promote the retrospective exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* (2009) in Taipei Fine Art Museum.

Talk show programmes in Taiwan have become a popular media and communication platform on which celebrities can express themselves in relation to all sorts of topics and issues, selling inside and personal stories for greater media

⁵⁹ Zheng, Guowei. Nickname: Gui-gu-lai-xi. ‘*Cong caiyi fanmai dao yinsi fanmai*’ (Transformation from selling the talents to selling the privacy) <http://www.bigsound.org/portnoy/weblog/000855.html>. Accessed 13 January 2010.

⁶⁰ Zheng, Guowei. Nickname: Gui-gu-lai-xi. ‘*Cong caiyi fanmai dao yinsi fanmai*’ (Transformation from selling the talents to selling the privacy) <http://www.bigsound.org/portnoy/weblog/000855.html>. Accessed 13 January 2010.

⁶¹ Ibid.

exposure. The rise of talk show programmes has constructed a specific type of celebrity, ‘*tonggao yiren*’, who sustain their careers almost solely by making guest appearances on talk shows. In other words, by participating in these talk shows, celebrities have a specific way of impressing their audiences without producing any albums, films or any other works. In artist Chu’s example, one can see that her participation in the commodification and celebritisation process gradually enabled her celebrity status to take over from her original status as an artist. However, in Chu’s case, her rise as a female celebrity artist through her frequent exposure in talk show programmes also relates to the transformation of traditional social values concerning women’s social role, which will be discussed in the next section.

In common with global tendencies, the commercialisation and entertainment orientation of the contemporary Taiwanese media can create the media hype necessary for the construction of the celebrity figure within a very short space of time. Moreover, the celebrity figure of today might disappear from the media focus tomorrow once the media hype surrounding her or him is demolished.⁶² Business and corporate interests have a powerful role in determining the rise and fall of celebrities, and in the following case studies, one can see how specific characteristics of the Taiwanese media are appropriated by corporations through a series of marketing strategies designed to promote art and artists as an aspect of their corporate interests.

⁶² An example is one of the most popular televised singing competitions, *One Million Star96*, which was broadcast once a week in 2007. The nature of the competition is very much similar to *The X Factor* in the U.K., which aims to gather together young people with singing talent so as to find the one with the best qualities to become a superstar.

In the programme, there was a controversial candidate, Aska Yang, who had the most popular voice and the distinctive appearance of an ugly face and had been found to have been untruthful about his age to enter the competition. At the time this caused a great deal of controversy and all of the mass media and the public took a great deal of interest in him so that in a very short period of time, he was transformed into a celebrity. With all the negative news, Aska Yang eventually decided to leave the competition but this did not affect his popularity. There were more than 3 million visitors to his personal web page after it had been established for only 2 months, and then after eight months, there were more than 8 million visitors. The related sites’ click rates and search engine searches on his name remained extremely high. He was on the top of the Yahoo! Celebrity list for seven weeks and 30,000 people joined his Yahoo! Family Support group after it had only been established for three months. A media report said that it took him only 77 days to become extremely celebritised, and the condition was therefore called ‘Star phenomenon’ (the ‘star’ here being taken from the name of the singing programme *One Million Stars*).

‘*Xingguang xianxiang—zhihua 77 tian! Meiti dazao Yang Zongwei baohong*’ (Phenomenon—media constructs Yang Zongwei Aska to be an extremely popular celebrity in only 77 days!) *TVBS*, 10 June 2007.

Institutional arrangements of new artistic and cultural spaces before and after martial law

The phenomenon of celebrity art in Taiwan took off in the immediate in the post-martial law period, as I have already discussed above. In the martial law period, according to artist and critic Xie Lifa, the presentation and display of Taiwanese art can be analysed with reference to different stages.⁶³ The 1950s to 60s were known as the ‘Salon era’, when the displays of paintings were limited to the Taiwan Provincial Fine Art Exhibition, Tai-Yang Fine Art Exhibition and other minor public and private group shows. The 1970s were known as the ‘Art Society era’, during which artists gathered together in art societies to share ideas about how to produce a pluralistic kind of art. The 1970s and 1980s was a period when many commercial galleries were established in Taiwan and when artists began to create and paint art works more freely, with more opportunities to display and trade their works.⁶⁴ With the take off of the economy, economic power permeated the art scene, with a consequent expansion of the commercialisation of art. By the 1980s and 1990s, Taiwan had started to enter the gallery and ‘museum era’, with art museums opening from north to south, including the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) in 1983, the Taiwan Museum of Art in Taichung in 1988 and the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts in 1994. Since then, artwork has acquired a multi-functional character: in addition to its commercial value and orientation, it is also increasingly associated with research and education as well as collection.⁶⁵ The establishment of these museums also played an important role in bridging the Taiwanese art scene with the international art scene. For instance, the *Dada’s World* exhibition held at the TFAM in 1998 was an important international exhibition that not only exhibited art works from international institutions including the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the

⁶³ Xie, Lifa. ‘*Cong shalong, huahui, hualang, meishuguan—shiping wushi nian lai Taiwan xiyang huihua fazhan de sige guocheng*’ (Talking About the Four Stages of Development in Fifty Years of Western Painting in Taiwan) *Xiongshi meishu (Lion Art Taipei)* Issue: 140, October 1982. 36-49.

⁶⁴ Some of the important commercial galleries established in the 1970s included the Lung Men Art Gallery (龍門畫廊, *Longmen hualang*) in 1977, Spring Gallery (春之畫廊, *Chunzhi hualang*) in 1978, and Triform Art Gallery (三原色藝術中心, *Sanyuanse yishu zhongxin*) in 1987.

⁶⁵ Xie, Lifa. ‘*Cong shalong, huahui, hualang, meishuguan—shiping wushi nian lai Taiwan xiyang huihua fazhan de sige guocheng*’ (Talking About the Four Stages of Development in Fifty Years of Western Painting in Taiwan) *Xiongshi meishu (Lion Art Taipei)* Issue: 140, October 1982. 36-49.

Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Kunsthaus Zurich (Museum of Art) in Switzerland and other museums, but also invited international scholars and people working in the art community to Taipei to participate in the conferences on Dadaism.⁶⁶

Although the establishment of the museum system showed the commitment of the Taiwanese government to develop, document and promote Taiwanese art, the museums were effectively the representatives of the authorities. In the 1980s and 1990s, when these museums were established, artists, including Lee Ming-sheng (discussed in chapter three), used their artworks and projects as a means to express their non-compliance with the museum system. Besides the individual initiatives of artists who challenged the authority of the museums in their art projects, alternative spaces were also established by some artists as a counterforce signifying what I argue was an important process of artistic democratization in Taiwanese art. These alternative spaces included the IT Park Gallery (*Yitong gongyuan*), established by a group of artists in 1988,⁶⁷ the No.2 Apartment (*Erhao gongyu*) established in 1989 by a group of twenty-two artists,⁶⁸ and the Sly Art Space (*Xinleyuan yishu kongjian*) established in 1994.⁶⁹ These alternative spaces were established to enable artists to present their works in a more experimental environment outside the museum context. If artists wanted to hold exhibitions in official museums, their applications could take more than two years to process. Thus, such alternative spaces became very important, not only because they constituted a force in challenging both the official art museums and commercial art galleries, but also because they provided spaces for

⁶⁶ Ni, Zaiqin. *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art – the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (Taipei: Artists Publisher, 2005), 182.

⁶⁷ The IT Park Gallery Website. <http://www.itpark.com.tw/preface>. Accessed 1 June 2010. The establishment of the IT Park Gallery aimed to provide a space to engage with fresh and vibrant perspectives of the arts outside the official museums and commercial gallery spaces. The space aimed to exhibit enlightened artwork, and to provide opportunities for artists to converse with each other. I discuss this in great detail below in chapter seven.

⁶⁸ The No.2 Apartment was set up by a group of artists, most of whom had studied abroad, since they needed a space to create non-commercial artwork (i.e. artwork not for commercial galleries).

⁶⁹ Sly Art Space (新樂園藝術空間, *Xinleyuan yishu kongjian*) website: <http://www.slyart.com.tw/>. Accessed 1 June 2010. Sly Art Space was established as a space for artistic mutual support. Its tasks were to provide a space for artistic communication and to explore the relationship between art and community.

artists to express themselves freely.⁷⁰ For example, artist Tang Huang-chen (discussed in chapter six), chose to present her first action art project, 72, in the IT Park Gallery after she returned to Taiwan from France in 1991, at a time when the form of action art she engaged with was still unfamiliar to the Taiwanese art scene and society.⁷¹

Another form of alternative space came into in early 2000 focus with the reuse of abandoned spaces and historical sites, such as Huashan Creative Park (2002, *Huashan chuangyi wenhua yuanqu*) and Taipei Artist Village (2004, *Taipei guoji yishucun*). The mode of operating these spaces was very new in Taiwan, as they were collaboratively run between art organizations, corporations and local government, guided and governed by the Government's community development policies.⁷² The establishment of these spaces was, on the one hand, to preserve and reuse historical sites by transforming them into art and cultural spaces; and, on the other hand, as I argue in chapter six, to reduce the distance between art and the general public by spreading the alternative spaces across urban and rural areas, providing public places to visit in leisure time. Among the use of these abandon spaces, the transformation of Huashan Creative Park from an abandoned winery to cultural space caused a series of debates and protests, mainly led by artist Tang Huang-chen. In June 1997, when she and a group of artists organised the exhibition *You Say I Listen* across Taiwan and France, they discovered an abandoned winery, Huashan, owned by the Taiwanese government, which was suitable for development as a multi-functional artistic space because of its distinctive building structure.⁷³ Tang then brought

⁷⁰ The IT Park Gallery Website, http://www.itpark.com.tw/archive/article_list/19. Accessed 1 June 2010.

Information provided on the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, <http://www1.ntmofa.gov.tw/artnew/html/2-5/601.htm>. Accessed 1 June 2010.

⁷¹ The term 'action art' will be explained in chapter six in Tang Huang-chen's case study.

⁷² Information provided on the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, <http://www1.ntmofa.gov.tw/artnew/html/2-5/601.htm>. Accessed 1 June 2010.

⁷³ "Huashan hosts 38 buildings in total, which are 40 to 80 years old. Before the reconstruction, they were old factory buildings, most of which were two-storey constructed during the Japanese occupation. The interiors of the buildings are high and with huge cast iron frames. The whole space presents a sobering machine-like aesthetic. After more than a decade of abandonment, the buildings were damaged and most of them leaked badly. On sunny days, a large expanse of sky could be seen from the inside. The factory buildings suggested a picture of decadence with the passing of time". Information from Huashan 1914 Creative Part website: <http://web.huashan1914.com/about/buildings.php?cate=about>. Accessed 8 September 2010.

together a group of artists in the fields of drama, fine arts, dance, film and music, and started to petition the government to preserve the abandoned space and reconstruct it as a special zone for art and cultural activities, exhibitions and performances rather than as a legislative space as initially intended.⁷⁴ However, before obtaining the legal right to use the space, the director of the play *An Ancient God—Troy Festival*, produced by the theatre group Golden Bough Theatre and performed at the Huashan winery, was arrested by the police on charges of ‘occupying national land’.⁷⁵ This incident provoked political concerns amongst the People’s Representatives, culture legislators and other people from the artistic community, as well as the media, resulting in even greater publicity.⁷⁶

In June 1998, after marches and visits to the People’s Representatives and different government departments, Tang’s artistic suggestions for the use of Huashan received a positive response from the Cultural Affairs Department, and the Huashan Art and Cultural Park (*Huashan yiwen tequ*) was formally established as a public space for use by the artistic community, non-profit organisations and individual artists.⁷⁷ A group including Tang, set up a juridical association called the Association of Cultural Environment Reform Taiwan, which took over the operation of Huashan from the government, and organised warehouses and buildings for cultural events for almost seven years. Subsequently, in 2004, the management team was formally changed from the Association of Culture Environment Reform Taiwan to a private

⁷⁴ The artists pointed out in the petition that, ‘Our claim concerns not only the maintenance of the historical buildings, but rather a more forward-looking cultural policy decision. If the delicate art and cultural space is well-planned and a foundation that manages the running of the space is established, large-scale international art exhibitions and performances can be held periodically here, and the gaps between the performances and exhibitions can be opened for other applications, or a professional curatorial system could be established to make plans for events. This will not only expand the international perspective on cultural events and the right to speak, but also cultivate professional curatorial people in our nation, so it will be a comprehensive plan for development. Additionally, with environmental planning, the art and cultural space will become the first multi-functional place for art and cultural activities as well as for public recreation’. Information from ‘*Kenqing lifayuan wei quanmin baoliu yige yiwen huodong tequ qingyuanshu*’ (A petition to the Legislative Yuan to retain space for art and culture activities). 18 September 1997. ‘*Zhongzhi yishu xingdong*’ (‘Planting Arts’ Action) website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

⁷⁵ ‘*Zhongzhi yishu xingdong*’ (‘Planting Arts’ Action) website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Lin, Naiwen. ‘*Huashan daodai*’ (Rewinding Huashan), an article translated from *Kuajie juchang, ren* (*Cross-border Theater and People*), (*Shiji yingxiang congshu* 17), 193-206. <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact/archives/5734605.html>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

art consultant company, L'Orangerie International Art Consultant Co.⁷⁸ In July 2004, a newly appointed chairman of the Council for Cultural Affairs (known as CCA), Chin Chi-nan, made a proposal for the 'New Taiwan Art Star' (*Xin Taiwan yiwen zhi xing*)⁷⁹ to coordinate with cultural policy and the official declaration of the establishment of a Cultural Sector by the DPP President Chen Shui-bian.⁸⁰ The proposal suggested an estimated amount of 8.2 billion Taiwanese dollars to be invested in the development of Huashan, and art and cultural affairs were to be incorporated into the overall national development plan. Part of the new proposal included the construction of three-storey buildings on 28 floors in Huashan for administration and a resource centre. This plan would have destroyed Huashan's experimental and artistic character, and was intended to transform it into a space for business development and cultural industries.⁸¹

This caused an uproar in the art and cultural community. Even Tang Huang-chen, who had withdrawn from the management team in 1998, expressed her anger. The Association of Culture Environment Reform Taiwan invited professionals and scholars from the artistic community to discuss the new proposal and more than ten art and cultural groups formed the Association for Creative Huashan (*Chuangyi Huashan cujin lianmeng*).⁸² They made a request to the CCA to hold a Huashan

⁷⁸ L'Orangerie International Art Consultant Co., Ltd, was established in 1999 and covers site planning for reused and abandoned spaces, public arts and the organisation of artistic activities. The art consultant company, self-declared as an art curatorial company, acts as a bridge between the art projects of government, private sponsorships and the art scene, bringing all the elements together to form exhibitions and space operations.

⁷⁹ The 'New Taiwan Art Star' plan (新台灣藝文之星 *Xin Taiwan yiwen zhi xing*) was designed by CCA as a new model for cultural and creative industry. It includes three big areas as its main production fields: media industries (digital, sound and vision, publication and popular culture, etc.), design industries (life, products, advertising, environmental space, etc.) and art industries (high art and performances, folk art, the peripheral activities and products). For detailed information see the CCA website on 'New Taiwan Art Star': http://www.cca.gov.tw/cforum/culture_meeting4/culture_meeting4.htm. Accessed 27 July 2010.

⁸⁰ Lin, Naiwen. 'Huashan daodai 2' (Rewinding Huashan 2), an article translated from *Kuajie juchang, ren* (*Cross-border Theater and People*) (*Shiji yingxiang congshu* 17), 193-206. <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact/archives/5734659.html>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The art and cultural group that formed The Association for Creative Huashan (創意華山促進聯盟 *Chuangyi Huashan cujin lianmeng*) included the Association of Cultural Environment Reform Taiwan, (藝術文化環境改造協會 *Yishu wenhua huanjing gaizao xiehui*), the Performing Arts Alliance (表演藝術聯盟 *Biaoyan yishu lianmeng*), the Association of the Visual Arts (視覺藝術聯盟 *Shijue yishu lianmeng*), the Organisation of Urban Re-s (專業者都市改革組織 *Zhuanyezhe doushi*

cultural reconstruction forum and invited the public to join the discussion. Since 2007, Huashan Creative Park has been operated by the Taiwan Cultural-Creative Development Co. Ltd, and renamed Huashan 1914.⁸³ This business intervention gave rise to many journalists and artists' questions about whether Huashan 1914 would marginalise art and cultural activities, but brought introduced many new commercial activities into the park.⁸⁴

More and more art and cultural organisations and spaces are being established in contemporary Taiwan society to cultivate the creative development of art and cultural activities. These spaces often appear as multi-functional spaces, allowing the public to conduct different activities and have different experiences in one condensed area. The most influential place is the Eslite Bookstore (*Chengpin shuju*), established in 1989, two years after the lifting of martial law. The Eslite Bookstore occupies highly significant place in Taiwan's cultural industry, and is a cultural landmark in Taipei, particularly for young 'cool' people and the social elite.⁸⁵ Within fifteen years after its establishment, it opened forty-nine branches across Taiwan⁸⁶ providing the Taiwanese people with a diversified cultural experience. By the late 1990s visiting the Eslite Bookstore became a popular social practice alongside going to museums, watching films or going to karaoke.⁸⁷ The Dun-nan and the Xin-yi branches in particular⁸⁸ provide unique hybridised urban

gaige zuzhi), the Taiwan Association of Theatre Technology (台灣技術劇場協會 *Taiwan jishu juchang xiehui*) and others.

⁸³ The Taiwan Cultural-Creative Development Co. Ltd was established by three commercial organizations, including Yuan-Liou Publishing Co. Ltd, J.M.Lin Architect/The Observer Design Group and Ambassador Hotel. Information from <http://0226512111.web66.com.tw/>. Accessed 17 January 2011.

⁸⁴ Lin, Naiwen. 'Huashan daodai 2' (Rewinding Huashan 2)', an article translated from *Kuajie juchang, ren* (*Cross-border Theater and People*) (*Shiji yingxiang congshu* 17), 193-206. <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact/archives/5734659.html>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

⁸⁵ Long, Yingtai. 'Zai yige you wenren de chengshi li' (In a City with Literati) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 3 June 2005.

⁸⁶ Information from the Eslite Bookstore website, <http://www.eslitebooks.com/about/eslite/index.shtml>. Accessed 14 May 2007.

⁸⁷ About the Eslite Bookstore, http://www.ubonus.com/stores/eslite/about_eslite.htm. Accessed 14 May 2007.

⁸⁸ The Eslite Dun-nan branch has a bookstore shop, a music store shop, an art gallery, an exhibition hall, a lecture theatre, a café, restaurants and shops. The Xin-yi branch has a bookshop, a music store, a Japanese bookshop, an art bookshop, a children's museum of Taipei, an exhibition hall, a lecture theatre, a library, a stationery shop, a café, restaurants and shops.

spaces that bring a complex global culture to the local environment. The Dun-nan branch, opened in 1989, was particularly important for the Eslite Bookstore chain as it was one of the earliest branches. Apart from the actual bookshop and an Eslite café that occupy the entire first floor, the Dun-nan branch also has a boutique shopping mall on the ground floor. Additionally, there is an art gallery, exhibition spaces, a music store, lecture theatres and the Eslite Stationery store on the second basement floor, where diverse artistic exhibitions and performances are presented, as well as seminars on different topics, such as global and local literature, art, architecture, photography and music. Furthermore, vendors and stalls gather outside the building to sell creative art and fashion products on the street in the evenings. In so doing, the Eslite Corporation claims that, besides selling and promoting the ‘culture of “reading”’, they have extended the concept of a ‘bookstore’ to incorporate the ‘enlightened’ spaces of culture, art, creativity and life.⁸⁹ Through a close study of the examples of Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang, this thesis shows the powerful role of the Eslite Bookstore in the construction of celebrity art in Taiwan, manifesting the importance of Eslite in cultivating art and cultural developments.

In 1996, the Dun-nan branch of the Eslite began to stay open for 24 hours a day in response to a specific Taiwanese lifestyle. The bookshop claimed that being open for 24 hours provided a space for ‘nocturnal visits’ for those young people who stay up during the night in Taipei city—a place to visit besides karaoke and nightclubs.⁹⁰ Not only does the complex structure of various spaces constitute a legitimate social space that hybridises the experience of reading, shopping and consuming, it also constructs a particular lifestyle and consumption which is claimed as an ‘Eslite phenomenon’ (*Chengpin xianxiang*),⁹¹ hosting the cutting edge of Taipei urban culture. With the distinctive design of the bookstore architecture, the high quality and comfortable reading spaces, the production of its own magazine—

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Zhang, Jialing. ‘*Chengpin shenghuo, mingnian disanji guapai*’ (Eslite Life, Going into the Stock Market in the Third Season Next Year) *Pinguo ribao* (*Apple Daily*) 21 June 2010.

⁹¹ You, Changshan, and Yang Qianrong (‘*Chengpin, you xiexia yiye chuanqi*’ (Another Marvellous Page for the Eslite Bookstore) *30 Zazhi* (*30 Magazine*) 7 December 2005.

the *Eslite Reader* (*Chengpin haodu*)⁹² and selling a variety of local and foreign books. *Time Magazine* in 2004 declared Eslite as the ‘Best Bookstore’, with

more than half a million people visiting the flagship branch [the Dunnan branch] every month, including devotees from Japan and Hong Kong. They mingle with the fashionably dressed twenty something’s who flock here because Eslite has become Taipei’s place to be seen... the high prices [of the books] don’t deter customers—many use the store as a library, reading without ever buying.⁹³

The uniqueness of the Eslite Bookstore has also been described by the former Cultural Minister of Taipei, Lung Yingtai, as ‘an important landmark’ of Taipei culture, which attracts both local and foreign visitors for its novelty, selection of products and as experience of Taipei urban culture.⁹⁴

Another multi-functional space named the Very Temple Artsalon (shortened to VT Artsalon) was established in 2006 by a group of eight artists and a curator as an art and lounge bar space. As I discuss in chapter seven, the establishment of the VT Artsalon challenges the traditional way of exhibiting, viewing and experiencing art and cultural activities, as well as how artists present themselves in public spaces. As an art and lounge bar space run by a group of artists and a curator, the VT Artsalon presents itself as an innovative model for the relationship between art and business in Taiwan’s art scene. Its location near the IT Park Gallery demonstrates its cultural and political significance as a new art establishment, bringing art into consumer culture. Chapter seven offers a detailed analysis of how the VT Artsalon space and the group have influenced and intervened in Taiwan’s art scene and consumer culture, indicating a new model of celebrity art in recent years.

⁹² *Eslite Reader* (誠品好讀, *Chengpin haodu*) is monthly magazine on book criticisms and humanities, published by the Eslite Bookstore. The first issue was launched in July 2000, and the publications stopped in April 2008 due to the reasons include the digital media’s impact on paper magazines. Between 2000-2004, the *Eslite Reader* was published purely for the Eslite members. Every member had a free copy each month. From 2004 it changed to a non-members’ magazine and sold in the branches of Eslite Bookstore for the price of NT49 (GBP 1) for members and NT 120 (GBP 2.40) for non-members. In 2005 its publication expanded to Hong Kong, Singapore Malaysia and other places. The publication started again in February 2009, with a uniform price of NT90 (GBP 1.80). As well as paper magazines, it also published on-line in *Eslite Station*: stn.eslite.com.

⁹³ ‘Best Bookstore’. *Time Magazine*. 15 November 2004.

⁹⁴ Long, Yingtai. ‘Zai yige you wenren de chengshi li’ (In a City with Literati) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 3 June 2005.

Corporate business and its involvement with art

The rapid development of art and artistic spaces in the post-martial law era has seen the increasingly active involvement of corporate interests in art especially since the 1990s. This has a strong influence on the construction of celebrity art.⁹⁵ In fact, art sponsorship in Taiwan appeared as early as the Japanese colonial period when two entrepreneurs, Ni Jianghuai and Yang Zhaojia, used their wealth to support various artists.⁹⁶ However, from the end of the Japanese colonial period to the 1990s, corporate sponsorship of art consisted mainly of collecting art paintings and works,⁹⁷ mainly of master Taiwanese artists and Chinese calligraphy. Due to the fact that these corporations have been collecting art for a period of time, they have transformed their private collections into museum collections, such as Hongxi Museum (established in 1991) and Chi Mei Museum (established in 1992). Influenced by these corporations, other businesses gradually paid more attention to art and some of them started to collect art works.

Before the 1990s, corporate collections of art were mainly due to the personal interests of business directors; but since the 1990s, corporate sponsorship of art has become a widespread phenomenon with many corporations investing in art and cultural activities. The emergence of this phenomenon can be analysed from four aspects. Firstly, the 1990s saw a significant increase in general public interest in art and cultural activities. According to the Council for Cultural Affairs (shortened as CCA), from 1991 to 2001, public participation in art and cultural activities grew 2.3

⁹⁵ Luo, Baozhu. ‘*Taiwan qiye zanzhu yiwen quandao zhi yanjiu—yishu yu qiye meihu pingtai zuzhi jianzhi yu fanchan*’ (A research on the channels of corporate sponsorship in Arts in Taiwan—the establishment and development of platform for merging art and business). Department of Fine Arts, Tunghai University. Unpublished thesis, 2004.

⁹⁶ The sponsor Ni Jianghuai operated coal-mining industry. His sponsorship included establishing reading clubs, art institution, and financially supported artists to study in Japan. The other sponsor Yang Zhaojia was a well-known entrepreneur in the Japanese colonial period. His sponsorship included financially support artists to study in Japan, support and promote the development of music. Information from: *ibid*.

⁹⁷ Those corporations include Hengjia Construction Company, Hongxi Group, and Chi Mei Corporation.

times from 34,842,000 to 79,624,000 people.⁹⁸ The number of art and cultural activities also grew 2.57 times from 7,163 in 1991 to 18,375 in 2001. These figures not only indicated the vigorous development of art and cultural activities in the 1990s, but also meant that considerable amounts of money was needed to fund them. When the grants given by the public sector could not meet cultural needs, artists and groups had to search for other sources of funding, and they turned to corporations to look financial assistance, leading to the growth of corporate sponsorship of art. Thirdly, before the 1990s, the government did not sense the benefits of using corporate economic power to support art and cultural development, but in the 1990s, the government started to promote and reward corporate sponsorship. This began with a letter sent by the CCA to the directors of the thousand largest enterprises in Taiwan. The letter was also published in important media channels in order to request more business support for artistic activities and to suggest it as a good way to feed back to society. Thereafter, the CCA and the National Cultural and Arts Foundation established various reward systems to encourage corporate sponsorship. For example, the Art and Business Awards was established in 1998; and the National Cultural and Arts Foundation funded a specific website in art and business in 2006, not only to connect the fields of art and business, but also to provide and circulate information on art sponsorships.⁹⁹ Lastly, under the encouragement of the government and the positive brand image that corporations are able to cultivate, business sponsorships in art have become more active and open, and also solicit

⁹⁸ Information from the cultural statistics made by the CCA in 2001 and 2002. <http://www4.cca.gov.tw/artsquery/09-09all.htm,2003/9/11>. 6 March 2011.

⁹⁹ In order to encourage business sponsorship of the arts, the Council for Cultural Affairs established Art and Business Awards in 1998. The prizes are given to corporations according to the monetary amount of their sponsorship. For instance, with the sponsored figures of over NT 10,000,000 (equivalent to GBP 211,000 pounds), the corporation can be awarded a gold prize, the next category of a silver prize is given for sponsorship of between NT 5,000,000 to NT 10,000,000 dollars (equivalent to between GBP 105,000 to GBP 211,000 pounds), the bronze prize is given for sponsorship of between NT 1,000,000 to NT 5,000,000 dollars (equivalent to between GBP 21,100 to GBP 105,000 pounds) and a certificate is awarded for sponsorship below NT 1,000,000 dollars (equivalent to GBP 21,100 pounds). Additionally, if the sponsorship carries particular meaning for the art and cultural business, there is a special prize awarded to the corporation at the top of the monetary awards.⁹⁹ For example, the Taishin Foundation of Arts received both the gold and special prizes in 2006. Moreover, the National Cultural and Arts Foundation also funded a specific website in art and business in 2006, not only to connect the fields of art and business through the website, but also to provide and circulate information on art sponsorships. Information from Art and Business Awards websites, <http://wenxin9.cca.gov.tw/>. Accessed 2 June 2010; Art and Business website, <http://www.anb.org.tw/>. Accessed 2 June 2010.

media publicity for their sponsorships.¹⁰⁰ Corporate sponsorship in art has now become a trend as an effective way to present corporate business's social responsibilities.¹⁰¹

In addition to their sponsorship of art, corporations also started to set up foundations in order to operate their art and cultural programmes. According to Lai Xiangling, art historian and researcher who was also the former director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, the art foundations have different focuses, including the implementation and plan for exhibitions and curation, the holding of art education programmes and activities, the cultivation of artistic talents and the collection of artistic creations, contributing to the diversification of art sponsorship.¹⁰² Alongside constructing a positive brand image through conveying their social responsibilities, the establishment of corporate foundations has a further important purpose, which is tax savings. According to the inheritance tax and its related tax law, any donation to a consortium of public associations or inherited estate may be exempt from the inheritance tax. Also, the incomes made by such foundations can be exempt from income tax.

Under the government's encouragement and the related tax rules, the establishment of the Taishin Arts Award (discussed in chapter six) in 2002 is an example of independent business sponsorship of contemporary Taiwanese art particularly associated with the construction of celebrity art.¹⁰³ Unlike the other

¹⁰⁰ Huang Xiuyi. 'Qiyе jítuán zuòfēn gē biànlè—cōngqián, liáoyìbào wèishān bùyùrēnzhì; rújīn, niánqīng yìbèi jiù pà wàijiè bù zhìdào' (Enterprise Group has changed style—before, the older generation did not want people to know what good they have done; now, the younger generation afraid of people do not know). *Jingji ribao* (Economic Times), 11 August 1996.

¹⁰¹ Luo, Baozhu. 'Taiwan qiye zanzhu yiwén quándào zhī yánjiū—yìshù yú qiye mèihu píngtái zuzhī jiànzhì yú fāchān' (A research on the channels of corporate sponsorship in Arts in Taiwan—the establishment and development of platform for merging art and business). Department of Fine Arts, Tunghai University. Unpublished thesis, 2004.

¹⁰² Qiu, Jiahe. 'Lai Xiangling—Yìshù jījīnhuì de Táiwan jīngyán' (Lai Xiangling: The Taiwan Experience on Art Foundation) *Yìshù zhōngguó* (*Art.china.cn*) 20 July 2008. http://big5.china.com.cn/gate/big5/art.china.cn/guandian/2009-07/20/content_3027194.htm. Accessed 1 June 2010; and Wu, Chingchi. 'Yìlín tǎnsuǒ—huánjīng piān' (Exploration in Art circles—Environment section). *Wenjuanhui* (CCA), 1998.

¹⁰³ Taishin Bank said that the award was established, first of all, to acknowledge and promote excellent contemporary Taiwanese arts; secondly, to encourage national and international public recognition of the valuable contribution of artists; and thirdly to reinvent the ways in which society thinks about contemporary arts. Information from Taishin Arts Award website: www.taishinholdings.com.tw. Accessed 8 February 2010.

official arts awards in Taiwan that are run by official art institutions,¹⁰⁴ the Taishin Arts Award is one of Taiwan's most prestigious contemporary arts awards funded by a single corporation, the Taishin Bank,¹⁰⁵ and run by the non-profit Taishin Bank Foundation for Art and Culture of the Taishin Financial Holding Co., Ltd.¹⁰⁶ The Taishin Arts Award is made up of two categories—'Visual Arts' and 'Performing Arts'. The nomination in each prize category is based on exhibitions and performances instead of an artist or a particular work of art. Not only does the event design and host a specific process for selecting the best of Taiwan's art, but it also uses a very unique celebrityisation strategy to promote the nominated artists, art exhibitions and performances, as well as its corporate name.

The example of Taishin Arts Award demonstrates how corporate money and power can be exerted through the establishment of art and cultural foundations to influence Taiwanese art scene. However, in the recent years, besides such intervention, other businesses not only use art and cultural activities to advance their power in the art scene, but also use art in their commercial projects and services in ways that have significant impacts on the celebrityisation of artists. The Eslite Bookstore mentioned above is an example that has sponsored artist Cai Guoqiang's exhibition in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum with its corporate name of Eslite Corporation. Not only did it intervene in the museum operations during the period of Cai exhibition (discussed in chapter five), but it also used Cai's creativity to produce commercial products. The production of art and creative products with Eslite's own brand name and logo offered a model of art and culture as 'good business'.

¹⁰⁴ Awards run by art institutions in Taiwan include: the Taipei Arts Award of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the Kaohsiung Awards of the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts.

¹⁰⁵ Taishin Financial Holdings was established on 18 February 2002 upon completion of the merger between Dah An Commercial Bank and Taishin International Bank. In the same year, Taishin Bills Finance and Taiwan Securities came under the umbrella of Taishin Financial Holdings (TFH). TFH owns physical and virtual networks of 163 business locations, over 2,000 ATMs, internet banking, 600 professional consultants and financial planners, a 500-seat phone banking centre, and a credit card customer service centre. It was the first in the industry to reorganise its large business scope into three core competencies: Retail Banking, Wholesale Banking and Wealth Management. The cross-selling and economy scale soon boosted Taishin's profitability to the second place in Taiwan among financial holding companies. Information resource: www.taishinholdings.com.tw. Accessed 8 February 2010.

¹⁰⁶ The Taishin Bank Foundation for Art and Culture is run by the Taishin Bank, and both belong to the Taishin Financial Holding Co., Ltd (台新金控). Besides the bank, the corporation also runs Taiwan Securities and Taishin Bill Finance. The Foundation supports contemporary art activities including the CO2, CO4 and CO6 Taiwan Avant-garde Documenta (台灣前衛文件展).

In fact, the cultural and creative industries have become a focal development for the Taiwanese government in recent years. In 2003, the government promoted a five-year ‘Cultural and creative industries development plan’, which came to an end in 2007.¹⁰⁷ In January 2010, the ‘Cultural and creative industry development act’ was passed and implemented, through which the government hopes to promote artistic creativities and cultural preservation, the integration of culture and technology, and the links between different industries, to draw attention to Taiwan’s local features, to raise national cultural literacy and to promote the popularity of art and culture, in line with global trends.¹⁰⁸ According to this model for the cultural and creative industries, businesses attempt to combine elements of tradition with the contemporary in order to develop their products and images as aspects of Taiwan’s unique culture. Examples include Fenice Design Company, which combines the ideas of craft, fashion and culture into their creative jewelry products; and Hwataoyao, a botanical garden, ceramic studio and wood kiln.¹⁰⁹ There are also many cultural and creative industry parks established in different places in Taiwan to provide a platform between the industries, products and the public, which include the previously mentioned Huashan 1914 Creative Park, Taichung Creative and Cultural Park, Chiayi Cultural and Creative Park, Hualien Creative and Cultural Park, and ‘Bravo Taiwan’ Taiwan Culture Shop.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ ‘*Chuangyi Taiwan—wenhua chuangyi chanye fazhan fangan xingdong juhua 98-102 nian*’ (Creative Taiwan—Cultural and creative development proposal and action plan 1999-2013). Wenjuanhui (CCA). October 2009. <http://www.cci.org.tw/cci/upload/law/20100604104150-8dd3d038610f19c0bd08739c496f4052.pdf>. Accessed 6 March 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Cultural Creative Industry includes the following sixteen fields: 1. Visual arts industry; 2. Musical and performing arts industries; 3. Application of cultural assets and performance facilities industry; 4. Technology and craft industries; 5. Film industry; 6. Radio and television industries; 7. Publishing industry; 8. Advertising industry; 9. Product design industry; 10. Visual communication design industries; 11. Design brand and fashion industry; 12. Architectural design industries; 13. Digital content industry; 14. Creative life industry; 15. Popular music and cultural content industry; 16. the other industries designated by the central competent authority. Information from: ‘*Wenhua chuangyi chanye fazhan fa lifayuan sandou tongguo banben*’ (Cultural and Creative Industry Development Act passed by Legislative Yuan on 7 January 2010). 7 January 2010. http://www.cci.org.tw/cci/cci/law_detail.php?c=260&sn=3985. Access 5 March 2011.

¹⁰⁹ For further information, please make references to the Fenice Design Company website: <http://www.fenice.com.tw/>; and the Hwataoyao website: <http://www.hwataoyao.com.tw/index/>. Accessed 6 March 2011.

¹¹⁰ ‘Bravo Taiwan’ is an on-line shopping centre that promotes and sells fashion and modern oriental culture commodities, which is officially launched by Taiwan cultural and creative industries in 2010. <http://bravotaiwan.com.tw/>. Accessed 6 March 2011.

The integration of culture and business, and the development of cultural industry are not only a national concern, but have also emerged as a topic of discussion in the regional and global scale. *Culture is Good Business* was published in Taiwan in 2002, in which the author, Foong Waifong, takes the concept of ‘culture’ as a ‘vivid idea’, and argues that developing the cultural industries and bringing culture into industry are the two most important trends in Asia at the present.¹¹¹ Foong is Malaysian Chinese with wide-ranging experience as economist, critic, entrepreneur and speaker, and she suggests that we are entering an era of culture as the new economic capital.¹¹² Her book uses examples from Asian countries, including China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Korea and Taiwan, and examines how cultural commercialisation can provide new economic growth, popularize the declining traditional handcraft industries, redefine the idea of the ‘good life’, and generate further cultural development. Unlike Adorno and Julian Stallabrass who criticise the commercialisation of art for leading to the detriment of art’s autonomy (discussed in chapter two), Foong suggests that,

[in] Asia at the current stage, the most powerful cultural industry is popular lifestyle culture, such as fashion, dining, entertainment, multimedia creativities, and cultural tourism. With improved art appreciation among the middle-class, profound artistic activities are able to expand..... Hence it will become the most competitive field.¹¹³

Pursuing her discussion, Foong looks into examples such as Disney Island, Jingdezhen’s porcelain industry, the Guggenheim Museum, Director Lee Ang’s film *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, and the global construction and influence of ‘Asian Style’. She emphasises the importance of ‘art’ and ‘culture’ as soft contents in developing commercial activities and promoting cities and countries as brands. Nevertheless, while she argues that by developing cultural industries and bringing culture into industry, ‘good culture’ can be promoted to expand people’s access to different entertainment and aesthetic options,¹¹⁴ this thesis questions the idea and definition of ‘good culture’. In contemporary Asian society, there are many

¹¹¹ Foong, Waifong. *Cultural is Good Business*. (Taipei: Cite Publishing Ltd, 2002).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 185.

examples, including those in Foong's discussions, and the Eslite Bookstore, that present the economic success of using art and culture as a matter of rebranding corporate images, increasing commercial profits and shaping national identities. The notion of 'good' or 'bad' culture therefore is irrelevant, since the main distinguishing factor is their commercial (and sometimes political) value.

Foong's discussion mainly focuses on the regional context of Asia and does not analyse the cultural and creative industries in Taiwan. In contrast, the case studies in this thesis demonstrate the significant links between art, business and the construction of popular and aesthetic taste specifically in Taiwan (discussed in chapter four, seven and conclusion). Since the celebritisation of art is tightly connected to art commercialisation, both business intervention in art and the development of cultural and creative industry contribute to the construction of celebrity art in Taiwan. However, since the 'Cultural and creative industry development act' was only implemented in January 2010, its impact on the arts, cultural activities and business as well as on the construction of celebrity art in national and regional contexts is an ongoing topic which will await further research.

Global art influences on Taiwan's art scene

Western art first began to be influential in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) when the techniques and concepts of Western art, as well as formal art education, were introduced to Taiwan by the Japanese Government. However, it was not until 1975 that Taiwan had its first international art exhibition of Picasso's paintings, held at the National Museum of History.¹¹⁵ Due to the fact that it was the very first international art exhibition in Taiwan, with great expectations from

¹¹⁵ *Picasso's Painting*, National Museum of History, 26^h July to 31 August 1975. It was later turned into the exhibition *Chinese and Western Masters' Arts*. National Museum of History. 6th September. Ni, Zaiqin, *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art – the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (Taipei: Artists Publisher. 2005), 19.

the general public, mass media and people from the art scene, the scale of the exhibition was enlarged to host both Western and Chinese masters' artwork.¹¹⁶

Before the establishment of the TFAM in 1983 that bridged the Taiwanese art and global art scenes, the influences of global art in Taiwan grew in various stages. Firstly, through artists who were educated abroad and published articles in Taiwanese art magazines in the 1970s and 1980s. One example is artist and critic Xie Lifa, who stayed in Paris for four years and then lived in New York for almost twenty years.¹¹⁷ In 1971 when the first art magazine *Lion Art* (*Xiongshi meishu*) was published in Taiwan, Xie became a long-term contributor and published numerous articles on foreign aesthetic concepts and artists.¹¹⁸ Secondly, art magazines became important in reporting art news and publishing articles on global art activities and artists. For instance, before artist Lee Ming-sheng had the opportunity to attend the Venice Biennale in 1993—the first time for a Taiwanese artist—*Artist Magazine* had already published a long and detailed article in 1985 on the content and importance of the global Venice Biennale.¹¹⁹ Thirdly, in the 1980s, with increasing numbers of artists¹²⁰ who were educated abroad and returned to Taiwan, new artistic concepts were introduced to the Taiwanese art scene, including new media arts, performing arts, installation arts and mixed media.¹²¹

In the 1990s, the most influential global art influence in Taiwan was the participation in the Venice Biennale by artist Lee Ming-sheng in 1993. Through participation in this event, Lee was celebrated as a 'national hero' by the Taiwanese

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹¹⁷ Ni Tsai-chin, *Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art – the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine* (Taipei: Artists Publisher, 2005), 185.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Those people include artist Lu Mingde (盧明德) who studied in Japan; artist Guo Yifen (郭挹芬), who studied in Japan; art researcher and writer Chen Chuanxing (陳傳興) who studied in France; director Yang Dechang Edward (楊德昌) who studied in the United States.

¹²¹ Wang, Renying. 'Taiwan yishu de zhutixing yu quanqiuhua xianxiang' (The Subjectivity and the Global Phenomenon of Taiwanese Art) *Tainan yishu daxue yishu yanjiu xuebao* (*Journal of Performing and Visual Arts Studies*) Tainan: Tainan National University of the Arts. Issue 1, Vol. 2 (2008), 45—76. <http://nutnr.lib.nutn.edu.tw/bitstream/987654321/7411/1/王人英.pdf>. Accessed 10 August 2010.

mass media, as I have mentioned above. This provided Taiwan with the opportunity to explore a new global status under the national name of 'Taiwan'. The importance of Lee's celebrity status as a participant of the Venice Biennale led Taiwanese art into joining the global trend of biennales. If the period of 1980s is named by Xie Lifa as the 'museum era'; the 1990s and 2000s could then be called the 'biennale era'. According to Julian Stallabrass, global activities, especially biennales, were revamped and funded on an unprecedented scale in the 1990s.¹²² Since 1995, the TFAM has not only been responsible for organizing the Taiwan Pavilion and selecting artists to participate in the Venice Biennale, but since 1996, it has also hosted its own Taipei Biennale.

When Taiwanese art and artists started to take part in the global art scene in the 1990s, the issue of the relationship between globalisation and localisation came under discussion. In 1996, when the TFAM hosted the first Taipei Biennale, it even used the most topical issue, 'The Quest for Identity', as its main title, provoking considerable discussion among art critics and artists.¹²³ In fact, as more and more global art activities take place around the world, more and more Taiwanese artists are participating in the global flow of artistic activities, and in the process are becoming increasingly aware of the global view of their artwork representing the wider concept of Taiwanese art. This will be discussed further in chapter six which analyses Tang Huang-chen and the Taishin Arts Award. As the Award demonstrates, international professionals' views on Taiwanese art have become part of a strategy to select the 'best' of Taiwanese art. Moreover, in the process of the celebrity status of art, distinctions between local and global views on art, and the local and/or global identities of art and artists have become something that artists are aware of in the process of creating their artwork and in promoting their images.

¹²² Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33.

¹²³ Ni, Zaiqin, *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art – the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (Taipei: Artists Publisher, 2005), 290–293.

Celebrity artists and the transformation of gender values

One of the arguments of this thesis is that one of the more progressive features of the celebritisation of art in Taiwan concerns the transformation of gender values. Artists Chu Cha-ray and Tang Huang-chen, whom I discuss in the chapters that follow, have both made positive contributions in representing different models of womanhood in Taiwan.

As Taiwanese society started to open up politically, socially and culturally in the 1980s, significant shifts occurred in a range of social values, including those concerning women's position in society and women's gender self-identification. Today, womanhood in Taiwan represents a tension between traditional Chinese and Taiwanese views that women's value arises from and resides in their family responsibilities as wife, mother and daughter-in-law, and modern ideas and practices of women's independence and value as autonomous persons. In contemporary society, on the one hand, women have opportunities to express their ideas and desires, and participate in different social activities and protests; on the other hand, their thoughts and behaviours are still constrained by traditional social values. The pull between these different forces is an important feature contributing to the construction of female celebrity artists, albeit in different ways, as is demonstrated in my two case studies of artists Chu Cha-ray and Tan Huang-chen.

The formation of womanhood in modern Taiwan can be examined from the influences of three main forces: the historically embedded traditional ideology of women, the influence of the Japanese colonial period, and the impact of Western culture. Women's repression in traditional Chinese society was both physical and psychological; women's activities were centered on families and the values of womanhood were associated with their roles as daughters, daughters-in-law, wives, and mothers.¹²⁴ During the Qing dynasty, traditional Taiwanese women had no

¹²⁴ Zhang, Shuli. 'Dangdai Taiwan nüxing wenhua pinglun de guoqu (wei) wanchengshi/weilai jinxingshi' (The past (im)perfect tense/future perfect tense of cultural criticism on Contemporary Taiwanese women). *Wenhua yanjiu zai Taiwan (Cultural Studies in Taiwan)* (Taipei: Liwen Publisher, 2000). 158.

opportunity to receive education, nor could they engage in cultural production.¹²⁵ At the time, one of the popular and dominant rules was that the ‘absence of talent in a woman is synonymous with virtue’. Professor Lai Ming-chu points out in her article ‘Modernity, Power and Gender—Images of Women by Taiwanese Female Artists under Japanese Rule’ that, “A women’s artistic talents and energy could be presented through women’s work such as knitting and embroidery, because for hundreds of years the social status of women had been kept low within the conventional patriarchal society of Taiwan”.¹²⁶

During the Japanese colonial period, Japanese government built up schools and educated Taiwanese women in familial and social values, confirming women’s role as ‘virtuous wives and good loving mothers’ (*xianqi liangmu*). Thus, even though women started to receive education, dominant family duties denied them access to public social status. Art researcher, Chen Yi-ling, who studies women’s images in print media in the Japanese colonial period, points out that,

Taiwanese women have the entrenched characteristics of good manners, decency and propriety of Chinese traditional feminine virtue. Although women’s education witnessed important improvements under Japanese colonisation, women’s traditional virtue was still maintained under the new system. The idea of woman being a ‘virtuous wife and good loving mother’ never changed.¹²⁷

Studying the print images, Chen also observes that although women started to adopt westernised clothing and ‘liberated’ fashions such as western swimming suits and evening dresses, women’s value was still linked to the specific roles of mother and wife.¹²⁸ Professor Lai Ming-chu made similar arguments that female artists’ paintings during Japanese rule, such as those of Huang Huaren and Lin Yuzhu,

¹²⁵ Lai, Ming-chu. ‘Modernity, Power and Gender—Images of Women by Taiwanese Female Artists under Japanese Rule’. Yuko Kikuchi ed., *Refracted Modernity—Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). 161.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹²⁷ Chen, Yi-ling. ‘*Rizhi shiqi pingmian chuanmei zhi nuxing xingxiang chutan*’ (An investigation into the female images on print media in Taiwan in the Japanese colonial period) A special report made by an art teacher, Chen Yi-ling, in Fu-ying Junior High School. (October 2007). 14.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

depict the inequality of the sexes in the hierarchal social structure of Taiwan.¹²⁹ That these female artists were able to express their ideas about women at the time, so Lai argued, was due to the fact that “colonial modernity also enabled some Taiwanese artists to transform their consciousness of gender issues and power into visual culture”.¹³⁰ Thus, such paintings became a critique for women to express their concerns about womanhood and their social identity.

However, besides those female artists who could make a critique through their paintings, other women were not simply victims without self-consciousness of their position. As early as the 1920s and 1930s, influenced by the world, China and Japan’s women’s rights movements, as well as social movements in Taiwan, debates about women’s rights developed more extensively.¹³¹ Nevertheless, in the different contexts of Taiwan’s political and social environment, Taiwanese women’s liberation presented its own distinctive features that tended to integrate the issues of the women’s rights movement, the anti-colonial movement and the proletarian liberation movement.¹³² Their discussions mainly concerned four aspects: independence in marriage, equality in education, economic independence and access to political rights.¹³³ In the 1940s, after Taiwan was returned to the Republic of China, women's groups began to flourish,¹³⁴ and by the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by the development of the women’s movement in previous decades, the lifting of martial law and the impact of western ideology, a new generation of women in Taiwan gradually moved towards economic independence as well as independence

¹²⁹ Lai, Ming-chu. ‘Modernity, Power and Gender—Images of Women by Taiwanese Female Artists under Japanese Rule’. Yuko Kikuchi ed., *Refracted Modernity—Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). 133-165.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³² Hu, Ai-ruo. ‘*Taiwan funu runquan yandong de deshan*’ (The transformation of women’s right movement in Taiwan) *Fuhsing kang xuebao (Fu Hsing Kang Academic Journal)* Issue 86, (2006), 276.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹³⁴ In January 1946, after World War II, the first legal women’s group, the ‘Taiwan Women’s Association,’ was established. Thereafter, ‘Chiayi Women’s Association’, ‘Taipei Women’s Association’ and numerous women’s groups were also set up. Information from Hu, Ai-ruo. ‘*Taiwan funu runquan yandong de deshan*’ (The transformation of women’s right movement in Taiwan) *Fuhsing kang xuebao (Fu Hsing Kang Academic Journal)* Issue 86, (2006), 280-281.

of thought and social practice.¹³⁵ This led to big ideological conflicts over women's role and position in Taiwan, and a seesaw struggle started to take place between modern and traditional ideologies of womanhood, mainly between the older and the newer generations.¹³⁶ The conflicts are mostly played out in families, between the roles of grandparents, parents and daughters. Even some family members who are educated abroad and enjoy a high socio-economic status are still likely to maintain the ideological concepts of traditional Taiwanese womanhood.¹³⁷

Feminist criticism developed rapidly in Taiwan after the 1980s, influenced by the lifting of martial law, the second wave western feminist movement, the gay and lesbian movement, and post-colonial criticism.¹³⁸ According to the literature scholar Liou Liang-ya, feminist criticism in Taiwan was characterized by five different tendencies emphasizing anti-pornography, sexual liberation, queer and lesbian identities and post-colonial/indigenous identities. These discourses took various forms but in their different ways attempted to challenge the gender biases of the traditional patriarchal structure.¹³⁹ Amongst the many publications that ensued, professor Ho Chuen-juei's *The Gallant Woman—Feminism and Sexual Emancipation* (1994) sparked a particular controversy.¹⁴⁰ The book focused on women's sexual repression under patriarchy, and emphasized the need for woman's sexual liberation represented by the 'gallant woman' (*hao shuang*) who is not constrained by the traditional values sustaining woman's sexual repression. Although

¹³⁵ During the martial law period, especially between 1949 and 1970, official organizations including the Women's Association (1945), National Women's League (1950), the Women's Affairs Association (1954) were established to formulate women's policies for the government and help promote official values. Through these organizations, the government hoped to shape Taiwanese women into patriotic citizens as 'good wives and mothers' in order to increase the country's stability and help to implement anti-communist policy. After martial law was lifted, other women's groups were set up on diverse platforms and to debate a range of issues concerning women's rights and position in civil society. Information from *ibid.*, 14.

¹³⁶ Liou, Liang-ya. 'Taiwan nüxing wenhua zhuyi piping 1990-1999' (Taiwan's Feminist Cultural Criticism 1990-1999) *Wenhua yanjiu zai Taiwan (Cultural Studies in Taiwan)* (Taipei: Liwen Publisher, 2000). 172-182.

¹³⁷ This observation is made according to my own experience in growing up in Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s in the city of Taipei in north Taiwan and the rural area of Ming-shung in southern Taiwan.

¹³⁸ Liou, Liang-ya. 'Taiwan's Feminist Cultural Criticism 1990-1999. *Cultural Studies in Taiwan*. (Taipei: Liwen Publisher, 2000). 172-182.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁴⁰ Ho, Chuen-juei. *Haoshuang nuren—Nüxing zhuyi yu xing jiefang (The Gallant Woman—Feminism and Sexual Emancipation)* (Taipei: Crown Publisher, 1994).

the book did not offer a comprehensive critical discussion about power relationships, or what some saw as the adverse consequences of sexual liberation and sexual violence, it reflected the needs of many Taiwanese women to liberate their bodies, sexual identities and desires. A similar desire to express the body and sexuality can be seen in artist Chu Cha-ray (chapter four), who became a celebrity in 2004 when her bold behaviour and style generated extensive media attention and public discussion.

In recent decades, many women in Taiwanese society have had opportunities for education abroad and have been profoundly influenced by western cultural values through travel, the circulation of information in different media and communication channels and consumerism. Although young women now have more independent ideas about their life styles, bodies and desires, careers, financial conditions and futures, their families still tend to share the conventional gender values inherited from traditional Chinese ideology that ‘men make houses, women make homes’.¹⁴¹ This is due to the fact that most Taiwanese families are still dominated by the older generations of grandparents and parents who grew up under the Japanese education system and martial law. These older generations expect girls to marry before they reach the age of thirty and believe that women should focus on taking care of their families rather than on their own career development.¹⁴²

A popular book called *Defeated Dogs Bark Far (Baiquan de yuanfei)* that was translated from the original Japanese and published in Taiwan in 2003, reflects the conflicts between the traditional and new values of womanhood. It describes a specific social phenomenon in Japan in recent years wherein any beautiful or talented woman who is over thirty years old and unmarried is described as a ‘defeated dog’ (or ‘lost dog’, *baiquan*). When this book was published in Taiwan it generated considerable discussion, and many women over thirty became terrified of being

¹⁴¹ In Taiwan, the traditional ideology that ‘men make houses, women make homes’ is discussed largely with reference to the increasing independence and professional status of Taiwanese women. Discussions in newspapers, magazine articles and individual blogs focus on the necessity to overturn the traditional ideology. See, for example, ‘*Nanzhuwai nūzhunei re de huo*’ (The troubles caused when men make houses, women make homes). *Nūxing dianzi bao (Women’s Newsletter)*. Issue 237; and ‘*Nanzhueni nūzhuwai*’ (Men make homes, women make houses). *Chen An-yi de bixia rensheng (Chen An-yi’s life in writing)* 8 October 2008. <http://anyichen.pixnet.net/blog/post/21783870>. Accessed 18 January 2010.

¹⁴² This observation is made according to my own experience in growing up in Taiwan.

identified as a ‘defeated dog’. In 2009, a popular Taiwanese television drama programme named *My Queen* (or *Queen of No Marriage (Baiquan nüwang)*) used the same phrase ‘defeated dog’ (*baiquan*) to construct a female character who was over the age of thirty, unmarried, but with a high career potential.¹⁴³ The ratings of this drama were extremely high, achieving an average of 5.69 among a population of 22,600,000.¹⁴⁴

Although the book and the television programme attempted to reflect women’s position and difficulties in contemporary society, the fact that they emphasised the pressure of social opinion on women to marry caused great panic for many single women. Chu Cha-ray’s celebrityisation process also sheds light on these issues. Although her celebrity status began with her image as a fashionable and independent woman characterized by the media as a ‘hot female professor’ (*mala nü jiaoshou*) with a distinctive personality and bold teaching style, she constantly referred in her art works and her personal stories to the inner insecurity resulting from her traditional family upbringing. However, as her celebrityisation status progressed, she increasingly commercialised her childhood and family stories and sought media exposure for her new status as a modern unmarried woman in her forties, with a successful and independent career.

Another female artist Tang Huang-chen who I discuss in chapter six, is also in her forties and is a single independent woman, but with significant differences to Chu. Tang has continuously been a leading figure of cultural and environmental protests since the late 1990s, and thus represents a very different idea of new womanhood in Taiwan. However, with her non-feminine appearance, media attention has not stressed her image as a woman. Her celebrityisation has mainly been associated with her artistic achievements and with the institutional changes in Taiwan’s art and cultural spaces, including the corporate intervention in Taiwan’s art scene since the 1990s.

¹⁴³ *My Queen* (or *Queen of No Marriage, baiquan nuwang*) is a Taiwanese idol soap opera broadcasted in 2009, produced by Sanlih E-Television.

¹⁴⁴ These ratings are also very high compared to those for other popular idol soap operas such as *Touxin dasheng PS nan* (偷心大聖PS男 *The Closer-PS boy*) which received episode ratings of 3.88. The ratings are investigated by Nielson Television Audience measurement. <http://www.agbnielsen.com/whereweare/dynPage.asp?lang=local&id=370&country=Taiwan>. Accessed 3 July 2010.

Setting the Scene: Research Methodology and Fieldwork

This thesis is shaped by five case studies each of which exemplifies particular features—overlapping with and distinct from each other—of the celebritisation of art. In this section, I set out the research methods I used that resulted in the selection of these five cases, through describing my fieldwork, my collection of data and the research methods and techniques I adopted during the research process.

The research on which this thesis is based took place during five research trips to Taiwan between December 2005 and April 2007.¹⁴⁵ My overall aim in these visits was to explore different encounters with celebrity art and artists, and to build up a picture of how the celebritisation process functions in the contemporary Taiwanese art scene. I used three main methods to conduct my fieldwork: visits to museums, galleries and cultural spaces, where I could engage in an informal kind of ‘participant observation’; collecting relevant materials from different kinds of publications including journal and newspaper articles, news reports, gallery catalogues and television programmes, and conducting formal and informal interviews and conversations.

My research trips to Taiwan, and particularly to Taipei, gave me ample opportunity to talk to people working in the art community, and their views, as recorded in my notes, form substantive data for this research. My connections with these people arose from three major sources: my own social relationships with artists and friends working in the art circle built up when I lived and worked in Taiwan previously;¹⁴⁶ other friends and social connections introduced to me by friends and other acquaintances; and people I came across during my visits to galleries and other cultural spaces. These friendships and connections allowed me to hold countless conversations and observe a multitude of artistic practices and behaviours in many different spaces, including art museums, commercial galleries, artists’ studios, and

¹⁴⁵ The fieldtrips I spent in Taiwan included: one month in December 2005, one month in March 2006, two months in July and August 2007, one month in December 2006, and one month in March 2007.

¹⁴⁶ I lived in Taipei from September 2003 to August 2005. During that time, I worked as a research assistant at the National Palace Museum.

other cultural spaces such as bookstores and art salon. I was able to observe how the artists interacted with the general public and present and promoted themselves in interviews with the media.

During the period of my fieldwork, four big events happened in Taiwan that interacted differently with the topic of my thesis and eventually shaped the structure of my thesis as I describe below. The first event took place slightly before my first research trip in March 2005, when the exhibition *Sixteen Close Encounters* was held at the Eslite Bookstore in Taipei to celebrated its 16th anniversary.¹⁴⁷ This exhibition was curated by a female artist Chu Cha-ray who invited fifteen other celebrities and famous people to exhibit their ideal reading spaces. Through the extensive media exposure the exhibition attracted, art and artists became a prominent feature of the bookshop's self-promotion. This event caught my attention because it was relevant to the topic of my research in art and celebrity. When subsequently I went to Taiwan on my first fieldwork trip, I began to closely follow the relevant news reports and television talk shows as Chu Cha-ray's celebrity grew.

The second event was the 4th Taishin Arts Award ceremony that took place in April 2006, organised to select the best visual art exhibition and performing art project in Taiwan. The Taishin Arts Award, solely sponsored by Taishin Bank, is a big annual event in Taiwan's art scene. Previously when I worked and lived in Taiwan, each year I visited the finalist exhibitions that took place in different spaces and I was aware of their promotional strategy through the different media channels used by Taishin to promote the corporation, Taiwanese art and artists. In 2006, I attended the award ceremony, having been invited by a friend who was also a friend of artist Tang Huang-chen, the winner of the Visual Art Prize for the *Best of 2005* at the 4th Taishin Arts Award. I used my attendance at the award ceremony as an opportunity to observe how the nominated artists were presented, and how the winners were announced by the awarding body and photographed by the mass media. I was also able to observe how people working in the art community greeted each other and socialised in such a formal occasion.

¹⁴⁷ Exhibition *Six Close Encounters*, The Eslite Gallery (second basement floor), Eslite Bookstore. 13-17 March 2005.

The third event was the launch of the VT Artsalon, which was a space combining lounge bar and art gallery founded by a group of eight artists and a curator. In visiting the space, I observed how these artists and the curator actively used various media channels to promote their Artsalon and to celebritise themselves as artists, lounge bar operators and entrepreneurs.

The last event was Cai Guoqiang's retrospective exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* that took place at the TFAM from November 2009 to February 2010. Cai is a Chinese artist of global renown, but his celebrity status in Taiwan took off in 1998 since he first arrived Taiwan. When his retrospective exhibition was held, he was even more mediated and celebritised by the Taiwanese media. Under the circumstances, despite his nationality, he was included as one of the research case studies in this thesis because the celebritised image and artwork that he created in Taiwan have had a great impact on both the Taiwanese public and the art scene.

During my field trips to Taiwan, I devoted considerable energy to collecting media narratives and hard-copy, web-based and video images of these events and their respective artists, both as sources of information but just as significantly for their contribution to thinking about how the figure of the celebrity artist is constructed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes have made an insightful comment about the importance of the text in the analysis of celebrities.

If there is one approach that has largely—but not exclusively—dominated the field of star and celebrity analysis then it is the approach of employing close textual analysis to explore the ideological meaning of a star or celebrity image. Stars are imagined to be representations, 'made up' in media culture, multi-faceted in terms of 'what they consist of' (Dyer, 1987:2), how they signify, and they are historical and political in terms of how they relate to complex issues, conflicts and contradictions that emerge in the social world at any one time.¹⁴⁸

In this thesis, I develop Redmond's and Holmes' argument about the importance of 'textual analysis' through my analysis of media, on-line and catalogue materials that I collected. By text, therefore I mean written narratives, photographs and other visual images, produced by or about the celebrity artists, and treat them as

¹⁴⁸ Redmond, Sean and Su Holmes. 'Made in Culture: Star and Celebrity Representations, Introduction,' in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader* ed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 257.

crucial components in the production of my case artists as celebrities.¹⁴⁹ The media sources were mainly in the National Central Library in Taipei, which has documented newspaper information since as early as the 1950s, as well as Internet resources and the daily newspapers that I read. I consulted the five main newspapers in Taiwan, namely *China Times*¹⁵⁰ (*zhongguo shibao*), *United Daily Newspaper*¹⁵¹ (*Lianhe bao*) and *Min Sheng Daily*¹⁵² (*Minsheng bao*), *Liberty Times*¹⁵³ (*Ziyou shibao*) and *Apple Daily*¹⁵⁴ (*Pingquo ribao*), and a number of art magazines

¹⁴⁹ Pawson notes that, ‘textual analysis involves analyzing the linguistic subtleties within documents in order to see whether they encourage a particular interpretation of events’. Patrick Mcneil and Steve Chapman. *Research Methods*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1985, 1990, 2005), 121.

¹⁵⁰ The China Times (中國時報, *Zhongguo shibao*) is a newspaper published in 1950 in Taiwan in traditional Chinese. It is one of the four biggest newspapers in Taiwan, the other three being the Liberty Times, United Daily News, and Apple Daily (Taiwan).

¹⁵¹ United Daily News (聯合報, *Lianhe bao*) was founded in 1951 by Wang Tiwu (王惕吾) as a merger of three newspapers, Popular Daily (全民日報, *Quanmin ribao*), National (民族報, *Minzu bao*), and the Economic Times (經濟時報, *jingji shibao*). The three newspapers formally merged in 1953. In terms of political orientation, UDN is Pan-Blue, pro-China, and conservative.

¹⁵² Min Sheng Daily (民生報, *Minsheng bao*) is a tabloid newspaper based in Taiwan, and a sister publication of United Daily News. Since 1 December 2006, it has stopped disturbing the physical newspaper but continues to report news on-line on the website <http://n.yam.com/msnews/>.

¹⁵³ Liberty Times (自由時報, *Ziyou shibao*) was first published in 1980 in Taiwan by the Liberty Times Group, which also publishes the English language newspaper the Taipei Times. Liberty Times is recognised as taking a Pan Green pro-independence political stance.

According to the latest Nielsen Media survey from July to September 2008, the figures show that the Liberty Times reportedly has a readership of 17% which was recognised as the first in the country, leading Apple Daily’s 15.9%. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (shortened as ABC) which audits the daily average of actual sales, Liberty Times has total sales of 699.45 thousand copies, Apple Daily has 510.01 thousand copies which gives a strong lead of 37% to the Liberty Times. However, China Times and United Daily news were not part of the ABC audit.

¹⁵⁴ Apple Daily (蘋果日報, *Pingquo ribao*) is a tabloid-style newspaper printed in Taiwan and owned by Hong Kong-based Next Media. When it began publication on 2 May 2003, the number of newspapers sold was already higher than the other newspapers. Its rigid occupation of Taiwan’s market is due to the full colour-print throughout and the low price. (Most of the newspapers lowered their prices from \$15 to \$10 on the day of Apple daily’s publication, but Apple Daily was sold for \$5 at first and rose to \$10 the following month). The most important feature of Apple Daily is its emphasis on colour photos and visualised diagrams. The newspapers are in colour throughout including the advertising pages. It is now one of the most influential newspapers in Taiwan and sells very well in the convenience store—7-11—even higher than Liberty Times. But the market subscription rates for Liberty Times, United Daily and China Times are higher than Apple Daily. According to the statistical data of newspaper ranking in Taiwan, Apple Daily and Liberty Times are competing for first place, United Daily and China Times are competing for third and fourth place. Information from: Lu Shixiang. ‘*Minzhu Taiwan de xin liang dabao*’ (The new two main newspapers in democratic Taiwan) *Caijing wenhua zhoukan* (Taiwan News) 21 November 2004.

including *Artist Magazine*¹⁵⁵ (*Yishu jia*), *Contemporary Art News Magazine*¹⁵⁶ (shortened as *CANS Art*, *Dangdai yishu xinwen*) and *ARTCO*¹⁵⁷ (*Jin yihsu*). I also consulted different non-art magazines and television programmes for additional material on the individual cases. In the process of collecting these sources, it became apparent that the news reports and information in the print media were better documented than television programmes and advertisements, hence my greater use in this thesis of printed materials. It was during this process of collecting secondary sources in the library, that I discovered that as early as the late 1980s when martial law had just been lifted in Taiwan, artist Lee Ming-sheng had begun to exploit the concept of celebritisation in his performance art *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* (1988). I include his case in this study as the earliest example of celebrity art in Taiwan.

In order to establish comprehensive knowledge about the individual celebrity artists in my case studies, I used their current and previous exhibition catalogues to support my understanding and analysis of the primary and media materials that I gathered. For instance, artist Lee Ming-sheng has his own biographical and exhibition catalogue in both Chinese and English, which contains textual information and images that provide detailed knowledge of his performance art projects since the early 1980s to mid-1990s. In Lee's case, a documentation of his performance art works in *Avant-garde liberation—the Huang Ming-chuan image collection of the 1990s* (2002) also provides images of how Lee conducted his street performances in the 1980s and the conflicts that took place between the artist, the police and the public. For other artists, after visiting their exhibitions, the catalogues and guilds were used as references for my analysis of their concepts and expressions in arts. One of the special cases was artist Chu Cha-ray's exhibiton *16 Games of Study* at the Eslite Bookstore, for which a book and a DVD were published in which Chu

¹⁵⁵ *Artist Magazine* (藝術家雜誌, *Yishu jia*) is a monthly magazine that was founded in 1975. Focusing on reporting on artwork and events in Taiwan, it also reports international art news. The price of the magazine is NT 180 dollars (equivalent to GBP 3.6 pounds).

¹⁵⁶ *Contemporary Art News Magazine* (當代藝術新聞, *Dangdai yishu xinwen*) is a monthly professional art magazine first published in 2005. It introduces the latest trends in the contemporary art scenes of China, Taiwan and the rest of Asia. The price of the magazine is NT 160 dollars (equivalent to GBP 3.2 pounds).

¹⁵⁷ *ARTCO* (今藝術, *Jin yihsu*) is a monthly professional art magazine first published in 2000. It focuses on contemporary Taiwanese art and acts as a bridge to the Western art scene. The price of the magazine is NT 180 dollars (equivalent to GBP 3.6 pounds).

deliberately presented herself as a celebrity to promote the exhibition. I also accessed information about exhibition and art works on the Internet websites of art institutions, organisations and artists, such as Cai Guoqiang's exhibition information on the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and his own studio websites; Tang Huang-chen's exhibition details on the IT Park Gallery and the Taishin Arts Award websites; and the VT Artsalon website.¹⁵⁸

The Internet-based materials were very important sources for this research, especially since many of them contained information not found in traditional resources. In consulting these materials, my aim was to explore the particular production and circulation of discourses and images on each individual case. This internet-based research took four directions which I pursued through keyword searches, including the names, art works and exhibitions of celebrity art and artists in both Chinese and English, on search engines including Yahoo, Google and Bing, the most common search engines in the Internet. The first direction involved searches made on on-line news, articles and journals about the activities and news-updates on the celebrity art and artists of my case studies. As many of the news articles are now frequently updated online, such as instant news displays on *Yahoo news*, *NOWnews* and *POTS*,¹⁵⁹ this allowed me to follow up-to-date art and cultural news about the changes in Taiwan's art scene. Secondly, my on-line sources include materials from the websites of art institutions, alternative spaces, galleries and artists, where they update information on exhibitions, art and artists. This not only allowed me to update news about different artistic spaces in Taiwan, but also provided on-line information on exhibitions and critical art commentary. Thirdly, I used the photo and video sharing websites included Flickr, Google Picture and YouTube to search images and video clips on the celebrity artists. This was mainly to see how they were

¹⁵⁸ Cai Guoqiang's webpage: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/> (accessed 30 April 2010); Taipei Fine Arts Museum website: <http://www.tfam.museum/>. Accessed 5 February 2010; Taishin Arts Award website: http://www.taishinart.org.tw/chinese/2_taishinarts_award/page_sub.php??MID=1. Accessed 8 February 2010; The VT Artsalon website: <http://www.vtartsalon.com/eng/about.html>. Accessed 24 March 2010; The VT Artsalon blogs: <http://vtartsalon.wordpress.com/>; <http://www.wretch.cc/blog/vtartsalon>. Accessed 24 March 2010.

¹⁵⁹ *Yahoo News* website: <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/>; *NOWnews* website: <http://www.nownews.com/>; and *POTS*: <http://www.pots.com.tw/>. *POTS* was established in 1995 and has both printed newspapers (free of access) and a website to publish contents on experimental art and cultural activities in Taiwan and globe. Information from *POTS* website.

photographed and how they presented themselves in different occasions and television programmes. Furthermore, when a celebrity artist such as Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang was interviewed on television talk shows, I repeatedly watched the video clips that were uploaded on YouTube to analyse how Chu and Cai presented themselves to the media and interacted with the other celebrities. Lastly, part of my internet-based searches was made on weblogs—personal-run web spaces for individuals to express their opinions on exhibitions, art and artists. In searching for these weblogs, I used search engines including Yahoo and Google, typing in the names of the celebrity artists, the events they participated in or the exhibition they held, with the aim of building up a picture of the kinds of opinions and debates their work and personalities generated among the general public.

After many informal conversations and devoting a huge amount of energy to gathering secondary media reports and Internet-based material on the five examples, I also conducted formal interviews with the respective artists, curators and art agents. In contrast to the mass media descriptions of celebrity art, artists and the celebritisation process, the formal interviews offered valuable insights into views from the inside as it were, in other words how the artists and curators themselves described their fame and celebrity status. These interviews were ‘semi-structured’, in that I had in mind some questions around celebrity art that I wanted to raise, but I also combined these with open-ended discussions when the interviewees raised interesting and significant topics that seemed to deserve detailed exploration. These interviews were held in different places according to individual needs. For instance, my two interviews with Lee Ming-sheng were carried out in his studio and home, each lasting about one hour; Tang Huang-chen’s was in Starbucks café, and lasted for about an hour and half; my two hour interview with Cai Guoqiang’s agent, Zhao Li, was in the Eslite Gallery meeting room; and my interview with Hu Chao-sheng (VT Artsalon group) was in his office, and lasted for about an hour. My aim in these interviews in part to collect data on their artistic careers, the processes of their celebritisation, their interactions with the mass media and the public, how they saw themselves as celebrity artists and their views on their celebrity artist peers. It was also to observe how they presented themselves during the interviews, their body

language and ways of dressing.¹⁶⁰ Among the artists and curators in the case studies, I was only unable to hold interviews with Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang. For Cai, I managed to have an interview with his agent in Taiwan, the manager Zhao Li at the Eslite Gallery, whose authority to speak was as a colleague who had worked closely with Cai for a long time.¹⁶¹ I also attended Chu's public seminars and tried to speak to her face-to-face in order to seek an opportunity for an interview. However, though she asked me to get in touch with her assistant, the assistant always told me she was abroad or was too busy. Since however, she often appeared on television talk shows or gave public seminars at the time I was trying to meet her, I eventually considered her assistant's response as a sign of her particular brand of celebritisation. This refers to a point made by Chris Rojek, about how celebrities construct their relationships and interactions with audiences through 'para-social interactions'.¹⁶² I shall return to this in chapter two.

My informal conversations and chats with visitors to museums, galleries, and other cultural spaces also yielded rich material. This was particularly beneficial for my study of the spaces of the VT Artsalon and the Eslite bookstore, and Cai Guoqiang's exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* (2009). Through talking to the visitors to these places, I was able to gather information about how the public might read and interpret the spaces of display, the art displayed in them and the images of the artists, which gave me further material to reflect on public reception of celebrity artists as part of their celebritisation in different social and cultural contexts.

As I argue below, the figures and institutions involved in these five cases in their different ways have had a major influence on Taiwan's contemporary art scene, and the artists involved figure among Taiwan's leading contemporary art scene. However, I am aware that by selecting these five case studies, I am excluding other examples from my discussion. For example, the artist Lin Minghong (Michael Lin)

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 56. I structured the interview questions differently according to individual case studies, according to individual artistic careers, the particular celebritisation process that they encountered and the media discourses around them, their works and their media presentations.

¹⁶¹ The Eslite Gallery has been the formal agent of Cai Guoqiang in Taiwan since 1998.

¹⁶² The term 'para-social interaction' refers to relations of intimacy constructed through the mass-media rather than direct face-to-face meetings. Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 52.

and curator Lu Rongzhi (Victoria Lu) could also be considered as celebrity artists, and in Lin's case, this encompasses his family background as a descendant of Taiwan's five legendary families.¹⁶³ Lin's distinctive art works with their traditional Taiwanese fabric patterns, and his prominent business connections draw considerable media attention. Lu has a distinctive appearance and personal style in dressing, and was influential in feminist and avant-garde art in Taiwan.¹⁶⁴ However, Lin operates mainly in the global and the U.S. fields, and Lu has worked in China since 2002, so their 'celebrity status' in Taiwan was not a prominent media issue during the period of my fieldwork. The other very recent celebrity artist is Pang Yao, who has a pretty appearance and was born in a family of famous artists,¹⁶⁵ and who started to host a television programme *Pang Yao is knocking the door* (*Pangyao qiaoqiaomen*) on the Discovery Travel and Living channel in 2009.¹⁶⁶ In this programme, she introduces people's homes, restaurants, and commercial spaces as examples of design and artistic concepts. Although Pang's celebrity status emerged too late to be a case study in this thesis, her example demonstrates again the prevalent phenomenon of celebrity art in Taiwan that is constructed through the artist's own desire for fame and business advantage. I do not therefore claim that the five cases of my analysis should be seen as a comprehensive representation of all aspects of celebrity art in Taiwan. As Patrick McNiell and Steve Chapman point out, a 'case study' research method can "make no claim to representativeness because the

¹⁶³ Lin Minghong is the great-grandson of Lin Xiantang (林獻堂), who is widely described as 'the pioneer of the national movement'. Lin's family is known as the Wufeng Lin family, and together with the Lukang Koo family, the Keelung Yen Family, the Kaohsiung Chen family and the Banciao Lin Family, are known as the five legendary families in Taiwan. Information from Lu, Shaowei. *Kuashiji Taiwan bainian jingji pian: Jingji qiji elufa* (A hundred years of Taiwan's economic development: the economic miracle with electronic business) *Zhongshi dianzibao* (*China times*) 2003. <http://forums.chinatimes.com.tw/special/100year/economic.htm>. Accessed 15 September 2010.

¹⁶⁴ Lu Rongzhi was the founder and curator of Animamix Biennial (2009 Taipei), the former creative director of MOCA Shanghai, and is now the creative director of Today Art Museum in Beijing. Lu has many important publications in Taiwan including: *Houxiandai de yishu xianxiang* (*The phenomenon of post-modern art*. Taipei: 1990) *Gonggong yishu de fangwei* (*The direction of public art*. Taipei: 1994), *Taiwan dangdai nuxing yishushi* (*The history of Taiwan's contemporary feminist art*. Taipei: 2002), and 'Po' *houxiandai de yishu* (*Breaking the post-modern art*. Taipei: 2003)

¹⁶⁵ Pang Yao's (龐鈞) grandfather Pang Xunqin (龐薰堯) was a well-known artist and the vice-dean of the Central Academy of Craft Art in Beijing. Her father Pang Jun (龐鈞) is also a famous artist in Taiwan.

¹⁶⁶ *Pang Yao is knocking the door* (龐鈞敲敲門 *Pangyao qiaoqiaomen*) is broadcasted every Thursday at 11pm and Sunday at 1pm on Discovery Travel and Living Channel.

essence of the technique is that each subject studied is treated as a unit on its own".¹⁶⁷ My aim, therefore, has been to explore the specific qualities and characteristics my cases exemplify, and to build up a picture of Taiwan's celebrity art as it has emerged since the late 1980s through a focus on some of the key figures on Taiwan's contemporary art scene.

The Chapters

This last section of this chapter gives a brief outline of the focus and content of the chapters that follow. Chapter two provides an analysis of the historical and contemporary construction of celebrity, mainly with reference to academic discussions in media and cultural studies where the concept has been extensively analysed. It looks into the Western production of contemporary celebrity and its characteristics from two main aspects: the social functions and the economy of celebrity. Also, it examines relevant Western theoretical writings in the field of celebrity art. The last section of this chapter will focus on discussions about the commercialisation and celebritisation of contemporary art in the regional context of East Asia, including China, Japan and Taiwan. Chapter three focuses on artist Lee Ming-sheng, whose celebrity status is associated strongly with Taiwan's political and social transformation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It will explore the transformation of Lee's public image from crazy man and agitator to spiritual icon, responsible for bringing Taiwanese art and artists to the global event of the Venice Biennale. Chapter four looks into Chu Cha-ray's celebrity status as an artist, curator and teacher, and argues that her image as a new modern woman, which has been shaped media texts, interviews and her own publications as well as her appearance and dress style, has constructed a celebrity persona that offers a new feminist social model in Taiwan. Chapter five examines the Taiwanese celebritisation of the world renowned Chinese artist Cai Guoqiang. Tracing his celebrity construction in Japan and the United States, and the global spread of 'Cai Guoqiang phenomenon', it argues that Cai 'glocalises' himself to Taiwanese context through identifiable

¹⁶⁷ McNeil, Patrick and Steve Chapman, *Research Methods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1985, 1990, 2005), 121.

strategies to connect with local culture. As a Chinese artist, his celebrity status in Taiwan enabled him to appear as a politically significant artist when he held a retrospective exhibition in 2009, sponsored by his agent, the Eslite Gallery in Eslite Corporation. Chapter six takes a close look at artist Tang Huangchen and her celebritisation in relation to the Taishin Arts Award. As an action artist who devotes her artistic career to combining creativity with cultural and environmental protests since she returned to Taiwan from Paris in 2001, Tang was nominated by the corporate award and as thus drawn into a series of marketing strategies to promote the nominated art, artists and the corporate brand. This chapter aims to examine the effect of this on Tang's public image and her artistic career. Chapter seven investigates the Very Temple Artsalon Group (namely the VT Artsalon Group), which is a group of seven artists and a curator who joined together in 2006 to fund a space that integrated art gallery and lounge bar at a time when the commercialisation and celebritisation of art in Taiwan was already an established process. It examines how their innovative ideas have become associated with a certain social distinction and taste in the urban city of Taipei, giving new meaning to the notion of art through bridging high and popular culture.

Chapter Two

Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on the Construction of the Celebrity and Celebrity Art

Given my focus on the celebritisation of contemporary art and artists, this chapter first maps out the historical constructions of fame and celebrity that contribute to explaining the public recognition given to individual ‘celebrity’ figures today. It then looks into debates about the production of celebrity in a broader sense, especially in the fields of media and cultural studies where the contemporary concept of celebrity has been most extensively analysed. The chapter then moves on to focus on contemporary art, cultural politics and discourses on the commercialisation and celebritisation of art in Taiwan’s regional context.

As terms that describe publicly acknowledged achievement, the modern English words *fame* and *celebrity* draw on the Latin words, *fama* and *celebritas*.¹ According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, the word *fame* means the ‘status of being known by many people’,² and *celebrity* means ‘a famous person’ and ‘the status of being well-known’.³ Chris Rojeck explains the origin of the word *celebrity* thus: “The Latin roots indicate a relationship in which a person is marked out as possessing singularity, and a social structure in which the character of fame is fleeting”.⁴ He further points out that ‘celebrity’,

suggests representations of fame that flourish beyond the boundaries of religion and Court society. In a word, it ties celebrity to a *public*, and acknowledges the fickle, temporary nature of the market in human sentiment.⁵

¹ Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986, 1997), 57.

² *Oxford Dictionary of English*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Rojeck, Chris. *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Book, 2001), 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

The links between these characteristics and the contemporary production of celebrities in consumer society will be examined in the later sections of this chapter.

Although celebrity has invariably been defined with particular reference to the fields of entertainment or sport,⁶ the term is nowadays also widely seen in politics, literature, art and business arenas. Marshall compares celebrity with other terms as follows:

Celebrity can be thought of as the general and encompassing term, whereas concepts of *heroes*, *star*, and *leader* are most specific categories of the public individual that relate to specific functions in the public sphere.⁷

Accordingly, when one talks about a specific achievement of a public individual in a specific field or category, one tends to use the term *star*, referring to a figure such as film star, sporting star, or famous artist, whereas the term *celebrity* is used to describe an individual with more general, if fleeting as Rojek suggested, popularity in the public sphere. In this thesis, I use the term ‘celebrity’ as a way of describing the popularity and mass media publicity granted to artists and kinds of art, rather than using the term ‘art stars’ which, following Marshall’s distinction, would refer more to the specific public functions of artists with high levels of visibility within the art scene.

Although the celebrity has emerged as a global phenomenon, most studies of celebrity have been produced in Western societies where the notion and figure of the ‘celebrity’ as a commercialised global phenomenon arose. This literature review will therefore begin with discussions about the celebrity in the West, briefly mapping out the historical construction of fame and how public recognition was granted individuals and disseminated in ancient Western society. The second part will examine modern and contemporary discussions about celebrity formation, followed by two more sections on the social functions and economic significance of celebrities in contemporary society and their application to the contemporary art scene. The fifth section looks at more Western theoretical debates about the concept of celebrity art. The last section of this chapter will focus on discussions about the

⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of English*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003).

⁷ Marshall, David. *Celebrity and Power* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota, 1997), 7.

commercialisation and celebritisation of contemporary art in the regional context of East Asia, including China, Japan and Taiwan. Through these sections, I not only aim to provide a detailed picture of the development of what could be called a celebrity discourse, but also to examine its social, cultural and economic importance in both Western and East Asian societies. This coherent understanding of celebrity will contextualise my focussed analysis of the emergence of celebrity in Taiwan's art scene, and inform my analyses of the individual case studies in the following chapters.

The Historical Development of Fame

Leo Braudy's book *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* explores the transformative meaning of fame, the relationship between the famous and their audiences from ancient Rome to the modern mediated society. Braudy points out at the beginning of the book that, "from the beginning fame has required publicity",⁸ and in the history of fame, when individuals bring themselves to the attention of others, they thereby gained power over the others.⁹ These passages instantly point out two of the most important elements in the construction of fame and its links to later concepts of celebrity, namely publicity and power.

However, the forms and recognitions of these two elements have different very representations to those of today. By the time of Alexander the Great, a coin was an established medium that was circulated with the feature of the ruler stamped upon it. Braudy observes that "the perpetuation of his name and legend was no doubt aided immeasurably by the continued circulation of coins with his marking for years after his death, even by otherwise hostile countries".¹⁰ The circulation of coins was

⁸ Braudy, Leo. (1986, 1997), 3.

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 104.

Braudy points out that 'only those rulers most assertive about the divine sanction of their kingship put their own feature on coins'. In general, Asian and African rulers took more easily to the new mode than European ones; and the Ptolemies, partaking of the long-standing Egyptian tradition of kingship, were the most consistent, appearing on coins up to the time of Cleopatra. Braudy also indicates that the portrait-from-life coin in Europe was based on that of Demetrius I of Macedonia, the son of one of Alexander's generals and a failed empire builder himself.

not only used as a way of emphasising and disseminating the political fame of the ruler, but also for enhancing his heroic effect. Rulers like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar became standards against which monarchs were measured for centuries.¹¹

Throughout the medieval period of Christianity in Europe, and even into the Renaissance of Roman arts, there was an interplay between the Christian and Roman views of “what constitutes an ideal person, shaped by a debate over what qualities define human character and activity in general”.¹² Thus, fame progressed from kingly ideals to the search for specific characteristics embedded in a person which could constitute that person’s greatness.

Braudy points out that, until the eighteenth century, the controversy about which qualities defined human character and activity took place within limited sections of society: among rulers, who, “for reasons of political, spiritual, or artistic aspiration want special sanction for their ambition; and among writers and artists who supplied their patrons and employers with such sanctions, appropriately embroidered with classical and biblical references”.¹³ As regards artists painting for their patrons, John J. Walker points out that in the Italian Renaissance, there were some great artists, including Brunelleschi, Donatello, Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, who represented a professional class distinct from artisans and were praised by patrons and historians for their genius. This engendered the early cult of individual artists and the acclamation of personal artistic achievement as fame.¹⁴

By the seventeenth century, a power transformation meant that the patron was gradually losing absolute power to command an artist’s worth. Braudy observed that there were two new audiences beginning to demand equal consideration: the immediate audience of the theatre-going public and the more detached collector of

¹¹ Braudy, Leo. (1986, 1997), 15.

In chapter three, I discuss how Lee Ming-sheng examines contemporary ways of disseminating images and names by aspiring politicians in Taiwan in the form of performance art.

¹² Ibid., 586.

¹³ Ibid., 586.

¹⁴ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 193.

books and prints.¹⁵ More than the change of the power from patron to audience, this was an early sign of the impact of consumption on constructing fame and taste, leading to a focus on talent, learning, and personal virtue rather than birth and inherited rank or fame in the eighteenth century.¹⁶ According to Braudy, “[s]ince the eighteenth century, the imagery of fame has been more connected with social mobility than inherited position, and with social transcendence as an assurance of social survival”.¹⁷ This transformation was also linked to the rise of democracy, which had two striking effects on fame: “...one was the connection to a world of spiritual value beyond, and the other one was the connection to a world of human value through the individual”.¹⁸ Since then, the idea of individuality has played an important role in the concepts of fame and the more contemporary concept of celebrity. In contemporary society, besides the fact that celebrities express their personality and individuality through different communication channels, David Marshall also argues that celebrity operates to articulate, and legitimate, various forms of subjectivity that enhance the value of individuality and personality.¹⁹ The process of constructing contemporary celebrity’s political function will be discussed in the following sections.

Since the nineteenth century, vital inventions and wider use of technology have transformed ways of producing, disseminating and circulating images. These technological inventions include dry-plate photography, which was invented in 1873, the phonograph of 1877, the roll film in 1884, motion pictures and radio around 1900, television's commercial importance in 1941, and colour television in 1946. All have had a tremendous impact on how images are produced and circulated.²⁰ New technologies allowed one’s face, dress, posture and appearance to be seen through television monitors. Unlike Alexander the Great’s image on coins, the Renaissance

¹⁵ Braudy, Leo. (1986, 1997), 586.

¹⁶ Braudy notes ‘with the rise of Washington and later Napoleon, that personal virtue became transformed into the star, the destiny, that singles out the most extreme aspirations’. Braudy, Leo. (1986, 1997), 586.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 595.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 588.

¹⁹ Marshall, David. (1997).

²⁰ Walker, John. (2003), 193.

had paintings and engraved portraits that represented the fame and the greatness of a person; in the modern age, the fame culture and celebrity culture are inseparable from mass media and consumer culture. Also, as Braudy points out, “as each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified and the number of individuals celebrated expands”.²¹

The Production of Celebrity in the West

When the new inventions of technology started to make impacts on people’s lives and constructed new ways of how images of the famous were produced and displayed in media channels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the establishment of the film industry, Hollywood studio system, began to mass produce the fame and construct film stars.²² Scholar Richard deCordova traces the concept of star representations that emerged in the early 20th century in three key stages: the discourses on acting (circa 1907), the emergence of the idea of ‘picture personality’ (circa 1909), and the development of the star (circa 1914).²³ Such star discourses started to focus largely on the film industry and those actors and actresses played in the films.²⁴

The post-Second World War period was a significant time of change in social values as the visual mass media engaged even more closely with the technological developments of consumer culture and related activities.²⁵ As early as 1944, Leo Lowenthal pointed out a significant change in the function of celebrities. Lowenthal proposed that there was a transformation of public interest from the traditional role

²¹ Braudy, Leo. (1986, 1997), 4.

²² Redmond, Sean and Su Holmes, ‘Fame—Remember my name?: Histories of Stardom and Celebrity: Introduction’ in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*. ed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 127.

²³ DeCordova, Richard. ‘The emergence of the Star System in America’ in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*. ed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 132-40.

²⁴ Gamson, Joshua. ‘The Assembly Line of Greatness: Celebrity in Twentieth-Century America’, ed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*. (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 143.

²⁵ Lowenthal, Leo. ‘The Triumph of Mass Idols’ (1944), *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 109-40.

of the hero—focusing on the hero’s triumph in society, politics or economic life—to the celebrity’s personal interests and daily life. Lowenthal described this as a shift in focus from ‘idols of production’, referring to heroes such as military leaders, politicians and leaders of industry, to ‘idols of consumption’, referring to magazine heroes and almost every one of them related directly or indirectly to the sphere of leisure.²⁶ Lowenthal’s analysis suggested that the constitution of the modern celebrity marked a shift in social values, with the growth of public power exercised through consumption. Indeed, the relocation of the celebrity identified by Lowenthal, linked to the modern power structures of consumption and the focus on individuality, is a very significant moment in the early relationship between celebrity and consumerism. However, this thesis suggests that such a shift in social values and the emergence of ‘idols of consumption’ have to be discussed with reference to their different cultural and social backgrounds. In the context of Taiwan, although the Second World War had ended, this was still a turbulent era when Taiwan was returned to China after Japanese colonialism, resulting in the implementation of martial law in 1949. As discussed in chapter one, this was a period of extensive political repression of both society and the mass media, and ordinary people and professionals had no freedom for individual expression. Nevertheless, despite the repressive social and political environment, ‘idols of consumption’ such as singers and film stars were promoted by the music and film industries to encourage popular consumption of entertainment. A key difference from the Western phenomenon of the same period, however, was that although changes in styles of consumption were influencing changes in Taiwan’s social structure, the themes of these movie stories and song lyrics and the representation of the stars associated with them were

²⁶ Ibid., 115.

Leo Lowenthal used the content analysis of biographies and compared biographies written in the very early part of the century to those written during and after World War One. Lowenthal pointed out that not only was there a tremendous increase in biographies as time went on (the average figure of biographies in 1941 is almost four times as high as at the beginning of the century), but the focus of the subjects of the biographies had transferred from the spheres of political life before World War I to that of entertainment after the war (Table 4-2. Lowenthal: 1961, 111).

The table ‘Distribution of biographies according to professions in *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier’s* for selected years between 1901 and 1941’ was analysed with the subjects of the biographies in three groups: the spheres of political life, of business and professions, and of entertainment. From the table it can be found that for the time before World War I, there was very high interest in political figures, and an almost equal distribution of business and professional men on the one hand and of entertainers on the other. This changed completely after the war. The figures from political life have been cut by 40 percent (Lowenthal: 1961, 111).

carefully manipulated by political forces, instead of by the market and audience interests. For example, the title and lyrics of the song ‘Thinking of Home’ (*Sinian guxiang*) were soon changed in order to avoid political sensitivity after the original lyricist was executed in the 1950s for his ideological transgressions.²⁷

In Lowenthal’s analysis, public forces and the change of life style in consumption constructed the modern celebrity in the post-1940s; hence the concepts of market and audience emerge as important perspectives in the early phase of celebrity construction. Although Lowenthal’s analyses were based on magazine studies, he did not analyse the power of mass media in more general terms at the time. In the later publication *International Celebrity Register* (1959) Cleveland Amory pointed to the significance of mass media in celebrity formation by analysing the documentation of lists of celebrity figures and their performances. Amory proposed an early definition in which he described celebrities as ‘the names’ that, “once made by news, now make news by themselves”.²⁸ This early definition revealed that even the news of celebrity was something that could be ‘made’ and ‘constructed’. This idea was further developed by American writer Daniel Boorstin who examined the significance of mass media in celebrity construction as a cultural moment tied to the invention of new technologies. Boorstin proposed the concept ‘pseudo-event’ to describe the move away from an actual event (that happens naturally) to an event planned and staged entirely for and even by the media, which accrued significance through the scale of its media coverage rather than through any more disinterested assessment of its importance.²⁹

²⁷ ‘Talking about songs that were banned in the martial law period’. http://moonformosa.blogspot.com/2007/12/blog-post_02.html. Accessed 10 March 2011.

²⁸ Amory, Cleveland. ed-in-chief., *International Celebrity Register*. (U.S. edition, 1959). This particular book documented celebrity figures and their performances at the time.

²⁹ Boorstin, Daniel J.. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1961, 1992), 12.

A ‘pseudo-event’, by Boorstin’s notion, possessed and was perceived to have the following characteristics,

- “(1) It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted, or incited it.
- (2) It is planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced.... Its success is measured by how widely it is reported....
- (3) Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous....
- (4) Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Boorstin's concept of 'pseudo-event' was generated in the context of two influential aspects. The first was the broader influence of what he named the 'Graphic Revolution',³⁰ which changed society into a mediatised world. This included shifts in news gathering and reporting, the construction of celebrity, changes in forms of transportation, the interdissolving forms of literature, art and drama, and alterations in the perception and conception of images. With the impact of technological and ideological changes, Boorstin points out that

since the Graphic Revolution, much of our thinking about human greatness has changed. Two centuries ago, when a great man appeared, people looked for God's purpose in him; today we look for his press agent.³¹

Boorstin's emphasis on the construction of celebrity through mass media in the mid 20th century is particularly important to this thesis because it conceives fame as a product of media fabrication: "The Graphic Revolution suddenly gave us, among other things, the means of fabricating well-knownness".³² This was a symptom of cultural change facilitated by technological inventions. In addition to this, the second influential aspect was the importance of the market- and audience-driven forces, as well as the interests in the 'inside dope' of celebrities' personal lives that triggered the construction of 'pseudo-events'. In this case, if a report or story of a celebrity's life was not interesting enough to attract the public's attention, the reporter was responsible for creating one.³³ The deliberate set-up of a 'pseudo-event' to attract further media reports and generate audience attentions marked the inauthentic

³⁰ The 'Graphic Revolution', in Boorstin's terms, meant "man's ability to make, preserve, transmit, and disseminate precise images – images of print, of men and landscapes and events, of the voices of men and mobs – now grew at a fantastic pace" (1962:13). The transformation that was mentioned by Boorstin included some vital inventions and wider use of technology such as dry-plate photography, which came in 1873; the phonograph was invented in 1877; the roll film appeared in 1884; Eastman's Kodak No. 1 was produced in 1888; motion pictures came in and voice was first transmitted by radio around 1900; television became commercially important in 1941, and colour television even more lately, etc. These inventions not only made a great impact on the news transmission, transformed the ways of news reporting via telegraph, which was used in the 1830s and 1840s, to a wider range of technologies, but also brought the age of news reporting to 'news making'. Information from, *ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

This discourse around the concept of celebrity was established in contrast with what people normally called the hero in the past, who was known as the immortal character. "The hero was distinguished by his achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark. The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name." (*Ibid.*, 61)

³² *Ibid.*, 47.

³³ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

characteristic of the event, which was later pointed out by Graeme Turner as “a culture impelled by its fascination with the image, the simulation, and losing its grounding in substance or reality”.³⁴

The contemporary meaning and production of ‘reality’ are examined in the works *Simulation* (1983) and *Simulacra and Simulation* (1996) by Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard goes so far as to claim that our society has replaced reality and meaning with signs. These signs of our reality are not to be seen as unreal, but rather as a ‘simulacrum’. For Baudrillard, “it is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle”.³⁵ In this case, what we experience in society is a simulation of reality constructed through signs and imageries, but which are experienced as an accurate rendering of the reality of our current situation.

The concept ‘pseudo-event’ therefore can be associated with Baudrillard’s notion of simulacrum which challenges the distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’.³⁶ According to Boorstin, “The news they make happen, the events they create, are somehow not quite real”.³⁷ However, the ‘true’ symptoms that the ‘pseudo-event’ manifests allow it to make ‘real’ effects on society and audiences, as well as on individuals in ‘human pseudo-events’.³⁸ Nonetheless, when Boorstin talks about the ‘pseudo-event’, the question ‘is it real?’ is less important than ‘is it newsworthy?’. This is because ‘the real’ is supplanted by the event’s media success, which is measured by how widely the event is reported.³⁹

Boorstin’s notion of the ‘pseudo-event’ and ‘human pseudo-event’ has been very influential in my understanding of celebrities and their publicity as purposely

³⁴ Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 5.

³⁵ Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*, ed., Sheila Faria Glaser, (United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 13.

³⁶ Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*. ed., Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman. (New York, Brooklyn: Semiotext[e], 1983), 5.

³⁷ Boorstin, Daniel J. (1961, 1992), 11.

³⁸ For Boorstin, celebrity is the human equivalent of a ‘pseudo-event’, which is the ‘human pseudo-event’ fabricated for the media and evaluated in terms of the scale of effectiveness of the media visibility. Boorstin (1969, 1992), 57.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

set-up events for media exposure and audience attentions. However, the concept has limited value in that it sets up a boundary between the pseudo and the real. In contemporary society the events Boorstin calls ‘pseudo-events’ are widely known as ‘publicity events’ and although they are pre-planned and framed, their happenings are real in that they have real impacts on the public and society. The distinction between them as staged events and another ‘reality’ is, as Baudrillard argued, neither visible or experienced. In this case, the examination of the ‘real’ impacts are much more important than deciding whether the events are ‘authentic’ or not. Additionally, the success of an event is not merely measured by how widely it is reported, but also by the influence achieved. Although Boorstin has suggested the importance of the ‘Graphic Revolution’ and the invention of media technologies, his analysis lacks consideration of the social, cultural and economic forces explaining the construction of ‘pseudo-event’. With reference to Taiwan, for example, political interests made significant interventions in media technology during the martial law period. The manipulation and production of news was mainly for propaganda use to promote the dominant official political ideology. Lastly, Boorstin also presumes the role of the mass media as rather passive—once a news event is staged purposely for reportage, the mass media becomes a passive recipient and reporter of relevant information. However, in contemporary society, while many of the media channels are commercialised and developed into corporations, the mass media is far from passive. Journalists look for materials they feel will appeal to their readership, and through the editing process, their reports are not merely a reflection of they have been told or what they have seen. The mass media today has an active and manipulative role in the search for interesting and fresh topics. Moreover, this role is also manipulated to promote the interests of business and politics and influence the cultivation of taste, as I show in the case studies that follow.

In this thesis, I propose that the ‘publicity event’⁴⁰ is a more appropriate term to describe a contemporary media event as a purposely set-up appeal to mass media reportage. Such events are constructed to provide material for media interests, such as the presence of attractive celebrities and new products. In the field of art, these

⁴⁰ The term ‘publicity event’ is also used by Walker to describe the annual award ceremony of Turner Prize, through the attendance of which event the individual is able to infest the media.

celebrity figures may be artists, curators and gallerists, and the products are the art works they produce, sell and display. In contemporary examples, press conferences and photo opportunities can be considered as forms of ‘publicity events’. These events, all parts of the process of celebritisation, are frequently used in planning marketing strategies by various institutions and businesses. Events are set up to deliver and circulate artistic information and images to audiences, and as this thesis argues, have profound effects on the artists, artworks, art institutions and businesses involved.

In contrast to Boorstin who emphasised celebrity from the view of media construction, Richard Dyer’s influential work *Star* (1979) examines the manifestation of ‘stars,’ a term which, as I have already noted, has often been used in the field of film, especially Hollywood films. Dyer explores stars in the realm of representation and ideology and proposes that stars may be understood as ‘signs’, read as ‘texts’ and ‘images’, and investigated using the tools of semiotics.⁴¹ He takes on Francesco Alberoni (1962)⁴² and Barry King’s (1974)⁴³ idea about the preconditions for the star phenomenon. In particular, he draws attention to

⁴¹ Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. (London: British Film Institution, 1979, 1998).

⁴² Alberoni’s (1962) suggestions on the basic conditions for the star phenomenon:

- a state of law
- an efficient bureaucracy
- a structural social system
- a large-scale society (stars cannot know everyone, but everyone can know stars)
- economic development above subsistence (though this need not be very great development – cf. film stars in India)
- social mobility (anyone, in principle, may become a star).

Alberoni, Francesco. (1962) ‘The Powerless Elite: Theory and Sociological Research on the Phenomenon of the Stars’, *Sociology of Mass Communication*, (London: Penguin, 1972), 75-98.

⁴³ King’s (1974) own preconditions for stardom:

- production of surplus (i.e. commodities in excess of basic material needs)
- development of a technology of mass communication
- extensive penetration of the cultural sphere by industrialisation which leads to a separation between a system of action committed to instrumental goals (utilitarian and predominant) and a system of action committed to expressive goals (moralistic and subordinate)
- rigid separation of work and leisure: division of role structure between expressive and instrumental roles
- decline of local cultures and the development of a mass level of culture, transformation from specific to universalistic modes of evaluation
- organisation of the motion picture industry around commodity production and the progress centralisation of control over production
- a relative increase in social mobility into an expressive role position unconnected with sacred institutions (which in feudal society constitute centres of power).

Barry, King. ‘The Social Significance of Stardom’. (Unpublished Manuscript. 1974.)

Alberoni's focus on the structural conditions and social mobility; and King's emphasis on the production of a surplus, rigid separation of work and leisure, the development of a mass level of culture and a relative increase in social mobility. This begins with an examination on the idea of 'production: consumption', that is, why stars arise on the basis of the preconditions. Dyer points out that,

stars have a privileged position in the definition of social roles and types, and this must have real consequences in terms of how people believe they can and should behave.⁴⁴

This is one of the key points of celebrity studies in contemporary society, where a celebrity constructs a particular type of image that exercises power through the production of social types. One can observe the manifestations of this in the imitation of clothes, everyday products, behaviours and other social habits of the public that are associated with celebrities and their privileged position. I follow this point up in the next section.

Dyer's work also proposes that stars articulate ideas about personhood and individualism in capitalist society in themes that are the focus of his other book *Heavenly Bodies: Film stars and society* (1986). In this, he comments that "the star phenomenon consists of everything that is publicly available about stars".⁴⁵ In pointing this out, Dyer expands the definition of the celebrity/star mechanism. A film's star image means not only the on-screen presentation, but also the promotion of films and stars through pin-ups, public appearances, studio hand-outs and so on, as well as interviews, biographies and coverage in the press of the star's doings and 'private' life. This not only echoes Boorstin's idea of 'image-making', but also strengthens and extends the 'on-stage' and 'purposely set-up' media events to aspects of private life. This idea allows every trait and behaviour of a star/celebrity life, both on-stage and off, to potentially become components in the construction of fame.

Along with his claims that on-stage performances and the private life of star/celebrity are equally important, Dyer also points out that an individual star is

⁴⁴ Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. (1979, 1998), 8.

⁴⁵ Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987), 2.

more than just a lifeless commodity. In fact, it is stars' passions, struggles and experiences that enable their celebrity image-making potential; and in this way they establish a very active commodity form.⁴⁶ This is a crucial point for this thesis as it indicates the process of commodification of human beings, in which every characteristic and presentation of a star/celebrity can be channelled forwards into various consumable products. Celebrities' commodity status is closely connected with the rise of paparazzi and tabloid newspapers⁴⁷ which have had a great interest in mining the private stories of celebrities.⁴⁸ In Taiwan, the newspaper *Apple Daily*, discussed in chapter one, exemplifies attempts to dig out, create and commodify celebrities' inside stories and off-screen images in order to increase the paper's sales. Newspaper, paparazzi and celebrity thus meet in a relationship of mutual advantage. If a star/celebrity has no shocking private story, he/she might gradually fade out from the spotlight; or otherwise the press agent or media reports will have to make one up to attract or sustain the audience's interests.

Richard Dyer's theorizations offer a coherent frame for the arguments of this thesis. He takes a different approach from the previous concerns of celebrity by arguing that stars/celebrities are not merely significant while they are on-stage or in films, but rather as a combination of a celebrity's performances/achievements, private stories, media focus, public interests and commercial values. These elements depict the essential points of contemporary celebrity and highlight their social and economic importance. This thesis takes Dyer's concepts—of social types, individualism and celebrity as commodity—as basic positions for understanding the significance of celebrity and celebrity art in contemporary Taiwanese society. Furthermore, these concepts will serve as guidelines in my analysis of individual celebrity artists and their works, their power and their relationship with the public and the industries/business that construct them as celebrities.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Paparazzi is an Italian term originating in the 1960 film *La dolce vita* directed by Federico Fellini.

The Origin of the term tabloid derived from the late 19th century. It was originally the proprietary name of a medicine sold in tablets, the term came to denote any small medicinal tablet; the current sense reflects the notion of 'concentrated, easily assimilable'. The term was used in journalism in the early 20th century, referring to the smaller sheet newspapers. Information from, Oxford Dictionaries: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Along with the importance of media to commodity sales, sociologist Joshua Gamson claims that the production of celebrity status requires two different forms of fame. One is that fame is deserved and earned in relation to achievement and quality; the other is the publicity apparatus itself becomes a central plot element in fame construction.⁴⁹ Gamson's notion of the publicity apparatus in the construction of fame is a step further than Boorstin's idea of 'pseudo-event' in that it moves further into the function the media industry plays in celebrity construction. In contrast to more 'traditional' views that artistic legitimacy was accumulated through achievements, innovative ideas, having artworks display in prestigious museums/galleries and through high auction prices, Gamson's argument informs us that in contemporary mediated society, where large numbers of artistic images can be displayed and circulated via the publicity apparatus, fame itself has become a channel to construct another form of legitimacy for artists and art works. In this thesis, I draw on Gamson's analysis to engage both forms of fame in the examination of the diversified ways that celebrity is constructed in the current art field.

Gamson's ideas about how celebrities are processed share common ground with Chris Rojek's concept of celebrity status which Rojek argues comes in three forms. Firstly, 'achieve celebrity', derives from the perceived accomplishments of the individual in open competition, which in the public realm are recognised as individuals who possess rare talents or skills.⁵⁰ This form of 'achieve celebrity' is very similar to the first type of fame construction that Gamson proposes—gaining fame through achievement. Secondly, 'attributed celebrity' is "largely the result of the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries",⁵¹ which echoes Gamson's notion of celebrities as constructed through publicity apparatus. The last category of celebrity that Rojek points out is the 'ascribe celebrity', which sees celebrity as a kind of lineage status

⁴⁹ Gamson, Joshua. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ Rojek, Chris. (2001), 16.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

that follows blood-lines,⁵² as seen in the contemporary examples of Britain's or Japan's royal families.

Alongside these three categories, Rojek coins the term 'celetoid' from the media-generated attributes of celebrity.⁵³ The 'celetoid' refers to the celebrity figure who is the result of the expansion of media enterprises, such as Monica Lewinsky. For Rojek, "celetoids are the accessories of cultures organised around mass communication and staged authenticity".⁵⁴ He distinguishes celetoids from the other celebrities because, "generally, the latter enjoy a more durable career with the public",⁵⁵ even though as Rojek also points out, the character of celebrity as opposed to fame is often fleeting.⁵⁶ This point reflects the rise of purely media constructed celebrities, such as lottery winners, one-hit wonders, stalkers, sports streakers, have-a-go heroes, mistresses of public figures and various other social types who "command media attention one day, and are forgotten the next".⁵⁷ This type of celebrity roughly corresponds to what James Monaco labels as a 'quasar',⁵⁸ and what Graeme Turner calls an 'accidental celebrity', referring to the person who has become "the focus of attention initially through no fault of their own, and through a process over which they can have very little control".⁵⁹

The terms 'quasar' or 'accidental celebrity' refer to the specific mechanisms (or process) of how one acquires fame in the first place. In the case studies that follow, this particular process of fame emergence can be seen in the examples of

⁵² Ibid., 16.

⁵³ Ibid., 18.

Chris Rojek explains that, "it is in the nature of celetoids to receive their moment of fame and then to disappear from public consciousness quite rapidly." (p.21)

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18-20.

⁵⁶ Rojek, Chris. (2001), 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ Monaco, James. *Celebrity: the media as image makers*, (New York: Delta, 1978).

The other two categories of celebrity that Monaco set up are the 'hero' and the 'star'. For 'hero', he means someone who has actually done something spectacular to attract attention in the first place; and 'star' is the category who achieves prominence through the development of a public persona that is more important than their professional profiles.

⁵⁹ Turner, Graeme. (2004), 21.

artists Lee Ming-sheng and Chu Cha-ray who end up as the focus of media attention due to their personas and the occasions in which they are involved. Although particular media mechanisms enabled them to become celebrities, the media cannot guarantee the duration or sustainability of this status. Continuity of their celebrity status might have to be supported by other media or commercial interests, depending on circumstance and need.

The other recent mechanism of the celebrity phenomenon is the rise of reality TV shows, through which constant media exposure celebritise ordinary people, who then become products of the publicity apparatus. Such reality TV shows have become increasingly significant beginning with the series *Big Brother*, first broadcast in 1999 in the Netherlands.⁶⁰ In 2000 in the UK, an ex-editor of *Heat* magazine, Mark Firth, described his personal experience of engaging with this new form of ‘celebrity’ produced by such shows and its impact on popular culture and existing celebrity mechanisms:

It seems the weirdest thing—I get that the show’s [*Big Brother*] huge but here’s someone—an ordinary guy who’s been locked in a house for a few weeks—who’s not really a celebrity at all, but he is on our cover. Well, he is a celebrity, sort of. But he’s not a film star and he doesn’t make records ... First rule of celebrity magazine: put a celebrity on the cover, stupid!⁶¹

What Mark Firth describes here is an indication of a cultural transition in the production of celebrity, driven by various forces including commercial exploitation, individuals’ desire for fame and audience power. The rise of reality TV shows represents a new social value and public power that has gained scholarly attention.⁶² To engage with such a new representation of culture Graeme Turner coins the term ‘the demotic turn’ as a means of examining what he argues is “a significant new

⁶⁰ Hill, Annette. *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2005).

⁶¹ Firth, Mark. *The Celeb Diaries*, (Reading: Ebury Press. 2009), 42.

⁶² Articles and books include Su Holmes and Sean Redmond in their edited book *Framing Celebrity: New Direction in Celebrity Culture* (2006) and *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader* (2007), David Marshall in *New Media Culture* (2004), Graeme Turner in *Understanding Celebrity* (2004) and *Ordinary People* (2010), all include the discussions and essays on reality TV as part of, or a focus of, the examinations in contemporary celebrity constructions.

development in how the media participates in the production of culture”.⁶³ By deploying the concept of ‘the demotic turn’, Turner hopes to describe “an alternative, less pejorative and more productive, way of understanding some of the shift in content and participation often noticed in critique of the tabloid.”⁶⁴ He suggests that the focus is not primarily on the content of media texts or the taste-based cultures tied to how they are marketed. Rather, it is on an examination of the signs of a fundamental shift in the media’s cultural function.⁶⁵ In acknowledging the social and cultural impacts of the new fame mechanism in contemporary society, Turner’s recent books, *Understanding Celebrity* (2004) and *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn* (2010), analyse the social functions of celebrity, the economy of celebrity, the production of ordinary identities, and the construction of cultural identities connected to the new rise of technological forms such as YouTube in constructing and accessing celebrities. These areas are significant for my arguments in this thesis and will be addressed in the following chapters as ways of understanding the constructions and the impacts of celebrity art and artists.

In fact, in recent years, the spread of celebrity culture has become an even more prevalent public phenomenon; celebrity content has become fundamental to the news media in the twenty first century.⁶⁶ Graeme Turner describes the rising tide of the celebrity by saying that,

from mass market to nightly television programmes to on-line editions of newspapers, celebrity news has proved its capacity to attract attention and to drive consumption.⁶⁷

In response to this, many scholars of cultural and media studies have been giving increasing attention to the significant cultural impact of celebrity on contemporary mediated society. Numerous books, journals, essays and academic readers explore their concerns from different perspectives. One example of such attention is the

⁶³ Turner, Graeme. (2004), 83; and Turner, Graeme. *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2010), 6.

⁶⁴ Turner, Graeme. (2010), 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁶⁶ Turner, Graeme. ‘Approaching celebrity studies’. *Celebrity Studies*. (1:1, March 2010), 11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

journal *Celebrity Studies*, which was launched in March 2010.⁶⁸ This journal is an effect of the widespread phenomenon of celebrity in our society today, and is dedicated to, as the editor Su Holmes put it, to

the critical exploration of celebrity; it will seek to make sense of celebrity by drawing upon a range of (inter)disciplinary approaches, media forms, historical periods and national context; and it will address key issues in the production, circulation and consumption of celebrity both historical and more contemporary lenses.⁶⁹

Holmes's points indicate that the study of celebrity today should be approached from different contexts and perspectives, including the 'production, circulation and consumption' of celebrity are in relation to different aspects of celebrity studies, including the mechanisms of construction, how images and texts are produced and circulated in contemporary society, how it is related to the contemporary style of consumption, and what social and cultural impacts are made upon society. These issues are the urgent concerns in celebrity studies today, and are also the concerns of this thesis in the context of the art scene in Taiwan. The analysis in this thesis also reflects the 'interdisciplinary approach' suggested by Holmes.

Furthermore, in the same journal publication, Graeme Turner contributes his idea of how the field of celebrity studies should be further studied. He points out a significant gap in celebrity studies, which is the need to establish a stronger base for study of the industrial production of celebrity.⁷⁰ Turner proposes two angles from which it can be addressed:

The first would examine the structural effect of celebrity upon production in the globalising media and entertainment industries. While any approaches would need to be aware of and responsive to local and national production environments, the primary target for this first set of examinations would be to understand the roles played by transnational organisations.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Celebrity Studies* launched its first issue in March 2010 and aims to publish three issues per year.

⁶⁹ Holmes, Su and Sean Redmond. 'A Journal in *Celebrity Studies*', *Celebrity Studies*. (1:1, March 2010), 1.

⁷⁰ Turner, Graeme. 'Approaching celebrity studies'. *Celebrity Studies*. (1:1, March 2010), 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

Turner clearly explains that these approaches would not only include the usual media and entertainment interests, but also “the large advertising and promotional interests involved in, for instance, the promotion of celebrity properties as a component in the development of transnational branding”.⁷² Turner indicates that the construction of celebrity is beyond the mere interests of media and entertainment, but is involved in a broader process of economic and social forces driven by corporations and their interests in image constructions. This point is crucial for this thesis because it looks at how celebrity art and artists are constructed and utilised by corporations, and agrees that corporate interests are one of the main forces that leads to the prevalence of celebrity art and artists today.

Turner also points to a gap in celebrity studies which

could interest itself in the process and practices through which celebrity is produced and marketed in particular local and national regions and markets in order to pick up the different levels at which the production of celebrity articulates with varying patterns of media regulation, production, distribution, and consumption, as well as understanding the regimes of professional practices, that determined how these organisations operate.⁷³

Turner’s suggestion reminds us of the importance of studying celebrity construction within a specific regional context in relation to its specific media industry and market. This is taken up in this thesis through its location of the production of celebrity art and artists within the commercial conditions and cultural environment of Taiwan.

The Ideological and Social Functions of Celebrity

Graeme Turner’s essay ‘Approaching Celebrity Studies’ published in the first issue of the journal *Celebrity Studies*, questions the issue of what makes celebrity as a social or cultural formation. Turner also suggests that this question offers a direction for further research and that should be placed at the heart of celebrity studies.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid., 15.

⁷³ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁴ Turner, Graeme. (March 2010), 11-20.

Beyond the commercial utilization (the economic value of celebrity will be discussed in the next section), the social and cultural issues of the effects celebrity has on audiences, how audiences identify themselves with celebrities as an aspect of the ideological power of the celebrity, and the social and cultural significance of celebrity at a particular moment will be discussed in the following section.

Richard Dyer's 1979 notion of 'stars as types' was based on Orrin E. Klapp's work of 1962, which defined social types as "a collective norm of role behaviour formed and used by this group: an idealised concept of how people are expect to be or to act".⁷⁵ Drawing on this definition, Dyer recognised that social types are ideological expressions of dominant systems of beliefs.

Ideology is the set of ideas and representations in which people collectively make sense of the world and the society in which they live. It is important to distinguish between ideology in general and ideology in particular. Ideology is a characteristic of all human societies, but a given ideology is specific to a particular culture at a particular moment in its history. All ideologies are developed in relation to the concrete, material circumstances of human life—they are the means by which knowledge is made out of those circumstances.⁷⁶

Stars' images displayed in films and other media texts are embodied with meanings and effects that exist in specific ideologies and their social values are read by audiences who, through the act of interpreting the star signs, identify themselves with specific ideological representations. Dyer also points out that audience interpretations vary according to their relationships with different social groups, so that 'the concern of such textual analysis is then not to determine the correct meaning and affect, but rather to determine what meanings and affects can legitimately be read in them.'⁷⁷ Members of different classes, genders or races read stars' images in multiple ways in relation to their positions in society. The formation of stars as types is further elaborated in the Dyer's other book *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, where he explains:

Stars present typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally,

⁷⁵ Klapp, Orrin E.. *Heroes, Villains and Fools*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 11.

⁷⁶ Dyer, Richard. (1979, 1998), 2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

historically constructed... Stars are also embodiments of the social categories in which people are placed and through which they have make sense of their lives, and indeed through which we make our lives—categories of class, gender, ethnicity religion, sexual orientation, and so on.⁷⁸

While the social types function ideologically, members of society identify with or identity themselves through the invisible forces of categorization and identification these types represent. Dyer's claims can also be seen in some of the examples in this thesis that, beyond the field of film studies, celebrity artists are also embedded in and represent certain social values that categorize them into different social groups. Unlike film stars whose categories of identification processes are made through the roles that they play in films and other media texts, the ideological values that celebrity artists represent can come from either their specific personas or achievement that are recognised by mass media or corporations. These entities then package the value, the personas, the art works and artists into a 'celebrity-commodity', and are consumed by the audience.⁷⁹ The examples of artist Chu Charay in chapter four, Cai Guoqiang in chapter five and the initiatives of the VT Artsalon (chapter seven) all provide particular channels for the public to identify themselves with different sets of values and taste.⁸⁰

Richard Dyer's works are instrumental in dealing with the connection between audience and constructed star images, and hence provide valuable insights into the meaning of celebrity. Extending Dyer's analysis, David Marshall in *Celebrity and Power* looks at how the field of power is articulated through celebrities.⁸¹ Unlike Richard Dyer whose studies remain in the context of film

⁷⁸ Dyer, Richard. (1987), 17-18.

⁷⁹ Turner, Graeme, Frances Bonner, P. David Marshall. *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2000), 13.

⁸⁰ Chris Rojek points out that, "[t]aste is, of course, pivotal in celebrity culture", and further explains, "[t]aste became a mark of recognition in which individuals acknowledged solidarity in regard to specific cultural mores and values".

In the case study of the VT Artsalon group, the thesis will look into the notion of 'taste' and 'taste culture'. However, the thesis will argue that, the 'taste culture' contributed by the VT Artsalon, instead of tightening to the celebrity status of the VT Artsalon group, it is constructed through both high art and popular culture that take place in the salon. This argument will be made on the basis of Herbert J. Gans's observation in popular culture and high culture.

⁸¹ Marshall, David. (1997), Preface.

industry stars, Marshall's discussions focus on overtly public individuals who are called celebrities. Marshall analyses Dyer's works and takes on board three important points as bases for developing his own arguments. Firstly, the celebrity is the epitome of the individual for identification and idealization in society. Secondly, the celebrity is not wholly determined by the culture industries and is therefore somewhat created and constructed through a negotiation with an audience's reading of dominant cultural representations. Thirdly, the celebrity is a commodity, and therefore expresses a form of valorization of the individual and personality that is coherent with capitalism and the associated consumer culture.⁸²

These three points emphasise the power of celebrity and locate celebritisation as a rather higher social function. For Marshall, there is a convergence in the source of power between a political leader and other forms of celebrity, and celebrity is endowed with symbolic meanings and significance for the culture.⁸³ He points out that celebrity status "confers on the person a certain discursive power: within society, the celebrity is a voice above others, a voice that is channelled into the media system as being legitimately significant."⁸⁴ Marshall's perspective shows us that, in order to make celebrity power function significantly in the society, it has to go through channels in media systems that allow audiences to perceive (and consume) their images or signs, then to recognize, identify, and respond to the values and ideologies that celebrities represent.

In further analysis of the power dynamic between constructed celebrity images and audiences, Marshall combined the concept of the subject with that of the audience to form a neologism *audience-subject*, which in fact is what we are attempting to identify within the celebrity sign.⁸⁵ Marshall claims that,

Each celebrity represents a complex form of audience-subjectivity that, when placed within a system of celebrity, provides the ground on which distinctions, differences and oppositions are played out. The celebrity, then, is an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the

⁸² Ibid., 19.

⁸³ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Preface.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 65.

norms of individuality and personality within a culture. The celebrity's strength or power as a discourse on the individual is operationalised only in terms of the power and position of the audience that has allowed it to circulate.⁸⁶

Marshall then attempts to use the concept *audience-subject* to analyse the study of celebrity in different domains of industrial cultural production: film, television and popular music. However, the concept can not only be applied to those areas, but also to others such as sports, business and religion, according to Marshall, which are equally valid for investigation.⁸⁷ To this list I will, of course, add artists.

Through analysing different representatives of celebrities from the three different areas, Marshall is able to produce different identifications for each field. In film celebrity, he argues that the aesthetic and 'larger-than-life' distance is structured primarily to maintain the film industry as the centre of cultural capital accumulation, and the particular development of the aura of the public personality of the film star is part of this general industrial strategy. The formation of television celebrity, in contradistinction, is a form of routine consumption. The stars of television are working toward the construction of a mass and relatively undifferentiated audience. As for the popular music industry, the collective characteristic of their fans is the loyalty that they give to the celebrity. The form of power of the popular music celebrity is demonstrated through the public subjectivity that is demonstrated by the living audience as compared with celebrities in the film or television industries.⁸⁸

Through the analysis of audience-subjectivity in different fields of cultural production, Marshall argues that the public personality or celebrity is "the site of intense work on the meaning of both individuality and collective identity in contemporary culture".⁸⁹ This thesis is informed by this particular point, and therefore when examining the field of celebrity art, I look at the meaning of celebrity artists both as a collective identity and an individuality. While the individuality of each celebrity artist will be analysed in the relevant chapter, their collective identity is

⁸⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 65.

⁸⁸ Marshall, David. (1997), 150.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 241.

briefly discussed here, and will be addressed in a more detailed way in the conclusion of this thesis. Unlike the television star, whose familiarity is constructed in a process closely tied to everyday consumption, the celebrity artist has the tendency to remain in a more distant and elite position. Art celebrities possibly share more with film stars who are constructed at the pinnacle of the celebrity hierarchy due to the intense global circulation of the works in which they are depicted and have little familiarity with their audience on daily basis. Further evidence of this can be seen in the examples of artists Chu Cha-ray, Cai Guoqiang and the VT Artsalon Group, where there is a clear contrast between a sense of distance and familiarity that is consistently played out between the celebrity artists, art works/exhibitions and audiences. The construction of aura and distance that is embodied in the film celebrity category is considered as the form of public subjectivity, which is also manifested to some degree in the celebrity artist. The power of the celebrity artist is partially constructed through the distance between their image, their art and audiences, both for their art and for their media appearances.

This thesis acknowledges both Dyer and Marshall's work on the way that star and celebrity images consolidate and confirm social types for the public. This not only explains how their images construct particular social types for audience identifications, but also how audiences can project their idealizations onto the constructed social types via patterns of consumption. This process enables celebrities to use, or to be used by, cultural experience within specific processes of commodification and commercialisation, a point I examine in the next section.

Besides the construction and representation of social types, contemporary celebrity also generates 'para-social' interactions. According to Chris Rojek,

the term 'para-social interaction' is used to refer to relations of intimacy constructed through the mass-media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings. This is a form of second-order intimacy, since it derives from representations of the person rather than actual physical contact.⁹⁰

The notion of para-social interaction does not only point out that the relationship between celebrity and audience exists in the realm of imaginary, but also reflects the

⁹⁰ Rojek, Chris. (2001), 52.

points made by Dyer and Marshall that, the constructions and representations of celebrity as social types are actually processed through the process of ‘para-social’ interaction, in which they build up a specific form of communication network. Rojek further emphasises that,

in society in which as many as 50 per cent of the population confess to sub-clinical feelings of isolation and loneliness, para-social interaction is a significant aspect of the research for recognition and belonging.⁹¹

Within this form of interaction, “celebrity offers peculiarly powerful affirmations of belonging, recognition and meaning in the midst of the lives of their audience”.⁹² In such an understanding, celebrities are thought to possess the power of God-like qualities and are recognised by those audiences as a contemporary site akin to religion.⁹³ This ‘religious’ quality enables celebrity to exert a symbolic power on their audiences through the promises of spiritual enlightenment, condensing social values and constructing patterns of consumption. Dyer explores this in *Celebrity and Power*. “The term [celebrity] is linked to past power structures (e.g., the church) and now has connotations that link it to the modern power structures (e.g., capitalism).”⁹⁴ The modern power of celebrity and its metaphorical value connect its significances to popular culture and democratic politics in our society today. This can also be seen in the way economic values function in the concept of celebrity.

The Economy of Celebrity

In the above section, I explored how celebrity images construct social types and represent individualism in our society. These characters of contemporary celebrity can not only be seen as social effects, but also as participants in or figures used by the whole process of commercialisation and commodification in popular culture in order to generate profits for both celebrity and the industry. In *Fame Games: The*

⁹¹ Ibid., 52.

⁹² Ibid., 52.

⁹³ Ibid., 53.

⁹⁴ Marshall, David. (1997), 7.

Production of Celebrity in Australia, authors G. Turner, F. Bonner and P. D. Marshall indicate that,

The celebrity's ultimate power is to sell the commodity that is themselves. This fact has been thoroughly integrated into contemporary popular culture and the marketing of the celebrity-as-commodity has been deployed as a major strategy in the commercial construction of social identity... Celebrities are brand names as well as cultural icons or identities; they operate as marketing tools as well as sites where the agency of audience is clearly evident; and they represent the achievement of individualism—the triumph of the human and the familiar—as well as its commodification and commercialisation.⁹⁵

Celebrity's economic value in relation to its social and cultural importance as asserted in *Fame Games* is extremely important for my argument in this thesis, which suggests that the celebrity can make money in two main ways: as cultural workers who are paid for their labour, or as public persona who develop their commercial assets within the logic of a career choice.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, those two ways are not really separate, but rather combine in the production of the economic value of celebrity.

While celebrities are involved in film productions, television programmes or music album productions, their names, images and professions are sold along with the products and are commodified within the whole process of marketing. Nevertheless, the position of this thesis is that when celebrity is involved in any production, the specific characteristics that are embedded in his/her personality are the core parts of the celebrity construction. This point reflects a distinction that Turner makes:

While most part of the celebrity industry would probably prefer to operate like more conventional manufacturing industries, the whole structure of celebrity is built on the construction of the individuated personality.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Turner, Bonner, and Marshall. (2000), 13.

⁹⁶ Turner, Graeme. (2004), 34.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

By 'individuated personality', Turner means that, "a individual star has a highly identifiable, even iconic, physical image, a specific history for the circulation of this image, and accrues psychological and semiotic depth over time." He further explains the importance of this in celebrity construction that,

The individuated personality is very important to every celebrity in that it can be transformed into economic value through cultural productions (i.e. films, albums and advertisement), mass media, agent or even the celebrity him/herself. In the process of marketing the individuated personality, each celebrity is able to identify its exclusive market with the particular social value and type that his/her images constructed within the audience's recognitions.

Nevertheless, there are various degrees of connections between celebrities and the productions in which they participate. While some celebrities wish to be linked tightly to their performances and roles, others might resist to the link. Joshua Gamson suggests that "the performer who wants to increase her marketability as a celebrity persona is also resistant to link to work, preferring personality alone".⁹⁸ Graeme Turner also says that "certain teenage stars of television soap operas, for instance, enjoy a high level of visibility in the US, the UK and Australia (among other locations), but in many cases find that once they leave the serial they are unable to find other work".⁹⁹ He points out that this is because their celebrity status is built on particular roles.¹⁰⁰ However, the resistance to being linked to particular works might not fit the example of the celebrity artist. Due to the fact that art works are personal creations which often represent an individual's artistic creativities and specialities, when artists enter into the realm of fame and celebrity their artworks are tightly connected to them and are also celebritised. In the example of Chu Cha-ray, we will see that the artists' celebrity is constructed upon various elements including the distinctive look of her appearance in media images, and her assertive personality, as well as her artworks. The distinctiveness of these elements allows Chu Cha-ray to sustain her exclusive status as a celebrity artist, in which her personality traits and artworks are associated with certain corporations and publication companies which commodify her images, personality and artworks into profitable products.

"the interests of the individual seeking celebrity are overwhelmingly in favour of pursuing the kind of specificity."

⁹⁸ Gamson, Joshua. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994), 84.

⁹⁹ Turner, Graeme. (2004), 37.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

Once a celebrity has gained high levels of media visibility and is able to generate his/her own following, it is likely that he/she can spin-off into other commercial opportunities by selling his/her images along with specific products. This is widely known as a ‘celebrity endorsement’ where “individuals can become brands in their own right, with enormous commercial potential”.¹⁰¹ Using the example of sport stars, Turner points out that the rise of the celebrity athlete after the 1970s brought together celebrity endorsements with the growth of the ‘fitness chic’, as seen in “the extraordinary rise in the popularity of fitness clubs and the ‘exercise boom’ over the 1990s”.¹⁰² Within this development sport brands start to use sport stars to market their brands and commercial logos. Turner notes that “all of these developments have generated a relatively new intensity to the media’s focus on the appearance, style and personality of the sports star in their behaviour off the track. As a result, athletes too are “celebrated and exploited”.¹⁰³ However, it should also be noted that celebrity endorsement not only refers to the recommendation of product or service. Celebrities can also endorse other celebrities and their works, adding to others’ celebrity acclaim.

This research has observed a similar framework in the realm of celebrity artists in Taiwan. Due to the development of corporate sponsorships in the arts since the late 1980s which I introduced in chapter one, various aspects of art and artists are utilised by corporations and business through sponsorships. Although art and artists gain advantages from being financially supported by businesses to create art works and develop their careers further, the art and artists are used to establish the businesses’ brand names and to reinforce their commercial logos, within the overall scheme of generating further commercial opportunities. Graeme Turner provides some insight on this perspective,

the process of celebritisation is widely seen as transformative but with markedly varying political significance; at one end of the spectrum of opinion, it would be described as a form of enfranchisement and

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁰² Ibid., 39.

Whannel, Gary. *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 129-132.

¹⁰³ Turner, Graeme. (2004), 39-40.

empowerment, but at the other end, as a mode of exploitation or objectification.¹⁰⁴

In the process of the celebritisation of art, the celebrity artist is to different degrees and for different reasons subject to both business utilisation and socio-political empowerment, as I argue in the following chapters.

Art and Celebrity: Western Theoretical Approaches

In their famous essay ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’¹⁰⁵ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer critiqued the connection between art and popular culture. They argued that the products produced by the culture industry such as film, radio and print were similar to the standardised cultural goods produced in factories.

In all its branches [of the culture industry], products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to plan.¹⁰⁶

Adorno and Horkheimer criticised the easy pleasure of safe and standardised cultural products ‘enjoyed’ by the masses on the grounds that they made people docile and complacent. In their views, mass-produced culture not only appealed to the lowest common denominator of public entertainment, but also diminished the aesthetic value of high art. As Adorno put it,

the autonomy of works of art, which of course rarely ever predominated in an entirely pure form, and was always permeated by a constellation of effects, is tendentially eliminated by the culture industry, with or without the conscious will of those in control.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Turner, Graeme. (March 2010), 11-20.

¹⁰⁵ Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer, ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’, *Dialectic of enlightenment: philosophical fragments*. (1944 with Horkheimer) ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Trans. Edmund Jephcott (United States of America: Stanford University Press, English translation: 2002), 94-136.

¹⁰⁶ Adorno, Theodor. ‘Culture Industry Reconsidered’, *The culture industry: selected essays on mass culture*, (London: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

For Adorno, the transformative potential of the realm of high art was limited by the capitalist-drive culture industry and by those searching for “new opportunities for the realization of capital in the most economically developed countries”.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, both Adorno and Horkheimer believed that the culture industry and the various standardised forms of production has had serious and destructive impacts on high art.

Adorno and Horkheimer’s notion of the culture industry was an early critique of capitalist intervention into the realm of art. Simon During reminds us of the specific political and social context of the mid-1940s which led Adorno and Horkheimer to proposed the concept of ‘the culture industry’.

The Second World War had not quite ended, and Adorno and Horkheimer were refugees from Nazi Germany living in the US. Hitler’s totalitarianism (with its state control of cultural production) and the American market system are fused in their thought—all the more easily because, for them as members of German (or rather the secularized German Jewish) bourgeoisie, high culture, particularly drama and music, is a powerful vehicle of civic values.¹⁰⁹

In the previous section on celebrity studies, we saw that in the same period of the Second World War, western societies saw a transformation of social value from the ‘idol of production’ to the ‘idol of consumption’.¹¹⁰ Adorno and Horkheimer certainly sensed this change of social value under the development of capitalism, and in fact, they produced their critique of the culture industry as a way to raise academic and public awareness of this transformation of culture. Nevertheless, they judged this transformation as a negative decline in social and aesthetic values, without recognising the possibility of creativity in the construction of popular aesthetic values within the culture industry as a whole.

Simon During also points out that at the time when the essay was written, “the cultural industry was less variegated than it was to become, during the 1960s in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ During, Simon. ‘Editor’s Introduction’ in ‘Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer: The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1993), 31-41.

¹¹⁰ Lowenthal, Leo. ‘The Triumph of Mass Idols’ (1944), *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 109-40.

particular”.¹¹¹ Today, when the various forms of cultural industry are tightly connected to the construction of popular culture, they do not merely provide leisure activities in people’s daily life, but also contribute to the formation of popular tastes and new aesthetic values. Nevertheless, Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the culture industry continues to be relevant in identifying the crucial leading role capitalist business interests play in formatting the culture industry, and the effect of this in turning art to serve the interests of corporate business and mass consumption against those of critical expression and freedom.

Another effect of the culture industry that Adorno and Horkheimer addressed was the massification and vulgarisation of culture. “For the present the technology of the culture industry confines itself to standardization and mass production and sacrifices what once distinguished the logic of the work that of society”.¹¹² The commodities of the cultural industry demonstrate the same features as other products of mass production: commodification, standardization, and massification, in which cultural products are reduced to one genre targeting one audience. Accordingly, “the spectator must need no thoughts of his own: the product prescribes each reaction, not through any actual coherence—which collapses once exposed to thought—but through signals. Any logical connection presupposing mental capacity is scrupulously avoided”.¹¹³ It is undeniable that with technological developments in motion picture, sound and television in the early twentieth century, the general public started to gain access to the same standardised cultural products as components of their daily leisure activities (always presupposing that they had the financial resources). However, while Adorno and Horkheimer pointed out that the socio-economic and cultural developments of the time signified tendencies towards increasingly unified and uncritical cultural values, this thesis suggests that this is not synonymous with the standardization of audiences’ minds. Firstly, audiences have the power of choice to decide whether they want to consume a particular cultural product or activity. Secondly, with different backgrounds and experiences, and exposed to new cultural tastes, audiences interpret them and are inspired by them in

¹¹¹ During, Simon. (1993), 31-41.

¹¹² Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. (2002), 95.

¹¹³ Ibid., 109.

different and often creative and critical ways. Thirdly, with the increased competition of cultural products and technological inventions, new artistic creativities and advanced technologies are applied in the creative processes, offering audiences more options and improved techniques in the range of cultural products to which they have access. Additionally, creators of cultural products also benefit from the development of the culture industry. The income they make from the consumption of cultural products gives cultural creators greater opportunities to give play to their creativity.

Adorno and Horkheimer criticised the mass-produced, standardised and popularised cultural process as a particular threat to the viability of high art, because the success of the culture industry lay in the inseparability of 'art' and 'life'. Since the concept 'culture industry' was first proposed in the 1940s, the relationship between high art and popular culture has been a prominent and constant theme of debate in academic and media circles. It is a particularly prominent topic in contemporary society with the transformative effects of digital technology on the expression of cultural imagination and creativity. Many artistic ideas are conveyed in new forms of exhibiting styles, such as installations and media arts. Additionally, the forces of capitalism involved in the process of popularising and commodifying art and other cultural products are not merely limited to business interests in profit making, but have broader social, cultural and political implications. These new interventions in the art world are examined by art historian Julian Stallabrass, who also looks at the influences of economic and political forces that operate in the art world since the 1980s post-cold war period.

In his book *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*, Stallabrass proposes that a new world order of art has emerged in the past three decades due to the impact of neoliberalism on the world economic system.¹¹⁴ Free trade had a strong impact on the art world, and the role of art increasingly came to serve corporate and state interests. These interests lay behind the dramatic rise of global biennales alongside new museums and new cities in the 1990s, all of which influenced the way the arts were produced, dissimulated, perceived and consumed. Nevertheless,

¹¹⁴ Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Stallabrass points out the contradictions between the dual interests of corporations and government:

corporations want to use art to assure an attachment to the brand that cannot be purchased by advertising; the state wants to counter the destructive effects of free trade on social cohesion.¹¹⁵

In the previous section of this chapter, ‘The economy of celebrity’, I discussed how businesses use various strategies to engage celebrity as means of reinforcing their brand images. Here the new role of art that emerged in the 1980s, as indicated by Stallabrass, similarly serves the function of developing corporate brands on a global scale. Nonetheless, the progression of this engagement is also due to “the deindustrialization in the West that broke the link between communities that made and brought consumer goods”.¹¹⁶ Under these circumstances, the connections between art and business have gradually moved from occasional charitable sponsorships, to building partnerships with museums or artists in which “the brand of one is linked with the brand of the other is an attempt to inflate both.” Moreover, “they have further turned increasingly to collecting and commissioning art, exhibiting it, and recently even into curating exhibitions held in public venues”.¹¹⁷ Such tight connections between art and businesses, according to Stallabrass, result in

an emphasis on the image of youth, the prevalence of work that reproduces well on magazine pages, and the rise of the celebrity artist; work that cosies up to commodity culture and the fashion industry, and serves as accessible honey pots to sponsors; and a lack of critique, except in defined and controlled circumstances.¹¹⁸

These points, indicative of a strong corporate presence in the arts, are considered in this thesis to be important guidelines in examining the relationship between art and celebrity. Throughout the thesis these concerns will be examined with reference to the individual case studies to interrogate whether or in what way they might be applicable to the dynamics of celebrity art in Taiwan.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 130. This point is originated from Naomi Klein’s book *No Logo* (London: Harper Collins Publishers).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 130-131.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 136.

Nevertheless, Julian Stallabrass sees all of these transformations of art's characteristics and values in the new world order as rather destructive to the realm of art's freedom.

It is easy to see that the conditions for that freedom no longer exist in the art world: artists are snug in the market's lap; works are made to court the public; sufficient autonomy is maintained to identify art as art, but otherwise most styles and subject-matter are indulged in; success generally comes swiftly, or not at all.¹¹⁹

He then concludes the book with a strong statement:

In these circumstances, the plausibility and power of arts freedom are on the wane... Until the wider unfreedom is effaced, the particular freedoms of art run through the fingers like sand.¹²⁰

This thesis agrees with Stallabrass's arguments about the transformation of the new art world order caused by the new economic system after the 1980s, which, stimulated by the dual interests of corporations and the state, have resulted in the commercialisation, commodification and celebritisation of art. However, while Adorno, Horkheimer and Stallabrass concur in the view that the forces of capitalism erode art's critical autonomy, this thesis, in contrast, suggests that art's intersections with public and popular culture are productive rather than destructive of artistic creativity, adding new aesthetic experiences to people's lives and providing popular and accessible ways to engage people's interests in art. The creative effect of art on wider audiences generates a new power of art in public space. Under such circumstances, although art is no longer totally distinct from mundane forms of communication,¹²¹ its 'power and plausibility' exist in social, economic and political domains that alter the definition of art. This aspect of art's new characteristics and power will be discussed throughout this research, with particular reference to celebrity art and artists in the Taiwanese context.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 200.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 200-201.

¹²¹ In Julian Stallabrass book *Art Incorporated*, when he talks about art's autonomy, he makes references to sociologist Niklas Luhmann's idea: "art's exclusive feature is that it uses perceptions, not language, and it thus separated from mundane forms of communication. Its role may be integrated the incommunicable into communications networks of society". Stallabrass, Julian. (2004), 114-124.

Similarly, as I have already noted previously, the celebritisation and commodification process does not merely mean exploitation by business interests, for it is also productive of new social and cultural values. In the realm of art, different cases of the celebritisation and commodification of art and individual artists indicate that alongside their commercial value to business, they also address complex issues of socio-political empowerment embedded in the celebritisation process. The following chapters demonstrate how while the formation of the celebrity artist is clearly influenced by business and commercial interests of big corporations and the mass media, some artists use the celebritisation process to gain a voice to support social innovation.

In addition to the importance of corporate business's economic interests in the formation of celebrity art, celebrity artists often display a strong interest of individual persona as a key component of their art and public profile. This is discussed in another text written by Stallabrass 'Famous for being famous' in *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. Looking at the trajectory of four artists' careers—Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Tracey Emin and Gavin Turk—and their art works, he discusses the close relationship between Emin's works and her artistic persona, Hirst's works and his lifestyle, and raises another example, the contemporary artist-duo of Gilbert and George, in which "persona was all-important, and inseparable from the art in which they appear".¹²² For Gilbert and George, the display of their persona was through a process of self-conscious manipulation fostered by the artists and their dealers.¹²³ Stallabrass's analysis shows how these personalities are imposed on their works through the use of media images, intentionally constructed to add to their fame. In contrast, he also looks into Hume's arts and the absence of personality, suggests that "with Hume and Turk it is variously different as the art work evacuates the self".¹²⁴ Therefore, Stallabrass also comments

¹²² Stallabrass, Julian. 'Famous for being famous' in *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. (London: Verso, 1993), 48.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

that “it is possible to continue making art without an interior life, or without marking out a separation between life and art”.¹²⁵

Another study in the Western concept of celebrity art and artists is John Walker’s 2003 book *Art and Celebrity*, which provides a particularly relevant argument for this thesis. Walker’s analysis is based on previous discussions by Chris Rojek (2001), Leo Brandy (1997), Daniel J. Boorstin (1962), Irving Rein, Philip Kotler and Martin Stoller (1997) and his own earlier work *Art in the Age of Mass Media* (1983), which develops an understanding of the meaning of contemporary celebrity. For Walker, the constitution of contemporary celebrity includes elements of commercial value, an emphasis on beautiful appearances, the construction of pseudo-events, the presence of mass media, charisma, and the representation of social trends and cultural intentions (such as the emergence of young British artists, also known as the yBas, which led to the ‘Cool Britannia’ characteristic of the New Labour cultural policy of the 1990s),¹²⁶ which basically provides a coherent analysis for the celebritisation and commodification issues we have discussed in the above paragraphs.

Walker approaches the topic of art and celebrity in a very broad sense. His discussions are categorised into different thematic categories: celebrities as art collectors and artists, artists depict celebrities, simulation and celebrities, alternative heroes, and art stars. In the specific chapter of ‘Art stars’, Walker proposes fourteen artists as examples, including Jackson Pollock, Francis Bacon, David Hockney, Yoko Ono, Andy Warhol, to more the recent examples of Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. These examples show different displays of personalities and their engagements with the mass media of their times. Besides his evaluations made of individual examples and their artistic careers, Walker reviews the advantages and disadvantages of being celebrity artists. The advantages include: opportunities for travelling around the world; admiration from critics and gallery-goers; high demands for their works; high levels of media interests and publicity; and wealth.¹²⁷ While

¹²⁵ Stallabrass, Julian. ‘Famous for being famous’ in *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. (London: Verso, 1993), 48.

¹²⁶ Walker, John. (2003), 13.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 260.

John Walker sees the advantages mostly in terms of monetary value and publicity opportunities, what is lacking here is the empowerment that enables artist to gain specific social and cultural significance in society, as we have previously discussed. When such artists cross over from their original field of art into celebrity space, they also play with the construction of artist ‘types.’ For instance, Japanese artist Takashi Murakami represents a specific type of artist entrepreneur, as I discuss in the next section.

The advantages analysed by Walker bring out the glamorous side of celebrity life, but there are also many disadvantages. Constant media attention on celebrity artists and their works can lead to the neglect of other artists, and the concentration on personalities and lifestyle means that the value of their artworks is demoted. Artworks that are made by art stars often lack of genuine aesthetic qualities and intellectual complexity because of the influence of money, publicity and the desire to attract the media’s attention and to shock or entertain gallery goers. Living the life of a celebrity and mixing only with other celebrities remove artists from their roots and contacts with ordinary people and this might adversely influence the character of their work. Media pressures can result in the artist’s alienation or self-estrangement. They may face difficulties in obtaining the peace and quiet necessary to make new work. Some artists cannot cope with the pressures of being celebrities and indulge in exhibitionist, anti-social behaviour and resort to consumption of drugs and alcohol. The sudden demand for their works can cause overproduction and poor quality. Finally, Walker suggests that art stars need to develop thick skins because they are likely to become the targets caricatures, jokes or harsh criticism.¹²⁸

Nevertheless, some of the advantages and disadvantages pointed out by Walker demand further analysis since in some cases, artist’s main interests in becoming celebrities often lead them to actively seek media exposure. Artists who produce certain kinds of works that are media-friendly, or that are designed to the mass media and the public—who are not necessarily interested in aesthetic qualities and intellectual complexities—are more likely to obtain celebrity status than those who keep a low profile. This can be seen in the case of celebrity artist Chu Cha-ray,

¹²⁸ Ibid., 260-264.

whose art works, personal characteristics and dress make a particular appeal to the mass media. Although Walker's detailed analysis calls the public's and artists' attention to the advantages and disadvantages of celebrity art, he does not evaluate its greater impacts on social, cultural and economic developments in Western society. Moreover, his analysis of the past and current conditions of celebrity art does not suggest a new theoretical framework for current celebrity art studies.

Celebrity Discourses, Celebritisation and Commercialisation of Art in East Asia

In the East Asian context, the study of stardom and celebrity culture only started to emerge since the late 1970s—very recently compared to Western discourses—and is still relatively limited. This section first aims to explore the various discourses on the emergence of stars and celebrities in the contexts of China and Taiwan, and examines the commercial and political influences shaping the construction of celebrity in the region. Since the relevant discussions emphasis the influence of Japanese popular cultural products in China and Taiwan, it also looks into the influences of cultural products in the region and their effects on the construction of idols and celebrities. The section the looks into the discourses on the recent phenomenon of the celebritisation and commercialisation of art in Taiwan's regional and national context. While as I discuss below, the development of the cultural industries in China and Japan have brought increased popular and commercial attention to art, the distinctive social, economic and political histories of these two countries have, with few exceptions, had limited effects on the celebritisation of art. The following section therefore attempts to provide a brief analysis of the commercialisation and celebritisation of art in the region, drawing on relevant writings on the topic in the East Asian context, and seeks to set out some of the distinctive regional features that intersect with and influence the celebritisation of art in Taiwan.

In the East Asian context, celebrity discourses developed initially with reference to the concept of stardom in the field of film and television studies. Some of the early books published in China include Li Chao and Cai Guangrui's *Chinese and Foreign Stars* (1983) that documented well-known Chinese, Taiwanese,

Japanese and Western film stars, showing the early interests of stars in the Chinese context.¹²⁹ The contents of the book were limited to stars' biographies and performances, and did not provide any critical insights into the processes explaining their rise to fame. Another book, *Grand Sight of Chinese Stars* published in 1991 was also a documentation of the biographies and works of Chinese film and television stars.¹³⁰ Although the book attempted to identify the first female star in China—Wang Hanlun who played the leading role in *A Note on the Orphan Saves His Master* in 1923—and distinguished her from the first actress—Yan Shanshan in *Chuangzi Tests his Wife* in 1913—it did not provide any explanation about the distinction between the two explaining Wang's star status.¹³¹ Besides looking into stars in Mainland China, the book also had a section introducing stars in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but did not analyse their cross-border performances and the different characteristics between the stars in the three places.

In the context of Taiwan, similar to these early discussions about stars in China, early writings mainly focused on individual stars and celebrities in relation to their films and television performances. One of the earliest books, *Film Superstars*¹³² (1971) discussed Western stars and their films, showing the early influence of Western stars in Taiwan. *A Documentation of Chinese Film and Television Celebrities*¹³³ (1982) started to look at the idea of celebrities in Taiwan both in film and television industries. What was significant about this book was that it did not merely focus on the concept of stars, but also consider other well-known figures as 'celebrities'. Thus, not only film actors and actresses were discussed in the book, but also directors and screenwriters. Nevertheless, at this stage, discussion was still limited to individuals' professional achievement. Then, in 1984, a book *Viewing*

¹²⁹ Li, Chao and Cai, Guangrui ed. *Zhongwai Yingxing (Chinese and Foreign Stars)* (Jilin: Jilin Renmin Publishing House, 1983).

¹³⁰ Huang Aiju ed. *Zhongguo mingxing daquan (Grand Sight of Chinese Stars)*. (Shandong: Shandong Youyi Publishing House, 1991)

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹³² Li Youxin. *Yingtian chaoji juxing (Film Superstars)*. (Taipei, Zhiwen Publication, 1971).

¹³³ Huang, ren; Liang, Haiqiang; Dai, Duxing; Xu, Guifeng; Meng, Liping; and Li Nanli (黃仁, 梁海強, 戴獨行, 徐桂峰, 孟莉萍, 李男棣) ed. *Zhongguo dianying dianshi mingren lu (A Documentation of Chinese Film and Television Celebrities 中國電影電視名人錄)* (Taipei: Film's Today Magazine, 1982).

*Stars in New York*¹³⁴ (1984) started to focus on gossip about and personal stories of celebrities, making a shift from praising personalities' achievements to their entertainment value. Such a shift also marked the broader shifts in social values within the wider political and social context of Taiwan's transformation in the 1980s that occurred around the time of the lifting of martial law, and as society gradually opened up (discussed in chapter one).

These studies of stars and celebrities in the 1970s and 1980s were mostly descriptive and did not address the connections between stars, celebrities and the social forces producing them. The Western critical studies into the phenomenon of the production of celebrities in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Daniel Boorstin's and Richard Dyer's, did not yet have any impact on Chinese and Taiwanese studies. Both societies had undergone periods of extreme restraint—in the form of the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) in China, and martial law in Taiwan—and the global flow of information and ideas was extremely limited in both places. (I am unable to access the celebrity discourses produced in Japan at the time due to language restrictions).

In 1999, Zhang Baiqing's book *Chinese Film and Television*¹³⁵ published in China started to contextualize the development of Chinese films and television in relation to their political and historical background. He divided the development of Chinese films into three stages: the initial stage between 1905 and 1948; the tough period between 1949 and 1976; and the exploration period from 1977 until today.¹³⁶ Zhang points out that films produced in the last period were increasingly diversified

¹³⁴ Liu, Qing (劉晴). *Niuyue quanxingji (Viewing Stars in New York 紐約觀星記)*. (Taipei: Minsheng Publishing House, 1984).

¹³⁵ Zhang Baiqing. *Zhongguo dianying, dianshi (Chinese Film and Television)*. (Beijing: Culture and Art Publication, 1999).

¹³⁶ The first stage was the period between 1905 and 1948. It was the initial stage that from merely importing Western films, Chinese films began to have their own shootings and productions. The contents were mainly the reflections of the real life in China at the time. In the 1930s and 1940s, Chinese Communist party started to lead the film production and there were writers and artists joined the film works. Chinese films began to look into its social and related issues. The second stage took place between 1949 and 1976 that Chinese films developed into a tough period. When People's Republic of China was established in 1949, Chinese film entered into a new historical period that new character, thinking, styles and themes were developed in diversifications that the national characteristics were presented in films even more strongly. Nevertheless, between 1966 and 1976 when the Chinese Cultural Revolution took place, all the outstanding film productions were criticised and banned. The third stage from 1977 until today was the exploration period that Chinese films were looking forward to a new age. Information from: Ibid.

in style and content, and directors started to pursue various film languages and different forms of aesthetics. Not only were they rewarded with good market sales, but also received various international awards in global festivals.¹³⁷ Chinese television dramas also started to develop in similarly diverse ways, and film and television became the most popular forms of art and cultural activity in China, attracting with the largest audience numbers. More importantly, many Chinese television dramas started to broadcast in Japan and other South East Asian places.¹³⁸

Zhang's analysis pointed to the development of Chinese actors and directors' fame beyond the national context, but he did not pursue his discussions further into the flow of fame and celebrity in the regional or global contexts, nor did he examine the influences in other parts of East Asia of China's cultural products, such as film and television dramas. This thesis suggests that these issues are important because since the 2000s, television channels in Taiwan started to broadcast Chinese television dramas and through such programmes, Chinese culture and ideology started to be transmitted globally, shaping audiences' understanding of China, but also influencing the construction of stardom and celebrity culture in Taiwan. However, this type of discussion concerning China's political influence in the formation of Taiwan's celebrity culture does not appear until later academic studies published were in Taiwan.

In 2002, *Criticising Chinese Stars*¹³⁹ published in China made an important contribution to Chinese celebrity studies because it was not merely a description of the celebrity phenomenon in China, but also included critical views of different people from the fields of academia, mass media and film production. The book included six topics of discussion representing different types of Chinese celebrity formation. The first looked into Hollywood, and discussed the reasons, benefits and drawbacks for stars and directors who worshiped the Hollywood industry and whose fame was constructed by joining Hollywood productions. The second and third parts respectively discussed the rise and fall of the 'fifth generation' and the 'sixth

¹³⁷ Ibid., 1-5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1-5.

¹³⁹ Jia Zhifang ed. *Zhongguoxing Pipan (Criticising Chinese Stars)*. (Shandong: Shandong Youyi Publishing House, 2002).

generation' of Chinese directors.¹⁴⁰ The fourth part discussed middle-age celebrities' popularity and their television dramas. The fifth part looked into the comic dialogues (*xiangsheng*) specific to Chinese culture, and the last part examined the rise of 'idol drama' (or 'trendy drama', *ouxiang ju*) and evaluated the formation of young idols under the influence of Japanese and Korean popular culture.

The book's two chapters that examine the fame of Chinese film directors demonstrate the strong phenomenon of the celebritisation and commercialisation of Chinese directors in the past two decades. While the book's relevant discussion emphasizes the creativity, the specific film language and the aesthetic that established the personal characteristics of these Chinese directors, they ignored how the directors' fame also emerged from their personal stories and relationships, as for example in the case of Zhang Yimou and Gong Li. Of greater relevance to the discussion of this thesis is the last part of this book that focused on the importation of idol dramas. This gives us some understanding of the mutual influence of popular cultural products in the regional area of Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan, and their impact on the construction of local popular culture and the popularity of regional and national celebrities. The book points out that the rise of the Chinese idol drama had to be analysed in relation to the imports of Japanese and Korean idol dramas, because almost all of them were replications of Japanese idol dramas. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the popularity of Japanese and Korean idol dramas in China caused a big wave of fascination. Not only the drama stories became popular topics of discussion among young people, but Chinese teenagers also imitated the actors' and actresses' fashions. Due to the popularity of Japanese and Korean idol dramas, Chinese television production companies also started to produce their own idol dramas, which constructed a group of young television stars who rose to fame in China, and who shared some similarities with those Japanese and Korean idols, including their youth and good looks.

¹⁴⁰ The 'fifth generation' of the Chinese directors include Zhang Yimou, Jiang Wen, Chen Kaige and Feng Xiaogang; and the 'sixth generation' refers to those young directors who started their film productions in the 1990s, include Wang Xiaoshuai, Lou Ye, Jia Zhangke and others. Information from: Jia Zhifang ed. *Zhongguoxing Pipan (Criticising Chinese Stars)*. (Shandong: Shandong Youyi Publishing House, 2002).

One of the discussants about this topic, Wu Liangzun, an Internet critic, expressed his idea about the cultural influences between the nations in the regional area. He noted that, “In the atmosphere of globalization, there is a natural geographical relationship between China, Japan and Korea, which all locate in East Asian. Thus, while facing the vortex of globalization, the first wave of popular cultural impacts that China is affected is the dominating culture of Japan and Korea.”¹⁴¹ Also, “China has a closer cultural background with Japan and Korea, especially for teenagers, who are all facing the pressure of their educational systems. Thus the mental rebelliousness of teenagers in these places is similar, in that they rebel against their traditional cultural systems. Additionally, due to the intimacy of race and skin colour, their cultures are more easily accepted than European or American cultures”.¹⁴² Such an analysis is also applicable to the context of Taiwan, especially when Japanese idol dramas started to be broadcasted in Taiwan in 1992 and Korean dramas came to Taiwan in 1999, causing big waves of ‘Japanification’ (*‘Hari’*) and ‘Koreanification’ (*‘Hahan’*) (or ‘Korean wave’ (*‘Hanliu’*)).¹⁴³ These waves not only influenced the construction of Taiwanese popular culture, but also the formation of idols and celebrities in Taiwan.

The influence of Japanese popular cultural products in Taiwan is discussed by Li Taindow and He Hweiwen in their essay ‘Beyond Tokyo Rainbow Bridge: The Imaginary Appropriation of Japanese Television Trendy Drama in Taiwan’ (2002).¹⁴⁴ They argue that there are a number of reasons explaining why Japanese cultural products became so popular in Taiwan. Firstly, ‘cultural appropriation’ enables the adoption of some specific elements of Japanese culture to be interpreted by Taiwanese audiences and generate new meanings for them. Secondly, ‘cultural proximity’ enables Japanese idol dramas to provide a sense of cultural familiarity to Taiwanese audiences. Li and He argue that this is the reason why Japanese idol dramas are more popular than Western movie series in Taiwan. Lastly, the popularity

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 241.

¹⁴² Ibid., 241.

¹⁴³ The word *ha* has the meaning of ‘very much like to get, to an extent of frenzied’. Ibid., 240-241

¹⁴⁴ Li, Taindow and He Hweiwen. ‘Beyond Tokyo Rainbow Bridge: The Imaginary Appropriation of Japanese Television Trendy Drama in Taiwan’. *Japanese Popular Culture in Taiwan and Asia 1. Envisage: A Journal Book of Chinese Media Studies*. Issue 1. (Taipei, March 2002), 15-49.

of Japanese idol dramas in Taiwan is about ‘imaginary appropriation’. The audiences of these dramas connect their daily experiences to the drama stories and thus use them to produce new meanings in their lives.¹⁴⁵

Additionally, Li and He also point out that the specific colonial relationship between Taiwan and Japan that plays an important role in stimulating the ‘Japanification’ in Taiwan. Those young people who are the main audiences of the Japanese idol dramas did not experience the Japanese colonization; they grew up in the 1980s and 1990s when Japanese culture was the main indicator of fashion and trend in East Asia, with young people increasingly identifying themselves with Japanese popular culture. The book *Criticising Chinese Stars* points out that alongside the increasing popularity of Japanese and Korean idol dramas in China, Chinese television companies started to produce their own but replicated idol dramas promoting many young Chinese idols.¹⁴⁶ A similar development occurred in Taiwan, with new productions of its own idol dramas in 2001, when a group of young television idols rose rapidly, all with great looks but poor performance skills. Constructed by television companies to interpret and perform the characters of ‘idol dramas’, but without an adequate training in acting, their idol images and fame were the result of commercial interests and mostly relied on sophisticated packaging skills and mass media publicity.

The book *Criticising Chinese Stars* and the essay ‘Beyond Tokyo Rainbow Bridge: The Imaginary Appropriation of Japanese Television Trendy Drama in Taiwan’ were both published in 2002, respectively in China and Taiwan. This indicates an important stage of mutual influences in the construction of popular culture and celebrities in the East Asian context. A few years later, a book *Thirty Years of Chinese Popular Culture 1978-2008*¹⁴⁷ published in 2009 in China also explores the flow of popular products between China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and suggests that international capital and commercial interests are the strongest factors

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Jia Zhifang ed. *Zhongguoxing Pipan (Criticising Chinese Stars)*. (Shandong: Shandong Youyi Publication, 2002).

¹⁴⁷ Wu, Bin and Han, Chunyan. *Zhongguo liuxing wenhua sanshinian 1978-2008 (Thirty Years of Chinese Popular Culture 1978-2008)* (Beijing: Jiuzho Press, 2009).

in the production of popular cultural products and celebrity in the region. Nevertheless, this might not be the whole picture for China and Taiwan. A book *The Party-State Consciousness and Popular Culture in China* published in Taiwan in 2010 argues that political interventions are more important than commercial interests in China in manipulating the construction of popular culture and celebrity figures. This also has effects on other places in the region, including Taiwan, Hong Kong.¹⁴⁸

The main theme that underpins this whole book is the discussion about the ways in which the Chinese government consistently exerts political power to influence the forms and presentations of popular music, film, television drama, women's magazines and stage drama, and furthermore inscribes the 'consciousness of the party-state' (*dangguo yishi*) in such popular cultural products. Author Zhang Yuliang points out that, although China has entered the age of national capitalism, the Chinese authorities still maintain the political form of post-totalitarianism. This can be seen in the tightly controlled mass media and the state's insistence on its right to interpret ideology. Zhang argues that, the Chinese authorities are trying to disseminate party-state consciousness in popular culture, and their political control of cultural productions and presentations have a strong influence in the construction of film, television and music stars.¹⁴⁹

For instance, in the field of music, Zhang points out that in the post-1990s, through the party-state 'supported' and controlled concerts—such as the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, officially sanctioned music charts, memorial museum festivals, and various charity concerts—and through the cooperation with selective songwriters who have positions in the military or the party, Chinese authorities endow songs with the 'party-state consciousness', including for example, praising the party-state achievements, celebrating national identity, and spreading national unity.¹⁵⁰ More importantly, the authorities even incorporate Chinese pop singers to sing the songs that conceal the party-state consciousness. Such strategies also attract songwriters or singers actively to join the production or interpretation of specific kinds of songs,

¹⁴⁸ Zhang, Yuliang. *Zhongguo dalu liuxing wenhua yu dangguo yishi (The Party-State Consciousness and Popular Culture in China)* Taipei: Showwe Information Co., Ltd., 2010.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

because if they follow ‘political correctness’, they will be able to enjoy more opportunities for commercial performances.¹⁵¹

Such political interventions have a significant influence on the popularity of a celebrity because a celebrity’s willingness to be complied with ‘party-state consciousness’ gives her or him more performance or media exposures. This also has a strong impact on Taiwanese celebrity culture, especially in the music and television fields. Taiwanese celebrity singers such as Jay Chou and S.H.E frequently perform in China, in part due to their incorporation of elements of Chinese culture or ‘party-state consciousness’, in their songs. Other singers, in contrast, such as Zhang Huimei, who was banned from performing in China because she sang Taiwan’s national anthem in a public event in Taiwan, and was labeled as a pro-Democratic Progressive party supporter, who openly supports Taiwanese independence.¹⁵² Although performing in China is extremely political sensitive, many Taiwanese singers and performers who seek celebrity status in China due choose not to express their political positions.¹⁵³

Thus, discussions about the development of film and television in China, and the cultural impact of Japan in Taiwan, suggests, on the one hand, that the emergence of celebrity in Taiwan has been influenced by the importation of Japanese popular cultural products that construct a particular taste for idols. These idols are celebrity-commodities constructed mainly by commercial interests, and rely on the production of idol dramas and mass media exposure to sustain their popularity. In Taiwan, especially with the influence of *Next Magazine* and *Apple Daily* since the early 2000s (discussed in chapter one), such celebrity formation also significantly draws

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

In the other field of films, in order to divert audience attention away from the conceal party-state ideology in films, in the recent years, Chinese films adopt the commercialized production strategy include funding diversification, extending production facilities, celebrities actors and actresses, and striving for film awards. The purposes of these strategies are to commercialized the films and create high-ticket sales in order to purify its political implication and further reinforce party-state ideology. For the field of television, in order to gain over hundreds of millions audiences’ hearts, the contents of Chinese mainstream television must tightly connected to the historical, cultural and social contexts. Ibid., 9.

¹⁵² ‘Zhang Huimei is being specified as the “green singer” and banned from singing. Many singers are feeling wronged for her’. *Dajuyuan Newspaper*. <http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/4/6/14/n568173.htm>. Accessed 9 March 2011.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

on media publicity to gossip and personal life stories. On the other hand, celebrity culture in Taiwan has also been influenced by Chinese political forces; in order to gain wider popularity and media publicity beyond the national context, Taiwanese celebrities are aware of the idea of ‘political correctness’.

Nevertheless, such production of celebrities and celebrity culture do not merely occur in the entertainment industry, for in the art scene, artists’ celebritisation and commercialisation are similarly linked to business interests and political interventions. Whyte Murray’s article ‘How China is using art (and artists) to sell itself to the world’ (2009) discusses the fact that facing the impact of globalization and the world capitalist economy in the new millennium, the Chinese government has put vast investment into developing its ‘soft power’. With specific reference to art and the art world, the term can be defined as “the ability of a political body to get what it wants through cultural or ideological attraction”.¹⁵⁴ “Soft power translates to a full-scale public relations campaign designed to bolster its image—and influence—by selling an in-tune, culturally savvy version of itself to the world”.¹⁵⁵ This strategy not only constructs a new image for China in the age of globalization, but also stimulates the commercialisation and celebritisation of Chinese art and culture. The new art and creative industry zone of 798 Art District in Beijing offers a telling example.¹⁵⁶ It has been reported in the press as the third most popular tourist draw in the country, after the Great Wall and the Forbidden City.¹⁵⁷ The popularity of the 798 Art District in promoting Chinese contemporary art now attracts many international artists and art galleries to set up studios and gallery branches, enabling a vibrant trade of art and cultural products.

China’s main interests in promoting its ‘soft power’ through such developments aim first and foremost neither at local audiences nor at promoting local

¹⁵⁴ Whyte, Murray. ‘How China is using art (and artists) to sell itself to the world’. *Toronto Star*. 12 December 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Whyte, Murray. ‘How China is using art (and artists) to sell itself to the world’. *Toronto Star*. 12 December 2009.

This massive former munitions factory 798 Art District was transformed by the government in 2002 as a home for artists’ studios, galleries, boutiques, cafés and restaurants.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

identities. In contrast, government sponsorship of the arts in Taiwan seeks to promote culture as a way of constructing a globally recognized national identity, and for stimulating the articulation of and communication between different ethnic identities. The DPP regime, for instance, used art exhibitions and other cultural practices to construct a diversified Taiwanese identity by putting on aboriginal exhibitions, promoting local artists and filmmakers, and drawing attention to the diversity of local Taiwanese culture. The KMT regime emphasizes cross-straits relations by supporting the exhibitions of Mainland Chinese artists in Taiwan's national museums.

While the Chinese government's interests in disseminating its image as a global power shore up its investment in contemporary art and culture, Murray's other article 'Eastern Promise: Winds of change propel China's new art stars' (2009) points out that Chinese artists have been extraordinarily successful in drawing global attention to their work through their skill in blending historical and political symbols into their art. However, according to Xie Xiaoze "much of the big name found in China these days pointed directly at Western collectors plied with simplified narratives of suffering during the Cultural Revolution".¹⁵⁸ The massacre of dissidents in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 explains much of the global interest in contemporary Chinese art of the 1990s,¹⁵⁹ but many of the works do little more than "satisfy a sense of exoticism" that is of little relevance to China's realities or Chinese audiences.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the art works that became popular in the West present an overt 'Chineseness' constructed mainly for Western eyes. They are also traded for enormous sums of money in auction markets. One notable result has been the appearance of a new generation of art stars in China including Liu Xiaodong, Fang Lijun, Yue Minjun, Zhang Xiagang, Zeng Fanzhi and others, stars, all of whom

¹⁵⁸ Xiaoze Xie is a teacher who teaches painting at Stanford in San Francisco, left China in 1992. Information from *ibid*.

¹⁵⁹ Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (2004), 57.

¹⁶⁰ Whyte, Murray. 'Eastern Promise; Wind of change propel China's new art stars'. *Toronto Star*. 12 December 2009.

enjoy high international reputations and whose works sell for sometimes astronomical prices.¹⁶¹

Nevertheless, alongside those Chinese art works that present explicit ‘Chinese’ elements, and which influenced by Western commercial interests achieve high market sales, Whyte does not discuss other Chinese celebrity artists who have stronger relations with China’s political authorities. For instance, famous celebrity artist Cai Guoqiang who obviously followed the idea of ‘political correctness’ and joined the firework productions in the official festivals operated by the Chinese authorities, included projects *Countdown* and *Closing Rainbow: Fireworks Projects for the Closing Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games* (2008), and *Fireworks Project for China’s 60th National Day Celebration* in Tiananmen Square in 2009. Although Cai was already a world-widely recognized celebrity artist whose work sold at high market prices, he was even more celebritised after being involved in the Chinese official events. Another Chinese celebrity artist Ai Weiwei presents a contrary example whose fame is constructed around his individual power of resistance. This can be seen, for example, in his support for the investigation into student casualties in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and in the following year when he published the collected names and numerous articles documenting the investigation into the earthquake on his blog that was shut down in May 2009.¹⁶² This, to a certain extent, is similar to artist Lee Ming-sheng’s celebritisation in the late 1980s, despite the different political and cultural conditions.

In recent years, Ai’s celebrity artist status has become global. Not only his arts works and actions represent the repression of the Chinese people and society by the Chinese authorities, but his celebrity status enables him to exhibit world-wide and become involved in frequent media exposures.¹⁶³ Discussion about whether Ai

¹⁶¹ For instance, Liu Xiaodong’s painting was auctioned for \$7.95 million U.S. dollars in 2008 and Zheng Fanzhi’s *Mask Series, 1996* was sold for \$9.7 million in 2008. Information from Whyte, Murray. ‘Eastern Promise; Wind of change propel China’s new art stars’, *Toronto Star*. 12 December 2009.

¹⁶² "China cracks down on outspoken artist". *CBC News*. 12 July 2009. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/artdesign/story/2009/07/12/aiweiwei-criticism-china.html>. Accessed 9 March 2011.

¹⁶³ Ai Weiwei’s various media exposures are broadcasted and circulated around via the Internet website of Youtube. The broadcasted videos include, videos produced by Ai Weiwei’s studios about his various projects, Ai’s interviews on CNN by Amanpour and other video clips and interviews.

Weiwei's celebrity has been constructed mostly by the constant media attention to his art works concerning the 'Chinese issue' lies beyond the remit of this thesis. However, it is worth pointing out that Ai's celebrity is also the product of a process of commercialisation in which he 'sells' discussion of Chinese issues to the global market. However, there are almost no academic or critical discourses in China or Taiwan that look into the construction of Ai's celebrity art in relation to Chinese political conditions, and which compare Ai's celebrity to the other art stars whose works enjoy high market sales. This thesis identifies this question as a potential topic for further research and exploration.

Compared to China, Japanese celebrity artists present more commercialised characteristics and are closer to the construction of Japan's popular culture. In fact, the construction of taste and popular culture in Japan has long developed in close relation to the commercialisation of the arts. Jordan Sand's book *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture 1880-1930* offers some insights on the promotion of art and artists by the department store, Mitsukoshi, that established the basis stimulating the emergence of celebrity art in Japan through connecting art and people's daily lives.¹⁶⁴ Jordan Sand also discusses how Mitsukoshi adopted Western-style products and retail techniques, with significant influences on the construction of lifestyle and art decoration in Japan. Sand describes the amount of money that customers spent on Western paintings and products as "the price of admission to an imagined world of connoisseurship, proffering its own 'master' and marks of value, without the requirement of personal intimacy with the producers and purveyors in the art business or the need to fear embarrassment in the game of authentication".¹⁶⁵ Mitsukoshi shaped the Japanese imagination of the West by selling selective paintings and products in its stores. Through the act of consumption, Japanese people might have imagined that they were absorbing Western culture, but it was in fact a taste culture created by Mitsukoshi.

Please make reference to Ai Weiwei's video search on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Ai+weiwei&aq=f. Accessed 10 March 2011.

¹⁶⁴ Sand, Jordan. *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic space, and Bourgeois Culture 1880-1930*. (United States of American: Harvard University, 2005).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

In this thesis, the case study of the Eslite Bookstore and the VT Artsalon also present the possibility of constructing taste culture in Taiwan through the introduction of art into people's daily life in the process of celebrityising art. In fact, Mitsukoshi Department Store was one of the early influences in Taiwan that brought the concept of popularized art as an aspect of ordinary people's daily lives when it set up Taiwan's first chain of department stores, named Shin Kong Mitsukoshi in 1989.¹⁶⁶ It used art and culture as a means to distinguish itself from the other department stores, such as the Far Eastern Department Stores and Sogo Department Stores in Taiwan.¹⁶⁷

While Mitsukoshi has played a crucial role in bringing art into people's daily life in recent years, the rise of a celebrity artist, Takashi Murakami, defines and represents the new idea of the contemporary celebrity artist in Japan. Murakami is described by the Taiwanese media as the 'Andy Warhol in the East'¹⁶⁸ in that his art works present strong links with Japanese subculture and his artistic productions are created through a factory-like studio system.¹⁶⁹ Since the early 1990s, Murakami started to gain radical recognition on the global art scene with his unconventional approach to artistic creations that he created under the style name 'superflat'.¹⁷⁰ Suggesting close links with the Otaku lifestyle of Japanese subculture, Murakami's works blur the boundaries of high art and popular culture, and the factory-style

¹⁶⁶ Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store in Taiwan is a joint venture between Mitsukoshi Ltd. and Shin Kong Group. Information from Shin Kong Mitsukoshi website: <http://www.skm.com.tw/10/index.asp>. Access 10 February 2011.

¹⁶⁷ According to the article, 'The mystery of Shin Kong Mitsukoshi becomes the new over lord of Taiwan's department stores—Why squeeze into the district, we create the district', *Business Next*. Issue 53. 1 March 2003. 96-101.

¹⁶⁸ Yang, Zhiwei. 'The Andy Warhol in the East'. *Business Next*. Issue 146. 15 December 2005. 146-7.

¹⁶⁹ In a close interview with Murakami published on *ARTINFO.com* in June 2006, Murakami says that he has a unique factory-style production line in studios in Tokyo and in New York that involve dozens of artists and assistants and runs like a well-oiled machine.¹⁶⁹ Also, in his art company, Kaikai Kiki, artists hired by the company help him produce the work on the basis of his initial conception of it, which Murakami then amends to meet his own standards. The company is also the agent of the young artists it employs.

¹⁷⁰ The style, Superflat, is coined by Murakami. It is characterised by flat planes of colour and graphic images that involves a character style derived from anime and manga. Superflat comments on Otaku lifestyle and subculture, as well as consumerism and sexual fetishism. Information from: Chong, Derrick. *Arts Management*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 71.

production that he adopts challenges the traditional way of producing artworks by artists' physical labour.¹⁷¹

Unlike other celebrity artists, Murakami contextualized his own commercial success and artistic celebrity, and published two books, *The Art Entrepreneurship Theory* and *The Art Battle Theory: How to be a Real Artist in Japan* in 2006 and 2010, which were soon translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan in 2007 and 2010. Both books detail how he turned his art career into a business and how he attempted to teach artists the secret of becoming an art entrepreneur. They also offer audiences insights into his celebritisation process and his desire to be recognized legitimately as both artist and celebrity.

Murakami has never denied his love for money and power. Before his books were published in Taiwan, Murakami once visited Taiwan in 2004 to promote his exhibition *Fiction Love: Ultra New Vision in Contemporary Art* at Taipei's Museum of Contemporary Art.¹⁷² At the time his unprecedented behaviour of asking for 300 US dollars for a media interview petrified Taiwanese journalists. A media reported Murakami to have said, "if the reward reaches what I expect, I would do it; if the reward is higher than what I expect, I would do even more".¹⁷³ Murakami's explicit desire for money presented an early model of the celebrity artist in Asia for Taiwan,¹⁷⁴ and in 2008, in order to promote his first book, Murakami held a speech

¹⁷¹ In 2003, Murakami's name was even recognized in the fashion industry and was widely known by the public when he collaborated with the art director of Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacob, and masterminded the new monogram multicolor canvas range of handbags and accessories that made his fame in fashion and media circles, as well as the general public.

Marc Jacob sensed the growing popularity of Japanese art, sought a partnership with Takashi Murakami. At the time, Murakami was an emerging Japanese artist on the international art scene. Various called Japan's Andy Warhol or Japan's Hirst. This collaborative range of the new monogram multicolor canvas range of handbags and accessories included the monograms of the standard Monogram Canvas, but in 33 different colors on either a white or black background.

Murakami also created the cherry blossom pattern, in which smiling cartoon faces in the middle of pink and yellow flowers were placed atop the monogram canvas. This series of pattern appeared on a limited number of pieces. In 2009, celebrating the launch of his multicolor spring palette with Louis Vuitton, Murakami produced an animated video named *Superflat First Love*, with his distinctive artistic style 'superflat'. Information from: Chong, Derrick. *Arts Management*. (2010), 71.

¹⁷² *Fiction Love: Ultra New Vision in Contemporary Art*. Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei. 21 August-31 October 2004.

¹⁷³ 'Murakami xuanfeng—yishu linglie shengcun zhi dao' (Murakami cyclone—art's alternative survival kit) *Yaqi (ARCH)*. Issue 176, September 200.

¹⁷⁴ In this research, the thesis observes that, besides artist Lee Ming-sheng's celebrity emerged in late 1980s and early 1990s, and artist Chu Cha-ray was spotted by the mass media as a 'hot female

‘Art Founding Forum’ in the Taipei Arena, a dome where Taiwanese and foreign singers normally hold their concerts.¹⁷⁵ What was also unprecedented about this forum was that not only more than ten thousand people attended the speech, but also the speech-related souvenirs were sold with business sponsorship logos around the venue. While Taiwanese media and audience portrayed him as a god-like figure, he was depicted as ‘the most mercenary artist in history’ by the media.¹⁷⁶

Murakami presents himself in his two books as a ‘successful’ example of how an artist can reach his celebrity status in western dominated society. Unlike John Walker’s book *Art and Celebrity* which details both the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a celebrity artist, Murakami’s books predictably present the positive side of his success. He also justifies his connections to the commercial world and explains the importance of his art works in Japanese and Western culture. Despite his lack of attention to the historical and cultural influences on his work, his books have given him the opportunity to legitimise his commercialised and celebritised art work and status by locating himself and his work across Japanese and Western art scenes. Murakami is now clear model of celebrity for Taiwanese artists. Indeed, in 2010, the establishment of a new Kaikai Kiki Gallery branch in Taipei showed his intention to intervene in the contemporary Taiwanese art market and in the construction of contemporary Taiwanese taste.

Murakami’s books on the relationship between art, artist, money and business are written from the perspective of artist entrepreneur, and as far as I know have no other equivalent in either Western or East Asian publications. However, with multiple identities of being artist, writer, designer and entrepreneur, Murakami is often criticized for being too commercialised and losing his critical capacity as an artist.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless, in the East Asian context, accordingly to Foong Waifong’s

professor’; the other celebrity artists’ fame and popularity do not appear until the later part of 2000s. Consequently, Murakami’s active approach to commercial opportunities, mass media reports and momentary reward offered Taiwanese audience an example of Eastern celebrity artist.

¹⁷⁵ Murakami’s ‘Art Founding Forum’ was held in Taipei Arena on 30 November 2007.

¹⁷⁶ Wu, Chia-xuan. ‘High & Low tongchi de Takashi Murakami: ceji baimeiquan “yuwang yu xiaofei zhan” zuo tan hui’ (Takashi Murakami takes both High & low: side recording the forum of ‘Desire and Consumption Exhibition’) *ARTCO*. Issue 184. January 2008. 98-99.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

book *Culture is Good Business* that was previously discussed in chapter one, the commercialisation of art and the development of the cultural industry is generally praised and supported by East Asian governments.¹⁷⁸ Although Foong's analysis welcomes the commercialisation of culture in its effects on existing cultural activities and promoting the 'Asian style', it does not touch on the impact of artists' creativity in bringing art and culture into industry. The thesis aims to fill this gap by examining whether artists still have a voice in the process of commercialisation and celebrityisation of art, or whether they are, as Stallabrass argues, spokespersons for the sell-out of art's critical freedom.

In summary, the regional discourses on the emergence of the celebrity and the commercialisation and celebrityisation of art suggest that the study of the production and influences of celebrity art in Taiwan has to refer to its regional influences. These discourses, and particularly those concerned with celebrity production in China whether in film, television, music or popular culture, indicate that not only do commercial interests and the flow of global capital play important roles in the celebrityisation process, but so also do hidden political forces. For Chinese celebrities and celebrity artists, whether through being incorporated by the Chinese authorities to communicate 'party-state consciousness', such as in the case of Chinese and Taiwanese singers who work in China; or artists' reinterpretation of China's cultural specificities; or self-celebrityisation through critical discussion about Chinese issues, such as in the case of Ai Weiwei; Chinese political interventions can be forces both to amplify and prohibit individual celebrity construction. Japanese popular and celebrity culture also has its part to play in the regional impact on processes of celebrityisation in Taiwan. On the one hand, through the import of popular cultural products, Japan has influenced the construction of taste for idols and celebrities in Taiwan; on the other, in part through introduction of the idea of bringing popularized art into people's daily life, the celebrityisation of art in Taiwan is able to construct a particular cultural taste in specific spaces.

Despite such general regional cultural and political influences on the emergence of celebrities in Taiwan since the lifting of martial law, academic studies

¹⁷⁸ Chapter one has discussed the development of cultural industry in Taiwan and the government support on the commercialisation of art.

into the celebrityisation and commercialisation of art in Taiwan are extremely rare, making it difficult to evaluate the precise nature of their influences. *Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Products and Consumption* (2003) discusses art works in the context of the commercialisation and consumption of art, but only briefly introduces the creative concepts behind the relevant art works without offering any critical argument about their commercialisation. Books such as *Encountering a Wolf in Department Store* (2002) and *Catipalism×Monster*(2010)¹⁷⁹ look into Taiwanese people's consumer styles. There are also some unpublished academic theses documented in the National Central Library that discuss the concept of celebrity in different fields.¹⁸⁰ However, the references used in these unpublished works are mainly Western, indicating the lack of celebrity studies produced in Taiwan. Those works see Taiwanese celebrity as Western extension or application, and merely a commercial effect and a product of media manipulations, without analyzing its greater social, cultural and political effects. There are also a few articles in magazines and media reports, including two articles 'The New Favourite in Advertising Industry: Contemporary Celebrity Artists' and 'Looking the Profession of Art Marking From the Case of Cai Guoqiang', written by Zhuang Guolin, who works in Art Marketing in a Taiwanese commercial gallery.¹⁸¹ These articles merely touch on the idea of celebrity art by raising some examples of their media exposures, popularity and commercial activities, without examining the production of celebrity artists and their social, cultural and economic significance. As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the production and social and cultural significance of the celebrity are the most significant features of the phenomenon as debated in

¹⁷⁹ The references of the books are: Li, Weijing. *Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Products and Consumption* (Taipei: Artist Publishing Co., Ltd., 2003); Zhang, Xiaohong. *Encountering a Wolf in Department Store* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co., Ltd., 2002); Zhang, Xiaohong. *Catipalism×Monster* (Taipei: Route Culture, 2010).

¹⁸⁰ Those unpublished academic theses include: Chen, Jiaqi. *Jiegou meiti de Wang Jianmin xianxiang—Guozu, mingren, yu meiti shangpin* (Deconstructing the media phenomenon of Wang Jianmin—Nation, celebrity and media products). National Chung Cheng University. 2007; Qiu, Yiyi. *'Mingren zhengzhi' de xinwen kuangjia—Ma Yingjiu butong congzheng shiqi xinwen baodao zhi bijiao*. (The news framework of 'celebrity politics'—A comparative study on the news reports of the different periods of Ma Yingjiu's political careers). National Chengchi University. 2007; Yuan, Qianwen. *Shishang xiaofei, mingren xiaoying de yuetingren jieshou fenxi* (Media Audiences Analysis on Fashion consumption, celebrity effect), National Taiwan University. 2005; and others.

¹⁸¹ Zhuang, Guolin. 'The New Favourite in Advertising Industry: Contemporary Celebrity Artists'. *Adm.* Issue 226. 15 March 2010; and 'Looking the Profession of Art Marking From the Case of Cai Guoqiang'. *Adm.* Issue 224. 15 January 2010.

Western celebrity studies.¹⁸² This research therefore aims to begin to fill the gap in current celebrity studies in Taiwan by focusing on the emergence of celebrity art in the Taiwanese and regional contexts. In the process, it also seeks to explore the distinctive features of the celebritisation of art in Taiwan that make it much more than a simple extension or application of Western models and theories.

¹⁸² Turner, Graeme. 'Approaching celebrity studies'. *Celebrity Studies*. (1:1, March 2010), 11-20.

Chapter Three

Lee Ming-sheng: Taiwan's First Celebrity Artist



Figure 2. *Lee Ming-Sheng=Art, Part 2* (1988). Lee displays his iconic image with a television magnifier to enlarge his face. His name, in both Chinese and English characters, appears on his shirt.¹

This thesis considers Lee Ming-sheng (李銘盛) as Taiwan's first 'celebrity artist' (*yishu mingren*). Active in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Lee's celebrity status is associated strongly with Taiwan's political and social transformation in the decade following the lifting of martial law, and is characterized by his double-sided image as an agitator and a spiritual icon. His entry into celebrity can be examined as being shaped in two stages. The first refers to his highly controversial performance art projects during the time immediately before and after the lifting of martial law, that centred on the display of extreme physical exertion and that he performed in public

¹ Photograph provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

spaces to challenge culturally conservative values at a time when the form of performance art was unfamiliar to the public.

In complete contrast, the second stage involved his participation in the Venice Biennale as the first Taiwanese artist attending the global exhibition. Although his performance projects were not favourably received by Italian critics and intermediaries, the Taiwanese media gave him an extraordinary prominence, describing him as a ‘national hero’.² The thesis therefore argues that Lee’s empowering title of ‘national hero’ was not only in recognition of his artistic achievements, but just as importantly, if not more so, represented a particular cultural expression and political engagement at the time when social forces in Taiwan were striving for international status.³

In the 1980s, when Taiwan was still suffering under the KMT’s martial law, people lived in a state of political fear and spiritual oppression, and were under surveillance in every aspect of their daily lives, as discussed in chapter one. Lee, born in 1952,⁴ began his artistic career in this political climate, working with performance art forms which were unfamiliar to both the Taiwanese art world and the general public. Most of Lee’s works in the 1980s criticised the internalized constraints produced by the government’s use of dictatorial power. Before martial law was lifted, police often surrounded Lee’s challenging public performances, and on certain occasions arrested him. Despite constant surveillance of his work, Lee continued to carry out his performance art projects and in the process became a celebrity through the media’s coverage of him as an agitator. Lee’s celebritisation further transformed as the political and cultural context in Taiwan changed from the 1980s to the early 1990s.

² Ni, Zaiqin. *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art—the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (Taipei: Artists Publisher. 2005), 250.

³ Taiwan’s political status in international relations from the post-Second World War to the recent day is discussed by Dr. Chen Lung-chu, (the former national policy adviser, Professor of Law at New York Law School, and Chairman of Taiwan New Century Foundation) in his article ‘The outlook of Taiwan’s international Status in the new century’ in the journal *Taiwan New Century Forum* 12 (2000): 4-14.

⁴ Lee Ming-sheng was born in 1952 in a town called Meinung in Kaohsiung county, Taiwan.

The Emergence of Lee Ming-sheng's Celebrity

Lee, who grew up on the island-nation of Taiwan and under political oppression, did not receive any formal art education. He expressed a spirit of resistance through performance art using his own body to defy authoritarian rule, especially in the mid-1980s.⁵ In *Purification of the Spirit* (1983), Lee challenged the physical extremes of his own body by walking continuously around Taiwan for forty-two days and nights, and sleeping on the street. In the process of challenging his own physical strength, his ultimate goal was to raise funds for the establishment of the 'Art Workers' Foundation which was to assist in the development of young artists and to make a spiritual contribution to Taiwanese society.⁶ Despite not raising any money, his performances caused a wave of controversy. As Lee described:

at the time many people regarded this kind of performance with suspicion. Some thought I was doing it just for attention. My family thought I was crazy, and this really bothered me. Moreover, the pressure I felt was even greater owing to the fact I had received no donations to show for my efforts. I decided to end the performance two days ahead of schedule. When I returned home I didn't want to publicize the event. Many people were sceptical of whether I had accomplished what I had set out to do, but my sadness at the time prevented me from offering any explanation.⁷

At the time few seemed to understand what Lee Ming-sheng was trying to do, the assumption was that it was either for fame or he was insane.⁸

⁵ Lee was graduated from the Department of Navigation Science of National Maritime University in 1997.

⁶ The 'Art Workers' Foundation was established by Lee for this particular project. Through his performance art project, he aimed to raise funds to improve the art environment, aid young artists at work, enrich the quality of life on the island and make a spiritual contribution. The foundation only existed for the period during Lee's performance project *Purification of the Spirit*. Without being able to raise any funding to support the foundation, Lee had to give up the idea soon. However, 25 years later in 2009, artist Tang Huang-chen had a similar idea when she established a 'Creators' Union' to provide a basic environment for artistic creativity, and to promote artists' rights, share resources and monitor government cultural policies. See chapter six for detailed information. Lee, Ming-sheng. *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (Taipei: Tonsun Publication Company, 1995), 33.

⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁸ Ibid., 34.



Figure 3. *Bundle 119*, Performance costume.⁹

A similar situation occurred with another performance project, *Bundle Number 119* (1984), in which Lee used his body to perform in an even more intensive and pressurized way by continuously carrying a three-kilogram bundle for 119 days.¹⁰ Lee's aim for this project, on the one hand, was to use the bundle as a symbol of confinement during the martial law period; and on the other hand, he wishes to draw the public's attention to the social and cultural environment that could, once the bundle was removed, lead to a better life for the public and the artist. However, instead of successfully achieving these aims Lee and his performance art project became the object of taunts, especially by the mass media,

The media treated the whole thing as a joke, some gave favourable reports and some gave nasty ones. The favourable ones gave me a feeling of accomplishment while the nasty ones left me feeling frustrated.¹¹

⁹ Photograph from Ming-sheng Lee, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 38.

¹⁰ Lee tied a bundle on his body which weighted three kilograms, that symbolized the bundles of daily life pressures included family pressure, social pressure and economic pressure in our contemporary society. Information from, Lee, Ming-sheng. *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

Lee's abnormal behaviour attracted public and media attention, and he became a figure of 'accidental celebrity', in Graeme Turner's terms.¹² In *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, authors Turner, Bonner and Marshall discuss the construction of accidental celebrity:

The tactics employed by the modern version of television affairs—the adversarial style of interview, the use of hidden cameras, the carpark interview, the office invasions, and so on—have made it very difficult for the average citizen caught up in these events to protest their own interests... Because of its efficiency in generating a plausible story with lively pictures, and because it constructs a flattering image of the crusading reporter, the aggressive outdoor confrontation has become a routine performance in current affairs television. It is, though, a performance which reflects the demands of the television genre rather than the likely guilt or innocence of the person being interviewed.¹³

Although Lee's media reports and images did not show any obvious signs of hidden cameras, it is true that Lee had no control of his own public images and discourses constructed by news media. In this way Lee can be categorized as an accidental celebrity because his performance art projects were identified by the new media as maverick, and they framed his actions simply as an interesting topic but not as serious art works. The next chapter shows how another artist, Chu Cha-ray, similarly became an accidental celebrity as her fame accumulated through media interests in the early stages of her career. However, it is worth pointing out that in contrast with Chu, Lee's accidental celebrity as a crazy maverick with the general public's self-restrained behaviour in an oppressive society during the martial law period.

However, Lee did not give up performing art on the street or change the form of his artistic creations, even after he was forced to face a range of nasty comments. His determination and enthusiasm for performance art could be seen as already embedded in his personality. In the following years, when his performance art engaged more intensively with political issues and he deliberately deployed the celebritisation strategy used by politicians, he was seen as an agitator who challenged the government's power and was constantly in the position of being stopped or arrested in the middle of a performance.

¹² Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 21.

¹³ Turner, Graeme, Frances Bonner, P. David Marshall. *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2000), 111.

The project *Non-line* (1986) was never performed completely because the police claimed that the date planned for its performance on February 28th was politically motivated,¹⁴ although this was strongly denied by Lee Ming-sheng.¹⁵ According to Lee, he was advised by the police to change the project date, otherwise the performance would not be allowed. He was also kept at home and was not allowed to go anywhere else for the whole day.¹⁶



Figure 4. *Non-Line*. February 28 1986, 6am. Policemen were dispatched to barricade Lee's studio.¹⁷

The disruption on this particular occasion reveals two significant issues. One is that Lee's status shifted as he was now recognized as an agitator, rather than simply as a crazy person. The distinction between these two terms lies in the political and social power of the agitator, in contrast to the behavioural 'abnormality' of the 'crazy' person. Lee's performance art, which had been framed and disseminated by the news

¹⁴ In the project *Non-line* (1986), Lee attempted to extend a rope from his studio to the Taipei Fine Art Museum. This symbolised the union of mother (China as the motherland) and child (Taiwan). The news reports on the art projects and Lee's concept were released two days in advance. Lee was then stopped by police from leaving his studio on the day of the performance.

¹⁵ Interview with Lee Ming-sheng on 6th April 2010.

I tried to confirm with Lee Ming-sheng whether he was aware of the political significance of 28 February. Although he denied it, it is unlikely because Lee as a performance artist is continuously concerned about the political environment and after the martial law period his denial is unconvincing.

¹⁶ Lee, Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

media, was thus seen by the police as political, and Lee was put under surveillance in order to prevent him from engaging in his performance art *cum* political activism. The second, an extension of the first, is that the whole incident confirms Julian Stallabrass' assertion of art's new role in the new world order of the post-1980s.¹⁸ When Stallabrass considers political activism in art he refers to critical artworks in global biennales which enter into a dialogue about democracy, truth and reconciliation.¹⁹ In this sense, art acquired a new and critical capacity to stimulate public discussion on political issues.²⁰ Applying Stallabrass' understanding of political art to the *Non-Line* incident, the project had the potential to develop political action and focus the public's attention on the prevailing conditions of political repression.

Therefore it was no surprise that the news media had a different explanation for the cancellation of *Non-line*, because the mass media was often utilised as a propaganda tool by the government during the martial period. The news reports stated that the artwork was stopped by the police due to road safety concerns. For example, a piece in the *United Daily News (lianhe bao)* entitled 'Lee Ming-sheng's performance *Non-Line* has broken new ground—beware of being punished by crossing the fast lanes' reported on road safety concerns and pointed out that the performance would be a "breach of the regulations".²¹ The constructed 'reality' in the media and the 'reality' claimed by the artist showed a struggle between the

¹⁸ Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). 188.

¹⁹ Julian Stallabrass discusses the exploitations of business and government in art, and suggests that those two interests are in fact in oppositions: "In a linked development, art's elitism is challenged by the attempt to widen its appeal: business values art for its exclusivity, while states are generally interested in opposite, and wish to widen its ambit". For Stallabrass, the opportunities for the exploitations of those tensions fall into four categories, include the political activism in art and the linked exploitation of technological means to sidestep the art-world system. One of the example he discusses is the *Documenta 11*, curated by Okwui Ewenzor, in which he notes "was another sign that the art of the periphery had moved centre-stage, and contained an impressive array of critical work, buttressed by discussions taking place at many venues around the world and the publication of dialogues on democracy, truth and reconciliation, creolization and the Latin American city." (187-189).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

²¹ 'Lee Mingsheng feixian biaoyan, biekai shengmian shanzi chuanyue kuaichedao, dangxin shoufa. Sanshi yu gongli nilongsheng, xianjie Xindian yu Yuanshan, kansheng zhuangju, yishu chuanguo cheng kegui, jiaotong guize xu zunshou, shinan jiangu' (Lee Ming-sheng's performance *Non-Line* was very spectacular. He needed to be careful of not being published because of unauthorized breaking the fast lane) *Lianhe bao (07 United Daily News)* 28 February 1986.

official power (i.e. the police), the individual's power (i.e. the artist as celebrity) and the public's knowledge about the 'reality' of what happened in the highly controlled political environment at that time.

The fact that Lee's performance art was stopped by the police represented the power he potentially exerted, corresponding to David Marshall's idea of the celebrity having "a voice above the others".²² According to Marshall, this voice has to be channelled into media systems in order to be legitimately significant. Therefore, when the mass media presented a different reason for the cancellation of Lee's performance art project, this meant that the significance of his voice being silenced was to diminish its impact on Taiwanese society. Furthermore, some of the media reports emphasised Lee's lack of formal art training as a way to limit his authority and influence. For instance, a report in *United Daily News* described his performances as follows:

Lee Ming-sheng studied mechanical engineering in high school, and had a university degree in Marine navigation studies. He is working in the Department of Traffic statistics at the Telecommunications... His performance *Non-Line* was inspired by the Telecommunications and the telephone lines... Lee Ming-sheng spent half of his monthly salary to buy the performance materials, and was allowed for few days' vocation by the head of department to do the project. They are happy to see the success of this performance. His colleagues discussed the performance concept with him, but only his sister thought this did not mean too much and suggested him to cancel it.²³

This report portrayed Lee not as an artist, but rather as an art enthusiast who switched to a job he was not trained for. Transforming him into an object of humiliation that emphasized his illegitimacy as an artist was the media's way of trying to discredit him and undermine his political significance.²⁴

²² Marshall, David. *Celebrity and Power*. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota, 1997), Preface.

²³ 'Lee Mingsheng feixian biaoyan, biekai shengmian shanzi chuanyue kuaichedao, dangxin shoufa. Sanshi yu gongli nilongsheng, xianjie Xindian yu Yuanshan, kansheng zhuangju, yishu chuanguo cheng kegui, jiaotong guize xu zunshou, shinan jiangou' (Lee Ming-sheng's performance *Non-Line* was very spectacular. He needed to be careful of not being published because of unauthorized breaking the fast lane) *Lianhe bao* (07 *United Daily News*) 28 February 1986.

²⁴ As already discussed in the Introduction, the mass media in Taiwan in the martial period (1949-1987) was controlled by the KMT party and the newspaper ban was not lifted until 1988.

Around the time when the martial law was lifted in 1987, Taiwanese society was becoming increasingly liberated from the social and political controls of the previous decades. During this time, Lee's performance art projects showed an even stronger engagement with challenges to state power and the power of the institutionalised art establishment, reinforcing his media image as an 'agitator'. In the two projects that were performed in 1987, one presented a political metaphor hidden in the Marathon competition—*Non-Running, Non-Walking*²⁵—in which Lee ran the International Marathon of Taipei using four feet; the other challenged the official art institution—*Medical Examination of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*²⁶—through four improvised performances that contested the legitimacy of the existing museum 'regulations'. In *Non-Running, Non-Walking* Lee was warned by police as he was passing in front of the Presidential Palace, and in *Medical Examination of Taipei Fine Arts Museum* he was not only warned by the museum security, but by the museum staff who intervened in his performances, which included painting in the exhibition place, reading large-sized newspapers (collages of few pages of newspapers to make a large-sized one), and acting like a dog by walking into the exhibition hall on all fours.²⁷ Even though Lee continued to be seen as an agitator, it was through these projects that challenged political power in significant public spaces that his legitimacy as a serious artist was gradually consolidated. This became even more evident in his subsequent projects in which he deployed the celebrityisation strategy used by aspiring politicians.

²⁵ Performance art project *Non-Running, Non-Walking*. February 1987. In front of the Presidential Palace and on the streets in Taipei. Information from, Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 54.

²⁶ Performance art project *Medical Examination of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*. April 1987. Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Information from, *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷ Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995).



Figure 5. *Medical Examination of Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Part 2*. Lee Ming-sheng displayed his painting on the pedestrian area in Taipei.²⁸

Lee and the Celebritisation Strategy of the Political Campaign

After the lifting of martial law in July 1987, Lee sensed that the ideological oppression of the previous decades had been internalized in people's subconscious behaviour and was manifested in the constraints individuals imposed on themselves. In Lee's terms,

even though martial law was abolished, the average person is still paralysed by the 'white terror' mentality of the martial law period. No one dares to question unfair practices or conditions. Civil servants still conduct their jobs as if martial law was in place and no relevant news is revealed to the public.²⁹

In this specific political and social context, Lee expressed his concern with this phenomenon through a series of performances entitled *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* (1988), in which he attempted to address the general public's inability to break out of their internalised controls and achieve a freer self-identification through an exploration of

²⁸ Ibid., 58.

²⁹ Ibid., 71.

the self-promotional ‘celebritisation’ strategy used by aspiring politicians. Lee analysed the strategies that were used by aspiring politicians in their political campaigns and suggested that in the specific celebritisation process, politicians purposely commodified their names and images, through strategies such as broadcasting their names via amplifier devices, the display of their facial images on television and in the public events, and through the spread of their names on leaflets, newspapers and banners that were placed on the street. Those were the strategic promotional practices used by aspiring politicians in Taiwan in late 1980s in order to construct their popularity among the public and to capture political power.³⁰

Lee, who already had a degree of fame at the time, was interested in the mechanisms of how aspiring politicians acquired celebrity and exerted their power over the public. He deconstructed politician’s celebrity constructions and interpreted the important elements in his performance art project *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* (1988). Although Lee denied that the particular project was performed with the intention of reinforcing his own celebrity identity, this chapter argues that there was a connection between this series of projects and his own celebrity constructions. By making this assertion, certain questions arise—when Lee interpreted the political celebritisation strategy in his performance project, what were the effects on his own fame and art career; whether these particular performance projects legitimize Lee’s artistic status beyond being an enthusiastic amateur, or allowed his celebrity status to move beyond the position of an agitator. Moreover, whether or not the project had successfully communicated with the public to evoke their awareness of the issue of ‘self-identity’? The following section will analyse the above questions by looking at selected performances from the project *Lee Ming-sheng=Art*, which took place only a year after the lifting of martial law in one of the busiest commercial districts in Taipei.

³⁰ The concept of self-promotion and the spread of publicity was already manifested in the ancient society, as discussed in chapter two, at the time of Alexander the Great, a coin was an established medium that was circulated with the feature of the ruler stamped upon it. Information from, Leo Braudy. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986, 1997), 104.



Figure 6. *Lee Ming-sheng=Art, Part 1*. Lee shouts his name out in the middle of the road in a busy district.³¹

The first part of this performance project took place in the afternoon on the 9th and the 16th of April in 1988. Lee stood on the corner of Chunghsiao East Road and Tunhwa South Road shouting his name over and over again until he grew hoarse.³² The intersection of the two roads was one of the busiest districts in central Taipei. While Lee was shouting out his name, pedestrians turned their heads and tried to see whom he was addressing. For Lee the process of shouting one's name out was seen as a good way to promote oneself.³³ While his performances successfully attracted people's attention on the street, many of them did not understand what Lee was trying to do and dismissed him as a 'crazy person'.³⁴ Whereas, in terms of the mass media news coverage, this time Lee Ming-sheng was received more positively. A report 'From Hsieh The-ching to Lee Ming-sheng—the past and the present of performance

³¹ Photograph provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

³² *Ibid.*, 70.

³³ Although he adopted the strategy of shouting his own name on the street to explore how politicians promote themselves, in our interview, he denied the fact that he used it as a celebrityisation strategy for his own benefits. Information from interview with Lee Ming-sheng in April 2010.

³⁴ Ming-yuan. 'Participating with Actions: Lee Ming-sheng's Social Concerns', *Modern Arts*. Issue 64 (Taipei: February 1996), 42-44.

art'³⁵ in the *China Times* (*Zhongguo Shibao*) discussed Lee's present works along with his previous projects *Purification of the Spirit* (1983), *Mourning for Art* (1987) and *Medical Examination of Taipei Fine Arts Museum* (1987), and proposed the term 'happening art' to describe *Lee Ming-sheng=Art*. The report also offered suggestions to the public on how to approach Lee's performance art:

this afternoon, when you pass the intersection of Chunghsiao East Road and Tunhwa South Road, there will be a weirdo calling the name 'Lee Ming-sheng' along the street. While feeling surprised by how a performance could be considered as art, why don't you stop and think about this issue.³⁶

Although the term 'weirdo' was used to describe Lee's behaviours, the fact that part of the news reports compared him with the famous performance artist Hsieh The-ching,³⁷ and the way that the report recommends to its audience to think about Lee's performances, indicates that this was a legitimisation of Lee's artistic identity and art works.

³⁵ 'Cong Xie Deqing dao Lee Ming-sheng—'biaoyan yishu' de xi yu jin' (From Xie Deqing to Lee Ming-sheng—the past and the present of performance art) Wenhua ban (Cultural Page) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 9 April 1988.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ A brief introduction of performance artist Hsieh The-ching was discussed in chapter one.



Figure 7. *Lee Ming-sheng=Art, Part I*. Lee on a ladder at the middle of intersection yelling his name.³⁸



Figure 8. *Mourning for Art, Part I*. Lee used red paint to write the words “I am an artist” to declare his identity. He walked down Tunhwa South Road waving in the style of a politician.³⁹

³⁸ Photograph: Lian Hui-ling. Provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

³⁹ Photographed by Chen Kong-gu. Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 64.

The first performance focused on the presentation of the name, and in so doing, popularized his own name 'Lee Ming-sheng', through the act of repeatedly shouting it out loud in imitation of campaigning politicians. In the course of enacting an aspiring politician's celebrity, Lee focused the public and the news media on his own name 'Lee Ming-sheng'. A similar strategy was carried out in the second and third parts of performances of the *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* series, but shifting emphasis from the spoken name to facial images and the use of the written name.

In the second performance Lee wanted to explore issues related to the facial image. On the 23rd and 30th of April in the same location, Lee placed a magnifying screen in front of his face and displayed his facial image on street without shouting his name. He stood on the street and smiled through the magnifying screen. This way of presenting his self-image was a reflection of how politicians displayed their iconic images on television, in leaflets and in street publicity to establish their identity and strengthen the public's association with their faces. According to Lee, although the form of the magnifier and the enlarged image were like a statue, the artwork nevertheless functioned like a large screen television.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Documentary on Lee Ming-sheng. *Jiefang qianwei—Huang Mingchuan jiu ling niandai yingxiang shoucang (Avant-Garde Liberation: The Huang Ming-Chuan Images Collection of the 1990s)* (Taipei: Taiwan Public Service Television Foundation, 2001).



Figure 9. *Lee Ming-sheng=Art, Part 2*. Lee Ming-sheng displayed his image with a T.V. magnifier in the form of a statue, that attracted surrounding people's attentions.⁴¹

From documentation of the artwork in *Avant-garde liberation—the Huang Ming-chuan image collection of the 1990s* (2002), the image of Lee's magnified face caught the pedestrians' immediate attention (which were in fact displayed in a very comic way). Despite feeling odd, some pedestrians approached Lee to find out how the magnified images worked and what the concept was behind the performance. However, Lee had his own interpretation of how the image was displayed. He suggested that the strategy of displaying the enlarged face was very similar to the promotion of consumer goods.

When we watch T.V., usually there will be images, texts or voice reporting president... someone so and so, just like that. So... why can't we ourselves do that? So I use a magnifier and make myself enlarged to the size of the screen, enable you to see it from afar, just like a statue.⁴²

What Lee expressed was a process of commodification of the image, name and identity, in a process summed up in the concept of the 'celebrity-commodity' that was

⁴¹ Photograph: Xiao Jia-qing. Provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

⁴² Ibid.

introduced in chapter two.⁴³ Through the display of one's image in the screen magnifier and the act of shouting one's name, images and names are transformed into recognizable products. In political campaigns, the commodified names and images can be further used in other promotional tools, such as advertisements and speeches, which are consumed by the public through supporting and voting for the particular politicians of their preferences. What concerns politicians is their charisma and capturing the vote through occupying spaces in the media and political domain. The commodification process of constructing and reinforcing image and name, offers them a means of being able to establish their political programmes and assert their values.

Lee's intention in enacting his performances was to reveal this celebritisation and commodification process. In the later years when he was interviewed by the documentary film *Avant garde liberation—the Huang Mingchuan image collection of the 1990s* (2002), he criticised his own work by saying that,

nowadays, there are many television walls, but not back then. What I was doing could be seen from far apart, just like a moving T.V. wall. Very Interesting! And a lot of people saw it, they never realized it could be so real.⁴⁴

What Lee described was a process of reflection on the experience of our daily life. When the celebritisation, commodification and commercialisation processes occur through different marketing plans and strategies, we often do not realise the effects they have on our patterns of consumption (in this case, on voting and ways of identifying with politicians) and ideological positions. In other words, through the exploration of politicians' strategy of celebritisation, Lee tried to deconstruct the process and analyse the power exerted by these public individuals.⁴⁵

⁴³ Turner, Graeme, Frances Bonner, P. David Marshall. *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2000), 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁵ As discussed previously in the late 1980s, politicians celebritised themselves through strategies that included broadcasting their names via amplifier devices, the display of their facial images on television and in public events, and through the spread of their names on leaflets, newspapers and banners placed on the street. Most aspects of these strategic promotional practices are repeatedly used by politicians in Taiwan today, and in addition, they also adopt other publicity strategies including making campaign films, advertisements, being interviewed on television programmes and so on.

In *Celebrity and Power*, David Marshall analyses how political power has been housed in contemporary culture into individualised representations. He says that, "the political leader can be expressed as an amalgam of the construction of solidarity with the mass or crowd, the expression of

In the third part of the performance that took place on the 7th and 14th of May 1988, Lee explored the ‘names written in text’ as part of the celebritisation process, in which politicians normally had their names written on newspapers, leaflets, or banners. Lee wrote his name in Chinese characters over and over again with chalk on the sidewalk at the corner of Chunghsiao East Road and Tunhwa South Road. While carrying out this performance, he dressed in distinctive clothing with a long blue slip slit down the back, exposing his backside. Unsurprisingly, Lee’s performance attracted people’s attention and a crowd formed interrupting the business in the surrounding stores. Although the owners were upset, Lee ignored them and continued with his improvised performance. As more and more people gathered, the police appeared and told Lee that he was destroying the city’s aesthetic beauty by writing words on the pavement. They asked Lee to clean up the pavement but Lee replied, “how can I clean it up without any water?”. He then pulled up his skirt to urinate. This action enraged the policemen who exclaimed, “you are sick!”. They then grabbed Lee and shoved him into the police car.



Figure 10. *Lee Ming-sheng=Art, Part 3*. Lee was writing his name over and over again on the sidewalk of Chunghsiao East road and Tunhwa South Road.⁴⁶

familiarity with an audience, and the expression of an aura of distinction and differentiation”. Through the various promotional strategies that the politicians conduct, they attempt to construct a functioning form of public subjectivity that will be recognised by the public and thus sustain their celebrity power.

⁴⁶ Photograph: Lin Guo-zhang. Provided by Lee Ming-sheng.



Figure 11. *Lee Ming-sheng=Art, Part 3*. Lee Ming-sheng was grabbed by policemen, shoved into the car and took back to the police station.⁴⁷

After Lee was taken back to the police station, he attempted to discuss the topic of self-promotion and identity with the policemen.⁴⁸ He tried to ask the policemen to shout out their own names and he said to the policemen that through such acts, they could have a better understanding of their own existence and identity.⁴⁹ In later years Lee made some criticisms of his intentions and how he thought that the conservative nature of society at the time made people afraid of expressing themselves.

Men are so weird. There are times you want to be famous, but when it comes to reality you would then get shy. What are you afraid of? I don't get it. Is it a patent for politicians or some kind of product to shout out the names? I have been thinking about that. Maybe it has political or some kind of merchandised meanings. You know

⁴⁷ Photograph: Chen Kong-gu. Provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

⁴⁸ Documentary on Lee Ming-sheng. *Jiefang qianwei—Huang Mingchuan jiuling niandai yingxiang shoucang* (*Avant-Garde Liberation: The Huang Ming-Chuan Images Collection of the 1990s*) (Taipei: Taiwan Public Service Television Foundation, 2001).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Chunghsiao East Road, it's a very commercialised district. To perform the project in places like that, it shows the contrasts, their distinction.⁵⁰

Lee's comments about people's desire for fame remind us of what Leo Braudy pointed out in his article 'The Dream of Acceptability' in which he examines the ideology of fame and its historical engagement.

At its best, the urge to fame is a desire for recognition and appreciation that is interwoven with the nature of the human community, both socially valuable and personal enriching, beyond the rewards of comfort and status, in a worth inseparable from good opinion of others. The urge for fame, one recent aspirant has said, is 'the dirty secret'.⁵¹

In Braudy's analysis, the desire for fame is part of human nature and community, even though it is often hidden or even denied. Although this thesis has been suggesting that fame and celebrity are largely constructed by social, economic, political and cultural forces, Braudy's views are nevertheless helpful, as we shall see more clearly in the next few case studies. For Lee, fame is something that any individual can desire, but somehow people—especially in Taiwan where people were oppressed for so long under the white terror—were afraid of showing their interest in fame. While political figures have appropriate reasons to publicise themselves for recognition in order to advance their political or economic purposes, ordinary people's desire for fame and celebrity remains dormant. The fact that Lee chose to use different communication tools to depict the aspiring politician's celebrityisation strategy also corresponded to Braudy's view that, "As the media of communications covers more of the world and take up more time in the day, to be famous means to be

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Braudy, Leo. 'Conclusion: The Dream of Acceptability'. *The Frenzy of the Renown: Fame and Its History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1986), 592.

The idea of human desire for fame and celebrity can also be examined from a psychoanalytical angle. Chris Rojek notes that, "Freud held that creative artists are chiefly motivated by the desire to achieve fame, wealth and sexual fulfilment". This is due to the fact that, generally speaking, "celebrities are richer than ordinary people, possess greater opportunities for sexual liaisons with attractive partners, have more power to evade the intrusions of the law, and, for the most part, move about more easily in society." (147) On the other hand, the human desire for attention, can also be examined from a psychoanalytical approach. Rojek points out that the classical psychoanalytic theory locates the seat of desire in the unconscious. "Leaving aside the question of genetic influence, psychoanalytic theory maintains that the archetypal social relationship of desire is the dialogic bond between child and parent. Further, the child's transition to viable adulthood depends on the successful transference of desire onto a significant other, typically in the form of romantic love." Chris Rojek, *Celebrity*, (2001), 188

talked about. *Fama* flies through the skies once more”.⁵² The strong engagement between our daily lives and the various communication systems, including film, television, magazines, newspapers and other popular cultural products, which give us entertainment provides the stimulus and the means for talking and gossiping about those adored celebrity figures who are now so ubiquitous in our everyday lives.

Lee’s descriptions of the public’s desire for fame, I argue, are also a self-reflexive engagement with his own experience of fame. As I have already pointed out, he was presented by the media as an agitator. It was hard for him to free himself from the humiliation he received from newspaper commentaries. Even so, Lee’s artistic achievements and in the particular the *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* project were gradually affirmed and received more positive coverage. Nevertheless, for Lee even though he was recognised as a legitimate artist, his position as an agitator could not be left behind entirely, especially as the police continued to take a special interest in his activities.

Lee’s condition of being an agitator can also be seen in the last three parts of the project *Lee Ming-sheng=Art*, in which Lee changed his focus to explore the bureaucracy of art museums as another area of representation for politicians. Instead of interpreting their celebritisation and commodification strategies, Lee challenged their institutional power and their relationship to artists. In those three performances, Lee presented himself again as an agitator who intervened in different events at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. In 9th July 1988, Lee participated the opening ceremonies held for an international art exhibition, *Dada’s World* (1988), where he unexpectedly urinated and defecated in the exhibition hall. Lee dedicated the specific performance to Dadaism.⁵³ His following performance was carried out during a conference of Dadaism where he was prepared to discuss issues on the topic of Dadaism, art and education with the museum’s director Kuang-nan Huang. When it appeared that the director Huang would not appear, Lee faced the main entrance to the museum and shouted Huang’s name over and over again for an hour. He then took a photograph of Huang from his pocket and said, “Huang Kuang-nan has arrived”; and he talked to

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Lee, Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 70-71.

the photo, “let us please discuss the relationship between Dadaism, art and education”.⁵⁴ Such behaviour resulted in Lee being taken away by the museum’s security guards. Finally, the last part of the entire series of the project was an event in which Lee tried to bring excrement to the panel discussion on Dadaism conference, but the guards at the entrance confiscated it.

These performances reinforced Lee’s image as an agitator, and also caused the museum to consider him as a ‘headache’.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in such performances Lee received both positive and negative responses from local and international figures in art field.⁵⁶ Some scholars, including the art historian Stefan Foster from the University of Iowa and other scholars from the International Dada Archive, who attended the Dadaism conference, partly agreed with Lee’s performance; but they also criticised him for not having been more self-reflexive in thinking about what he could learn from his own performances.⁵⁷ In contrast, the director Huang had a different opinion. “It’s good to see these responses that mean some people are interested in the exhibition; but artists should be responsible for their behaviour, which needed to be more forward-looking.”⁵⁸

Although Lee was gradually recognised as a legitimate artist through constantly making performance art projects, his unremitting status as an agitator can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, his form of public performance art in the late 1980s that depended on bodily interventions, was shocking and frightening to people in Taiwan who had suffered under a long-term state of repression. In these circumstances, although Lee’s performance art projects were endowed with artistic meanings that the artist wanted to communicate with the public, these meanings were hard to see behind his maverick behaviour. On the other hand, his status as an agitator represented the fact that, as a celebrity in the late 1980s, Lee had no power to control

⁵⁴ Ibid., 70-71.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 70-71.

⁵⁶ ‘*Taipei de Dada bei wuran le*’ (The Dada in Taipei was polluted) *Lianhe wanbao* (United Daily) Page 8, 24 July 1988.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

the use of his own image and the discourses that occurred around the construction of his celebrity. As we discussed previously, this is the characteristic that an accidental celebrity tends to display. Their celebrity status is spotted, constructed and consumed by the mass media, in order to produce interesting and fresh news materials for audiences. Lee and his performance art projects were presumably one of the more interesting stories to be reported because they were distinct from the other, more serious art news on artists, art works and exhibitions.

Nevertheless, when Lee's artistic identity and performance art projects were acknowledged by the public and media they were seen as closely connected with political issues; since 1989, after the project *Lee Ming-sheng=Art*, Lee shifted the focus of his performance art. Critic Huang Haiming observed this change in the following description:

When intervention must involve some violent incidents, Lee Ming-sheng stopped using overtly violent intervention in 1989. He stated that the over use of violence would cause people to suspect that he was protesting just for the sake of protesting; that he was arbitrarily denying fixed social value. In addition, as the political situation begins to open up and people begin to criticize both society and politics, Lee does not need to be as outspoken in his protests.⁵⁹

Lee turned his focus to the issue of human beings and their relation to the nature. Instead of exploring the social and bodily conflicts, he focused on the broader environment, such as the forest and nature's relation to the human soul. Starting from 1989, he started to present such works included *Gratefulness Trees* (Installations, March 1989), *The Relationship between Nature and Human Moods* (Installations, April 1989), *Tree Person* (Installation, May 1989), *Double Bed* (Installation, June 1989), *Sculpture Without Form* (Installation, May 1990), *The Taipei Sky Paints Itself* (Installation, January 1991) and others. The forms of his creativity also broadened out from performance art works to include installations, and his displays were also moved from public spaces to art galleries. Interestingly, the transformation of Lee's artistic focus influenced his public image, and the reports on his art projects shifted to the focus on the artistic performances. It was not until 1993, that Lee became a major

⁵⁹ Huang Haiming. 'Criticism and Redemption: A discussion of Lee Ming-sheng's work'. Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (Taipei: Tonsun Publication Company, 1995), 22.

presence in Taiwanese society, after it began to be affected by global trends in artistic activity, and in particular, the phenomena of the biennales.

‘National Hero’ Status and the Venice Biennale

In 1993, Lee experienced one of the most influential transformations of both his artistic career and public image, which coincided with the development of the global art world. Global art activities, especially biennales, were revamped and funded in an unprecedented scale in the 1990s.⁶⁰ Stallabrass asserts that the art world at this time had a sanguine view of biennales.

The linear, singular, white, and masculine principles of modernism have finally fallen, to be replaced by a multiple, diverse, rainbow-hued, fractally complex proliferation of practices and discourses.⁶¹

Within the globalised art world, cultural difference not only became a marketable value, but also become a tool to display local cultural difference.⁶² The construction of the global biennale mechanism was stimulated by forces including the global trade of art works, corporate interests in art and the development of modern cities. Stallabrass quotes a statement made by influential curator, Hou Hanrou.

These new global cities represent the erection of new economic, cultural, and even political powers which are bringing about a new world order and new visions for the planet. What is the most important thing is that with their own specific legacies, these cities became new and original spaces in which new visions and understandings out

⁶⁰ Julian Stallabrass. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33.

The establishment of biennales around the world include: Havana Biennial in 1984, Sharjah Biennial in United Arab Emirates in 1993, Kwangju in South Korea in 1995, Johannesburg Biennale in 1995, Shanghai Biennale in 1996 (founded 1996, opened to international artists in 2000), Berlin Biennale in 1998, Yokohama Triennial in 2001, and Prague in 2003.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶² Stallabrass discusses the participation of artists in biennales from the third world with reference to Jean Fisher’s argument, that “the key problem is no longer invisibility but rather an excess visibility that comes about because cultural difference has become so readily marketable”. Information from Stallabrass (2004), 35; and Jean Fisher, quoted in Kobena Mercer, ‘Ethnicity and Internationality: New British art and Diaspora-Based Blackness’, *Third Text*. no. 49, Winter 1999-2000, 51-62.

Modernity, and new possibilities of ‘Utopian/dystopian’ imagination, can be elaborated and reinvented.⁶³

When the cities holding the biennales ‘reinvent’ themselves as distinctive new spaces promising new global visions, the exhibition curators, participating artists and their art works are all endowed with powerful economic, cultural and political functions. The curator has to select the appropriate exhibition themes, artists and art works, in order to present a new vision for the city and the global art world. In the process of holding the biennale, the city uses elements including architectural constructions, forms of cultural heritage, and the other entertainment activities to attract visitors. Thus, the success of a biennale is not only judged by name of the curator, the well organized exhibition, the participating artists and artworks, but also the number of visitors to the exhibitions, the city, and overall economic activity that the whole event generates.

However, in terms of the participating artists, there are important questions to ask including how local artists can be involved in such a global event, what their roles are in the global biennale, and what the event means to them and their representative countries. These questions can be discussed with reference to Lee’s example. As the first Taiwanese artist who was invited to participate in the Venice Biennale in 1993, Lee not only was empowered by the social and cultural significance of being a ‘national hero’, but also opened the door to the global art field to Taiwanese artists.

Lee’s participation in the Venice Biennale can be traced to his 1991 exhibition *Paper is an Extension of Trees, Human Life is an Extension of Paper* held at Dimensions Art Centre in Taipei.⁶⁴ This exhibition was one of his first projects to

⁶³ Ibid., 36-37.

Hou Hanrou, interviewed in Frankie Sirmans, ‘Johannesburg Biennale: Meet the Curators of “Trade Routes: History and Geography”’, *Flash Art*, Vol. 30, no. 190, October 1997, 78-82.

⁶⁴ Information provided by Lee Ming-sheng in the interview in April 2010. Dimensions Art Centre (帝門藝術中心) was a private art gallery established in 198 in Taipei. It exhibits and trade contemporary Taiwan and international art works, and devotes itself as an important platform for artistic communication between the national and international arts. In 2005, the Dimension Arts Centre established a new branch in Beijing. Since 2008, the gallery changed the name to Chen Ling Hui Contemporary Space (陳綾蕙當代空間). Since November 2009, when news reports about Chen Ling-hui’s suicide was released, the space did not host any exhibition. Information from Chen Ling Hui Contemporary Space website: <http://gallery.artron.net/unit/index.php?gid=ORG00007>. Accessed 16 Sept 2010.

be exhibited in a commercial gallery space and consisted of paper ‘tree trunks’ rolled out of what resembled discarded computer paper. Lee mixed his blood with red acrylic to form red paint and applied it layer by layer to the ‘paper tree trunks’ symbolizing the bloodshed of the trees after they are cut down. This particular series of art works was initially placed in a decimated forest to show the contrast between nature and human interventions in nature.⁶⁵

According to Lee, during the time when this exhibition was on display he went to the gallery to document his works where he came across a group of people. Among them were one or two artists who Lee was familiar with, and he said hello to them. One of his friends said, “Lee Ming-sheng, let me introduce you to an art critic from Italy”.⁶⁶ Lee said hello to the Italian art critic and had a conversation with him. Lee sensed that the critic liked his works. There was also another group in the gallery who asked questions about Lee’s works. Lee was more than delighted to know that they were interested, gave each of them an exhibition catalogue and explained to them the concepts behind some of the individual works. It was not until they all left the gallery that Lee’s friend told him that the Italian art critic was Achille Bonito Oliva, a highly recognised and respected contemporary Italian art critic.⁶⁷ During Bonito Oliva’s stay in Taiwan, he visited more than 10 young artists and viewed their works, and he seemed to be impressed by Lee’s art works. Dramatically, sometime later, Lee was selected for the ‘Aperto 93’ section of the 45th Venice Biennale, with Bonito Oliva as the curator of the exhibition.⁶⁸

In my interview with Lee, I tried to ask about the process of how he became the first Taiwanese artist to be selected for such a highly recognised international event. Lee responded that he wasn’t sure. He tried to recall the moment when Bonito Oliva and his group visited the gallery, and told me that he ‘guessed’ it was because

⁶⁵ Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 121.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶⁷ Achille Bonito Oliva has curated thematic and interdisciplinary exhibitions both in Italy and abroad, including ‘Contemporanea’, ‘Aperto 80’, ‘Avanguardia transavanguardia’, ‘Arte e depressione’, and ‘Minimalia’. Oliva was the director of the 45th Venice Biennale (1993), and was awarded several prizes, such as the Valentino d’Oro, an international prize for art critics.

⁶⁸ Wu Mali. *Artist Magazine*. Issue 152, 1993.

the exhibition impressed them.⁶⁹ What Lee described here was an obvious sign of affirmation; but it is worth asking what specific characteristics in Lee's art works represented Taiwanese culture in the international context of the Venice Biennale.

The main theme for this biennale was 'The Cardinal Points of Art', selected by the curator Bonito Oliva, who commented that "rather than imposing a restrictive critical approach," the theme was selected as a way of acknowledging "cultural nomadism and the coexistence of the languages that have formed contemporary art".⁷⁰ Such a theme was wide enough to cover artworks from any nation, with works on almost any topics. It was "a typical theme for a biennale" in Julian Stallabrass's view, "since it could be stretched to include just about everything and thus meant very nearly nothing".⁷¹ Additionally, the sub-theme for the 'Aperto 93' was 'Emergenza' (meaning emergency) and aimed to show the latest trends in art about landscape.⁷² While Bonito Oliva selected Lee's work, it was his political strategy of using the artist and artworks to accomplish his own curatorial aims, in order to allow the whole exhibition to function well. Lee's work, throughout his artistic career, constantly engaged political, social and cultural aspects of the Taiwanese environment, spanning his early political concerns to his more recent focus on human nature. Suitably, the works and the topics fitted well into the main theme 'The Cardinal Points of Art' and the sub-theme of 'Aperto 93—Emergenza' in the 1993 Venice Biennale, and in so doing represented the Taiwanese artist's perspective.

According to the above consideration, Lee was selected for political and cultural reasons. Nevertheless, the process of his selection into the exhibition was not as simple as it looked, but involved a drawn out series of proposal examinations, financial problems and political issues. Although Lee was invited to participate in the event, he still needed to propose art projects to be nominated into the exhibition in

⁶⁹ Interview with Lee Ming-sheng in April 2010.

⁷⁰ Carol Vogel, 'The Venice Biennale: An Art Bazaar Abuzz', *New York Times*, June 12, 1993.

⁷¹ Julian Stallabrass shares a similar view with the use of those words to discuss the theme 'Trace' in Liverpool Biennale in 1999. Information from, Julian Stallabrass. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (2004), 31.

⁷² Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 248.

the following selection phase. He described the difficulty of the whole process in which his work was rejected for many times and finally accepted for nomination. In between the proposal and the rejection, he needed to make full use of the time difference between Taiwan and Italy in order to develop new concepts and translate them into English, and fax them to the examination board in Italy.⁷³ Successful, he was finally selected into the exhibition as one of the eighty artists that were picked up from hundreds of thousands. As Lee describes:

Worldwide, the number of young artists invited to participate was limited to less than one hundred, so I was indeed fortunate to receive this distinctive honour. Inside I could not help but somewhat excited, but in addition to excitement there were the inescapable worries of construction costs, living in an unfamiliar place, communicating, buying materials, and my artistic technique.⁷⁴

However, even though he was honoured, he was also anxious about his financial situation. At the time, Lee realised that his own financial situation was not able to support the construction costs and the journeys to Italy. Lee prepared a list of detailed documents, including Chinese and English versions of letters, newspaper cuttings (an article introducing the importance of this exhibition to the world art stage and his receiving an invitation to participate in it), the details of his project proposal, and a list of construction costs expenses, and tried to get sponsorships from the government of Taiwan, and several public and private foundations. The sponsorship from Taiwan's government was very small and he still wasn't able to make the trip. (Lee refused to reveal the amount of money that he got from the government). The replies from foundations were not very encouraging. "This foundation is limited to only certain types of individuals and expense budgets. I am sorry but we cannot help you".⁷⁵ Eventually, he could only mortgage his house, took out interest-free loans of two thousand Taiwanese dollars from the Dimensions Art Gallery, and borrow from his friends.⁷⁶

⁷³ Interview with Lee Ming-sheng in April 2010.

⁷⁴ Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 163.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁷⁶ Interview with Lee Ming-sheng in April 2010.

Nevertheless in the same biennale, in contrast to the Taiwanese government's neglect, other participating countries had their own pavilion and representative artists, and strove to establish marked differences between themselves and other nations. In the process of representing their own culture, many of the countries made an effort to "dispel clichés about national distinctions, many countries have selected artists from elsewhere to represent them".⁷⁷ Such as the United States, who chose the French-born artist Louise Bourgeois to be the representative; and Germany, who chose Hans Haacke, the German-born artist who has been an American citizen for years, and Nam June Paik, who is Korean-born but lives in New York, as representatives artists. In great contrast to the other countries which respectively used artists from different nationalities in a strategy to 'dispel clichés about national distinctions'. The nation of Taiwan, while attempting to gain international status at the time, somehow neglected the importance of the event.

In the early 1990s, the government of Taiwan worked hard to improve its international position, and to compensate for its withdrawal from the United Nations in 1971, which the Taiwanese government saw as a deliberate marginalization arising from its unclear relationship with China.⁷⁸ Since then, Taiwan strove to rejoin the United Nations. While the nation's focus remained on this political objective, it seems that the government did not realize that such a cultural event could construct and reinforce its positive global image. Or it could also be presumed that with such strong economic development in Taiwan at the time, cultural development was rendered relatively insignificant, which might have lead to the government's neglect of the importance of cultural developments in both the national and international context. Nevertheless, having said that, the extent of the influence on Taiwan's international reputation through participating in the Venice Biennale is yet to be evaluated, and will be considered toward the end of this chapter.

Since Lee raised enough funding for his artwork's construction materials and the trip to Italy, he was the first to arrive at the exhibition site and he started to

⁷⁷ Vogel, Carol. 'The Venice Biennale: An Art Bazaar Abuzz', *New York Times*, June 12, 1993.

⁷⁸ The background of Taiwan's political relationship with China and its international status was discussed in chapter one.

prepare for his performance and artworks over a period of two months.⁷⁹ Prior to his main art performance, there was an open pre-show for the global media on the 9th of June 1993, in which Lee caught the attention of the global media. He appeared as a bald, tidily dressed figure wearing a suit, a green cardigan and a circular Styrofoam section on his neck similar to a tree ring (made with computer paper) that he used in the main work. With a plastic can and a piece of Styrofoam he made a beating noise along the street until he entered into the exhibition hall. A friend walked behind, dragging a long list of rubbish composed of discarded bottles and cans. They walked from his residence to the other countries' pavilions and finally entered the exhibition hall. He then took off the clothes and prayed with mantra while he walked around the main work of the platform—the computer tree ring. He then used the blood to pour over his head and body, and lay on the ground looking pained. Then he stood up, wiped his body and the pre-show ended.⁸⁰



Figure 12. Pre-show performance, *Fireball or Circle*. Venice.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Lee, Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 164.

⁸⁰ Wu Mali. *Artist Magazine*. Issue 152, 1993.

⁸¹ Photograph by Nakahara Hiroshi (中原浩大). Provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

Lee's open pre-show impressed the journalists and audience members in both positive and negative ways. While most of the mass media focused on praising Lee as the first Taiwanese artist to participate in the Venice Biennale, such as the publication *Artist Magazine* who described that "indeed [Lee] stole the show",⁸² a Venice newspaper made a negative criticism.

Clearly, some performances were made in order to surprise the audience more than being meaningful and convincing ideas. The performance made by Lee Ming-sheng from China was one example of such bad practices. He installed a huge roll of bundled computer print papers and painted it red. Yesterday, the exhibition had a metamorphic ending, Lee came to the site with a line of cans tied to his body... Body art (performance art) like this would better do less. Then one might imagine the next step, of becoming an ascetic person, a magician playing with snakes, or the fireeater.⁸³

This particular passage shows the typical way the global media at this time often confused Taiwan with China, and thus reflects the marginal position of Taiwan on the international scene, as discussed in chapter one.

Although Lee's open performance did not win over the Venetian media, it certainly caught some global attention. Lee's main performance was named *Fireball or Circle*, which took place in a space surrounded by three-side walls painted green, with a horizontal cylinder volume platform (represented the three rings) made by computer papers (represented a product of trees, trees are a symbol of nature). Lee poured red acrylic paint on the surface of the cylinder computer papers.⁸⁴ He then prayed with a mantra beside the platform and was only dressed with green underpants. After this he stood above on a platform, again and again pouring blood (his own blood and a cow's mixed with sorghum liquor) on his head and over his body. Eventually he laid into the arm of the injured earth with blood streaming over his body.⁸⁵ With the blood, the green walls, the body and the smell (of blood), Lee

⁸² Ni, Zaiqin, *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban* (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art—the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine) (2005), 248.

⁸³ di Enrich Tantucci. 'Una granda folla accende la biennale'. *Le idee*.
Own translation on the newspaper article provided by Lee Ming-sheng. .

⁸⁴ For Lee, computers are a symbol of man's economic society and civilization. Computers are also slaughtering the forests as a new weapon against old-growth forests.

⁸⁵ For Lee blood is like "the blood of the forest, of endangered species of animals, and of humans. Blood is a type of human violence, politics, power, and conquest. Blood is a beast of burden of

attempted to express his anger and dismay toward the human violence on the ecological environment. Lee described his thoughts on the performance,

to act it out is a type of funeral ceremony, it is my father's funeral ceremony. To act it out is to atone for the crimes against endangered species, forests, nature and ecology. To act it out is an active expression of my attitude toward life and the environment.⁸⁶



Figure 13. Lee's installation work *Fireball and Circle*.⁸⁷

sacrificial ceremonies. Blood is used to expiate man's crimes." From Lee Ming-sheng, *My Body My Art: Lee Ming-Sheng 1981-1995*. (1995), 154.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 154.

⁸⁷ Photographed and provided by Lee Ming-sheng.



Figure 14. Lee performing *Fireball and Circle* while the audience watched.⁸⁸

Although, as mentioned, in the pre-show Lee had received some negative comments from the local newspaper, there were other global media interviews about his creative concepts included in *Flash Art Daily*.⁸⁹ In these reports Lee's works were criticized along with those of other participating artists, including Louis Bourgeois, Antoni Tapies, Georges Zongopoulos, Nam Jun Paik, Yoko Ono, Frantisek Skala, Jean-Pierre Raynaud, Jean-frederic schnyder trasmuta, Hlungwane e Sandra kiel, Oliviero Toscani, Gianffranco Gorgoni, Enzo Cucchi, Kounellis and Emilio Vedova, Lee's association with such an elevated group of artists effectively established and legitimized his international renown.⁹⁰

Back in Taiwan, Lee received an enormous amount of praise, especially from art magazines and news reports. These reports started prior to the actual exhibition. *Artist Magazine*⁹¹ had already published two articles in the delicate pages of 'Special

⁸⁸ Photographed by Chen Chang-hua. Provided by Lee Ming-sheng.

⁸⁹ *Flash Art Daily: Daily Newspaper at the XLV Venice Biennale*. 11th June 1993.

⁹⁰ However, in the early 1990s, Lee was constantly named as an artist from China. The unclear political situation of Taiwan resulted in unclear international status for artists from Taiwan.

⁹¹ *Artist Magazine* was established in 1975 and published monthly in the areas of Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and places in Asia and Europe. Besides the monthly magazines, it also publishes art books.

Reports' in the April issue. One was an introductory report by the editors of the magazine, and the other one was written by Lee himself about his preparation for the exhibition. In the June issue there were six articles dedicated to the Venice Biennale; in the July issue there were 10 articles; and in the August issue 9 articles appeared as 'tracking reports' on the Biennale. This strategy of publishing the reports created a 'marathon' effect, which attempted to draw people's attention continuously along with Lee's exhibition and the Venice Biennale.⁹² In total, from June to August 1993, there were 27 articles published by the *Artist Magazine* devoted to Lee's performances and the Biennale event. Besides the *Artist Magazine*, there were also reports and articles from other magazines included *Lion Art Magazine*, *Artima Magazine*, and *Dragon Art Monthly*.⁹³ The exceptional flourishes of the media concerns was described by author and scholar Ni Zaiqin.

The media reports on the Venice Biennale were unprecedented. There was never such an exhibition that the publishers sent out so much manpower and resources to do tracking reports for so many months. It was like a marathon. We can compare the amount of reports with the German Documenta in 1992. At that time, the news media, *Artist Magazine* and other magazines were only produced small-scale reports. Whereas the reports on the Venice Biennale published in the *Artist Magazine* already totalled more than all the media reports on Documenta.⁹⁴

The reasons for such media hype can be linked to both objective and subjective circumstances. On the objective side, firstly, the historical status of Venice Biennial on the international art scene played a key role, and in particular 1993 was considered by the board members of the Venice Biennale as the pre-100-year anniversary celebration.⁹⁵ Secondly, the advanced development of media technology prompted competition between media agencies, in which individual media agencies wanted to make the first-hand reports. Thirdly, and most importantly, Lee's participation in the

⁹² News and material collections were carried out in the National Central Library during my research trips in Taiwan between 2006-2007.

⁹³ Ni, Zaiqin, *Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art – the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine (Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban)* (2005), 248.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 248-9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 248-9.

global art event internationalized Taiwanese art, and thus had a profound effect on the amount of local media coverage.

The subjective effects of the media phenomenon were mainly caused by Taiwanese people's identification with Lee's achievement in the global arena. After Lee returned to Taiwan from Italy, he received various comments and questions such as, "This time you represented Taiwan, and your work was very successful", "I feel that already you are gradually becoming the property of Taiwan", and "Before, your work was relegated to the fringe, but this time your work was so successful. Do you fear that you will be sucked into the system?" Alongside the affirmative comments made by the public, *Artist Magazine* bestowed him as a 'nation hero' (*minzu yingxiong*),

Lee had become a national hero and was widely praised and admired, as well as becoming a prime target for mass media reports.⁹⁶

Interestingly, according to Lee, though he was praised by the media, some people from the Taiwanese art world marginalized him, and did not agree with his work and achievements.⁹⁷ Without explaining the reasons more precisely in my interview with him, one might speculate that it could possibly have been due to jealousy and the so-called 'illegitimacy' of Lee's earlier artistic career, or due to disagreements with Lee's artistic concepts. However, people's various comments showed the effects of becoming a celebrity, in the way that both positive and negative judgements were made easily by the public on his behaviour and achievements.

Lee Ming-sheng's Political and Cultural Significance as 'National Hero'

The empowerment of Lee as a 'national hero' emphasized his cultural and political significance in Taiwan at a specific moment. Culturally, Lee opened the door for Taiwanese artists to participate in international art events. Two years later in 1995, Taiwan participated the Venice Biennale with its own pavilion. This was not only a great movement culturally, but politically Taiwan could use the name of the

⁹⁶ Ibid., 250.

⁹⁷ Interview with Lee Ming-sheng in April 2010.

nation to join such a popular global art event, as opposed to what happened in Lee's example in 1993 when he was constantly referred to as a Chinese artist. The particular cultural moment also included the raise of global biennales in the 1990s as an international phenomenon that, with support of art institutions, organizations and business sponsorships, stimulated the global flow of capital and cultural products. The mechanism of how this works—as suggested by Julian Stallabrass—can be observed in the exhibition catalogue.

The catalogue lists the biennial's sponsors and contributing organisations, which included business local academic institutions and art board, national arts council, and state bodies promoting cultural abroad, such as the Goethe Institute. This mix was telling of the kind of alliance that a biennale produces: businesses, large and small, wanting to boost their brand recognition; nations pushing their cultural products; regional bodies hoping for regeneration; and universities wanting to raise their research ratings.⁹⁸

This particular cultural moment, with all sorts of factors acquired by different organisations and business, lead to the popularity and global importance of biennales beyond the art world, and continues on to this day. Lee's celebrity status as a 'national hero' was closely tied to a particular political moment when Taiwan was attempting to gain a global status, even though the importance of the biennale was not recognised by the government at the first stage. Later it successfully utilized Lee's international experiences and established a pavilion in the Venice Biennale in 1995, called 'Taiwan Pavilion'.

The above political and cultural as well as economic factors combined in Lee's participation in the Venice Biennale in 1993, and lead to his celebritisation as a 'national hero'. The use of the term 'hero' is endowed with the meaning of a 'representative man'. Film scholar James Monaco, in his edited book *Celebrity*, expands the lexicon of public personalities. The first of his categories is the 'hero', which he defines as a famous person who has actually done something in an active sense. His second category is the more passive 'celebrity', who is acted upon by the media and constructed into an appropriate icon.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, figures like Lee, who

⁹⁸ Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33.

⁹⁹ Monaco, James. *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers*, (New York: Delta, 1978).

actively achieved his global renown with his outstanding artistic performances and installations, is also a product constructed into the icon of a ‘national hero’ by the media. Insofar as the contemporary meaning of ‘hero’ is here blurred between the two definitions proposed by Monaco, I suggest that in the current mediated world in which we live, it would be almost impossible for an individual to be considered a remarkable public figure without the role of the mass media.

Conclusion

The celebrity images of Lee shaped in the two stages I have analysed above reflect different moments in Taiwan’s political, social and cultural life in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They also show the shift in the government’s attitude towards the use of artistic activities for political purposes. In the 1980s, when martial law was lifted, the government still treated artistic creativity as an individualistic expression of ideas that were potentially subversive and therefore threatening to its political controls. This attitude was clear when Lee was deprived of his freedom in the project *Non-Line* (1986) and when he was taken to the police station for performing *Lee Ming-sheng=Art* (1988). By 1993, in contrast, Lee’s success in participating the Venice Biennale indicated the feasibility of using art to consolidate Taiwan’s national image on the global scene. It was indeed a political breakthrough for the government in its attempt to publicise its global status as a nation state. Public identification with Lee Ming-sheng as a national hero was a significant factor in making this possible.

The government utilised Lee’s experience in the 1993 global biennale and established a ‘Taiwan Pavilion’ in the following Venice Biennale in 1995. This was the government’s first legitimate cultural opportunity to use the global stage to present itself as a nation. Since then, Taiwan has been involved in numerous global art activities, and has hosted its own Taipei Biennale at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (the TFAM) since 1996. Through hosting such international art exhibitions, the government has been able to draw global attention to the Taiwanese art scene and its social, cultural and political impact.

Lee Ming-sheng's art performance as the first Taiwanese artist in the Venice Biennale not only allowed him to play a significant role in promoting the nation's participation in global art activities, but it also pushed his artistic career onto the international art scene. In later years, he became an artist who exhibited widely in Japan, Italy and Germany.¹⁰⁰ In the process, Lee's artistic focus and desire for fame shifted from drawing the public's attention to his subversive performance art and installations to global recognition. This shift of focus transformed him from a local celebrity artist to an international artist. Since then, although Lee's artistic career has continued to develop internationally, his celebrity status in Taiwan has gradually waned as the media spotlight has moved away from him as a crazy man or agitator, or as a national hero. Nonetheless, Lee's contribution to Taiwan's cultural and political development has not faded, and his place in Taiwan's recent art history is widely acknowledged. In the recent years, when reports about him have appeared in the mass media, journalists refer to his early celebrity image with phrases like "crazy man Lee Ming-sheng is back", as a way of acknowledging his breakthrough in performance art in 1980s Taiwan.¹⁰¹ This is in slight contrast to Chris Rojek's point about the 'fleeting' character of fame and celebrity, as discussed in chapter two.¹⁰² In Lee Ming-sheng's case, although the media focus has shifted away from his performance art and his iconic image, his public image is sustained as a serious and significant contributor to Taiwan's art scene and political status. This high point of his celebrity status may have past, but his achievements still live on for their cultural and political influence. A similar situation can be observed in artist Tang Huang-chen's case, as I discuss in chapter six, for although her public image and name faded from the media, the cultural standing that she gained in the celebritisation process has sustained a highly successful career. In both cases, the often 'fleeting'

¹⁰⁰ The projects that Lee presented abroad included *After the Fire Ball* in Yokohoma Portside Gallery in 1994, Japan; *Red* in the exhibition in Venezia in 1995, Italy; *Triennial Small Plastic* in Stuttgart in 1995, Germany; and the other projects.

¹⁰¹ In her news report in August 2007, journalist Chen Shuying talks about Lee's new art project with the use of phrases: "crazy man Lee Ming-sheng is back", and explained that, "in the early years when performance art was not recognised by the public, Lee Ming-sheng was often accused of being a crazy man". Information from: Chen, Shuying. 'Jilie tuibian, 'fengzi' Lee Mingsheng you mifang' (Radical transformation, 'crazy man' Lee Ming-sheng has secret recipe) *Yiwen xinwen* (Art and Cultural News) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 23 August 2007.

¹⁰² Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Book, 2001), 9.

character of the public celebrity is modified by their substantial and widely acknowledged achievement.

Chapter Four

Chu Cha-ray: From Celebrity Artist to Celebrity Entertainer



Figure 15. Artist Chu Cha-ray poses herself in front of the self-portrait paints that show herself in different characters, representing the different aspects of her inner-self.¹

Chu Cha-ray (曲家瑞) first became a celebrity in Taiwan in 2004 as an artist and university teacher, with a reputation as a fashionable independent woman representing new kinds of social values in Taiwan. Later on and particularly after 2006, her celebrity status became increasingly associated with her public image as a cultural commentator, academic and entertainer. This chapter follows the trajectory of Chu's celebrity status, beginning with the early stage of her career in 2004 when she was widely known as a 'hot female professor' (*mala nu jiaoshou*). It examines how the changing forms of her image have been shaped through discursive elements such as media texts, interviews and her publications, often focussing on her style of

¹ Photograph from internet website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/22745980@N00/71437991/>. Accessed 5 July 2010.

dress and public self-presentation. Media and commercial interests in her have contributed to a shift in her celebrity status from ‘hot female professor’ to ‘new modern woman’ in recent years. However, apart from the early stages of her career, her celebrity reputation has been built up more with reference to her popular appearances than to her work as an artist.

Chu’s early fame as an ‘accidental celebrity’² shares some similarities with artist Lee Ming-sheng. The transformations in their media profiles produced shifts in the interests and audiences associated with their roles as celebrities, altering the social, cultural and political significance of their images. However, while, as we have seen, Lee’s celebrity status was closely tied to the larger cultural and political context of the early post-martial law period, Chu’s rise to celebrity stems from a combination of her desire for fame, the force of her personality, media and business interests.

In the process of Chu’s celebritisation, her image and media presence also constantly focused on her gender attributes. This not only echoes a similar focus in her art practice, but also the ways in which she expresses her individuality in her publications, public presentations, life-style and manner of dress. These elements, in addition to her work as an artist and curator, have made Chu’s fame a unique product that businesses have taken up in cooperating with her to hold exhibitions in order to reinforce their brand images. In the process, Chu has also been able to establish herself as a brand, helping to generate further business interests and media coverage of her private life and thoughts. This thesis argues that the gendered characteristics of Chu’s celebrity persona are aspects of her calculated decisions to present herself as, a counterforce to conventional cultural values about womanhood in Taiwan.

The ‘Hot Female Professor’

The early emergence of Chu’s celebrity status was very similar to artist Lee’s. Both were reported in the media while they were unknown artists, and quickly acquired

² Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 21.

fame as ‘accidental celebrities’.³ Unlike Lee who acquired fame through his distinctive performance art in public spaces that were strongly connected to the political context between the mid to late 1980s, Chu’s early celebrity status was achieved through a series of news reports where she was spotted by the mass media owing to her distinctive personality and bold teaching style while she was working as a university teacher of art, design and fashion at the Department of Communications Design at Shih-Chien University in 2004.

These media reports, widely circulated on cable and broadcast television channels as well as in print media, focused on Chu’s identity as a female teacher (some reports entitled her as a ‘professor’) and published exclusive coverage on her distinctive bold teaching style. Not only did the reports focus on Chu’s use of nude self-portraits as teaching materials, but also her class trips around Taiwan, talking with ‘betel-nuts beauties’⁴ (*Binlang Xi Shi*) and going to nightclubs.⁵ The reports provided audiences with a contrast in values between Chu’s distinctive behaviour as a woman, her identity as a teacher and the inappropriate gender connotations of her conduct. The reports did not blame or challenge her behaviour, in fact, they even entitled her as a ‘hot female professor’. The following are some examples of media descriptions of Chu from this period:

There is a ‘hot female professor’ who appeared in Shih-Chien University! The Head of the Department of Communications Design, Chu Cha-ray, has long golden hair, and a tall, slim body. She does extremely provocative activities—not only does she take her students on a round-island trip, visiting betel nut beauties and going to night

³ Ibid.

⁴ The ‘betel nut beauty’ phenomenon is distinctly Taiwanese. The term ‘betel-nuts beauties’ refers to a common sight along roadsides in Taiwan, of young women in revealing clothing, selling betel nuts and cigarettes from brightly lit glass enclosures. The term ‘Xi Shi’ refers to one of the renowned Four Beauties of ancient China, and here refers to the feminine beauty of the women involved.

⁵ A selective of news reports include: ‘*Mala nu jiaoshou, dai xuesheng pao yedian, linglei jiaoxue*’ (Hot female professor takes students to night clubs as an alternative way of teaching) *Taiwan TVBS dianshitai* (TVBS Television Taiwan) 23 February 2004; ‘*Ziluo huaxiang dang jiaocai, shijian jiaoshou he jiaoshu lianai*’ (Using self-portraits as teaching materials, Shih-Chien University professor is falling in love with the teaching job’) *Taiwan zhongshi xinwen* (China Television) 23 February 2004; ‘*Shijian mala nu jiaoshou, shencai rehuo jiaoxue linglei*’ (Hot female professor at Shih-Chien University, whose has a hot body and an alternative teaching style) *Taiwan minshi xinwen* (FTV) 23 February 2004. Chen, Luowei. ‘*Mala nu jiaoshou, dai xuesheng kan binlangmei*’ (Hot female professor took students to visit betel nut beauties) *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) Page A14, 23 February 2004.

clubs, but also exhibits her nude self-portraits. She is the ‘hot female professor’ in students’ heart.⁶

This hot female professor describes teaching as being very similar to falling in love with students. Some students were shocked by the bold style of their teacher at the beginning.⁷

Chu Cha-ray’s dramatic behaviour includes taking two male students on a round-island trip to visit more than one hundred betel-nut beauties, photographing their flashy appearance and documenting the details of their first kisses, the cosmetic products they use and the history of their love affairs.⁸

Last year, Chu Cha-ray used a night club as a classroom. She took students to experience the excitement of a popular ‘lounge bar’. They observed the people there and made video images of the place. Chu said young people in the twenty-first century whose professions are in design must know what’s hot and happening, or otherwise it might be difficult for them to find the creative inspiration they need.⁹

These media reports not only showed Chu’s personality and her distinctive teaching style, but also her physical appearance. In response to her distinctive slim body and straight long hair, the media quipped that although she is “nearly forty years old, she looks like a college student. The students joke that it would be hard to concentrate in her classes”.¹⁰ The reports emphasized Chu’s youthful appearance, and suggested that there was a difference between her and the other teachers. This chapter will discuss in detail the significance of her distinctive look and features that were reproduced consistently and became her personal style and trademark in later years.

⁶ Chen, Luowei. ‘*Mala nu jiaoshou, dai xuesheng kan binlangmei*’ (Hot female professor took students to visit betel nut beauties). , *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)* Page A14, 23 February 2004.

⁷ ‘*Mala nu jiaoshou, dai xuesheng pao yedian, linglei jiaoxue*’ (Hot female professor takes students to night clubs as an alternative way of teaching) *Taiwan TVBS dianshitai (TVBS Television Taiwan)* 23 February 2004.

⁸ Chen, Luowei. ‘*Mala nu jiaoshou, dai xuesheng kan binlangmei*’ (Hot female professor took students to visit betel nut beauties) *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)* Page A14, 23 February 2004.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ‘*Ziluo huaxiang dang jiaocai, shijian jiaoshou he jiaoshu lianai*’ (Using self-portraits as teaching materials, Shih-Chien University professor is falling in love with the teaching job) *Taiwan zhongshi xinwen (China Television)* 23 February 2004.



Figure 16. Chu (third from the right) teaches live sketch class to students. Standing among the group of students, Chu's long hair, slim body figures and young dress style allow her difficult to distinguished as a teacher.¹¹

As accidental celebrities Chu and Lee are distinct. Lee was spotted by the mass media because of his distinctive behaviour as an agitator, strongly associated with the political oppression in the mid-1980s, whereas Chu's celebrity is associated with a challenge to existing social values. Focusing on the media image of her as a 'hot female professor', her defiance of conventional social roles can be analysed from two perspectives. One is the over-turning of the existing or 'old-fashioned' didactic style of teaching, which seldom allows students to express their ideas, is normally carried out in the space of classrooms, and excludes local cultural phenomenon such as the 'betel-nut beauties' in the standard course content.¹² The other challenge is to the traditional concept of how the teacher should dress and behave in the space of the classroom and school. In the conservative educational environment in Taiwan, teachers are generally seen as 'role models' and

¹¹ Photograph from internet website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/xuexue/620109600/>. Accessed 5 July 2010.

¹² There are many controversies surrounding 'betel nut beauties', that generally centre on two issues, of the propriety of wearing revealing clothes in public places and whether their dress marks them as victims of exploitation. . Some women's groups also point out that prohibiting their revealing dress would be an act of discrimination given that there are many international models, celebrities and showgirls whose sexy images are not seen as inappropriate. Information from 'Betel nut bueaties', Sex/Gender Research. National Central University: http://intermargins.net/repression/sexwork/types/betelnutbeauties/betelnutbeauties_index.htm. Accessed 22 September 2010.

consequently should never dye their hair bright colours. In all these aspects Chu certainly displays a very different example of how a teacher should be.

However, one can question Chu's rapid fame accumulation as an accidental celebrity, because almost all the media reports about her were released on the same day of the 23rd February, 2004, suggesting that her instant fame was the result of a deliberate 'publicity event'. As I pointed out in chapter two, the term 'publicity event' refers to the purposely set-up publicity event for mass media reportage. Reading carefully into Chu's example, almost all the content of the media reports focus on similar topics, and the ways they describe Chu and her characteristics are nearly identical. Given this, it would be reasonable to make the assumption that her fame at this stage of her career was a part of a conscious strategy, although without having interviewed Chu, this is hard to prove.¹³

Chu Cha-ray's Personal Background as Artistic Inspiration

Chu's upbringing and education

Following her accidental celebritisation, Chu increasingly used stories from her upbringing as a kind of resource for building her celebrity status. In this process, her background became the major theme through which she sought to build up her own fame. Her accidental celebritisation thus seemed to correspond with her own desire to acquire popular recognition. The idea of persona is central to Julian Stallabrass' *High Art Lite* where he discusses "a fast food version of the less digestible art that preceded it".¹⁴ He points out that "looking at the artists' personae and the way that

¹³ See the Introduction for the reasons I was unable to interview Chu Cha-ray. Another reason for making such an assumption is because of a recent example in Taiwan. A fashion celebrity designer Johan Ku, who had instant fame because of his award winning in the *Gen Art Styles International Design Competition*, caused the Taiwanese media to rush to be the first to report on his design and personal story. On the surface, it was his talent and the fact of winning the competition which caused the media's interests; but in fact, these media reports were manipulated by one of Ku's friends who worked in media circles and the art world, and who strategically delivered press reports before the actual competition took place. The process of manipulation was remained secret and Ku's unofficial media contact (his friend) was unwilling to offer any information. Thus, what seems to be a case of accidental celebrity can actually be deliberately contrived.

¹⁴ Stallabrass, Julian. 'Famous for being famous' in *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. (London: Verso, 1993), 2.

they are conveyed through their work will reveal something about the character of this new art”.¹⁵ Through examining the fame of four artists—Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Tracey Emin and Gavin Turk—Stallabrass suggests that there are close connections between their life, personalities and art works, providing a way of looking into the construction of their celebrity status. The same analytical strategy can be used in Chu’s example, and the first step is to look at the connections between the experiences and life stories in her upbringing, and her art, media image and celebrity persona.

Growing up in a traditional family Chu described her parents and their way of disciplining her and her elder sister as very conservative.¹⁶ Since childhood, her parents applied a very strict education to the sisters in terms of both their academic studies and daily behaviours. They were required to learn piano and behave like ‘dignified daughters of an eminent family’ (*dajia guixiu*).¹⁷ Since the elder sister is supposed to always follow their parents’ expectations, Chu, who was very naughty since early childhood, had difficulty keeping in line with her elder sister and was fed-up with the continual comparisons to her sister,¹⁸ and as a result she lost confidence in herself. Sometimes when she went out with her parents, her father would ask her to remain quiet because “people might think you are stupid”.¹⁹ In the course of her education Chu did not receive good grades at schools, but she displayed talents in the artistic field. However, this was not encouraged by her family and teachers in Taiwan because traditional educational values considered academic study more

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁶ Chu was born in 1965 to a wealthy family. Chu’s father was a businessman in aquaculture and fisheries management and her mother was a housewife, whose focus was always on Chu and her elder sister. Information from, ‘*Fengge shi yizhong jingzhengli*’ (Style is a competitive strength) *ELLE Zazhi* (*ELLE Magazine*) October 2008.

¹⁷ This is according to my personal experience of growing up in a traditional Taiwanese family. I observed that girls from eminent or highly educated families are expected to behave like a lady, following the traditional expectations of how girls should act according to social conventions. One of the skills that must be cultivated is playing piano, which is a way of displaying the elegant disposition embedded in the girl’s character.

¹⁸ ‘*Fengge shi yizhong jingzhengli*’ (Style is a competitive strength) *ELLE Zazhi* (*ELLE Magazine*) October 2008.

¹⁹ Ibid.

important.²⁰ Then, at age of seventeen, due to her very poor study results, Chu's family sent her to a boarding school in the United States. It was only when then that she was able to seriously develop her interests in art education. She completed a music degree at the pre-college division of the Manhattan School of Music. Chu then changed her direction of study and concentrated on the visual arts. Later she earned a B.F.A. from Cooper Union and a M.F.A. degree from Columbia University.²¹

During her studies in the U.S. Chu was constantly encouraged to focus on her interests, and through this process she was able to regain her confidence. Although she experienced seven years of wandering around and not knowing what to do after her studies, and her parents forced her to move back to Taiwan, she nevertheless gradually focused on painting self-portraits and working as a teacher of art, design and fashion at the Department of Communications Design, Shih-Chien University.²²

The events and anecdotes of her upbringing served as inspirational material for Chu's artistic career and the development of herself as a celebrity. In her publications, especially the two books *Please, Do Not Be the Same Everyone*²³ (2006) and *Why Not Just Be Yourself*²⁴ (2008), she talks about her love relationships, her student days, her inner feelings and the transformations that she has been through in the past years. These books give readers a coherent picture of Chu, her personality and life principles.

For instance, in *Please, Do Not Be the Same Everyone*, Chu describes how she was encouraged by her teachers in the U.S. to develop her interests and skills in the fine arts, and to make an application to study at the Coopers Union. She illustrated how her teacher, Ian, encouraged her at the time:

²⁰ Chu, Cha-ray. *Wei, ganma buzuo niziji (Why Not Just be Yourself?)* (Taipei: Fine Press Publishing Co Ltd, 2008).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. , 120.

²³ Chu, Cha-ray. *Baituo, buyao meigeren dou yiyang (Do Not Be the Same Everyone)* (Taipei: Fine Press Publishing Co Ltd, 2006).

²⁴ Chu, Cha-ray. *Wei, ganma buzuo niziji (Why Not Just be Yourself?)* (Taipei: Fine Press Publishing Co Ltd, 2008).

Ian encouraged me to be tough, and he provided a different example of thinking and acting from conservative Asian social values where everything needs to be done in a safe way. He believes people should be brave and willing to have a variety of experiences, and not care too much about winning or losing. Anything with a little promise should not be abandoned. Even when you work very hard, you might be lost at the end and get yourself hurt; but if you don't even give it a try you will always lose.²⁵

While she was consistently being encouraged to face her true feelings and work hard to strive for what she wanted, Chu was able to cultivate her confidence and to construct a strong sense of her own individuality which she did not have in her upbringing. This resulted in the famous motto 'be yourself' (*zuo ni ziji*) that she created in the later years.

This indicates the strong influence of individualism on Chu during her fifteen years in the U.S. However, Chu's 'brand' of individuality had a particular significance in Taiwan because of its challenge to traditional notions of the individual person inherited from Taiwan's past as a Japanese colony as well as from Chinese culture. In essence, the attention to individualism in the U.S. is very different from the social values and responsibilities associated with the concept of the person in Chinese and Japanese culture. This point has been made with reference to Japan by Sawa Kurotani.

Unlike the United States, Japan has very little historical background in rugged individualism—[...]—and social scientists have categorized the Japanese construction of selfhood as distinctly different than Western 'individuals', emphasizing more overtly the social roles and relationships as essential constituents of a person.²⁶

In the context of contemporary Taiwanese society, Chu's Americanized characters and representations of individuality offered a different approach to how people might present themselves and their aspirations. This difference has shaped Chu's specific image and emphasized her uniqueness in the process of her celebrityisation. Accordingly, this thesis argues that the individualism articulated by Chu is at the

²⁵ Chu, Cha-ray. (2006).

²⁶ Kurotani, Sawa. 'Beyond the Paper Screen—America's individualism and Japan's 'personalism'', Special to *The Daily Yomiuri*. 22nd June 2010. The other authors who look into the differences of American and Japanese individualism include Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (N.Y.: St. Martin's, 1986)

heart of her celebrity construction. In this light, her art, publications and cooperation with business and the media all become important instruments reinforcing her claims to a uniquely individual persona.

Artistic creations—self-portraits and the second-hand dolls collection

In *Why Not Just Be Yourself*, Chu discusses various artists she admires and their artistic influences on her own works. These artists include Cindy Sherman, Nan Goldin, Andy Warhol and John Ahearn.²⁷ Among them, Sherman and Warhol, both globally known celebrity artists, had a major influence on Chu.²⁸ While Warhol's was largely on her ideas about the commercialisation of her art,²⁹ Cindy Sherman's works had a more direct inspiration on Chu's artistic creativity, particularly in terms of how to explore and present herself, which resulted in her most famous and distinctive series of large charcoal self-portraits that she developed after 1995 after returning to Taiwan. As Chu put it,

my parents brought me back to Taiwan in 1997. (I was living in New York between 1990 and 1997, without a job and relied on my family's financial help). I was not too sure whether I should come back to Taiwan to develop my career, and I was not too sure about myself. I was feeling uncertain and anxious. I thought I was getting on so well in New York. (In fact, I was doing badly!) Why should I move back? One day, I suddenly could not stand my state of mind. I needed to break the situation urgently. So I began to paint self-portraits in a realistic style which was never encouraged in my school days. I examined myself closely in front of the mirror, looking at the real me, with female characters. Although I was already thirty years old at the time! I think of Cindy Sherman. I felt I was getting closer to her.³⁰

²⁷ Chu, Cha-ray. (2008), 86.

²⁸ Warhol's and Sherman's profiles as celebrity artists are discussed at length by John Walker in his book *Celebrity*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

In her book, Chu describes that when she was in university in the U.S. her teacher Hans Haacke, who was the mortal enemy of Warhol, constantly told his students (including Chu) that art should not be intervened by commercial activities. Nevertheless, Chu began to adore Warhol after his death in 1987, mostly because of his courageous breakthrough into the contemporary art scene. .

³⁰ Chu, Cha-ray. (2008), 70.

In some of her self-portraits Chu appears as different characters, including a few where she cross-dresses to appear like a man, and thus appears to present very similar characteristics to Sherman's famous role-play photography. Nevertheless, as Walker points out in referring to the question often asked, "which is the real Cindy Sherman?", Sherman "herself noted that her identity did not consist of a single self but several: the self in the country, the professional self, the self in the studio, etc".³¹ The following paragraphs describe how Chu, in contrast to Sherman, different aspects of the same self in her self-portraits. Furthermore, while Sherman's photographs did not in fact reveal her inner self or expose her private life, Chu's art explicitly delves into her interior life. From this one can see a constant theme throughout her art practice, namely her consistent concentration on herself.



Figure 17. Chu's self-portraits.³²

Prior to the launch of her exhibition of self-portraits in 2002, a media report in *United Daily* had already in 2000 revealed her works, dedicating almost an entire

³¹ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity*. (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 146.

³² Photograph from article 'Chu Charay, zhiyou 1% hao, jiukeyi fayang dao 100% de hao' (Chu Charay, who can carry forward to 100% excellence with only 1% good) *Jiankang 100 (Healthy 100)* September 2008.

page of the newspaper to the story. The report discussed her creative concepts along with her self-conscious transformation of the way she presented her body and mind in different life stages. The report was entitled ‘The Journey of Self-exploration: Flashing the pen—sketching the self-inner world’,³³ and introduced Chu’s fifteen large self-portraits that she created after moving back to Taiwan. Chu described her paintings as categorized into three stages representing three different periods of her internal transformation. The first consisted of self-portraits on the theme of ‘man loves woman’ in which she played the roles of the old man, the young man, the beggar and the clown in the Peking Opera (*pingju*). She noted that, “at the time, I couldn’t find an idealized man. I simply thought I should fulfill my own desire”.³⁴ The second stage was based on the theme ‘woman loves woman’, in which the woman in the paintings stood at the back hugging other female characters in the foreground. Chu explained that all the women represented herself in different stages, and that through the act of hugging she embraced her past and welcomed her future at the same time. The last stage was on the theme of ‘marriage’, in which she put herself in wedding dresses and thus symbolized the act of being married to her own body.³⁵

³³ Liao, hemin. ‘*Ziwo tansuo zhilu: shenlaizhibi—sumiao ziwo neixin shiji*’ (The Journey of Self-exploration: Flashing the pen—sketching the self inner world) *Xiuxian wenhua zhoubao* (Weekly report on Leisure and Culture) *Lianhe bao* (*United Daily*) 4 November 2000.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*



Figure 18. An almost entire newspaper page reporting on Chu's self-portraits and discussion on her inner-self.³⁶

The report featured an image of Chu in the middle of the page, wearing a cap, with her hands on her hips, looking upwards to show her self-confidence, in contrast with the surrounding self-portraits which revealed her inner sensitivity. This contrast began to reshape Chu's public image from the 'hot female professor' of 2004 to an active, cheerful and independent woman—on the outside—yet with an inner sensitivity that belied her anxieties and lack of confidence she had inherited from childhood.

The self-portrait series, first exhibited in 2002, soon became the most recognizable series of Chu's art works.³⁷ In the *Chinese Communication Society Conference* in 2009, Xu Ruting discussed Chu's self-portraits within the context of

³⁶ Image from 'Ziwo tansuo zhilu: shenlaizhibi—sumiao ziwo neixin shiji' (The Journey of Self-exploration: Flashing the pen—sketching the self inner world) Xiuxian wenhua zhoubao (Weekly report on Leisure and Culture) Lianhe bao (*United Daily*) 4 November 2000.

³⁷ Chu Cha-ray's exhibition of her self-portraits was held at Guan-xiang Art Gallery, Taipei in 2002.

Taiwanese feminist art and pointed out that Chu's self-portraits demonstrate her determination to "subvert the traditional gender value system in Taiwan".³⁸

Chu Cha-ray's works pour out her discontentment and criticisms of the patriarchal society, and subvert the traditional values and image of the socialite ladies. However, in her simple, plain charcoal drawings, what she really wants to challenge is her identity of being a 'female' in which perhaps she thinks there are too many suppressions and restrictions. But in her silent objection, meanwhile, there is an attitude of resisting and welcoming produced that on the one hand, she wants to boldly reveal herself; and on the other hand there is fear of a rebellious gender identity. This is the vulnerability of female artists when they try to express 'identity' or 'persona' through dressing-up, cross-dressing or using hermaphrodite qualities in performances.³⁹

Xu also pointed out that Chu was not the only artist who addressed gender issues in Taiwan. In fact, with the rise of women's liberation consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s, Taiwanese women artists launched a succession of movements criticizing gender discrimination and the neglect of women in the art system, and expressing their gender consciousness through various artistic strategies.⁴⁰ Their work sought to achieve two aims, to express their self-concerns and to eliminate the influences of male chauvinism.⁴¹

Chu's self-portraits expressed her feelings about her identity as a woman in Taiwan, combining masculinist images with the sensitive nature of a woman's inner-self. Her other well-known series of works similarly reflected aspects of her inner-self. This series, exhibited in *Sixteen Close Encounters* (2006) at Eslite Bookstore stemmed from her collection of dolls from markets and second-hand toy stores all

³⁸ Xu, Ruting. 'Taiwan dangdai nuxingzhuyi shijue yishu de zaixian yu chuanbo fangshi' (Representation and Communication: On Contemporary Feminism Visual Arts in Taiwan) *Zhonghua chuanbo xuehui 2009 nian yantaohui* (Chinese Communication Society Conference) Taipei, 2009.

³⁹ Ibid., 11-12.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Other feminist artists who also use their bodies to express ideas in the process of creations include Hou Shuzi (侯淑姿), Xu Huiqing (許惠晴), Huang Caifeng (黃彩鳳), Zhou Xuwei (周旭薇), Guo Huichan (郭慧禪), Lin Xinyi (林心怡). With the idea of 'self-representation', their feminist works share the commitment to standing from a female perspective, and using women's bodies as the main medium to express their desire, imagination and emotion. These feminist artists remain in the artistic field and have continued to express their concerns about feminist issues, and with no obvious sign of acquiring extensive media exposure, have not become celebrity artists like Chu.

over the world. Her artistic interest in these second-hand dolls lay in the way they evoked her childhood stories.

Why the old dolls? Because I had very bad school marks when I was a child, and my parents sent me to study abroad. I only regained my confidence in the United States and was able to recover myself. So I think everyone should have an opportunity to start again. When I see those dolls, I imagine they were loved by children. But when the children grew up, the dolls were thrown away. They then wandered in second-hand markets for years until I found them. They used to have a happy face but now they look frightened. They weren't supposed to be like this when they were created, so I think they have a life; and I need to give them a new environment. Looking at these dolls is just like looking at myself.⁴²

Her interest in and sympathy for the dolls reflected her childhood feelings, and also manifested her educational philosophy—to praise students and to give them positive opportunities.⁴³ This kind of art work shares certain similarities with the British artist Tracey Emin, and whose work is described by John Walker as a kind of ‘me, me, me art’.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, while Emin presents herself in her art in a more confessional way, the pains she has experienced in her life, such as a rape, a series of underage sexual encounters, severe depression, ill health and bouts of excessive drinking, are embedded metaphysically in her artworks. Chu's art works are about her inner sensitivity as a little girl who lacked security and confidence. In 2006 when Chu was invited by Eslite Bookstore (*chengpin shudian*) to curate an exhibition for its sixteenth anniversary, the dolls were shown as a complete collection.

⁴² Chu Cha-ray curated. *Shufang de 16 zhong youxi (16 Games of Study)* (Taipei: Net and Books, 2005), 21.

⁴³ Quan, Zhenxuan. ‘*Jishi daole wushisui, dou haiyou xinde keneng—shijian daxue shishang meiti yanjiusuo suo zhang*’ (Being yourself, forever invincible young—Director of Institute of Fashion and Communications Design, Shih-Chien University, Chu Cha-ray) *Wode manshou rensheng: 30 sui yiqian de rizi dou henku (My slow cooked life—suffering before the age of 30)* (Taipei: CW Book, 2008).

⁴⁴ Walker, John. (2003), 248.



Figure 19. Chu posed for a magazine interview. She volunteered to be photographed in wedding dress and hold a doll from her second-hand collection.⁴⁵

Commercialisation of Chu Cha-ray's Celebrity

Curatorial exhibition—sixteen close encounters at Eslite Bookstore

The invitation to Chu to curate the exhibition *Sixteen Close Encounters* at the Eslite Bookstore gallery signified an important stage in the commercialisation and celebritisation of Chu's artistic identity.⁴⁶ Chu was especially popular among teenagers and young people, the most important market groups for the Eslite Bookstore. However, the Eslite Bookstore invited Chu not only because of popularity as figure with multiple identities as an artist, teacher and celebrity but because she was previously involved in a few other important exhibitions and

⁴⁵ Photograph from the article 'Meili bianshen—Chu Charay yonggan chuan hunsha' (Break through—Chu Cha-ray wears wedding dress bravely) in *ELLE zazhi* (*ELLE Magazine*) July 2009.

⁴⁶ Exhibition *Shiliu zhong jinjuli jingyan* (*Sixteen Close Encounters*) The Eslite Gallery (second basement floor), the Eslite Bookstore. 13-27 March 2005.

curatorial projects, as well as having an established reputation through her work as an advisor and committee member for some significant awards and organisations.⁴⁷



Figure 20. Exhibition Sixteen Close Encounters at Eslite Bookstore (2006).⁴⁸

Chu's role in this particular exhibition project, apart from being a curator, was as a celebrity who, through her prestige and connections, could invite other famous people to participate in the exhibition, and together, they would all become a selling point to promote the Eslite Bookstore. The contribution that her Eslite exhibition made to Chu's artistic career and the celebritisation of her image was due to the fact that the Eslite Bookstore occupies an important place in the cultural industry in Taiwan as a cultural landmark in Taipei, particularly for young 'cool' people and social elites, as discussed in chapter one introduction.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Shih Chien University, Institute of Fashion and Communications Design, faculty website: http://ifcd.usc.edu.tw/c/faculty/faculty_04.asp. Accessed 1 July 2010.

⁴⁸ Photograph from *Shufang de 16 zhong youxi (16 Games of Study)* (Taipei: Net and Books, 2005).

⁴⁹ Information from, Long, Yingtai. 'Zai yige you wenren de chengshi li' (In a City with Literati) *Zhongguo shibao (China Times)* 3 June 2005.



Figure 21. A view on the magazine section in the Eslite Bookstore, Dun-nan branch.⁵⁰



Figure 22. A popular Taiwan's film *Au Revoir Taipei* (2010) was shot in the Eslite Bookstore.⁵¹

Thus, for its 16th anniversary celebration, Eslite used an art exhibition and the presence of celebrities from different fields to display their ideal reading spaces and to demonstrate the unique ‘reading culture’ that they had established. Apart from

⁵⁰ Photograph from internet website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/valour/2788651749/>. Accessed 8 July 2010.

⁵¹ Photograph from internet website: <http://blog.sina.com.tw/atom/article.php?pbgid=17143&entryid=601225>. Accessed 8 July 2010.

Chu, the celebrities included famous television hosts, publishers, architects, writers and designers, Tsai Kang-yung, Tsai Ming-liang, Tao Jingying, Jolin Tsai and others.⁵² Each of them created an individual ideal reading space in a wooden box, forming a total of sixteen wooden boxes placed outwards towards the surrounding walls. The layout was designed so that visitors had to snoop around in order to view the contents of each secret reading space. Chu filled up her reading space with a vast number of second-hand dolls and a few books on the floor. The idea was that, just like reading many books, she would be able to see hundreds of different life stories in those dolls, and at the same time, would be able to see her inner feelings through the dolls. Her space was named ‘Love Me’, representing her inner self as well as her love for the dolls.



Figure 23. Chu talks about her reading space ‘Love Me’ in the promotional DVD *16 Games of Study*.⁵³

⁵² Those entertainment, media, academic and artistic figures included Tsai Kang-yung (蔡康永); artist, architect and writer Ruan Qingyue (阮慶岳); artist and designer Li Mingdao (李明道); manager and chief editor of the Dada Publishing Company Huang Jianhe (黃健和); singer Jolin Tsai (蔡依林); celebrity writer Wang Wenhua (王文華); figural toy designer Zeng Weiren (曾偉人); celebrity film director Tsai Ming-liang (蔡明亮); celebrity TV producer and cartoonist Zhan Renxiong (詹仁雄); celebrity fashion designer Isabelle Wen (溫慶珠); artist Chang Zaidong (鄭在東); singer, and television host, actress and writer Tao Jingying (陶晶瑩); vice-professor at the Institute of Fashion and Communication Design Shih-Chien University Xie Dali (謝大立); spatial designer Su Chengxiu (蘇誠修); and celebrity designer Nie Yongzhen (聶永真).

⁵³ Image from *Shufang de 16 zhong youxi (16 Games of Study)* (Taipei: Net and Books, 2005).

Other celebrities, such as television presenter and singer, Tao Jingying, represented her ideal reading space with an installation of a surfboard, slipper and bottle of beer with the background display of the sea. It was entitled ‘Reading here is so luxurious’. The television presenter Tsai Kang-yung’s reading space was named ‘Life is more than shit’, with images of a naked man, reputed though not confirmed by Tsai to be Tsai’s rumoured homosexual boyfriend, whose genitals were concealed behind books placed on the shelves. Tsai explained that his idea behind this display was to enable readers to see the genitals once they took off the shelf, possibly as a reflection on Tsai’s homosexuality.⁵⁴



Figure 24. Celebrity Tsai Kang-yung talks about his reading space ‘Life is more than shit’ with a male model who appears on his wall photograph in the promotional DVD in *16 Games of Study*.⁵⁵

Through this particular exhibition, the Eslite Bookstore was able to use art as a strategy to achieve certain aims. The first was to use it as a means of highlighting the uniqueness of Eslite in a way that is similar to what Julian Stallabrass argues in the chapter ‘Consuming culture’:

⁵⁴ Chu Cha-ray curated. *Shufang de 16 zhong youxi (16 Games of Study)* (Taipei: Net and Books, 2005).

⁵⁵ Image from *Shufang de 16 zhong youxi (16 Games of Study)* (Taipei: Net and Books, 2005).

As in mass culture, art's very lack of convention has become entirely conventional. Ubiquitous and insistent voices urge consumers to express themselves, be creative, be different, break the rules, stand out from the crowd, even rebel, but these are no longer the words of radical agitators but of business.⁵⁶

The second was to use the art exhibition as a promotional strategy to reinforce the brand of Eslite, as Wu Chin-tao discusses in her book *Privatising Culture*,

Companies are not only organising exhibitions, but complementing them with press releases, opening receptions and sometimes even providing exhibition leaflets or catalogues to give the show an aura of permanence and scholarship. What for art museums and galleries is an established practice has become for business, firstly, a way of marketing their products and services; secondly, the source of corporate entertainment; and above all, a device for validating their intervention in the art world.⁵⁷

Chu's curation of the exhibition *Sixteen Close Encounters* embodies Wu's points that it was set up as a publicity event and as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' for Eslite to attract media reports and public attention in order to promote its reading culture and brand image.⁵⁸ As such, it was a component on Eslite's marketing strategies, which included inviting celebrities to increase the shop's publicity and entertainment value, widening the range of media coverage on the exhibition, and publishing a book with a DVD to promote the 'Eslite reading culture' during and after the exhibition period.

The specific marketing strategy designed by Eslite for Chu to invite famous people to participate in the exhibition and 'reveal' their ideal reading spaces, is very close to the strategy of 'celebrity endorsements' suggested by Graeme Turner, where the name of the celebrity becomes a brand and thus generates economic potential.⁵⁹ In this particular exhibition at the Eslite Bookstore, the name and the art works of the

⁵⁶ Stallabrass, Julian. 'Consuming culture'. *Art Incorporated: The story of contemporary art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 78.

⁵⁷ Wu, Chin-tao. *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980* (London: Verso, 2002), 205-6.

⁵⁸ Boorstin, J. Daniel. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1961, 1992), 12.

⁵⁹ Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 39-40.

In this thesis, celebrity endorsement not only refers to the recommendation of product or service, but celebrities can endorse other celebrities, or celebrities can endorse exhibitions, as a form of openly supports other celebrities and exhibitions.

famous people involved were used as a celebrity endorsement in a collective sense. While the celebrities had fame and popularity, the famous people invited to participated had specific talents and skills. Both the fame and the serious reputation of the participants were utilised by the bookstore in ways that were processed at the same time: with involvement of celebrities in the exhibition, Eslite was able to popularize and celebritise itself; and with the involvement of the professionals, Eslite could emphasis itself as a cultural space through legitimizing the cultural rather than merely entertainment value of its exhibition. In keeping with the concept of celebrity endorsement, the group of exhibitors could contribute their celebrity reputations and professional talents to promote the Eslite reading culture and to reinforce its corporate brand image.

The combination of celebrities and famous professionals involved in this exhibition also widened the media discourse involved in the coverage. Images and accounts of the exhibition appeared in different sections of newspapers, and in different styles of reportage. In the first place, there were news reports with simple information about the exhibition, which normally appeared in the ‘Art and Culture’ sections, in other words the standard avenue for distributing artistic news.⁶⁰ They also appeared in entertainment reports on the participation of celebrities in the exhibition which appeared in the ‘Celebrity Entertainment’ sections. These texts were often shown with sensational images, such as the display of images of the singer Jolin Tsai⁶¹ without showing her reading space in the exhibition; and the television entertainment programme presenter Tsai Kang-yung with the pictures of naked men in the display, or sometimes with articles on his homosexual relationship.⁶² Lastly, another category involved newspaper articles written by the

⁶⁰ News reports such as ‘The 16th anniversary celebration of the Eslite Bookstore, Meeting the Celebrities Reading Rooms’, *Central Daily News*, 13 March 2005; ‘The Eslite Bookstore exhibits writers’ reading rooms’, *China Times*, 13 March 2005; ‘Various images represent the ideal dreams of celebrities in different reading rooms’, *Ming Sheng Daily*, 13 March 2005.

⁶¹ News reports include ‘Jolin’s White Reading’, *Central Daily News*, 13 March 2005; ‘Jolin, Reading Together With the Sensational CD’, *Ming Sheng Daily*, 13 March 2005.

⁶² News reports include ‘The Sexy Exposure of Tsai Kang-yung’s Boyfriend’, *Ming Sheng Daily*, 28 March 2005.

exhibitors, expressing their thoughts on the experience of ‘reading’, and published in the ‘Literature’ sections of the *China Times* newspapers.⁶³

Additionally, as a promotional strategy, Eslite published a book with a DVD that accompanied the exhibition. While the book focused on each individual exhibitor’s space and introduced the concepts behind their works, the DVD mainly focused on the images of Chu and celebrity Tsai. The video focused on Chu and the process of her work in setting the installations in which she presented herself as the spokesperson for the exhibition. However, although she was the curator, her bodily movements in the video demonstrate something beyond the expertise of a mere curator because her bodily movements are often the focal point of the video shots of her work and conversations with other people. The video also shows her posing for photo shoots with other celebrities, especially with Tsai Kang-yung, host of the popular television talk show *The Variety Show of Mr. Con & Ms. Csi (Kangxi Lai Le)*, along with his partner ‘Little S’ (*Xiao-S*).⁶⁴ Tsai grew up in a wealthy noble family and is well educated, and in the entertainment field is widely recognised for his wit and as someone who openly presents himself as a homosexual. Tsai is also connected closely with the art scene as he collects art works, writes articles on art and openly supports specific artists such as Cai Guoqiang, whose celebrity status in Taiwan I discuss in the next chapter.

⁶³ The articles include ‘Of Course that Books are Having Standards’ by Tsai Kang-Yung, *China Times*, 18 March 2005; ‘Purely Joy’ by Tasi Ming-liang, *China Times*, 20 March 2005; ‘Just Like a Journey of Flight’ by Jolin Tsai, *China Times*, 23 March 2005; ‘A Party of Books’ by Tao Jing-ying, *China Times*, 24 March 2005; ‘It’s True That My Reading Room Has Disappeared’ by Zhan Ren-Xiong, *China Times*, 25 March 2005; ‘Reading Room is just a Phrase’ by Isabelle Wen, *China Times*, 26 March 2005.

⁶⁴ The programme *Variety Show of Mr. Con & Ms. Csi* (康熙來了 *Kangxi Lai Le*) was launched in January 2004 and is still one of the most popular talk shows in Taiwan. With its unique style and ideas, it has established its own characteristic and niche market beyond the usual conventions of the talk show. *Kangxi Lai Le* is also an extremely popular programme in China, often interviewing many Chinese celebrities.



Figure 25. Chu Cha-ray and Tsai Kang-yung posing together for the promotional DVD and show their cooperation and friendship.⁶⁵



Figure 26. Chu is taking a special pose in order to promote the title of the exhibition written on the wall beside her.⁶⁶

The video presents a clear process of commercialisation of Chu and her art. While the camera moves along with her as she introduces the installations, the focus is constantly on her—presenting her image as she walks through the exhibition,

⁶⁵ Image from *Shufang de 16 zhong youxi (16 Games of Study)* (Taipei: Net and Books, 2005).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

smiling and talking to colleagues, as well as speaking directly to the camera. In every movement in the video, one can see the signature characteristics of Chu's long hair, slim body and casual style of dress, all traits of her self-presentation in public arenas. Such qualities of her public appearances were important components of her celebrity construction since through these she became easily recognisable to the public.

Such commercialisation of Chu's image and the art installations she curated move beyond normal advertising, on the one hand reinforcing the brand image of Eslite Bookstore, and on the other, constructing the celebrity image of Chu as a brand. Naomi Klein distinguishes the term 'brand' from 'advertising' in the book *No Logo* (2000), in which she says,

though the words are often used interchangeably, branding and advertising is not the same process. Advertising any given product is only one part of branding's grand plan, as are sponsorship and logo licensing. Think of the brand as the core meaning of the modern corporation, and of the advertisement as one vehicle used to convey that meaning to the world.⁶⁷

Eslite, especially in the Dun-nan and Xie-yi branches, forms a condensed platform including a bookstore, clothing shops, a stationary store, a music store, an art gallery, a café and restaurants which together constitute the 'hardware' for the brand, whereas the art, design and cultural activities construct the 'software', responding to the psychological needs of urban people. Both the 'hardware' and the 'software' are designed to accumulate economic capital. Indeed, the various activities and the lifestyles that Eslite provides to their consumers or potential consumers are offered in order to contribute to the commercial success of the Bookstore.

In this exhibition *Sixteen Close Encounters* Chu plays as an intermediary role between the exhibition and the mass media in order to convey the corporate and exhibitors' ideologies with integrity. Chu's public exposure in the mass media and the exhibition DVD not only legitimise herself as a curator and artist, but also celebritise herself through the act of connecting with the exhibition, the other celebrities and famous professionals participating in the event. In the process of working for Eslite to establish their corporate brand, she constructs her own

⁶⁷ Klein, Naomi. *No Logo* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), 22.

‘personal branding’ to promote her career and celebrity status to a new stage in which she occupies an even more prominent public space and achieves even greater media exposure.

Chu Cha-ray’s image exposure in public and media spaces

Chu’s image exposures can be discussed in two domains—in public spaces that are associated strongly with her profession as a college teacher and author of a few popular books, and in the media space associated with her earlier image as a ‘hot female professor’ and her specific persona as ‘an individual’ and a female celebrity.

In public spaces, Chu frequently appears at conferences, seminars, art and design events, or events to promote and sell her publications, in which she displays all the characteristics of the mass media reports about her, including her long hair, slim body, casual dress code, big smile and fast speed of talking, and her sensitive ‘inner’ stories about her upbringing and background. These characteristics play a strategic role in her claims to a unique public image as a coherent brand image, as I observed during my fieldtrip research in Taiwan where I had participated in some of her seminars and talks.

For instance, in a forum *Meeting the Masters—Gjun Digital School Aesthetics Forum ‘Creative Aesthetic’*⁶⁸ held on July 2007 where she acted as one of the panel discussants, Chu wore a sleeveless, white vest, white short pants and a pair of white slippers.⁶⁹ Chu’s dress style for the occasion showed a great contrast with the other panel discussant, Xu Liling, the Chairman of Xue Xue Institute, who dressed in the relatively formal outfit of a black coat and brown trousers.⁷⁰ As an audience member I could see how inappropriate Chu’s style of dress was for such an event.

⁶⁸ The forum *Yu dashi youyue—Jujiangxin meixue jiangtang (Meeting the Masters—Gjun Digital School Aesthetics Forum ‘Creative Aesthetic’)* was held in GIS NTU Convention Centre on 21 July 2007.

⁶⁹ My observation in the attendance to the forum on 21st July 2007.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Xue Xue Institute was established in September 2005 by husband and wife, P.S. Lin and Lilin Hsu, along with more than a hundred shareholders as a “Learning Platform” for creativity and culture. Xue Xue’s operation revolves around the four poles of education, research, publishing and consulting,



Figure 27. A photo from *Meeting the Masters—Gjun Digital School Aesthetics Forum ‘Creative Aesthetic’*. One can observe the different style of Chu’s casual dress with the other people’s relative formal way of dressing. (From left to right: artist and teacher Chu Cha-ray, a member of staff from Gjun School (the organiser of the forum), the Chairman of Xue Xue Institute Xu Liling, the host of the conference Tsai Shiping)⁷¹

Nevertheless Chu’s style of dress on the one hand challenged the traditional dress code for a formal speech event, and on the other, subverted the traditional style of dress for Taiwanese woman in their forties, not only because she dressed too casually, but also because she left so much of her body uncovered when she was one of the discussants, who should appear professional. However, whether or not Chu chose the outfit purposely, she was conscious about the inappropriateness of her clothing that she casually explained during the speech that she had over-slept and had no time to think about what to wear. But if one has observed Chu for a long time, one would realise that this event was not a one-off incident. In another forum

with a mission of conducting 5000 courses and publishing 300 research reports by 2006, aiming to accomplish the following objectives: Meeting the needs of Taipei’s economic regeneration through cultural education, and positioning Taipei as a creative city through the formation of a talent hub.

⁷¹ Photograph taken in my research field in attending the forum.

*Meeting the Masters – Gjun Digital School Aesthetics Forum ‘Fashion Aesthetic’*⁷² held in September 2008, her outfit included a short-sleeved t-shirt, short pants and a pair of converse shoes. If Chu appeared as someone who solely came from the art scene, then the outfit might represent her uniqueness and the casual lifestyle. However, given Chu’s social status as a university professor, she is expected to act as a role model for students. These incidents show how Chu was not afraid of breaking with the traditional criteria of how a woman should dress and behave accordingly to the occasions and social status. Nevertheless, what we can speculate is that due to her subversive personality, Chu’s popularity among students increased rather than decreased. In one of her other speeches in the Tainan University of Technology⁷³ held in December 2008 to promote her new book *Why Not Just be Yourself* (2008), Chu appeared in a smart casual outfit, and gave a speech replete with indecent language (i.e. “*fuck*”), referencing topics such as her first sexual experience which made students burst into laughter.⁷⁴ As someone in the audience, I could see the level of her popularity from the way students were queuing up to get her signature and to take photographs with her after the speech.



⁷² *Yu dashi youyue—Jujiang shishang meixue jiangtang (Meeting the Masters—Gjun Digital School Aesthetics Forum ‘Fashion Aesthetic’)* was held on 20 September 2008.

⁷³ The talk was held at the Tainan University of Technology on 29 December 2008.

⁷⁴ My observation when attending the talk on 29 December 2008.

Figure 28. Chu (third from the left) takes photograph with admiring students after her speech ‘Creativity, Life and Being Yourself’ at the Cheng-shiu University on 14 December 2009.⁷⁵

Chu’s clear-out role and her profession in art allowed her to become an active figure across different fields, including design, entertainment field, academia and business. She was often invited as judge in activities such as the Golden Horse Award (2005), Kingston Creative Card Competition (2005), Golden Butterfly Award (2006), BenQ True, Good and Beautiful Award (2006) and as member of committees for selecting fine arts collection in Taipei Fine Arts Museum. She also participated in many curatorial projects, including *The Taiwan International Animation Festival* (2006), *2008 Converse Exhibition* (2008), *YODEX Young Designer’s Exhibition* (2005-2009), *My Reading Journey—20th Anniversary Celebration of Eslite Bookstore* (2009), and *MaxMara ‘Atelier Coats’ Art Installation of Coats* (2009). Although Chu has never restricted her abilities to a single field, her constant media exposure on television talk shows has been gradually overtaking her artistic performances in recent years.

Since 2007 in particular Chu has constantly sought media exposure and attention as a guest on talk show programmes. Beginning with discussions about her identity as a teacher, she gradually moved on to discuss her private life, and now she covers all sorts of issues including gender relations, social values, life style, dress and fashion.⁷⁶ One can also observe some minor changes in Chu such as wearing heavy make-up on her face. In 2007, she attended a talk show *Blackie*⁷⁷ (*wo ai*

⁷⁵ Photograph from internet website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/archiwu945/4184263215/>. Accessed 8 July 2010.

⁷⁶ A selective list of the talk show programmes that Chu participates up to 2009, include: *Woai heisehui (Blackie)*: ‘*Chaojinbao wode mala laoshi*’ (My super hot teacher) 29 July 2007; ‘*Wei chengnian shibushihe jin yanyijuan*’ (Is under age suitable to work in the entertainment industry?) 21 December 2009.

Xinwen wawawa (News Wow-wow-wow): ‘*Shui rang fumu jiaolu*’ (Who worries parents) 8 May 2009; ‘*Fumu de nanti*’ (Parent’s challenges) 6 July 2009; ‘*Lianai de zheng zhao*’ (Signs of love) 27 July 2009; ‘*Lianai you Zhangai*’ (Obstacles in love) 14 July 2009; ‘*Suyan cha henda*’ (No make-up makes a lot of differences) 5 August 2009; ‘*Buneng bishi de mei*’ (Unstaring beauty) 28 August 2009. *Mala tianhougong (Spicy Tin Hau Temple)*: ‘*Qiangjiu meirenyuan damingxing*’ (Rescuing the super unpopular stars) 16 November 2009.

Daxuesheng le mei (University): ‘*Daxuesheng rezhong shijianbu*’ (What are the university students keen on) 25 August 2009.

⁷⁷ *Blackie* is an entertainment programme broadcast on Channel V since August 2005. Since its premiere it has broadcast over a 1000 episodes and is one of the most highly viewed programmes on Channel V.

heisehui)—a programme that recruited teenage girls to cultivate them into celebrities—with the theme ‘My super hot teacher’, in reference to her earlier image.⁷⁸ During the programme she spoke about the round-island trip when she shared a room for two weeks with her male students. In order to make the round-island trip possible, she described how they (Chu and the two male students) had to lie to their parents with the excuse that they were invited by a publisher to write a book so they needed to go on a trip for research purposes. Listening to her story the girls on the talk show looked shocked, and one could see how subversive this action was in contemporary Taiwanese society even though Chu claimed it was totally normal and should not be treated as a big issue. Responding to the host of the talk show, Chen Jianzhou, who asked her whether it was appropriate behaviour for a teacher, she even explained that one of the male students was homosexual and the other was unclear about his sexual orientation.⁷⁹ Her words made the surrounding girls even more surprised and the host exclaimed “how can a teacher describe her student as homosexual on TV!”⁸⁰

Chu’s attendance on this talk show was to offer an alternative to the traditional style of teachers as serious, difficult to communicate with, and rigid.⁸¹ She appeared on the show in a peach blossom sleeveless top and jeans, immediately showing an image that contrasted with the usual appearance of a traditional teacher. In the middle of the interview, she took a scarf and wrapped it around her body. She said the scarf was a gift from students who admired her, and she promised them to take the scarf wherever she went.⁸² With her impressive appearance and the bold statements, she overturned the traditional stereotype of the female teacher and established herself as a social model of individuality, ‘coolness’ and difference, for her student and teenager audience.

Since then, Chu’s media image has progressed, and she is invited so frequently to appear on various talk shows that she has virtually turned herself into a

⁷⁸ ‘*Chaojinbao wodi mala laoshi*’ (My super hot teacher) *Woai heisehui (Blackie)* 29 January 2007.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

‘*tonggao yiren*’, a type of celebrity who sustains their careers almost solely by making guest appearances on talk shows. The popularity of this particular kind of celebrity is closely connected to the rise of talk shows in Taiwan and the transformation of the overall media ecology.⁸³ As discussed in chapter one, Internet critic, Zheng Guowei points out that for such type of celebrity, “managing their personal life has become the focus of celebrities who run their names like a business.”⁸⁴

As an artist appearing on talk shows, Chu has taken the commodification of the self to a new extreme, in ways that are very similar to the media processes contributing to British artist Tracey Emin’s celebrity status.⁸⁵ Chu holds forth across the various topics addressed in such talk shows, such as relationships, parent-child relationships, fashion trends and so on, and seems, constantly willing, even eager, to share her life experience with television viewers. Her frequent appearance on such programmes reinforces her personal brand image, to the point that her image and her stories are now household names in Taiwan. Her persona and life stories have become commodities that she can sell repeatedly on television, presumably in return for considerable sums of money, as her ownership of a luxury studio and apartment would indicate.⁸⁶ Take the example of the programme *News Wow-wow-wow* (*Xinwen wa-wa-wa*), which is a popular talk show hosted by Zheng Hongyi and Yu Meiren, and covers a range of political, economic, entertainment and daily life topics. Between July and August 2009, Chu appeared on the show several times—as a guest for the themes of ‘Parent’s challenges’ (6th July 2009), ‘Signs of love’ (27th July 2009), ‘Impairing love’ (15th July 2009), ‘No make-up makes a lot of differences’ (5th August 2009), and ‘Unstaring beauty’ (28th August 2009). During

⁸³ For more information on the rise of talk show programmes in Taiwan, please make reference to chapter one in this thesis.

⁸⁴ Zheng, Guowei. Nickname: Gui-gu-lai-xi. ‘*Cong caiyi fanmai dao yinsi fanmai*’ (Transformation from selling the talents to selling the privacy) <http://www.bigsound.org/portnoy/weblog/000855.html>. Accessed 13 January 2010.

⁸⁵ According to John Walker, this shows “a clear sign for her newfound celebrity”. However, Emin has received a lot of criticism and negative reviews, among Philip Hensher’s condemnation of her “insatiable enthusiasm for publicity”. Information from John Walker. *Art and Celebrity*. (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 253.

⁸⁶ Talk show programme *Mala tianhougong* (*Spicy Tinhau Temple*), ‘*Toukui mingxing simi haozhai*’ (Peeping the celebrity’s luxury houses) 17 March 2010.

the same period, she also participated in the other programmes, such as *University* (*Daxuesheng le mei*) based on the topic ‘What are the university students keen on’ (25th August 2009). Her appearance on these shows is now so frequent that there is little to distinguish her from other cultural and entertainment celebrities. In the process, interest in her work as an artist clearly takes second place.



Figure 29. Chu, identified as a professor in art and fashion, appears on an episode of the talk show *News Wow-wow-wow* with the theme of ‘No make-up makes a lot of differences’.⁸⁷

Chu’s recent media exposure on television transforms her from an artist who sells her talent to a celebrity who sells her ‘private life’, and to a certain extent, sells her body image. In the following last section of this chapter, I examine the gendered implications of this, since it gives her celebrity status singular characteristics not shared by other art celebrities such as Lee Ming-sheng, Cai Guoqiang, and the other male artists from the VT Artsalon Group.

⁸⁷ Image is intercepted from YouTube video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umS5yreEOzc>. Accessed 8 July 2010.

The ‘New Modern Woman’

Most of the talk shows that Chu appears on in Taiwan are also transmitted through YouTube, and are thus circulated around the world and can be easily watched anytime and at any place with access to the internet.⁸⁸ Her potential audience is thus enormous, and from the comments people post on YouTube, that include many messages in Romanized type and simplified Chinese characters, part of the audience is Chinese (from mainland China, but not necessary based in China). As Geert Lovink suggests in the introduction to his co-edited collection on YouTube, “we no longer watch films or TV, we watch databases”.⁸⁹ The power of Chu’s celebrity and the significance of her image are therefore not merely restricted to the national scale, since they circulate in the larger flows facilitated by global technology.

In the development of her celebrity image through her appearances in public events and talk shows, as I have already mentioned, Chu expresses her ideas, tastes and style in ways which challenge traditional social values of womanhood in Taiwan. However, the relative lack of serious interest in her as an artist, her image as a new modern woman was constructed more through her public events and talk shows appearances, and her persona as an entertainer, than through her art.⁹⁰ Public and art world interest in her image of the ‘new modern woman’ she presents is unlike what is normally described as a ‘strong woman’ (or powerful woman, *nü qiangren*)—a woman who is in the position of authority or control, or who is highly skilled in something. In contrast, Chu’s image of the ‘new modern woman’ represents a woman who makes independent decisions about what she wants in her life, career and social relationships that mark her out as a highly individualistic woman. For instance, she conveys the idea that although she is in her forties, unlike the ‘normal’ Taiwanese woman who urgently wants to get married, she is still continuously searching for ‘true love’. With acute awareness of what she wants in

⁸⁸ Turner, Graeme. *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2010), 142.

⁸⁹ Lovink, Geert and Sabine Niederer, ed. *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*. (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures 2008), 9.

⁹⁰ A survey of serious art magazines since 2006 reveals that neither her name does not appear as a significant artist on the contemporary art scene. See magazines for example *Artist Magazine*, *Contemporary Art News Magazine* and *ARTCO*.

her life, as is indicated by the titles of her publications such as *Do Not Be the Same Everyone* (2006) and *Why Not Just Be Yourself* (2008), Chu refused to be influenced by the conservative social values of the traditional Chinese family which demand that women should marry before they reach the age of thirty.

Defeated Dogs Bark Far (*baiquan de yuanfei*), a book published in Taiwan (in 2006) and translated from the original Japanese edition (2003), describes a specific social phenomenon in Japan in the recent years wherein any beautiful or talented woman who is over thirty years old and unmarried, is described as a 'defeated dog' (or 'lost dog', *baiquan*). When this book was translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan it generated considerable discussion, and many women over thirty became terrified of being identified as a 'defeated dog'. (This chapter previously referenced the strong influence of Japanese culture in Taiwan). In 2009, a popular television drama programme named *My Queen* (or *Queen of No Marriage*, *baiquan nuwang*), used the same phrase 'defeated dog' (*baiquan*) to construct a female character who was over the age of thirty, unmarried, but with a high career potential.⁹¹ The ratings of this drama were very high, achieving the average of 5.69 in Taiwan among the population of investigation of 22,600,000.⁹²

Those popular cultural works reflect the serious concerns of women who are able to, or do not want to get married before their thirties, and contribute to new social values sustaining the idea women should be independent and autonomous. The talk shows that invited her to discuss this topic include 'Older women love blind date' (24th November 2009 on *Spicy Tin Hau Temple*; 'I want to fall in love too' (10th November 2009) on *Big Wife Club*; 'The regrets of being a single' (23rd April 2010) on *News Wow-wow-wow*. Through participating in such discussions, Chu's celebrity acquires new dimensions, linking her self-interests and the media's interests through images of new womanhood which potentially provide the audience with a new model

⁹¹ *My Queen* (or *Queen of No Marriage*, *baiquan nuwang*) is a Taiwanese idol soap opera broadcasted in 2009, produced by Sanlih E-Television.

⁹² The ratings are relatively very high figures compared to the other popular idol soap opera such as *Touxin dasheng PS nan* (偷心大聖PS男 *The Closer-PS boy*) had the episode ratings of 3.88. The ratings are investigated by Nielson television Audience measurement. <http://www.agbnielsen.com/whereweare/dynPage.asp?lang=local&id=370&country=Taiwan>. Accessed 3 July 2010.

of gender identifications, contributing to a reworking of gender expectations and practices.

Conclusion

Much of Chu's participation in entertainment talk show programmes does not require the professional knowledge that she has acquired from her academic work, her art and curatorial practices. Although without having interviewed her, it is difficult to understand the precise nature of her desire to appear on the programmes, her frequent participation in them suggests her complicity with her celebrity status more as a popular and informed cultural commentator than as an artist or a teacher. Chu is not an artist who exhibits frequently. There are even comments that describe her as arrogant when she is invited to exhibit in galleries.⁹³ The latest exhibition of her works—the second hand dolls—on display in *ANIMANGA!* (2007) is part of the Exit Festival International in France, which part of her works are selected from the exhibition *Fiction Love—Ultra New Vision in Contemporary Art* (2004) in Taiwan.⁹⁴ Her curatorial projects are mainly commercial exhibitions which use her name and image for commercial advantage.⁹⁵ All of these exhibitions reflect the commercialisation and celebritisation of her identity as an artist and curator, in which businesses rely on her name to promote their own brand images, while at the same time promoting her own celebrity status.

⁹³ I was informed about the rumour by a gallery manager in Taipei during my field research in February 2009. The manager described how Chu Cha-ray was invited by a commercial gallery in Taipei to present an exhibition in 2008 and she agreed with the exhibition time and space. However, during the preparation period, Chu did not turn-up. When the manager tried to contact her, she insisted that she would do the preparation overnight. However, the gallery owner was very angry at Chu's disrespectful attitude, and refused to let her stay overnight. (Also, if Chu stayed overnight that meant someone from the gallery had to stay with her too). In the end, Chu had to arrange her artworks after the exhibition opened and there were many visitors who thought that it was some kind of performance art.

⁹⁴ Victoria Lu curated, *Fiction Love—Ultra New Vision in Contemporary Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei. August 21st–October 31st 2004.

⁹⁵ These include the *2008 Converse Exhibition*, *YPDEX Young Designer's Exhibition* (2005-2009), *My Reading Journey—20th Anniversary Celebration of Eslite Bookstore* (2009), and *MaxMara 'Atelier Coats' Art Installation of Coats* (2009). Some of these occurred after the time of my fieldwork in Taiwan, and others were relatively minor, and as their titles suggest, had little to do with Chu's work.

As we have seen in this chapter, Chu's various roles as university professor, artist and curator have been and continue to be important elements in empowering and legitimizing her as a new modern woman. Just as significantly, however, her constant commercial involvement and media exposure also give her the capacity to exercise considerable social influence, even if she does not always use this in what might be thought of as socially responsible ways.⁹⁶ Chu Cha-ray is now not widely known as a serious artist in Taiwan, and although she is considerably respected as a university teacher, her celebrity depends almost entirely on her media exposure, exemplifying Marshall's point that it is only when the celebrity voice is channelled into media systems that it becomes legitimate and significant.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ For instance, in one of the talk shows on the topic of 'Peeping into celebrities' luxury houses', Chu essentially acts the same as other celebrities, showing off her expensive flats and revealing in her personal tastes. She even revealed the market price of her flat on this programme. Such ostentatious behaviour is very similar to other celebrities from the film and entertainment fields who show off their 'IT bags' and luxury resorts.

⁹⁷ Marshall, David. *Celebrity and Power*. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota, 1997), Preface.

Chapter Five

Cai Guoqiang: Localising a Global Art Star



Figure 30. Cai Guoqiang is surrounded by journalists in his retrospective exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.¹

This chapter looks at the world renowned Chinese artist Cai Guoqiang (蔡國強), and after a brief introduction to his rise as a global artist, focuses on his arrival as a celebrity in Taiwan in the 1990s and his impact on the Taiwanese art scene, the mass media, and corporate sponsorship of the arts. Unlike Lee Ming-sheng and Chu Charay whose rise to fame was mainly the result of media interests, Cai's celebrity status was the result of more complex influences involving the mass media, corporate power, his own self-interest and the state. This chapter argues that Cai's celebrity

¹ Photograph from photo sharing website flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/artfreedommenews/4208191067/in/set-72157622845458742/>. Access 21 July 2010.

status in Taiwan can be seen on the one hand as the result of constant and often controversial media interests in his art and relationships with other celebrities, including Lesley and Kelly Ma, daughters of the President Ma Ying-jeou, who were his assistants. On the other hand, his fame is tied to corporate sponsorship of the arts, which is most clear in his retrospective exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in 2009. This chapter also proposes that Cai's status in Taiwan, evident for example in his retrospective exhibition, is associated with the political interests of the Kuomintang (KMT) regime.

In 1998, when Cai had already established his reputation in the international art scene, his exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art in New York was spotted by Zhao Li, the director of Eslite Gallery (which soon became his agent in Taiwan), who then introduced his art to Taiwan in the following year. Since then, Cai and his art have promoted another 'Cai Guoqiang phenomenon' in Taiwan, in which some of his works have been culturally, socially and politically related to Taiwanese society. Furthermore, in order to connect with Taiwan's local culture, Cai 'glocalises' himself to Taiwanese context through a series of identifiable strategies that establish a social and cultural framework enabling him to create art works that specifically 'communicate' with Taiwanese people. These characteristics of his personality and his art differentiate him from other Chinese artists known in Taiwanese context.

In 2009 Cai was sponsored by his agent in Taiwan, the Eslite Gallery (which is a division of the Eslite corporation), to hold a retrospective exhibition in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. In holding this exhibition with corporate art backing, Cai became even more celebritised and commercialised through a marketing strategy planned by the Eslite corporation, which included 'publicity events', celebrity endorsements, open production and appearances on television talk show programmes. Through the commodification of his image and art works in magazines, websites, diverse stationery and dairy products, he was promoted as a 'celebrity-commodity' in order to generate maximum profit for Eslite. Corporate sponsorship has thus been a crucial element in the production of his celebrity status in Taiwan.

The Global ‘Cai Guoqiang phenomenon’ and the *Celebri-scape*

Cai was born in 1957 in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China and grew up in the Chinese communist system influenced by Maoism (officially known as ‘Mao Zedong Thought’) and Marxism–Leninism. During the Cultural Revolution period when Cai was a young artist, he learned to paint propaganda art and was selected to join the propaganda team.² These political ideologies not only had a direct influence on his art works through slogans advocated by the Communist Party such as ‘No Destruction, No Construction’, ‘Encircling the Cities from the Rural Areas’ and ‘Mass Movement’ which were used as titles of his art works, but also were adopted by Cai in the later years as a strategy when he tried to develop his artistic career in Japan.³

As a Chinese artist and influenced strongly by Chinese politics and culture, Cai surprisingly chose not to develop his artistic career in China, but rather to go to Japan which was a totally unknown country for him.⁴ When Cai first arrived in Japan, without knowing where to start his career, he was rejected constantly by different galleries. He then left Tokyo and went to a small seaside town, Fukushima Iwaki, Cai apparently to do just what Mao Zedong had advocated when he urged, “encircle the cities from the countryside”.⁵ With this specific strategy of starting off his career, Cai also explored the properties of gunpowder in his drawings, which led to his experimentation with large-scale ‘explosion art’ events that became one of his signature creative forms. He then started to hold exhibitions in Fukushima Iwaki, and gradually became more prominent through his gunpowder ‘explosion art’.

Gunpowder has a very specific connection with Cai’s nationality, and especially as he developed his career outside China, it became embedded with a

² Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. *Woshi zheyang xiangde (This is How I Think)* (Taipei: INK Publishing, 2009), 61.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Cai admitted that some of the reasons for leaving China were his love of freedom and his personality that sought to avoid conflict with people. These tendencies led him to believe that if he stayed in China as an artist he would only desire Western art but never be able to practice because he would not dare to fight against the existing regime. Therefore in 1987, Cai decided to go to Japan and begin his artistic career. Information from, Ibid., 45.

⁵ Mao, Zedong. *Mao zhuxi yulu (Quotation from Chairman Mao Tsetung)*. (Government of the People's Republic of China, 1964).

Chinese-ness associated to his cultural background.⁶ During his ten years in Japan from 1986 to 1995, a ‘Cai Guoqiang phenomenon’ emerged in what was an obvious sign of becoming an influential figure and being accepted by the mainstream Japanese art scene.⁷ At that time art in Japan was quite conservative, and the development and impact of the ‘Cai Guoqiang phenomenon’ in the 1990s was a rare and honourable achievement for a foreign artist.⁸ The emergence of this phenomenon can be analysed from different perspectives. Firstly, his unique use of explosives allowed a rapid rise in his popularity and led to a series of exhibitions in Japan.⁹ Secondly, the explosion projects required considerable audience participation and were labour intensive. This fostered a dialogue between the art and the audience and thus extended the popularity of Cai’s work to a broader public instead of being restricted to museums and appreciated only by people with high levels of economic and cultural capital. This was a subversion of the usual experience of art in Japan.¹⁰ Cai describes how,

at the time, the modern art scene in Japan was relatively self-enclosed. Every time there was an opening reception the same people always came, even the journalists were the same people who reported on modern art for the major media channels. At each event the faces were always the same. However, my exhibitions could always bring new people out who were new to art museums. I think this is my contribution to art in Japan.¹¹

The popularity and mass appeal of Cai’s art were connected to a breakthrough in the conservative Japanese art scene. Cultural critics Yang Zhao and Li Weijing, in the book *This is How I Think*, point out that because of the rise of the Cai Guoqiang phenomenon, those active in the Japanese art scene began to discuss how art could

⁶ In modern Chinese society gunpowder is used in a more celebratory way; for instance, Cai describes that in his hometown in Quanzhou Fujian, people light firecrackers in the events of weddings, funerals and other celebrations or important ceremonies. Information from, Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 61.

⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁸ Ibid., 61.

⁹ Cai continues to use gunpowder in very creative ways. In several of his artistic projects he intentionally uses gunpowder that is extracted and purified locally, giving it unique mark-making qualities. During the period from 1987 to 1995, Cai had 12 solo exhibitions in Japan and participated in more than twenty group exhibitions in Japan and worldwide.

¹⁰ Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 61.

¹¹ Ibid., 66.

be further popularized.¹² Third, Cai's was also declared as "the most well-known young artist in the contemporary art world" by Iwaki City Art Museum in 1994, and thus established his symbolic status in the wider art field beyond the Japanese context.¹³ Following this praise, Cai also received several major prizes in Japan, including *The Japan Cultural Design Prize* in 1995 and later in 1997 he received *Oribe Award*.¹⁴ Fourth, in addition to the adulation of prizes and interest from art institutions, the Japanese mass media also expressed their admiration of Cai's artistic achievements. In 1994, one of the most influential Japanese newspapers, *Yomiuri Shimbun*,¹⁵ boldly stated that "it was a dismal year for Europe and the United States, but an active year for Cai Guoqiang".¹⁶ Cai became one of the most promising contemporary artist in the world. Already in 1995 he was invited by the ACC (the Asian Cultural Council) to be a representative of Japan in a year long artist exchange programme at MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Centre¹⁷ in New York.¹⁸

With his fame established, Cai was often invited on Japanese television programmes to participate in conversations with other famous people, so boosting his own profile even higher.¹⁹ He became a public figure whose images and art projects were mediated and circulated in different media and communication channels. In the celebrityisation process, Cai enjoyed his popularity and interactions with audiences, and acknowledging his own fame said that, "occasionally there were

¹² Ibid., 66.

¹³ *Cai Guoqiang: From the Pan-Pacific*, Iwaki City Art Museum, Fukushima, Mar 1994. 6–31.

¹⁴ Information from Cai Guoqiang's webpage: http://www.caiguoqiang.com/artist_cv.php. Accessed 30th April 2010.

¹⁵ *Yomiuri Shimbun* is an influential national Japanese newspaper. In 2003 its daily publication had reached 14,000,000 issues, which made it one of the highest selling international newspapers and had been included in the Guinness Book of World Records.

¹⁶ This was pointed out in a conclusion of an article 'Art of This Year' on 14th December 1994 in *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

¹⁷ MoMA PS1 is one of the oldest and largest non-profit contemporary art institutions in the United States. It invites global artists with different cultural or aesthetic backgrounds to work on site. MoMa PS1 Website: ps1.org/about/.

¹⁸ 'CAI GUOQIANG—Yi chuantong caogen xinong dangdai, baozha yishu de dawanka' (CAI GUOQIANG—Doing contemporary art with a traditional grass-root technique, Cai is a big player in experimental art) *Ppaper Magazine*. (Taipei, 1 November 2009. Issue 91), 38-39.

¹⁹ Huang, Qianfang. 'Yu yuzhou hunpo duihua—Cai Guoqiang de yishu chuangzuo' (A dialogue with the universal soul—Cai Guoqiang's artistic path) *Diancang yishu zazhi (Art of Collection)* (February 1999), 172-177.

people wanting to shake my hand when I went down the street”.²⁰ Cai’s gregarious character and his desire to interact with audiences both in the arts and in his daily life, as pointed out by Cai’s agent and director of the Eslite Gallery Zhao Li, was one of the important factors in his success and fame.²¹

Cai’s artistic achievements and popularity in Japan and the United States brought him onto the global art scene. In 1995, his project *Bringing to Venice What Marco Polo Forgot* was a commissioned piece in the 46th Venice Biennale 1995. In this project he shipped a wooden fishing boat from his hometown, Quanzhou, with a full load of Chinese herbs that symbolized the five Chinese elements²² to the Port of Venice. He put the Chinese herbs into vending machines as a way of integrating Eastern culture into the western world.²³ The success of this global project opened up Cai’s international career; his name and his works started to become extremely well known in the western art world. The mid-1990s, during which Cai’s career ascended rapidly through his participation in global art events and exhibitions, was also the high point of global biennales, and connected to the development of global economic and cultural capital as discussed in Lee Ming-sheng’s case study in chapter three. Around the same time, the rise of Chinese artists was also becoming a feature of the global art field. Many international curators were optimistic about Chinese art and attempted to invite Chinese artists to participate in different biennales.²⁴ With this trend, Cai’s national identity and the overall Chinese-ness embedded in his explosion art works contributed to his predominance in the global art world.

In 1995 Cai moved to New York. Unlike his early artistic career in Japan that started in the rural area, Cai’s art works immediately entered established galleries and museums in the United States. The first project Cai presented during this time was *The Century with Mushroom Clouds: Project for the 20th Century* (1996), where he lit firecrackers inside a heavily guarded military nuclear site in Nevada. The

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

²² Five Chinese elements include Water, Wood, Gold, Fire, and Earth.

²³ ‘CAI GUOQIANG—Yi chuantong caogen xinong dangdai, baozha yishu de dawanka’ (GUO-QIANG—Doing contemporary art with a traditional grass-root technique, Cai is a big player in experimental art) *Ppaper Magazine*. (Taipei, 1 November 2009. Issue 91), 38-39.

²⁴ Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 25.

firecrackers produced smoke in a small mushroom shape that symbolized civilization and the atomic bomb.²⁵ According to critics Yang Zhao and Li Weijing,

the work's cultural meaning and its aesthetic touch totally did not need verbal discourse. It was directed with infectious power and became Cai Guoqiang's representative work after his arrival in the U.S..²⁶

In 1996 his art works were mainly exhibited in important art museums, such as the project *Cry Dragon/Cry Wolf: The Ark of Genghis Khan* in the Guggenheim Museum, New York; and *Crab House* in P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York. After 1997, Cai Guoqiang's art works and projects were being exhibited around the world, included Denmark, Austria, Italy, Turkey, France, Sweden, and other countries.²⁷



Figure 31. Cai's project *The Century with Mushroom Clouds: Project for the 20th Century* (1996) was enacted at various sites. Here it is in front of the Manhattan skyline.²⁸

²⁵ Cai Guoqiang. (Taipei: Artist Publication, December 2005), 40.

²⁶ Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 75.

²⁷ See Cai Guoqiang's webpage for a list of detailed projects and exhibition places: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/>.

²⁸ Photograph from Cai Guoqiang's webpage: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/shell.php?sid=2>. Access 20 July 2010.

From this point on the ‘Cai Guoqiang phenomenon’ was no longer regional, but swept across the globe. Arjun Appadurai has suggested that global cultural flows can be conceptualised through five dimensions or ‘scapes’ which together identify the global shifts of people, information, technology, finance and ideas.²⁹ Cai Guoqiang’s global celebritisation exemplifies an additional and specific component of these shifting ‘scapes’ that has emerged as apart of the post-cold war neo-liberal ‘new world order’ noted by Julian Stallabrass.³⁰ In this new world order, as various interests, especially of the state and corporate business, started to intervene in art through sponsorships and political support, biennales and various other global art events mushroomed under the effects of the global flow of technological, ideological, and cultural forces. These, in turn, have been crucial elements in the construction of global art celebrities, such as Cai Guoqiang, and to the construction of what I call the celebri-scape.

I use the notion of celebri-scape to refer to how the image and status of the global celebrity artist can be seen as a particular instance of how Appadurai’s five scapes come together. Moreover, these five scapes are necessary and interdependent components sustaining the celebrity artist’s identity as a global celebrity. As a Chinese artist who initially established his celebrity in national contexts in Japan and the U.S., before operating internationally from the mid-1990s on, Cai’s evolving celebrity status was inseparable from the movements of global cultural and economic forces across Appadurai’s five scapes. Firstly, in terms of ethnoscares, Cai’s global move shares similar characteristics with other artists, curators and collectors who travel around the world to exhibitions and art events. This is a large flow of a specific group of people, tightly connected to a particular type of cultural trend. Secondly, in terms of technoscares, the new technologies and forms that are used in artistic creations and installations affect the ways artists articulate their ideas and how audiences perceive and interpret them. One example of this is the prevalence of installation art in global exhibitions since the 1990s. The global movement of new technologies also sustains the global circulation of concepts and ideas, and the

²⁹ The five ‘scapes’ are ethnoscares, mediascares, technoscares, financescares, and ideoscaps. Arjun Appadurai. *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³⁰ Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

finances required to transport and install works as complex as Cai's explosion art.³¹ The financescape in this context consists of the global flow of economic capital as it is invested in the arts, and the resources spent on the exhibitions and their associated expenses such as tickets, subsistence and travel. Fourthly, with respect to mediascapes, and as has already been demonstrated in Lee Ming-sheng's case, the distribution of information in a global exhibition increases the competition between media outlets both to construct an 'imagined world' for those unable to physically experience the exhibition and to present the exhibition in ways that appeal to its potential visitors. Lastly, ideoscapes can be analysed from many perspectives in global art exhibitions, including the theme of the exhibition, the artists and the cultural activities of the nations they represent and market, and how a city presents itself to the world through staging large exhibitions.

Of course, artists do not share equal opportunities to participate in global exhibitions. Artists with fame and celebrity status, as well as 'outstanding' artistic achievements, are certainly better placed to participate globally than other, lesser known artists. Cai's studio team, the Cai Studio (*Cai gongzuo shih*), performed an indispensable role in promoting his global celebrity, as the next section suggests.

The 'Cai Studio' System

The previous examples of Lee Ming-sheng and Chu Cha-ray did do not have a studio team or system supporting their artistic production. The studio system in the *celebriscapes* of Cai's artistic career plays a very important role. In addition to the role of assisting with the production of the art works, the studio also functions to bridge the communication between Cai, the global art scene, mass media and the general public.³² It arranges funding and negotiates expenses with institutions, manages Cai's image exposures on media reports and public discourses, and operates as an

³¹ Ibid., 25.

³² Although Cai has been a resident of the United States for many years he has never learned to speak English. For communication with art gallery/museum staff not from Chinese or Japanese speaking countries, he has to reply on staff from Cai Studio staff to translate.

administrative unit that sustains the business of Cai Studio and constructs Cai as a global brand.³³

The Cai Studio was established by Cai, his wife and a former assistant Ma Wen in 1995 when he moved to New York. Currently, the studio has around thirteen employees³⁴ and is divided into the project department, the archive department and the management department. The responsibilities of the project department are to help Cai to develop creativity and project implementations. Their jobs include organizing art exhibitions, art activities and the others events. The archive department is responsible for information documentation on art works and artistic activities, such as work storage, documentary tapes, updating photographs and the websites. The third management department is responsible for trading artworks, signing contracts and other official procedures with museums and galleries, planning schedule and exchanging gifts between relatives and friends. Additionally, Cai Studio also runs a blog, which is constantly augmented by the team and provides the most up-to-date public information about artist and his exhibitions.³⁵

³³ Yang, Chao and Lee Wei-jing. (2009), 155.

³⁴ Information provided on Cai Studio Blog: <http://blog.caiguoqiang.com/category/cai-studio-team/page/3/>. Accessed 20 May 2010. The employees include Tatsumi Masatoshi (Technical Director), Bonnie Huie (Head of Archives), MeiMei Zhou (Project Assistant), Cai Guoqiang, Mariluz Hoyos (Project Director), Lesley Ma (Project Director), Sayuri Alsmann (Studio Manager), Chinyan Wong (Project Manager), Calice Chen (Executive Assistant), I-Hua Lee (Archives Assistant), Hong Hong Wu (Financial Manager), Ahuan Zhou (Operations Coordinator) and Jing Liu (Intern).

³⁵ Cai Studio Blog: <http://blog.caiguoqiang.com/>.



Figure 32. Cai and the studio team are working on an exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.³⁶

Critics Yang Zhao and Li Weijing point out that Cai's studio is one of the top teams in the international art scene and is impressive in its vitality, efficiency and professionalism in every aspect of its work.³⁷ Unlike Lee Ming-sheng and Chu Charay as discussed previously, who had little control over the media production of their images, the Cai Studio exerts a strict control over the media's reporting of Cai and his works. Among the departments, the archive department assists in filtering information to the media, which helps to establish, shape and control his public image.³⁸ For instance, if a U.S. business magazine asks for information from Cai Studio, the studio can ignore the request, or ask the magazine to provide reports for selection before any information is released from the studio. According to the studio team, "we only provide information when we feel it is appropriate".³⁹

³⁶ Photograph by Cai Canhuang, courtesy Cai Studio. Photograph from Cai Studio Blog: <http://blog.caiguoqiang.com/category/cai-studio-team/>. Accessed 20 July 2010.

³⁷ Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 160.

³⁸ Ibid., 160.

³⁹ Ibid., 160.

Such an entrepreneurial management way of arranging Cai's exhibitions and coordinating his opportunities, and the strict protection of Cai's media coverage have significantly helped to shape his artistic career through constructing his name as a brand. Nowadays, if a museum or gallery attempts to invite Cai to exhibit, they have to have a large budget to facilitate the exhibition. Once the museum budget is set, Cai Studio and the museum will then look for sponsorships together. Then finally Cai will decide what to create according to the total amount of budget.⁴⁰ In the creative process, Cai only needs to focus on making his art works; his studio team will help with the budgeting and other administrative matters. With such an entrepreneurial way of running a studio, director Zhao Li at the Eslite Gallery describes that, "Cai Guoqiang is like an entrepreneur, who knows how to negotiate and compromise, and also how to work consistently and continuously in creating and exhibiting art works".⁴¹

The way Cai runs his career with Cai Studio strongly contrasts with Andy Warhol's studio The Factory, which was established in 1962 in the early stages of Warhol's fame. The Factory functioned not so much as a studio but rather as a place for artists to hang out and have groundbreaking parties. The artistic production that took place in the studio was to make silkscreens and lithographs that were processed by his assistants and workers. By the time Warhol became famous, his studio consisted of poor little rich girls, studs, social misfits, drug addicts and transvestites to make films, all people he called 'superstars' and 'megastars'.⁴² The two studio systems show a great contrast between how artists run their careers, deal with the production of their art works and thus the emergence of their fame: while Cai Studio represents a well organized entrepreneur style, The Factory represents a more experimental and edgy-style artist's studio. Also, while The Factory employed people from the margins of society, Cai Studio prefers to employ assistants from various academic backgrounds, such as assistants with art degrees, and staff with anthropology, architecture or Chinese literature backgrounds. Cai believes that these

⁴⁰ Ibid., 161.

⁴¹ Interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

⁴² Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity*. (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 214-215.

people make useful contributions to his art practice because it is widely inclusive of artistic, social, political and astronomical issues.⁴³

Another recent example that can be compared with the Cai Studio is the company Kaikai Kiki run by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami. However, unlike the Cai Studio that focuses on Cai's work alone, Kaikai Kiki is an art production company that manages and promotes various artists, runs the art festival GEISAI, and produces the art-related merchandise and animations. Kaikai Kiki is more of an entrepreneur and has more than 80 workers, established and branded along with the name of Takashi Murakami, in order to achieve highest economic value and celebrity status.

While all three of these studio were established and operated by celebrity artists, one of the important differences concerns the Cai Studio's link with other figures already well known in the public domain, namely Taiwan's president Ma Ying-jeou's two daughters Kelly and Lesley Ma.⁴⁴ In 2006 Lesley Ma, and later in 2008 Kelly Ma, joined the Cai Studio, and in so doing further increased the fame of the studio within the Taiwanese context. When Cai first came to Taiwan in 1998, constant media attention already made him a celebrity figure, but with the addition of the Ma sisters to the studio, (still based in the United States) things further intensified. Every time Cai and his team comes to Taiwan, journalists chase them around in order to take snapshots of the Ma sisters.⁴⁵ However, Cai's connection with the two Ma sisters is interpreted by some in the Taiwanese media as both a media and political strategy, which not only benefits Cai in terms of media exposure, but also is used as social capital and a cultural-political strategy to build connections with the KMT regime and secure exhibitions opportunities, such as Cai's retrospective exhibition held in 2009 at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

⁴³ Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 159.

⁴⁴ At the time when Cai came to Taiwan for the first time in 1998, Ma was a popular candidate for the election of the Mayor of Taipei City, in the same year he was selected as the Mayor.

⁴⁵ The Taiwanese mass media retains a great interest in the two daughters despite their long residencies in the U.S. Every time they come back to Taiwan for a holiday or on business trips with Cai, the mass media chase them around and suspects them of having love relationships or about to marry.

Cai Guoqiang in Taiwan: The Glocalisation of His Celebrity

On his arrival in Taiwan at the invitation of his agent, the Eslite Gallery, Cai constructed another version of the ‘Cai Guoqiang phenomenon’ that added to his global reputation in ways that were more culturally and socially connected to the Taiwanese context.⁴⁶ As soon as the news of Cai’s arrival emerged, *Artist Magazine* (*Yishujia Zazhi*) reported that the “Taiwanese art scene is shrouded in the strong whirlwind of Cai Guoqiang”.⁴⁷ In print media, the *Contemporary Art News Magazine* (*Dangdai yishu xinwen*) was in the lead in running a special report on Cai, and published it on the front cover with Cai’s image.⁴⁸ Newspapers also tried to get access to Cai’s every movement during his stay in Taiwan.⁴⁹ Critic Ni Zaiqin described the situation at the time, “all of a sudden, the focus of discussion in the art scene was on Cai Guoqiang”.⁵⁰

In 1998 in his first visit to Taiwan, Cai had three major exhibitions which kept him constantly in the media spotlight. The first exhibition *Daydreaming* was held in the Eslite Gallery; the second was an exhibition with two works made for the Taipei Biennale held in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum; and the third work was made for the Taiwan Museum for Fine Art as its closing project before the museum’s refurbishment. Each of his subsequent visits and further projects caught the public and media attention, though in different ways. His unique way of creating explosion art and installations challenged the existing knowledge of art in Taiwanese society and gave rise to diverse opinions on the question of what constituted aesthetic value.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Cai Guoqiang was spotted by the director of the Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, in the Queens Museum of Art in the U.S. in 1997. She then introduced Cai into the Taiwanese art market.

⁴⁷ Ni, Tsai-chin. *Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art – the three decades edition of Artist Magazine*, (Taipei: Artists Publisher. 2005), 329.

⁴⁸ *Contemporary Art News Magazine*. 1998. April.

⁴⁹ Ni, Zaiqin. *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art—the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (Taipei: Artists Publisher. 2005), 329.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 329.

In his first Taiwanese solo exhibition, *Daydreaming*, that took place in the Eslite Gallery,⁵² Cai exhibited many of the incomplete explosion projects along with a new explosion work *Olympic Flame: Asian Games Hiroshima* created especially for this exhibition. Although this was a small project in scale, the particular way of using gunpowder in an art work left a profound impression on the Taiwanese art scene.⁵³ Journalist Qian Lian described her first engagement with the artist and the experiences in seeing the explosion on site in 21st May 1998,

it was after seven o'clock in the morning when Cai Guoqiang got off the aeroplane. He went straight to the gunpowder factory in Miao-li to meet up with his team. They then started to test the gunpowder which would be used in the first creation. At about quarter passed eleven, a medium-size bus arrived with more than 10 journalists who were still bleary-eyed. Their presence in the factory was for watching the explosion art created by this internationally popular contemporary artist. When Cai saw the journalists coming, he had a short conversation with them, and then he refocused back on his testing work.⁵⁴

Qian Lian describes that meeting with Cai, and watching him make his explosion art on site, as if he were making a pilgrimage. This demonstration of explosion art not only functioned like a 'publicity-stunt', which was set up purposely for the journalists to experience and write about Cai's explosion art, but also built up a *rapport* between Cai and the Taiwanese media.

This publicity event gave Taiwanese journalists the opportunity to see Cai's charismatic personality at work and also revealed that a key aspect of the appeal of his work lay in its unexpected outcomes due to the unpredictability of the materials he used. For instance, the work *Olympic Flame: Asian Games Hiroshima* (1998) displayed in the Eslite Gallery, used a specific gunpowder mixture that was provided by the local Taiwanese factories and made accordingly to a formula provided by Cai. He pointed out that "the gunpowder made in Taiwan is relatively speaking more uniform and has a darker colour, with shading effects that I did not expect. However,

⁵² Eslite Gallery, Taipei. *Day Dreaming: Cai Guoqiang*. 30th May–21st June 1998.

⁵³ Ni, Zaiqin, *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art—the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (2005), 329.

⁵⁴ Qian, Lian. 'Baopo shunjian cheng yongheng' (Explode into Eternity: Behind the Scenes of Cai Guoqiang's Explosion Art) *Yi Lei (Arts Circle Magazine)* (July 1998), 12–15.

with the use of gunpowder as creative material, it can be out of control, and it can go wrong”.⁵⁵ It was this feature of being ‘beyond control’ and producing an ‘unexpected outcome’ that added mystique to Cai and his art works. Another journalist described his personal experience in watching the performance event,

after nearly an hour of preparation, Cai Guoqiang and his assistants covered the work with cardboard and pressed them with bricks on the surrounding. He carefully advised the assistants on the rescue procedure to be used after the explosion. He said with fear and trepidation, ‘before each explosion we don’t know whether it will succeed. He asked all the audience to retreat to some distance, and then lit the fuses. Suddenly, after a sound ‘*hong*’, all the journalists pressed their camera shutters quickly. Cai and his assistants swarmed around the work and quickly put out the fire just in case the heat penetrated the paper. As Cai tried to put out the fire with a bottle of water, the bottle accidentally dropped and this drew out screams from the audience. Fortunately it had little effect on the work. And then it was over—Cai Guoqiang had successfully completed the first explosion art work in Taiwan.⁵⁶

The media reports of these dramatic moments left a profound impression on the audience, and constructed a powerful initial public image of Cai in Taiwan.

After exhibiting in the Eslite Gallery and having successfully made a great impression on the mass media and the public, Cai visited Taiwan again in June to participate the Taipei Biennale with two different works. The first of these was *Golden Missile* which was shown at the opening ceremony. For this work he launched more than 200 golden missiles in the north square outside the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Due to the fact that the explosion location was near to the flight paths of Taipei’s Songshan Airport, the Civil Aviation Authority agreed to implement a clearance control of the airspace during the event. The project drew the mass media’s attention again for two reasons. The first was that although the whole project only took ten minutes to perform, it was an unprecedented and pioneering project in the history of Taiwan’s civil aviation to clear a flight path for an artistic activity.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12-15.

⁵⁶ ‘*Baopo meili chuixi quantai: Cai Guoqiang gezhan jiaohao you jiaozuo*’ (Taiwan was hit by the charm of explosion art—Cai Guoqiang exhibition was applauded) *Diancang yishu zazhi (Art of Collection)* (July 1998), 134.

⁵⁷ Ni, Zaiqin, *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art—the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (2005), 329.

second reason was because the topic of this project recalled a missile test by the Chinese Communists Party in the end of 1997 in the Taiwan Strait, which was construed as a highly provocative act. Cai's missiles were equipped with a parachute device. After they landed on the ground, the missiles became 'artworks' that could be picked up by the audience. This scene was a reflection on the scene of people living in Kin-men picking up shrapnel that they found on the ground to make kitchen knives as a response to the tense relationship between Taiwan and China.⁵⁸ This kind of metaphysical reflection on cross-strait relations is embedded in many of Cai's art works produced for the Taiwanese context, and considering Cai's identity as a Chinese artist working in Taiwan have a strong political significance. This will be discussed more deeply in the following sections.



Figure 33. The *Golden Missile* project at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (1998).⁵⁹

After this exhibition, Cai was described by the Taiwanese media as a “star in the stars”, referring to his appearance among the other artists in the same exhibition.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 329.

⁵⁹ Photograph from Cai Guoqiang webpage: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/shell.php?sid=2>. Access 20 July 2010.

Cai's status of being an 'art star' was not only due to his position in the international art world, but also because of the controversial political topics that he chose to present through his art works, and the debates these generated in Taiwanese society.



Figure 34. The project *Advertising Castle* was display outside the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and consisted of castle-like walls made of large-scale scaffolding. (1998)⁶¹

While the public's attention was still focused on *Golden Missile*, another work, *Advertising Castle* exhibited in the Taipei Biennale, caused even more controversy. Cai erected large-scale scaffolding around the exterior of the Taipei Fine Art Museum, and constructed castle-like walls made from many pieces of Taiwanese advertising printed on canvas (which were often seen in the construction sites in Taiwan). Amid the different types of commercial advertising, Cai placed an advertisement for the biennale. This work eventually caused a big storm: first of all, it generated negative comments by the people in Taiwanese art scene and its legitimacy

⁶⁰ 'Niandu renwu, yuebaoyuewang, bupobuli: Cai Guoqiang zuopin yinbao xingangguan' (Person of the Year—The more explosive the more popular. No Destruction, No Construction—Cai Guoqiang's works have exploded our new sensitivity) *Yiwen xinwen* (Art and cultural news) *Minsheng bao* (*Minsheng Daily*) 25 December 1998.

⁶¹ Photograph from Cai Guoqiang webpage: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/shell.php?sid=2>. Access 20 July 2010.

as an art work was questioned.⁶² Artist Wang Fudong,⁶³ who could not stand the work, published an article angrily criticizing it relentlessly. “Frankly speaking, it is truly ‘bad enough’. What he [Cai] tries to tell the audience, whether it is ‘art’, ‘anti-art’ or ‘non-art’, are all superfluous”.⁶⁴ Despite such comments questioning whether *Advertising Castle* is a legitimate work of art, some politicians in Taiwan who worked as People’s Representatives, also questioned whether the art work (as a construction site without a legal permit) was illegally built and if the advertisements were constructed to benefit particular vendors. Those discussions and controversies tended to reflect and represent Cai’s famous quote: “it is not important whether what you do is art or not, what is important is how you say it’s art”.⁶⁵ With this particular art work, there was suddenly a swell of support for Cai from the art scene, rejecting political intervention in art. These voices, both for and against his art work, gave the Taiwanese public the opportunity to think about the meaning of contemporary art, just as the head of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum at the time, Lin Manli, noted in his response to the controversial discussions about Cai’s work,

many of the practices of contemporary art are not familiar to the general public, so there are many doubts. Therefore, the promotion of artistic works has to spend more effort on explaining so everyone can understand it: you can like it, you can hate it, but whatever the opinion, it is a work of art.⁶⁶

Lin’s passage did not try to explain the real meaning of contemporary art or even Cai’s art, but rather emphasized Cai’s superiority as an artist in contrast to the popular understanding of art in Taiwan. The discussion about *Advertising Castle* had turned this particular piece of artwork into a free propaganda tool for the Taipei Biennale.

⁶² Qin, Yajun. *Cai Guoqiang you lai le!* (Cai Guoqiang!) (Taipei: Eslite Corporation, 2009), 114.

⁶³ Wang Fudong (王福東) is an artist, university teacher and a former chief editor of magazine *Artop*, published by Tainan National University of the Arts.

⁶⁴ Wang, Fudong. ‘*Ta shaji yongle niudao—ping Cai Guoqiang ‘guanggaoqiang’ shi jian*’ (He killed a chicken with a chopper –A Review of Cai Guoqiang’s ‘*Advertising Castle* incident) *Xinchao huaren yishu zazhi* (*Art China*) (October 1998). 34-35.

⁶⁵ Hou, Jiliang. ‘*Ma Weizhong de gongzuo*’ (The job of Lesley Ma) *Hou Jiliang buluoge* (*Hou Jiliang’s Blog*) *Zhongshi buluoge* (China Times blog) 29 April 2009. <http://blog.chinatimes.com/hjl/archive/2009/04/29/399781.html>. Accessed 1 December 2009.

⁶⁶ Xu, Jinde. ‘*Beimeiguan “guanggao cheng” fanbu, budi “taifengwei”*’ (The canvas of “*Advertising Castle*” at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum cannot beat the “typhoon tail”) *Haitang yishu xinwen* (*Arts News*) 5 August 1998. <http://www.arts.com.tw/news/9808/980805-1.htm> Accessed 1 December 2009.

And this drew the public and media's attention, accumulating fame for Cai in Taiwan. The controversial discussions between the city councillors and the art community lasted for almost a month, and successfully gained media exposure for both the biennale and Cai. Interestingly, while all the disputes were still underway, Cai had already left Taiwan following the completion of the project.⁶⁷

In August 1998 Cai visited Taiwan again for the third time in the same year. *Artist Magazine* described his arrival: "Cai's visit was laden with the towering light of an international star, this time the target of the explosion is the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts".⁶⁸ The head of the museum, Ni Zaiqin, invited Cai to perform a project before the museum closed for a refurbishment period. This project was named *No Destruction, No Construction: Bombing the Taiwan Museum of Fine Art* and was a conceptual reflection on Mao Zedong's tenet that no construction happens without destruction.⁶⁹ In the context of this work, this meant that without the destruction (the explosion) of the museum there would be no rebirth.⁷⁰ The explosion project took place in an exhibition hall sized around 30,000 square feet in which Cai used the gunpowder to design a shape of a big dragon. When it was lit, the dragon shuttled back and forth between the large architectural space and the outer museum space, constructed two pillars in dragon-shape in the main entrance hall, and symbolized the newborn after the deconstruction. Due to the multi-national radio channels broadcasting on the day before, this project successfully attracted more than ten thousand visitors wanting to see how the artist would explode the museum. The number of visitors to the museum surpassed all other attendance records in the decade

⁶⁷ Ni, Zaiqin, *Taiwan dangdai meishu tongjian—Yishujia zazhi 30 nianban (Comprehensive Study on Contemporary Taiwanese Art—the Three Decades Edition of Artist Magazine)* (2005), 329.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁶⁹ *No Destruction, No Construction: Bombing the Taiwan Museum of Art*. 21st August 1998, 6:35 p.m. The original quote from Mao is "without destruction there can be no construction; without blockage there can be no flow; without stoppage there can be no movement". Mao, Zedong. *Mao zhuxi yulu (Quotation from Chairman Mao Tsetung)*. (Government of the People's Republic of China, 1966).

⁷⁰ Ni Zaiqin's act of closing the museum for reconstruction and inviting Cai to do an explosion project drew considerable opposition from the people working in the art scene. The numerous complaints made by these people resulted in Ni's resignation in 2000. Information from 'Cai Guoqiang dashiji' (Cai Guoqiang's events) *Jinri yishu* (Today Art): <http://www.artnow.com.cn/Artist/ArtistsArticle.aspx?ChannelId=274&ArtistId=284&ModuType=YearTable&Type=6>. Access 20 July 2010.

since the museum opened in 1988.⁷¹ Not only did the public gather for Cai's explosion, but the international media outlets including CNN, Associated Press, Reuters, L'Agence France-Presse and NHK all broadcast the exhibition live. Along with generating further fame for Cai, the event successfully 'internationalised' the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art.⁷²



Figure 35. The project *No Destruction, No Construction: Bombing the Taiwan Museum of Art at the Taiwan Museum of Art* (1998).⁷³

The 'Cai Guoqiang phenomenon' had now extended from Japan to the United States and Taiwan. The respected art critic Huang Haiming pointed out in his article 'A graphical analysis on the cyclone of Cai Guoqiang—Talking from the project of *Daydreaming* at the Eslite Bookstore' that,

⁷¹ 'Bupo? Buli?—Cai Guoqiang yinbao shengmeiguan hongdong haineiwai' (No Destruction? No Construction?—Cai Guoqiang has made an sensational international explosion) *Diancang yishu zazhi* (*Art of Collection*) (October 1998), 116-117.

⁷² International reports included: Kelmachter, H el ene. "Herv e Chand es presente Cai Guoqiang." *Connaissance des Arts* (Paris) 554 (Oct. 1998), pp. 78–79. In French; and Goodman, Jonathan. "Cai Guoqiang." *ArtAsiaPacific* (Sydney) 18 (1998), 92.

⁷³ Photograph from Cai Guoqiang webpage: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/>. Access 20 July 2010.

for a long time, the whole Taiwanese art scene was shrouded in the formidable Cai Guoqiang cyclone (*Cai Guoqiang xuanfeng*). There seems to be a mystical, energetic power in the air. Perhaps, to a certain extent, it is like the irresistible cyclone of the film ‘Titanic’ that was produced by the big film industry.⁷⁴

Huang used the term ‘cyclone’ to describe overwhelming impact that Cai Guoqiang had on Taiwanese society and its art scene. For 1998, Cai was selected by the Taiwanese magazine *Artist Magazine* as the ‘person of the year’, further confirming his popularity in Taiwan. However, Cai’s in Taiwan did not end here. Along with his visits in later years, his fame accumulated to a higher degree and his status as a celebrity artist in Taiwan became even more prominent. In the article ‘Cai Guoqiang—Taiwan’s Legend’, Ni Zaiqin analysed the importance of Cai in comparison with other Chinese artists in the Taiwanese art scene:

In recent years there have been quite a few Chinese artists who have had exhibitions in Taiwan. Can we locate them in Taiwanese art history? Certainly not. How about Cai Guoqiang? According to the previous modes of writing the yearbook or chronicle in Taiwanese art magazines, Cai was only recognized by Taiwanese art scene since the mid-1990s. His debut in Taiwan in 1998 was like a cyclone, sweeping Taiwan back and forth several times, and the media described him as ‘the most popular figure of the time’. In addition, he visited Taiwan twice more, continuously stirring up discussions. Wherever Cai is in Taiwan, Venice, New York, Shanghai, Tokyo or Lyon, Taiwanese magazines always devote several pages to covering his activities. This made Cai’s fame even greater. It can be said that in contemporary Taiwanese art, Cai is already steady and secure in his role an art celebrity.⁷⁵

Both very established and respected art and cultural critics in Taiwan, Huang Haiming’s and Ni Zaiqin’s writings explicitly acknowledged Cai’s celebrity status and artistic achievements in Taiwan.

With the above analysis this thesis argues that Cai’s celebrity status in Taiwan is, firstly, closely linked with the relationship cultivated between himself, journalists and the public. This relationship has led him to become something of a media

⁷⁴ Huang, Haiming. ‘*Cai Guoqiang xuanfeng de tushi fenxi—shicong Chengpin ‘Husiluanxiang weishixian jihuaan’ tanqi*’ (A graphical analysis on the cyclone of Cai Guoqiang—Talking from the project of *Daydreaming* at the Eslite Bookstore) *Yishu jia (Artist Magazine)* (July 1998), 352-357.

⁷⁵ Ni, Zaiqin. ‘*Cai Guoqiang de Taiwan chuanqi*’ (Cai Guoqiang—A Taiwan Legend) *Diancang jin yishu (ARTCO)* (February 2002), 53-58.

favourite.⁷⁶ Secondly, his art projects in Taiwan constantly engage with those aspects of Taiwan's political, social and cultural situation that capture the public and media's attention. In terms of political issues, Cai often presents works that are related to the cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, which can be seen in works such as *Golden Missile* (1998), *Advertising Castle* (1998), *No Destruction, No Construction: Bombing the Taiwan Museum of Fine Art* (1998), and later works such as *18 Solo Exhibition—Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art*⁷⁷ (shorten as BMOCA, 2004) and *Strait* (2009). The other projects and art works that connect with Taiwanese cultural and social issues include *The Mark of 921*⁷⁸ (2002) and *Art shopping Network*⁷⁹ (2005).

Third, a very significant aspect Cai's capacity to win over the Taiwanese public and media is that he consistently identifies himself with Taiwanese local culture, which I have described in this chapter as a 'glocalisation' strategy.⁸⁰ This

⁷⁶ This point is also confirmed by Zhao Li, the director the Eslite Gallery that "Cai's attractiveness is not only constructed on his art, but also his personality in facing the mass media, collectors and the public. This does not only happened in Taiwan where he speaks the same language, but also in western countries when he does not speak English. He is still willing to communicate and expose himself in the public through translators." Regarding collectors, Zhao points out that almost every time Cai visits Taiwan, his collectors often make request to have dinner with the artist. Cai never refuses such invitations and he allows the Eslite Gallery to filter the list of collectors for him, to foreground those collectors who invest in his art for speculation. Interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

⁷⁷ In the actual exhibition he invited eighteen people, including Chinese and Taiwanese contemporary visual artists, as well as creators in the fields of film, architecture, music and performance to host their individual work in abandoned bunker spaces.

⁷⁸ The work *The Mark of 921* was made especially for the exhibition *Gratitude* on the 921 post-disaster reconstruction activities at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art. In this art work, Cai used the 90-second earthquake wave print as a prototype to create an explosion on paper. Later this work was auctioned for \$2.3 million Taiwanese dollars and bought by a Taiwanese collector, and the amount of money was donated to the Dharma-Drum Mountain Buddhism Foundation (法鼓山基金會) for post-disaster construction work.

⁷⁹ Among these projects, *Art Shopping Network* was a special one in which Cai collaborated with celebrity Tsai Kang-yung (who has already been mentioned in Chu Cha-ray's case study) for an exhibition *Trading Place: Contemporary Art Museum* held in the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (known as Taipei MOCA). In this project, Cai exploded a total of 66 Shanghai Golden Yuan (which had been issued in 1948 by the Nationalist Government of China in an attempt to control inflation and failed miserably) on cotton fabric which he then gave an official stamp and signed it, transforming each one into a work of art. Tsai Kang-yung then sold these items on the shopping channel. As an unprecedented way of presenting and trading art works, this project was an attempt to explore the issue of the 'commercialisation of art'. 'Trading Place': Contemporary Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei. 2nd April 2005—22nd May 2005.

⁸⁰ The term 'glocalisation', is a portmanteau word of globalization and localization, generally used to describe a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, but is also fashioned to accommodate the consumer or user in the local market. References to the use of the term, Friedman,

particular strategy has been particularly significant in Cai's, since as a Chinese artist who operates globally, he has in recent years chosen to conduct his artistic career and develop his public image in a regional context where cross-strait political issues are highly sensitive. Glocalisation enables Cai to share a similar lifestyle, religion and memory with the people on the island, establishing a social and cultural framework that enables him to create art works that specifically 'communicate' to the Taiwanese people. Cai uses strategies of identification in his art works, and also through media interviews and reports in which he constantly notes that he shares many cultural similarities with Taiwanese people because they speak the same language Hokkien (the most local 'Taiwanese language'), have very similar taste in food, and even share celebration ceremonies with the ones in his home town of Quanzhou. He even comments that "to certain extent, I treat Taiwan as home of my culture".⁸¹ This chapter suggests that this process of cultural identification marks Cai's identity and artistic status differently from the other Chinese or foreign artists, whose activities in Taiwan are limited to being visitors with an exhibition.

Lastly, Cai's celebrity status in Taiwan can also be linked to corporate sponsorship. This was especially manifest in 2009, when his retrospective exhibition was held in Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), with financial sponsorship by the Eslite Corporation which conducted a series of marketing plans and media exposures, as I have mentioned above, including 'publicity events', celebrity endorsements, open production and appearances on talk show programmes. This particular exhibition exemplifies all the other elements that I have pointed out above in this chapter as important components of Cai's celebritisation in Taiwan—media interactions, connections with local cultural, social and political interests, and the media's interests in the Ma sisters.

Thomas. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalisation*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2000); Friedman, Thomas. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

⁸¹ Yang, Zhao and Li Weijing. (2009), 214.

Cai's Retrospective Exhibition: *Hanging Out in the Museum* (2009)

Cooperative mode between the art institution and business interests

The origin of the retrospective exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* (2009) was from the *Cai Guoqiang: I Want to Believe* exhibition held in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2008. The success of the Guggenheim exhibition and Cai's international renown attracted the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (the TFAM) and they were decisive in hosting a retrospective exhibition on Cai's works. However, with only a limited budget of five million Taiwanese dollars (equivalent to £107,000), the TFAM was hoping to invite Cai's agent in Taiwan, the Eslite Gallery, to sponsor the exhibition. However, after the evaluation was carried out by the Eslite, the total budget for holding such an exhibition was about one hundred million Taiwanese dollars (equivalent to £2,147,000), which meant that the Eslite Gallery had to invest 95 percent of the total budgets. For such a large amount, the overall visitors had to reach 300,000 ticket sales in order to break even, but the figures of the average annual visitors to TFAM were only 400,000.⁸² The target of 300,000 visitors for a single exhibition over the period of three months would be an ambitious challenge. After the financial evaluation, the Eslite Gallery intended to withdraw its sponsorship while the TFAM insisted on holding the exhibition. Zhao Li, the director of Eslite Gallery, pointed out that "eventually, the Eslite had to invest the amount because we had no choice. Cai was one of our artists and we could not let the exhibition proceed badly without proper management and financial budget".⁸³ In such circumstances, 95,000,000 Taiwanese dollars were committed to the exhibition under the company name of the Eslite Corporation, instead of Eslite Gallery, because Eslite had to integrate almost all its departments—including the bookstore, all their communication channels, the media planning department and the art gallery—to promote and market the sales of the exhibition tickets.

⁸² 'Canguan renci, guanwang dianyue chuangxingao, beimeiguan fengshou yingxinnian' (The largest amount of museum visiting figures and the website viewing rates. The Taipei Fine Arts Museum is having a harvest new year) *zhongyang guangbo diantai* (*Radio Taiwan International*) 28 December 2009.

⁸³ Information provided in the interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery Zhao Li on 8th May 2010. One could also speculate that the reason Eslite decided to take part in this exhibition was because if the exhibition gained a good reputation, Eslite's management of Cai's market in Taiwan and possibly Asia would be even more established.

Ironically, while the actual exhibition was held at the TFAM, the museum was afraid of being criticised by the public and the mass media as being too commercialised, therefore, although Eslite had 95 percent of the financial sponsorship, its logo was only allowed to appear in certain places, such as the exhibition websites where it appeared as one of the three sponsoring organizations: the TFAM, the Eslite Corporation and Cai Studio. On merchandise and even in press conferences, the Eslite logo and name were not allowed to appear because the museum wanted to avoid being seen as ‘Eslite-ised’.⁸⁴ Without Eslite’s financial support, Cai’s exhibition would not have been held, but despite this, the TFAM prohibited Eslite from publicly declaring the amount of financial sponsorship it gave to the exhibition.⁸⁵ The different considerations of the TFAM and the Eslite Corporation in Cai’s exhibition to a certain extent support Julian Stallabrass’s views on the contradictory interests between government and business in the arts.⁸⁶ The interests of the TFAM were to accumulate of cultural capital through holding a globally renowned artist’s exhibition, and to develop its appeal through connecting with the general public and promoting media focus on the artist. Whereas, despite sharing similar interests in gaining the interest of the public and media, the Eslite Corporation also wished to promote its corporate brand through furthering the public’s recognition of Cai and increasing the monetary value of his art work. In the end, although the TFAM avoided being identified with the Eslite Corporation and wished to maintain its own authority, it could not hide the fact that this was a corporate sponsored exhibition. After investing such a large amount, the Eslite would certainly try hard to promote its connections to Cai’s exhibition to avoid excessive loss. The Eslite Corporation therefore tried as hard as it could to promote the exhibition through marketing it as if it were any other ‘product’, but which in the process further consolidated Cai’s commercialisation and celebritisation.

⁸⁴ Information provided in the interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ As discussed in the Literature Review in chapter two, “the corporations want to use art to assure an attachment to their brand that cannot be achieved through conventional advertising; and the state wants to counter the destructive effects of free trade on social cohesion.” Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 130.

Corporate involvement and marketing strategies

The Eslite Corporation controls the Eslite Bookstore, and the Bookstore in-turn is comprised of various department stores, specialised bookstores, exhibition and performance spaces, cafe and a formal art gallery. When the Eslite Corporation integrated all its resources to promote Cai's exhibition, it delivered and circulated the information about the exhibition through its own media and communication channels, including the physical spaces of its bookstore branches through out Taiwan,⁸⁷ its department store magazines,⁸⁸ the *Eslite Reader*⁸⁹ and the Eslite on-line book shopping website.⁹⁰ Together, these channels were used for the pre-sale and sale of discount exhibition tickets to Eslite membership card holders, promotion through the department store magazines and leaflets that were distributed around the bookstores and shopping areas, large display boards promoting Cai's art work, and the launch of limited edition souvenirs for Eslite members.⁹¹ Such marketing strategies also featured big character, eye-catching slogans, such as '*Cai Guoqiang is coming*' and '*Who is Cai Guoqiang*', and the slogan '*Ask me for Cai Guoqiang*' was also printed on t-shirts worn by the staff working at the Eslite Bookstore. This publicity featured prominently in Taipei throughout the exhibition period, where Eslite culture plays a quintessential part in people's life, as I noted in the last chapter. Other products were sold in temporarily stores set-up outside the exhibition spaces at the TFAM, and tickets were available in convenience stores such as 7-11.

⁸⁷ In total there are 44 Eslite bookstores and department stores spreading out in Taiwan.

⁸⁸ The Eslite department store magazines contain information on clothing, consumer products and fashion news.

⁸⁹ *Eslite Reader* is monthly magazine published by the Eslite Bookstore, See footnote 58.

⁹⁰ Eslite on-line book shopping website: <http://www.eslite.com/>.

⁹¹ The limited edition souvenirs included '*Cai Guoqiang Matches Calendar—2010*' and '*Cai Guoqiang, Eslite Membership Card—2010*'. This information comes from my observations on the Eslite Bookstore.



Figure 36. Advertisement for the exhibition ‘*Hanging Out in the Museum*’ on the notice board at a 7-11 Convenience Store.⁹²



Figure 37. Advertisement for ‘*Hanging Out in the Museum*’ displayed on the advertising pages of the Eslite department store magazine published in October 2009.⁹³

⁹² Own photograph taken in October 2009.

⁹³ Ibid.

The above discussion demonstrates that corporate sponsorship has been a crucial element in Cai's celebrity status, and his promotion as a 'celebrity-commodity' was in order to generate maximum profit. Both David Marshall and Graeme Turner have noted that the celebrity-commodity is defined by the close relationship between the celebrity and the consumption of commodities, as discussed previously in chapter two. The localised ideologies of individualism, consumerism and capitalism converged in Cai's celebrity status through the promotion of a popular and commodified taste dominated by the Eslite Corporation. However, this particular process of celebritisation and commodification and its contribution to the construction of popular taste contradicts the general idea of how art and the artist's image should be displayed in an art institution such as the TFAM. This point was clearly made by the famous literature and cultural critic, Zhang Xiaohong:

why is an artist' agent [the Eslite] allowed to become the main organiser of art works and make commercial activities became so dominant in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, where the museum space has been turned into a bigger version of the Eslite Gallery? It seems that the pioneering work that was done for this exhibition was not the fact that the Taipei Fine Arts Museum opened its side-wing spaces especially for Cai, but rather that the public museum opened its front door for the Eslite Gallery.⁹⁴

Although the name and logo of the Eslite Corporation did not appear obtrusively in the TFAM, and the truth about Eslite's financial sponsorship remained hidden, it was obvious that all the commercialised images, products and marketing plans were conducted by the Eslite. Hence, Zhang's point that "the public museum opened its front door for the Eslite Gallery" refers to the dominant role of the Eslite Corporation in controlling both the exhibition and the TFAM. Zhang was not the only person who criticized this situation, and other journalists and contributors to on-line blogs and website spaces expressed similar viewpoints.⁹⁵ So, while questions were raised about the nature of corporate intervention in the exhibition, the Eslite Corporation was not allowed to make any public statement about its role and the TFAM remained quiet.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Zhang, Xiaohong. 'Pao meishuguan huo guang hualang' (Hanging out in the Museum or visiting art gallery?) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) A21. 28 November 2009.

⁹⁵ Discourses made by journalists Ling Meixue from *Liberty Times* and Zhou Meihui from *United Daily*.

⁹⁶ Interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

Despite Cai's promotion through the Eslite's communication channels, other exceptional strategies were the extensive use of 'publicity events', 'celebrity endorsements', and appearances on television talk show programmes. The first publicity event was a press conference, which was held on the 8th September to officially launch the exhibition. In the press conference two well-known Taiwanese celebrities, television presenter Tsai Kang-yung and a very popular model Lin Zhiling (both claimed to be Cai's friends), were invited by Eslite to act as 'celebrity endorsement' figures, to draw the public and mass media's attentions to Cai and his exhibition. However, this kind of celebrity endorsement was not only beneficial to the media exposure of the exhibition, but also to the celebrities Tsai and Lin. As John Walker suggests, such endorsement is a commonplace occurrence for "commercial (endorsing products and services in adverts), charitable and political reasons", and "in all three cases, additional publicity ensues for celebrities so even their support for good causes is not entirely disinterested".⁹⁷ Beyond Tsai and Lin's friendship, their endorsement of Cai's artistic activities was beneficial to the celebrity's positive public image as well as to their own careers and cultural recognition.



Figure 38. Cai Guoqiang with the two other celebrities, Lin Zhiling and Tsai Kang-yung, in a press conference promoting 'Hanging Out in the Museum'. Both Lin and Tsai wear the shirt with the slogan 'Ask me for Cai Guoqiang'.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity*. (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 30.

⁹⁸ Photograph from *Renjian fubao* (人間福報 *Merit Times*) 9 September 2009.

While the two celebrities—Tsai and Lin—were the focal points of the press conference, Cai made use of the occasion to invite Lin to bath together with him in his art project *Cultural Melting Bath*.⁹⁹ The particular work was an interactive installation built up in accordance with the Chinese principle of ‘*feng shui*’ (geomancy), and Cai put various Chinese medicines in the bath water. The work carried the message that in bathing together, people from different backgrounds were communicating and ‘melting’ their cultural difference. Through using ‘bathing’ as a metaphor, Cai hoped the public would want to ‘hang out’ (in Chinese pronunciation, the sound of ‘hanging out’—*bao*—is the same as ‘bathing’) together in the museum hosting his exhibition. His action in inviting Lin to bathe together was also calculated to stimulate public attention on his art work because of Lin’s beauty and sexuality. This ‘bathing’ conversation between Cai, Lin and the media reporters thus highlighted Cai’s skill in drawing media attention onto his art works and to gain publicity.

Although Cai’s strategy of celebrity endorsement seems to serve very similar purposes to those already discussed with reference to Chu Cha-ray, somehow they are different. In Chu’s example artists and celebrities openly endorsed an art exhibition held at the Eslite Bookstore, with the purpose of reinforcing Eslite’s corporate brand, while in Cai’s example, celebrity endorsements were mainly to popularise Cai and his exhibition, held under the name of Eslite and the TFAM. This kind of celebrity endorsement for an exhibition was a pioneer marketing strategy in Taiwan.

Throughout the period of Cai’s exhibition, the effective use of publicity events in attracting media reports was also be seen in the press conference cultural administrators held on the arrival of Cai’s art work *Strait*. This included Yang Zhao, a writer who was the general consultant of the exhibition, Xie Xiaoyun, director of Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and Wu Qingyou, chairman of the Eslite Corporation—standing by the *Strait* together with Cai, waving to the journalists and cameras, and looking joyful as they celebrated the moment.¹⁰⁰ The other specific event that I

⁹⁹ ‘Cai Guoqiang laitai kai gezhan, luonu wei zhuti’ (Cai Guoqiang holds a solo exhibition in Taiwan with the main theme on female nude’. *Bada xinwen* (*Gala Television News*). 8 September 2009.

¹⁰⁰ The work *Strait* was a depiction of the strait between Taiwan and China that symbolized the distance and the relationship between the two places. When this particular work arrived at the port of Taiwan from China, a press conference—a publicity event—was held to declare the arrival and the

consider here as a form of publicity event was the open production of the work *Day and Night*,¹⁰¹ which Cai launched by making an explosion art work for the public and the media.



Figure 39. A celebration at the arrival of Cai Guoqiang's work *Strait*. (From left: Yang Zhao, Xie Xiaoyun, Cai Guoqiang and Wu Qingyou).¹⁰²

The open production project was a very important part in the exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum*. Cai insisted on holding the open production at the planning stage of the project to demonstrate the process of creating his explosion art to the Taiwanese public.¹⁰³ The open production was thus not only a 'publicity event' to reveal 'real' condition of Cai's working process. It was also to a real piece of art

success of the work. The work was transported by a big ship from China to Taiwan specifically for this exhibition. On its arrival, Cai went on the deck to open the cloth cover to reveal the work while the mass media waited to transmit the images and broadcast the report. Information from exhibition *Cai Guoqiang Hanging out in the Museum* website: <http://www.caiguoqiang.tw/index.html>

¹⁰¹ The open production on the sketch *Day and Night* takes place in Huashan 1914 Creative Park on 17th and 18th October. 17-18 Oct.

¹⁰² Photograph from 'the public photos of Cai_tw': <http://picasaweb.google.com.tw/caiguoqiang.tw/kuAEMI#5403653414181903186>. Accessed on 7 September 2010.

¹⁰³ Although in the exhibition spaces, there were videos showing the creations of explosion arts, the intention of publicizing his creative process was due to the constant audience's interests. Interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

work, *Day and Night*.¹⁰⁴ The open production took place on the 17th and 18th October 2009 in Huashan 1914 Creative Park in Taipei. Although entrance was free and the space could host about two hundred people, too many people tried to enter the space and many of them could only view the event on a monitor placed outside the space. For those who were in the production site there were rules to be followed, including no photographs or video recordings, and people with certain medical conditions such as heart disease and pregnancy were not allowed entry for safety reasons. The audience also had to remain in silence so as not to affect the production. During the production process, the whole event was broadcast by SNG (Satellite News Gathering) and was also transmitted live on the exhibition website, so could be seen by people all over the world.¹⁰⁵

This particular art work *Day and Night* sought to capture a woman's inner feelings and outer movements between 9 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock in the evening, with support from Cai's assistants, including Kelly Ma, the youngest daughter of president Ma Ying-jeou. A nude dancer's movements were projected on to a sheet of paper hanging in front of her, making her silhouette visible to Cai and the spectators. The production of the work took place over twelve hours. Then on the next day, Cai spread gunpowder on the paper and prepared explosives. Although Cai had considerable experience of working under the public eye, it was, according to the Director of the Eslite Gallery, stressful for the female dancer, and the assistants were anxious that the work would not be completed on time. However, in the end, and within the scheduled time, the sketch was completed, and Cai introduced the female

¹⁰⁴ In fact, revealing the creative process is not something new for artists, especially for those celebrity artists. As early as 1956, Henri-Georges Clouzot made a documentary film *Le Mystere Picasso*, in which Picasso drew and painted specifically for the camera. A biopic film *Jackson Pollock* (1999) made by Ed Harris on American celebrity artist Jackson Pollock's life and art, also reveal his unique painting technique. In Taiwan, a series of documentary films *Avant-garde liberation—the Huang Ming-chuan image collection of the 1990s* (2001) filmed fourteen Taiwanese artists discussing and carrying out their work. In contrast to these mediated forms, Cai Guoqiang's open production was shown publicly with the artist working on-site over a limited time. This kind of open production performance could be compared to French artist Yves Klein's open performance of putting paint on a naked model's body, then using the painted body to make prints on papers. Klein's paints and Cai's explosion arts are also similar in the uncertainty of the prints/marks of their work. Information from, Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity*. (London: Pluto Press, 2003) 197, 206; and *Avant-garde liberation—the Huang Ming-chuan image collection of the 1990s* (Taipei: Taiwan Public Service Television Foundation, 2001).

¹⁰⁵ Information gained from my research field in attending the open production and the interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

dancer to the public.¹⁰⁶ Actually, the issue of whether the dancer wanted to be presented after the open production had been confirmed in a prior agreement. She was told by Cai that “you might be chased by the Taiwanese media for three days, but after the three days, no one would remember who you are.”¹⁰⁷ In fact the female dancer was present in the first conference before this performance, in order to prepare her for the ‘vigour’ of the Taiwanese media to reduce her anxiety during the open production.



Figure 40. Cai painting the projection of the nude dancer who performed behind the paper, with Kelly Ma and the other assistant helping him.¹⁰⁸

In saying this to the dancer, one can see how aware Cai was of the media environment in Taiwan. Another similar instance of this was when Kelly Ma appeared in the open production as one of Cai’s assistants. Almost every time when Cai appeared with Ma in public the Taiwanese media pursued her aggressively to get photographs. Therefore, when Cai initially proposed his idea of doing an open production, the Eslite Gallery thought there was going to be another mad media

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Photograph from ‘the public photos of Cai_tw’:

<http://picasaweb.google.com.tw/caiguoqiang.tw/yccguDL#5394964129266523538>.

Accessed 7 September 2010.

frenzy around Ma. The staff at the Eslite Gallery even suggested not letting Ma work publicly in this event, but Cai insisted on her being there in her usual position (as an assistant by Cai's side during the creative process). Cai said, "if you let the media photograph her enough for once, they would not bother chasing her anymore. If you try to hide her behind the scene, the media reporters will search the whole place for her and interrupt the open production".¹⁰⁹ Zhao Li pointed out after the production that Cai was right about how the Taiwanese media would conduct themselves: the media had their shots of Ma on the first day, then behaved very well on the subsequent occasions.



Figure 41. Cai and his assistant Kelly Ma working together in the open production.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Interview with the Director of Eslite Gallery, Zhao Li, on 8th May 2010.

¹¹⁰ Photograph from 'the public photos of Cai_tw':
<http://picasaweb.google.com.tw/caiguogiang.tw/ycguDL#>. Accessed 7 September 2010.

強攜馬元中創作

爭睹公開繪圖 今天還要搶看爆破

【本報記者蔡國強報導】以爆破藝術家蔡國強為主角的《晝夜》創作過程，昨天在華山創意文化園區中6館舉行。蔡國強解釋，《晝夜》呈現舞者自早上9時到晚上9時，長達12小時的肢體與心理變化；這段時間內，藝術家與舞者共同經歷時間流動與晝夜推移，也希望讓民眾感受「日日都在發生，卻不被注意到的生命痕跡」。

蔡國強今將把紙幕平放地上，在描繪的輪廓上鋪火藥爆破，創作完成後，先在華山展出，下月21日再移至北美館。實踐大學設計學院院長安郁堯說：「一般藝術家鮮少公開創作過程，蔡國強願公開相當難得，有助民眾深入了解藝術家創作想法與內涵。」

蔡讚馬「表現獨立」

這次蔡國強來台，馬元中以助理身分隨行，蔡國強說：「馬元中的表現相當獨立。」他們彼此會討論社會問題與藝術理論，昨蔡國強要記錄女舞者剛出場的興奮心情時，一時忘記如何寫「奮」，馬元中還臨時當起小老師，教蔡國強寫字。

為一睹名家創作，昨上午8時多就有10多人排隊等候入場，全場約550人參觀創作過程。民眾曹小姐說：「看到藝術家創作的過程，感覺很特別。」民眾張小姐說，今天還要再到場，希望可現場看爆破。

蔡國強（左）以炭筆描繪投射在紙幕上的女舞者身影輪廓。沈君帆攝

蔡國強（左）首度全程公開創作過程，馬元中（右）以助理身分參與創作。沈君帆攝

蔡國強《晝夜》創作資訊	
資料來源：誠品公司	
地點	華山創意文化園區中6館（北市八德路1段1號）
時間	今天上午9時~下午5時，預計下午3~5時點點火藥爆破（確切爆破時間視現場狀況調整）
參觀資格	免費進場，最多容納200人
作品尺寸	300×3200公分
創作內容	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 昨女舞者在紙幕後，依心情做出不同動作，燈光投影後，蔡國強在紙幕上以炭筆描繪身形 ▶ 今把紙放地上，在炭筆圖樣上鋪火藥爆破 ▶ 創作完成後將在華山園區展示，11/21移至北美館，加入當天開展的《蔡國強 泡美術館》展覽 ▶ 展出結束後，擬由國內公立美術館優先收藏
網址	www.caiguogiang.tw，可線上觀看爆破

0209-012-555 爆料投訴監製專線: 0209-013-666 爆料投訴e-mail: news@appledaily.com.tw 蘋果日報網站http://www.appledaily.com

Figure 42. Newspaper reports on Cai's open-production performance, but the title and images of the report focus on Kelly Ma.¹¹¹

On the second day of the open production, Cai ignited the gunpowder and made the artwork. The audience clapped as the work was hung up on display, then Cai carefully put his signature on the work. At this particular moment, there were around three hundred people and journalists on site, with two hundred and fifty outside the space watching the images transmitted live, and numerous people watching the scene through different television and Internet channels.¹¹² Cai's exalted comment was "this piece is really great. I am very satisfied".¹¹³ The success of the open production pushed Cai's celebrity status onto another peak of high visibility.

¹¹¹ Image from newspaper Apple Daily, 8th October 2009.

¹¹² The blog of exhibition *Cai Guoqiang Hanging out in the Museum*: <http://www.caiguogiang.tw/index.html>. Accessed 8 August 2010.

¹¹³ 'Cai Guoqiang yu nuwuzhe "zhouye" duihua' (The 'Day and Night' conversation between Cai Guoqiang and the female dancer) *Ledou* (Roodo) 23 October 2009.



Figure 43. Cai's assistants helped to cover the work with boards to prepare for a later explosion.¹¹⁴

In addition to the various mass media reports on this event, Cai also attended talk show programmes to promote his exhibition. There are two categories of talk show programmes in Taiwan, as previously mentioned in chapter four: political commentary talk shows and entertainment talk shows. The one Cai attended was an entertainment show, *Shen Chunhua Live Show*, hosted by former television news presenter Shen Chunhua.¹¹⁵ Cai attended the programme with a celebrity friend Chen Wenqian, who was an ex-politician and had been a controversial figure in Taiwanese politics. Cai was not only interviewed about his art and the creative process, but also his personal background and life. Celebrity Chen's presence was to offer her opinion on Cai's art and her personal feelings towards Cai. Cai sat very comfortably and confidently on the sofa chatting to Shen and Chen, fluently responding to the

¹¹⁴ Photograph from 'the public photos of Cai_tw': <http://picasaweb.google.com.tw/caiguogiang.tw/ycguDL#5403518619321956754>. Accessed 8 August 2010.

¹¹⁵ 'Yong pohuai chuangzao yongheng de dashi, Cai Guoqiang' (The master who create perpetual with deconstruction) *Shen Chunhua Live Show*. 25 October 2009. *Shen Chunhua Live Show* is a talk show programme that invites celebrities from different fields to discuss their performances, achievement, life and general thoughts. The programmes are broadcast on Saturday and Sunday at 9 in the evening on the CtiTV Channel.

questions without any suggestion of being camera-shy. The interview clips were later uploaded onto the YouTube website and circulated on the Internet.



Figure 44. The scene on *Shen Chunhua Live Show* when Cai Guoqiang was interviewed. From left to right: Shen Chunhua, Cai Guoqiang and Chen Wenqian.¹¹⁶

Cai's appearance on the talk show with Chen showed their good personal relationship. As a contemporary celebrity artist, Cai's social connections are extensive and extend into many different fields beyond art. When Tsai Kang-yung and Lin Zhiling appeared in the first press conference to endorse Cai's exhibition, they also claimed to be his good friends. During this talk show programme, Cai and Chen also mentioned another ex-politician celebrity, Zhao Shaokang¹¹⁷ and a banquet they had all attended. Such reference to other celebrities on the one hand suggested that they all belonged to the same elite social circles, and on the other hand, was an example of how celebrities can benefit from each other's fame through making connections and references. However, when Chen tried to ingratiate herself with Cai, cultural critic Deng Weiwei scrutinized her behaviour: 'Chen followed Cai

¹¹⁶ YouTube image: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGjUzDPnsic>. Accessed 10 December 2009.

¹¹⁷ Zhao Shaokang (趙少康) was an ex-politician and now working in media circle.

everywhere, in so doing she devalued traditional Taiwanese folk activities'.¹¹⁸ Teng's comment not only severely criticized Chen's use of Cai's fame, but also located Cai's art in the context of Chinese culture and emphasised the incompatibility between Chinese art and local Taiwanese culture.

The political implications of Cai's art and national identity is also observed by many Taiwanese people who express their views on blogs. They refuse to look at Cai's art because it represents 'the culture of big China' (*da zhonghua wenhua*). These people, many of whom obviously support the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and refuse the 'One China Principle', read Cai's art as laden with pro-China messages, especially because Cai has made explosion projects celebrating national events in China, such as the *Fireworks Project for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games* (2008) and the *Fireworks Project for China's 60th National Day Celebration* (2009). However, for other people who adore Cai and his art, and even travelled long distances to see his exhibition in Taipei, describe his promotional strategy as 'overwhelming' as it was well broadcast beyond just the Taipei area.¹¹⁹

Conclusion—Cai Guoqiang's Political Significance in Taiwan

Cai's exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* was a huge success in Taiwan. The total number of visitors over the three month exhibition period reached 220,000, and although it still did not break even, it was higher than expected and surpassed many other exhibitions held in the TFAM. This chapter has examined the construction of Cai's celebrity in Taiwan through the Eslite Corporation's formulation of marketing strategies to make Cai Guoqiang a household name. As I have argued above, the exhibition and its contribution to Cai's celebritisation is closely tied to the business interests of the Eslite Corporation, Cai's agent in Taiwan. Cai's image is thus an integral component of the cultural and social image of Eslite's corporate brand. In

¹¹⁸ Deng, Weiwei. "'Wenhua pinglun'" baopo Cai Guoqiang, meihua Chen Wenqian' ('Cultural Criticism' Exploding Cai Guoqiang, beautify Chen Wenqian) *Ziyou shibao* (*Liberty Times*) 21 October 2009.

¹¹⁹ This information was gleaned from conversations with friends in Taiwan.

this, it is supported by his global status within what I described before as a celebritiescape.

However, this chapter also argues that other aspects also need to be considered in understanding his celebrity construction in Taiwan, namely the link between Cai's art and politics. Co-founder of the Cai Studio and former assistant Ma Wen openly criticizes Cai's art by saying that "Cai Guoqiang's art is a marriage between politics and art".¹²⁰ Despite the frequent references to politically sensitive issues in his art works, especially those tied to cross-strait tensions, Cai's celebrity status in Taiwan in many ways is actually a result of politics. His close relationship with Lesley and Kelly Ma is one example. As previously mentioned, the media interests in the Ma sisters often inflated news reports on Cai and furthered his celebritisation. Both Cai's identity and his relationship with the Ma sisters has had the effect of connecting him to the Kuomintang party (KMT party). Just before Cai staged the national celebration projects *Fireworks Project for China's 60th National Day Celebration* (2009) in China, the Taiwanese media carried a number of reports questioning whether Lesley and Kelly Ma would work with Cai for the Chinese Communist Government. The media suspected that this might trigger a huge 'political effect' on Taiwan and even because a cause of war between the two.¹²¹ Although the question of whether Kelly Ma joined the specific project was never confirmed, this kind of media interest in the political implications of Cai's activities has maintained his position in Taiwanese society.

This chapter has further suggested that it would be legitimate to propose that if Taiwan were not currently under the KMT regime, Cai, as a Chinese artist who is often associated politically with the Chinese Communist Party, would not have been able to have such a large-scale retrospective exhibition supported by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Museums in Taiwan are bureaucratically linked to the ruling political

¹²⁰ Deng, Weiwei. "'Wenhua pinglun' baopo Cai Guoqiang, meihua Chen Wenqian' ('Cultural Criticism' Exploding Cai Guoqiang, beautify Chen Wenqian) *Ziyou shibao* (*Liberty Times*) 21 October 2009.

¹²¹ 'Cai Guoqiang danren shiyi zongdao, Ma Yingleou nuer bang dalu guoqing fang yanhuo?' (Cai Guoqiang will be the director of the October 1 National celebration day, the daughters of Ma Ying-jeou are going to help in setting up the bonfires for the celebration in Mainland China?) *Jinri xinwen wang* (今日新聞網 NowNews) 28 September 2009. <http://www.nownews.com/2009/09/28/301-2512389.htm>. Accessed 20 July 2010.

party, and when the party in power shifts, the directors and bureaucratic teams of the state museums also change.¹²² This indicates the importance the Taiwanese government gives to museums as instrumental and effective cultural spaces to exert its political power. In a Taiwan Studies seminar, held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, Edward Vickers pointed out in his paper ‘Recent Developments in Taiwan’s Museums’ that exhibition themes and the content of museums in Taiwan are seen as key organs of state cultural policy, not only by the KMT, but also by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) regime between 2000 and 2008, which strove “to convey strong messages concerning Taiwan’s historical and cultural distinctiveness from China”.¹²³ Vickers applies a similar approach in his article ‘Re-writing Museums’, in which he suggests that there is a strong relationship between museums and the politics of identity in Taiwan.¹²⁴ Drawing on this argument and on Stallabrass’s discussion about the different state and business interests in art, this chapter sees Cai’s retrospective exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* and his celebritisation, on the one hand, as a political tool enabling the KMT regime to construct a specific national identity oriented to cultural integration with Mainland Chinese culture.

¹²² According to my own working experience and knowledge accumulated at the National Palace Museum between 2003-2005.

¹²³ Vickers, Edward. (Institute of Education), Seminar title: ‘Developments in Taiwan’s Museums’, School of Oriental and African Studies. 10th March 2010.

¹²⁴ Edward Vickers, ‘Re-writing museums in Taiwan’. Fang-Long Shih, Stuart Thompson, Paul Tremlett ed., *Re-writing Culture in Taiwan* (Routledge: London, 2008), 69-101.

Chapter Six

Tang Huang-chen and the Taishin Arts Award



Figure 45. Tang Huang-chen addressed the ‘Planting Art’ Action seminar on 29 March 2008.¹

Tang Huang-chen (湯皇珍) is one of Taiwan’s most prominent contemporary artists who in 2005 was winner of the prestigious Taishin Arts Award Visual Arts Prize and in 2007 was selected to participate in the Taiwan Pavilion of the 2007 Biennale. This chapter looks at Tang’s celebrity status in relation to the Taishin Arts Award. It argues that Tang’s celebrity status was largely constructed through her involvement in the award and the marketing strategies it adopted to celebrityise art, artists and the Taishin corporation. Tang’s artistic career took off in 1991 after she returned to Taiwan from Paris, when she presented herself to Taiwan’s art scene as a serious

¹ Photograph from flickr website: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/7250651@N08/2401762173/>. Accessed 20 August 2010.

artist devoted to her artistic practice. She also participated in a number of cultural protests. Her celebrity did not emerge until her nomination for the 2006 Taishin Arts Award, and become even more apparent when she was announced as the winner of the Visual Art Prize in the award ceremony, which I treat in this chapter as a 'publicity event'. Tang's new cultural standing brought her instant media attention, with newspapers and magazines giving her extensive coverage. Her image was even printed on a magazine cover, giving her prominent public recognition.

Although the media exposure of Tang and her works was largely planned, if not manipulated, by the Taishin Arts Award, Tang was able to use her new cultural standing to advance her artistic career even after the media hype diminished. Her art project was selected for exhibition in the Taiwan Pavilion in the 2007 Venice Biennale and she was a tireless campaigner for cultural and environmental causes.

Tang Huang-chen's example shows the importance and influence of the Taishin Arts Award in contemporary Taiwan's art scene, not only because it offers the highest monetary prizes to the winning artists, but also because its mode of operation involves the use of a series of marketing strategies to promote the nominated artists and their art works. In so doing, the Award, which was established in 2002 and was solely funded by a corporate bank, has accumulated cultural capital to benefit its corporate image among the other competitors in the financial field. Moreover, by inviting national and international judges to select the final winners, it establishes its own legitimacy and cultural significance in Taiwan's art scene.

Alongside the example of the Eslite Bookstore, the Taishin Arts Award is another instance of business's appropriation of the arts. Both corporations use celebrity art as a strategy to enhance their brand images, thereby demonstrating a fast-growing and important relationship between art and business in contemporary Taiwan's art scene, incorporating media exposure as a means to achieve their end. Analysing this close relationship between artist and corporate interests, this chapter also observes how the Taishin Arts Award uses the flexibility of the Arts Award exhibition's location as a means to expand its business power outside the city of Taipei.

Tang Huang-chen's Artistic Career

An action artist

Tang Huang-chen's² artistic career took off in 1991 after she completed her master's degree in plastic arts at the University of Paris VIII and returned to Taiwan.³ Before she moved to Paris in 1987, she had already trained as an art teacher at the National Taiwan Teachers Junior College for Girls, Art and Craft Group.⁴ However, she had never wanted to be a teacher, but since her ambition of becoming an artist was opposed by her father, she was required to continue her teaching job and create art the same time.⁵ Thus, Tang described herself at the time as a 'Sunday painter', in common with Paul Gauguin, who could only express his creativity at weekends.⁶

Unlike artist Chu Cha-ray who, as we have seen, challenges conventional social values and family expectations, Tang struggled to juggle her interests and the teaching job for five years. Between 1985 and 1986 before she gained government funding to further her study in Paris, Tang did a variety of jobs besides teaching. She wrote professional art entries for encyclopaedias, worked as an illustrator without pay and as an actor in Lanlin Theatre⁷ (*Lanlin jufang*). This was just before martial law was lifted, when many small-scale theatres which were experimental in nature encouraged discussion of what were considered taboo topics.⁸ At the time Tang also

² Tang Huang-chen was born in 1958 in Taipei.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The National Taiwan Teachers Junior College for Girls, Art and Craft Group was upgraded to Taipei Municipal University of Education (臺北市立教育大學 *Taipei shili jiaoyu daxue*) in 2005. The system of 'teachers' colleges' in Taiwan trains students to become teachers after they graduate. The art and craft group tends to emphasise technological skills rather than creativity.

⁵ Tang's father's attitude is very prevalent in traditional Taiwanese society, which recognises that becoming a teacher is a stable job with good pay, especially for girls wanting to develop a career alongside their marital and family responsibilities.

⁶ Tang Huang-chen's identification with Paul Gauguin was based on his experience of having worked in a stockbroker's firm from 1871 and being what he described as a 'Sunday painter'. The financial crash of 1882-83 left him without work and prompted his decision to become a full-time artist. Information gained from interview with Tang Huang-chen in April 2006.

⁷ Lanlin Theatre (蘭陵劇坊) was one of the most important modern theatres in Taiwan in the 1980s, and had fostered many outstanding theatrical practitioners.

⁸ Information gained from interview with Tang Huang-chen in April 2006. The reason why many little theatres were established just before 1987 is discussed by Tuan Iris Hsin-chun in the book *Alternative Theater in Taiwan: Feminist and Intercultural Approaches*. 'Perhaps it was because theater

wrote scripts, some of which were read by directors including Hou Hsiao-hsien,⁹ but were not turned into plays.¹⁰ However, these experiences were very important for Tang's later artist's career. As she put it in an interview conversation with me in 2006, "these comprehensive experiences created the later 'Tang Huang-chen'".¹¹

The later education that Tang received in Paris had a great impact on the development of her artistic career. Describing the reasons why she chose to go to Paris instead of other countries, she said, "I am not a person who is very fast at doing things, so I think I am more suited to going to a country like France. However, I didn't have a full understanding of the schools in France before I arrived".¹² Although Tang was already educated in the field of art, her training was largely limited to technical skills. The French system influenced her conceptual thinking and transformed her attitude toward artistic creativity.

How the French see art is quite different from us, and how they teach people to approach art is different from us too. So the first thing was to put aside previous ideas, and to throw away what I had known and what I was proud of.¹³

What Tang saw as the liberal artistic concepts and left-wing humanist ideas embedded in French art education transformed her into an artist concerned about social and cultural events. These influences developed and became embedded in Tang's action art projects¹⁴ and led her to participate in cultural protests about the use of art and cultural space in Taiwan.

practitioners felt that the previous political repression was lessening, and they therefore dared to stage their political ideas through drama performances in the late 1980s. I argue that these social changes were important reasons behind why theater practitioners dare to express political protest through their theatrical art without worrying about being arrested'. Tuan Iris Hsin-chun, *Alternative Theater in Taiwan: Feminist and Intercultural Approaches*, New York: Cambridge Press, 2007, 23-24.

⁹ Hou Hsiao-hsien has been one of the most influential directors in Taiwan since the 1980s. He is a leading figure of Taiwan's New Wave cinema movement. His famous films include *The Sandwich Man* (1983), *A City of Sadness* (1989), *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998), *Café Lumière* (2003), and *Three Times* (2005).

¹⁰ Information from interview with Tang Huang-chen in April 2006.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Art critic, curator and artist Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中) explains that in Taiwan the definition of 'performance art' is different to that of 'action art'. For instance, artist Tang Huang-chen emphasises

Tang graduated in 1990 and had her first solo exhibition in Paris in 1991 before she returned back to Taiwan. The exhibition took place in her teacher's studio, in a small space where Tang began her first conceptual and experimental action art performance. The work grew from her questioning of the texts in the mass media. She painted the daily newspaper *Le Monde* in reverse direction, using a brush to cover each page with 418 touches of white paint, covering a page every seven minutes. The exhibition was therefore titled *touches 7 minutes*. Since then, many of Tang's art works have shared similar characteristics in emphasising series of repeated actions in absurd cycles, as well as focusing on selected times and spaces.¹⁵ Her first solo exhibition in Taiwan was named 72 and held in the IT Part Gallery in 1991, revealing many similar features.¹⁶ In this work, Tang threw 72 eggs into 72 transparent acrylic panels with paper bags behind them, representing windows between the gallery and the outer world, Tang commented that,

I just wanted to recall a 'threshold'. It's a window, a threshold between indoors and outdoors. It's acrylic panels, a threshold between eggs and the paper bags for eggs. The acrylic panels act as 'paintings', whether they are hung in this non-gallery exhibition space, they are thresholds on the verge of breaking out between my own situation and the bigger society.¹⁷

Through this project, Tang expressed her sense of the communicative barriers between herself and the wider environment of Taiwan. Unlike Chu Cha-ray, who painted self-portraits to show the different characters within her self, Tang chose the form of action art with the use of cold, material acrylic panels to express her inner feeling of her inability to integrate into the Taiwanese art scene after her long stay abroad.

that she does not use her 'body' to create art works. There are other artists who create 'mobile installations', and some artists who create 'body arts' and 'living arts' with a special interest in the body. There are also 'happening arts', 'live arts' and 'conceptual arts'. Yao does not make clear distinctions between these categories, but aims to preserve their experimental and open characteristics. Liu, Yuqing. 'Xingwei yishu, jinxia cheng huati' (Performance art becomes a topic of discussion in this summer) *Minsheng bao* (*Min-sheng Daily*) 23 July 2005.

¹⁵ Information from Tang Huang-chen's work statement on the IT Park Website: http://www.itpark.com.tw/images/exhfiles/1229408181_pdf.pdf. Accessed 19 August 2010.

¹⁶ 72. IT Part Gallery. 18 November–18 December 1991.

¹⁷ Exhibition Statement, IT Park Gallery. Information from the IT Park Gallery website: http://www.etat.com/itpark/artists/huang_chen/exhibition.htm. Accessed 23 July 2010.



Figure 46. Tang's first art project 72 (1991) in IT Park Gallery, Taiwan, after the return from Paris.¹⁸

In the early 1990s when Tang returned to Taiwan from Paris, the form of action art that she chose to focus on was not in vogue, similar to Lee Ming-sheng's situation with regard to performance art. In the process of searching for spaces to hold exhibitions, she was advised by friends who had also returned from Paris to consider a non-commercial gallery named the IT Park Gallery, which then became her first exhibition space. The IT Park Gallery was an artistic space in Taiwan which was established by a group of artists in 1988 and regarded itself as an alternative and avant-garde space.¹⁹ Unlike those commercial galleries that focused on displaying and trading mainstream arts, the IT Park Gallery devoted itself to the avant-garde and to those artists who could not, or were unwilling to, enter Taiwan's mainstream and commercial art market. Tang's first solo exhibition in the IT Park had no material hanging on the walls, and she placed a just few acrylic panels on the floor to

¹⁸ Photograph from the IT Park Gallery website:
http://www.etat.com/itpark/artists/huang_chen/exhibition.htm. Accessed 19 August 2010.

¹⁹ The IT Park was established in September 1988 by a group of artists including Chen Huiqiao, Liu Qingtang, Zhuang Pu, Huang Wenhao and others. The IT Park aimed to provide a space for artistic communication, exhibition of non-mainstream art works and artistic explorations in a context outside the official institution and business systems. The interior structure of the IT Park was built originally around the concept of 'bar' and gallery, in order to fulfil both communication and exhibition needs. For detailed information on the IT Park Gallery, see chapter seven.

coordinate with her action art performances. Initially this form of display worried one of the founding artists of the space, Zhuang Pu,²⁰ because it seemed too provocative. It was this initial exhibition that launched Tang's reputation on Taiwan's art scene.²¹

Tang's next project, *I Love You* (1992) soon entered the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.²² Tang continued to apply similar concepts and characteristics in a series of repetitive actions with symbolic numbers and tools. In 1994, in her project *Black Box* at the IT Park Gallery, she started to interact with audiences through pre-designed games. She placed many black boxes, a pile of flour potatoes, and a transparent acrylic box in the exhibition spaces. When visitors entered the exhibition on the ground floor, a short instruction placed on the wall guided them to put their hands into the transparent acrylic box to cut a piece of potato, then take the potato to the first floor. Then the visitors took the black box placed on the first floor and replaced it with the potato piece, taking the black box to the second floor where they were asked by the artist to put some sweat or saliva on the box to stick some flour to it, using their hands to clean off the excess flour. Afterwards they were told to fix the black box on the wall, which constructed an image of many black boxes on the wall at different heights. This series of actions was recorded by a hidden camera and the images were transmitted and broadcast on a screen at the other side of the room. This kind of action art with pre-designed instructions from the artist produced some interesting interactions between the displayed objects, audience behaviour and the exhibition space, with the transferability between 'reading' objects and objects 'being read' on the monitor placed on the other side of the room.²³

²⁰ The artist Zhuang Pu (莊普) was born in 1947 and hit the Taiwanese art scene in the early 1980s. In 1984, he was awarded the New Vision Arts Award by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Zhuang is still an active and influential figure in contemporary Taiwanese art. Information from the IT Park Gallery website: <http://www.itpark.com.tw/artist/statement/38/275>. Accessed 2 August 2010.

²¹ Information from interview with Tang Huang-chen in April 2006.

²² On the day of the opening of *I Love you*, Tang was sitting in a corner in the exhibition space. She had her back to the audience, and continuously spoke the words 'I love you' through a microphone. During the exhibition period, the words 'I love you' were repeatedly broadcast by tape recorder to express Tang's concept through a series of mechanistic and non-emotional acts.

²³ Information from the IT Park Gallery website: <http://www.itpark.com.tw/artist/statement/38/275>. Accessed 2 August 2010.

This concept of ‘entering the game in art projects’ in coordination with a series of instructions per design has become one of the key characteristics of Tang’s art works. It can also be seen in her project *Hom?* held at the IT Park Gallery in 1996²⁴ and in a series of works titled *I Go Travelling* (1999-). Since the *I Go Travelling* project, Tang has started to explore the relationship between travelling, communication and memories in the modern world, and has presented a series of nine projects, including *I Go Travelling I—A Trip to Beijing* (1999), *I Go Travelling II—Je fais un voyage* (1999), *I Go Travelling III—IT Vacation* (2000), *I Go Travelling IV—Traveller, Bali* (2001), *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* (part 1 in Korea in 2003, part 2 in Taiwan in 2005 and part 3 in France in 2006), *I Go Travelling VI—A Happy Island* (2005), *I Go Travelling VII—Plaza Traveller* (2006), *I Go Travelling VIII—Wise Man Fish Here* (2009), and *I Go Travelling IX—The Sojourner* (2010).

These projects are some of the most representative art works created by Tang in recent years, not only because they are a series of ongoing creations, but also because *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* (2005) won the Taishin Arts Award as the best visual arts exhibition in 2005. This celebritised Tang’s name, image and her art projects that now could be widely seen by the Taiwanese public through the constant media broadcasting that was part of Taishin’s marketing strategy. Although I argue that this constituted media hype for Tang and her art work, by winning the award Tang gained a cultural standing in the art scene that advanced her international career in the following years.

Before Tang Huang-chen won the Taishin Arts Award in 2006, she was already an important and serious artist, but was not a particularly mediated figure. Tang’s public presence is unlike that of the artists Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang, who constantly act as showmen in media spaces, as the thesis has demonstrated in

²⁴ Project *Hom?* held at IT Park Gallery in 1996 was another work extending her concept with pre-designed games. She placed a long pipe along the wall from the third floor of the exhibition room to the ground floor, and placed a wooden ladder next to the pipe on the third floor. The audience had to climb up to reach the pipe and drop a glass marble in it and let it fall down to the ground floor. When the marble hit the floor and fell into a transparent box, a sensor would transmit the sound of a horn to the speaker on the third floor. Tang hoped to use this particular project to express the possibility of ‘rebirth’ after every symbolic hit that she experienced in her life. Information from artist’s statement on the IT Park website. http://www.etat.com/itpark/artists/ Huang_chen/exhibition.htm. Accessed 19 August 2010.

the previous chapters. In contrast with Chu who focuses on her self-images and feelings, Tang gives the sense of being detached from her personal image in her works and being uninterested in presenting a vivid persona to her audiences. Tang does not have the fashionable appearance or outstanding young looks of Chu Charay. Her appearance is described by architect and cultural critic Ji Tienan²⁵ thus

Tang Huang-chen is not the kind of person who would catch people's attention, but her talk is rich in tension and struggle. During her fast speech, one can see her eyes sparkling, which is in contrast with her pen-black eyelids, and a particular artistic look on her face can be seen. Besides, she is not a woman who would catch people's attention. She has short hair and dresses very simply, which makes people unable to treat her as a 'woman' or 'girl', or as a female with 'female consciousness'.²⁶

This kind of non-feminine image appears in the photographs taken by journalists and others at seminars and art events. In her public appearances at exhibitions and artistic events, Tang's name and her image are more often associated with art and cultural policy protests in which she has played a leading role since 1997. Indeed, the media deliberately portrays her as a tough woman who strives for artists' rights and the open use of artistic spaces.

²⁵ Ji, Tienan (季鐵男) is a well-known architect who often works across the fields of art and architecture.

²⁶ IT Park Gallery, Exhibition Statement.
http://www.etat.com/itpark/artists/huang_chen/exhibition.htm. Accessed 23 July 2010.



Figure 47. This photograph shows Tang's facial features, with no make-up and no air-brushing.²⁷

Tang Huang-chen as campaigner

In June 1997, when Tang and a group of artists organised the exhibition *You Say I Listen* across Taiwan and France, they discovered an abandoned winery, Huashan, owned by the Taiwanese government. Tang and a group of artists from different artistic fields started to petition the government to preserve the abandoned space and reconstruct it as a special zone for art and cultural activities, instead of as a legislative space as initially intended (discussed in chapter one). In a series of protests, marches and complaints to the media, Tang played a leading role as a campaigner. Her name was constantly seen in almost every media report on the issue, in which expressions such as “the artist Tang Huang-chen points out that...”, “Tang Huang-chen in the Association of Culture Environment Reform Taiwan says that...”, and “the person Tang Huang-chen in charge of the Association for Huashan Art District points out that..”, emphasised her essential role in the campaign.²⁸

²⁷ Photograph from National Taiwan University website: <http://www.ntnu.edu.tw/acad/artists/art1/art1-3.htm>. Accessed 20 August 2010.

²⁸ News reports include:

Although almost no images of Tang were shown in these news reports, the reports of her protests gave her a public recognition beyond the boundary of her artistic creations. Nevertheless, Tang's involvement in the Huashan space was merely as a protester. After Huashan Cultural Park was established, Tang withdrew from the Association. The reason for this was mentioned in one of her interview articles: 'Tang, who was not fond of administrative jobs, did not participate in the formal management team. She preferred to maintain her original identity as an artist so she disappeared from Huashan for almost seven years'.²⁹

However, in July 2004, a new chairman of the Council for Cultural Affairs (known as CCA), Chin Chi-nan, was appointed and made a new proposal for the 'New Taiwan Art Star' (*xin Taiwan yiwen zhi xing*)³⁰ to coordinate with cultural policy and the declaration of the establishment of Cultural Sector by the DPP President Chen Shui-bian (discussed in chapter one).³¹ This caused an uproar in the art and cultural community. Tang started again to join a series of requests and protests, and played a leading role in opposing the government's proposal.³² The

Jiang, Miaoying. 'Feiqi jiuchang dijin qiyong, yiwenjie zhengxiang lai chahua' (The involvement of Art and Cultural circles in the best use of the discarded winery factory) *Zhouri douhui* (Sunday City page) *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) 15 March 1998; Hong, Ruoxin. 'Huashan wenyi tequ, shiyongquan qi fenzheng' (The dispute about the use of Huashan Art and Cultural Park) *Taipei jiaodian* (Taipei Focus page) *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) 19 September 1998.

²⁹ From 1998 to 2004, Tang did not take part in the management of Huashan Creative Park. Information from, Lin, Naiwen. 'Huashan daodai 2' (Rewinding Huashan 2), an article translated from *Kuajie juchang, ren* (Cross-border Theater and People) (*Shiji yingxiang congshu* 17), 193-206. <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact/archives/5734659.html>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

³⁰ The 'New Taiwan Art Star' plan (新台灣藝文之星 *Xin Taiwan yiwen zhi xing*) was designed by CCA as a new model for cultural and creative industry. It includes three big areas as its main production fields: media industries (digital, sound and vision, publication and popular culture, etc.), design industries (life, products, advertising, environmental space, etc.) and art industries (high art and performances, folk art, the peripheral activities and products).

For detailed information see the CCA website on 'New Taiwan Art Star': http://www.cca.gov.tw/cforum/culture_meeting4/culture_meeting4.htm. Accessed 27 July 2010.

³¹ Lin, Naiwen. 'Huashan daodai 2' (Rewinding Huashan 2), an article translated from *Kuajie juchang, ren* (Cross-border Theater and People) (*Shiji yingxiang congshu* 17), 193-206. <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact/archives/5734659.html>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

³² The first protest took place on 31 August 2004 as '831 Action Union', formed by some artists who took props with them to the CCA and performed a satirical action drama. Nevertheless, they were unable to enter the main gate of the CCA and were therefore unable to express their anger. Tang Huang-chen pointed out that the CCA was not willing to communicate, which resulted in the failure of communication between the artists and the CCA. Another protest was held on 24 November 2004, named 'shouqianshou, jiu Huashan' (Hand in hand to save Huashan) and was led by Tang Huang-chen and the legislator Pang Jianguo (龐建國). The protest group walked from the Huashan Creative Park to the CCA, and again they requested entry to talk about the government's cultural policy on the

mass media described her as the ‘person in charge’ of the protests, and described how she led a group of people including a People’s Representative to hold a protest on the street in heavy rain.³³ Some reports even put her name in the headline: “Tang Huang-chen goes on protest for the ‘New Taiwan Art Star’ proposal”.³⁴

These news reports, although they did not display images of Tang, foregrounded her cultural significance in artistic and cultural circles, accentuating her fame. That Tang’s concern about government policy on Huashan was consistent and unaffected by government disapproval was reflected in the tough image of her described by Ji Tienan (mentioned in the above section).³⁵ Even when other art and cultural personnel were unwilling to be named in the petition, Tang was always the one who stood up to be counted. Her obduracy lasted more than ten years. Throughout these years, Tang’s fame and public recognition were thus closely linked to the Huashan Creative Park and the related protests.

When we compare Tang Huang-chen and Lee Ming-sheng, both of whom took a public stand against authority, their images and names signify a very different kind of recognition. Lee embedded the idea of ‘protest’ in his performance art, and, as we have seen, he was perceived as either a crazy man or an agitator. Tang was seriously involved in protests and counter-government activities and was recognised as a relatively rational character and a tough woman, with a firm and persistent personality. The contrast between the two artists derives from the fact that Taiwan experienced a radical transformation between the late 1980s and the 2000s. When

development of Huashan. Initially they were stopped by the guards at the main gate, but after negotiation they were eventually allowed to enter the building of CCA. Pang Jianguo was a Kuomintang (KMT) politician, a Taipei city councillor (1994-1998) and former legislator (2002-2004).) Information from Ding, Rongsheng. ‘*Huashan xin yiwen zhi xing an, Tang Huangchen kangyi*’ (Tang Huang-chen protests on the proposal of ‘New Taiwan Art Star’) *Wenhua Yishu* (Art and Cultural Page C8) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) September 2004; Hei, Zhongliang. ‘*Qianshou jiu Huashan, yuzhong youxing kangyi*’ (Hand in hand to save Huashan, protest in the rain) *Wenhua Xinwen* (Cultural News A6) *Minsheng bao* (*Ming-sheng Daily*) 25 October 2004.

³³ Zhou, Meihui. ‘*Huashan gai dalou, fantan shenglang qi*’ (Rebound voices raised on the high buildings constructed in Huashan) *Zhouri ban* (Sunday Page B6) *Lianhe bao* (*United Daily*) 1 August 2004.

³⁴ Ding, Rongsheng ‘*Huashan xin yiwen zhi xing an, Tang Huangchen kangyi*’ (Tang Huang-chen protests on the proposal of ‘New Taiwan Art Star’) *Wenhua Yishu* (Art and Cultural Page C8) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) September 2004.

³⁵ IT Park Gallery, Exhibition Statement.
http://www.etat.com/itpark/artists/huang_chen/exhibition.htm. Accessed 23 July 2010.

Lee expressed his opposition to the government through *outré* performance art, he was portrayed as an abnormal figure by a still repressed society. Tang organised a group of art and cultural personnel to engage in serious campaigns and petitions to the government. In the already liberal social environment of the 2000s, Tang was portrayed as a rational and tough female figure.

However, in 2006, this specific public recognition of Tang's image and actions become associated with a corporate arts award and a series of commercial strategies and media exposures oriented to very different purposes.

Tang Huang-chen and the Taishin Arts Award

In 2005, the exhibition of Tang's art project *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* (2005) caught the attention of the nomination committee of the Taishin Arts Award who nominated it for the *Best of 2005*. *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* was an action art project, a reconstruction of an old photograph. It started by recruiting some local travellers to read descriptions of the photograph prior to a journey. This project was not only a performance project, but also a real journey in which all the participants travelled together in the same transportation and to the same seaside place. Through the journey, the artist and the participants reconstructed an old photograph which image existed in Tang's memory of Tang. Before the journey, she purposely hid the real image and only presented it in the form of texts to the participants. The participants had to reconstruct and represent the image according to their individual understanding of the textual descriptions and collectively pose for a new photograph to be taken. When the journey started, the travellers would start to arrange their position according to their understanding of the description that they read. Then Tang would take different photographs of the composed scenery; the journey was also video recorded and the whole process was exhibited to the public.



Figure 48. Tang's award winning project *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* (2005) is based on scenery in an old photograph.³⁶



Figure 49. The group of local travellers who were recruited by Tang tried to compose the scenery according to their understanding of Tang's textual instructions.³⁷

³⁶ Photograph from the Taishin Arts Award website:
http://www.taishinart.org.tw/chinese/2_taishinarts_award/2_2_top_detail_movie.php?MID=3&ID=4&AID=2&AKID=1&PeID=20. Accessed 19 August 2010.

³⁷ Ibid.



Figure 50. Tang's project *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* (2005) at the IT Park Gallery.³⁸

Although the art magazine *ARTCO* said that “at first it sounded a bit ridiculous”,³⁹ the project was nominated for the Taishin Arts Award because

Tang Huang-chen uses personal journeys as the subject matter of her work in an attempt to foreground the illusiveness of memory and history. She thus subtly expresses the duality of reality and fiction when personal actions are transformed into collective memory. In terms of overall gender difference in society, Tang's position also shows a great deal of significance.⁴⁰

For Tang, the nomination was no doubt an approval of her artistic concept. More significantly, the award nomination popularised her image and name because, like the other nominators, hers was involved in a series of marketing strategies with use of different media channels to celebritise both the name of Taishin Bank and the nominated artists. Moreover, she was even more celebritised when she successfully won the prize for best ‘Visual Art’ in 2006, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Wu, Yinhuei. ‘Zai nifengzhong zhanfang de yishu guangmang’ (The art that shines in adverse circumstances) *Diancang jin yishu (ARTCO Magazine)* (Issue164, May 2006), 130-132.

⁴⁰ The Taishin Arts Award website:
http://www.taishinart.org.tw/english/2_taishinarts_award/2_2_top_detail.php?MID=3&ID=4&AID=2&AKID=&PeID=20. Accessed 20 August 2010.

When Tang's exhibition *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery* (2005) was nominated in the first season for 'Best of Visual Art Prize' in 2005, it had to be judged in three stages. First of all was the nomination—first-round selection—whereby the foundation notified the committee of eligible exhibitions and performances, and the ballot was audited by the Foundation's lawyer. The first round of selection was divided into four seasonal nominations which welcomed self-applications made by individual or group artists. The second-round selection was the semi-finalist selection made by a committee of critics, artists and journalists at the end of each year, and the results are compiled into a list of ten performances and five exhibitions for the final selection. The final selection is made by a group of international professionals invited by the Taishin Foundation to join local jurors to select works that can compete in a world arena.⁴¹ With awards for both performing and visual arts, the Taishin Arts Awards are the greatest monetary awards of their kind in Taiwan. Recipients of the Performing Arts Award and the Visual Arts Award are each awarded NT \$1,000,000 (equivalent to GBP £20,150), and the Jury's Special Award is an award of NT \$300,000 (equivalent to GBP £6,000).⁴²

This thesis argues that the process of the Taishin Arts Award represents a contemporary form of institutionalisation of the broader social processes by which artists achieve recognition. This particular process is comprised of three stages: one is the nomination procedure as discussed above; the second is a series of marketing strategies designed to promote the name and the fame of nominated artists and corporations; the third is the Taishin Arts Award ceremony. This thesis also argues that these three stages constitute a celebritisation process for contemporary artists to achieve recognition from the wider public in ways that are comparable to, though distinct from, the four successive circles of recognition of modern artists noted by the former Director of the Tate Gallery, Alan Bowness in *The Condition of Success: how the modern artist rises to fame*: peer recognition, critical recognition, patronage by dealers and collectors, and public acclaim.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture website: www.taishinart.org.tw/. Accessed 2 February 2010.

⁴³ Bowness, Alan. *The Condition of Success: How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame* (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

The Taishin Arts Award marshals Bowness's last three circles into the award mechanism. In the Taishin Arts Award the stage of 'critical recognition' covers the initial selection and nomination process, and involves art critics, artists and journalists who contribute their critical ideas about the artworks and performances to articles and public debate. This activity is not only intended to offer critical professional judgments of the merits of the art works and exhibition concepts, but also to convey artistic concepts ways that encourage the public to gain better understanding of the works and the exhibitions. Those points echo Bowness's arguments about the two important functions of writers on art. One is to 'help create the verbal language that allows the public to talk about art'.⁴⁴ The written word acts as a communication channel, providing information to the public and generating debates. This also increases the importance of the social relationship between artists and critics, building up social capital that results in further publicity for artists and artworks. The other function is "the valuable role that the writers play in the modern artist's rise to fame—his contribution to the critical debate. Judgments in art are not absolute or final: they are sustained by consensus".⁴⁵ Critical judgments are thus a crucial component of the selection and reputation of the Taishin Arts Award winner.

With regard to 'patronage by dealers and collectors', Taishin Bank is an important patron of the arts, though it does not collect or deal. It sponsors an award mechanism that provides monetary and culturally significant prizes to the winning artists. However, in the process of promoting the art award and Taiwanese art and artists, the bank is able to promote its corporate brand image through a series of marketing plans that associate its brand name and image with exhibitions, discussions and award ceremonies on its business premises. In this process, through acquiring cultural capital accumulation, Taishin can distinguish itself from the other banks in Taiwan; its cultural status can also be translated into economic value.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 21-25.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 21-25.

Taishin Arts Award's Marketing Campaign

The use of media and communication channels

In order to promote the art award, the nominated artists and the name of the corporation, Taishin Arts Award conducts a marketing strategy including the use of newspapers, magazines, radio programmes and the internet to broadcast and circulate art criticism and images linked to the award. The core of its marketing strategy is thus media exposure. Significantly, in order to maximise the media effects, Taishin Arts Award conducts different combinations of media and communication channels that are designed differently every year according to the requirements of the Taishin Bank and Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture, as well as in response to the transformation of Taiwan's media ecology, including the changing popularity ratings of the various media channels and the public's reading habits.

In an interview with the Program and Special Event Project Manager of the Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture,⁴⁶ Gloria Lo points out that the annual changes in the bank's marketing strategy are depend on how effective the marketing strategy was in the previous year as well as the budgetary situation. Technology developments and the popularity of certain forms of mass media also need to be taken into consideration. Additionally, the marketing of the award has to be compatible with everyday life styles, especially in the urban area of Taipei.

All this means that the bank's marketing strategy has had to flexibly respond to media, technological and social shifts. For instance, the bank revised its marketing strategy in response to the decline in newspaper readers, and increase in the number of people reading on the internet. In particular, the collapse of *Min-sheng Daily Newspaper*⁴⁷ in 2006, which had been heavily used by the Taishin Arts Award, necessitated a reworking of their marketing strategy.

⁴⁶ Interview with Luo wenjun Gloria, the Program and Special Events Project Manager of the Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture, on 6 December 2006.

⁴⁷ The editor of *Min-sheng Daily Newspaper*, Xiang Guoning (項國寧), who is also the spokesman for *United Daily News*, announced that the suspension of the publication of this newspaper was owed to the rapid raise of competition and the change of public's reading habit that they prefer more entertainment-oriented reports. *Min-sheng Daily Newspaper* ceased publication on 30 November 2006. Information from, 'Min-sheng bao chuixi denghao, mingtianqi jiang tingkan' (Min-sheng Daily

Focusing on the award example of ‘*The Best of 2005*’ (the particular award year when Tang was involved in the nomination), Taishin’s marketing plan for the period from May 2005 to May 2006 was designed to combine various forms of mass media in order to maximise the effects of media exposure. This included, firstly, paying for an art criticism column ‘New Art Opinion’ (*Xin yijian*) in *Min-sheng Daily Newspaper*. Secondly, it established the ‘Taishin Arts Award Observation Forum’ in *ARTCO* and the members in the selection committee delivered essays examining the exhibitions and performances from different perspectives. Thirdly, it introduced the ‘Art MSN’ column in *ARTCO*, in which a writer on performing art and another on visual art attended the same show or exhibition, then joined in discussion through an internet chat room. Fourthly, owing to the high popularity of the acclaimed ‘Art Through Machine’ in 2004, the Taishin foundation again invited young director Li Ji-hung⁴⁸ to produce fourteen pieces of thirty seconds short movies based on the fourteen nominated exhibitions and performances and to be broadcast for twenty-four hours on the ATM machines located in the Taishin Bank branches in Taiwan.⁴⁹ Fifthly, the Taishin Arts Award Exhibition was to be held in the Taishin Art Centre (the location of the exhibition also varies each year, which will be discussed in the next section). Lastly, all the information was announced and documented on the Taishin Arts Award Website.⁵⁰ In January 2007, the Taishin Arts Award developed further connections with other media outlets, and began a partnership with a radio channel *Philharmonic Radio Taipei*⁵¹ to host a show, ‘Art Relativism’, inviting artists and critics to express their thoughts on the nominated exhibitions and performances as well as discuss the latest art news. From January to

Newspaper will stop the publication from tomorrow). <http://www.nownews.com/2006/11/29/389-2021653.htm>. Accessed 8 September 2010.

⁴⁸ Li Ji-hung (李基宏) is a new artist. He obtained a BA in Fine Arts from Taipei National University of the Arts, and an MA in Multimedia Computers from Long Island University.

⁴⁹ ATM machine refers to automatic teller machine (ATM), also known as automatic banking machine, cash machine or cashpoint. Information from Taishin Arts Award website: http://www.taishinart.org.tw/chinese/2_taishinarts_award/2_0_award_overview.php?MID=3&AID=2. Accessed 19 August 2010.

⁵⁰ The official Taishin Arts Award Website: www.taishinart.org.tw. In March 2009, Taishin Arts Award also constructed a web space on Facebook that enables direct interactions with audiences and releases the most up-to-date news. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/tai-xin-yi-shu-jiang-Taishin-Arts-Award/>. Accessed 19 August 2010.

⁵¹ *Philharmonic Radio Taipei* is a radio channel on FM 99.7 mainly broadcasting classic music.

December 2007, Taishin Arts Award had an agreement with a literary magazine in Taiwan, *INK Literary Monthly Magazine*,⁵² to release twenty pieces of exhibition and performance reviews written by the members of the Taishin Arts Award review committee, and the website of the Taishin Arts Award started a section on ‘Art Criticism’ for discussion about the nominated artists, exhibitions and performances. Throughout all these different media outlets, discussions and images were published in columns titled the ‘Taishin Arts Award’, repeatedly familiarising the publicity with the corporation’s association with the artistic event. Besides the above-mentioned media cooperation that is part of the marketing plan, the subsequent discussions on the award exhibition and the award ceremony are equally important in the celebritisation of the award and the artists.

The Taishin Arts Award Exhibition

Since the Taishin Arts Award was launched in 2002, it has taken contemporary Taiwanese art beyond the conventional ‘white cube’ to display artists’ images and artworks in diverse public spaces. The process can be seen as a further component of Taishin’s aim to celebritise its status through public recognition of its artistic achievements. The first Taishin Arts Award Exhibition for finalists held in 2003 took place in the basement gallery space of the Eslite Bookstore. As described in the previous two chapters, the Eslite Bookstore is an important cultural and social space in Taipei city where many artistic activities are held. However, starting with the second Taishin Arts Award, two consecutive exhibitions (held in 2004 and 2005) moved from the gallery space in the Eslite to the consumer site of Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store.⁵³ This innovative idea aimed to encourage public appreciation of the arts by bringing the arts into people’s daily lives, as well as to stimulate interactions between art and the public. For a further two years after the

⁵² *INK Literary Monthly Magazine* was established in 2003 by well-known Chinese author Eileen Chang. It won the Golden Tripod Awards for Publications for five years running from 2004 to 2008. Besides the literary contents, it also has articles on food, film, theatre, art, and the economy.

⁵³ Shin Kong Mitsukoshi (新光三越百貨 *Xinguang sanyue baihuo*), with branches in Taiwan’s major metropolises, is the largest and leading chain department store in Taiwan, providing the public with the latest international fashion, Taiwan’s local unique cultural specialities and a leisure shopping experience. Information resource: www.skm.com.tw

2006 *Best of 2005*, the exhibitions moved to the Taishin Art Centre,⁵⁴ which was a new building holding offices, banks and an art centre. According to the Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture, when the exhibitions were held in department stores, the target audiences were mostly families and young people; when the exhibition was moved to the Taishin Art Centre, it was to encourage the employees in the Taishin Corporation and peripheral companies to visit the exhibition.⁵⁵

When the finalists' exhibition moved to the Taishin Art Centre, it also transformed the office space into an art gallery. The Chairman of the Taishin Corporation, Wu Tongliang, was happy with the impact of the exhibition on the office environment. He pointed out that,

the office space was transformed into a fishpond and grass on the floor, with dragonflies on the staircase. The public would no longer only rush in the bank for financial purposes, but to visit the space with more pleasure and fun. Also, almost forty classes of school children were programmed to visit the exhibition transforming a corporate space into a classroom.⁵⁶

Besides the direct transformation of the environment caused by the display of artworks in these corporate spaces, Wu Chin-tao observes that,

what for art museums and galleries is an established practice has become for business, firstly, a way of marketing their products and services; secondly, the source of corporate entertainment; and above all, a device for validating their intervention in the art world.⁵⁷

Wu's comments suggest two ways of looking at the significance of the finalist exhibition and the Taishin Arts Award. One is the construction of corporate culture through holding art exhibitions and activities on business premises. By moving the finalists' exhibition to the Taishin Art Centre, the corporation was able to bring its financial services, office-working environment and art spaces together to promote its image of being an enlightened patron at the same time as it marketed its products and

⁵⁴ A new Taishin international building with offices, banks and an art centre, located by the Ren-ai Roundabout.

⁵⁵ Interview with the Program and Special Event Project Manager of the Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture, Luo wenjun Gloria, on 6 December 2006.

⁵⁶ A speech made by the Chairman Wu Tongliang at the Fourth Taishin Art Ceremony in 2006.

⁵⁷ Wu, Chin-tao, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s* (London: Verso, 2002), 205-206.

services. Furthermore, the display of exhibitions and artworks play the vital role of corporate entertainment for employees contributing to a core value of corporate culture for the Taishin Bank. The display of art on the company premises offers rich opportunities for the interaction between employees through sharing of aesthetic and cultural interests.⁵⁸ This echoes the point made about western society by Virginia Matthews in the *Financial World*⁵⁹ that many banks are now looking for corporate entertainment opportunities as well as commercial advantages from their sponsorship activities. In the context of the contemporary corporate environment, corporate intervention in providing entertainment, as suggested by Wu, plays an active role in legitimising corporate interests in art and culture, with a significant impact on both arenas.⁶⁰

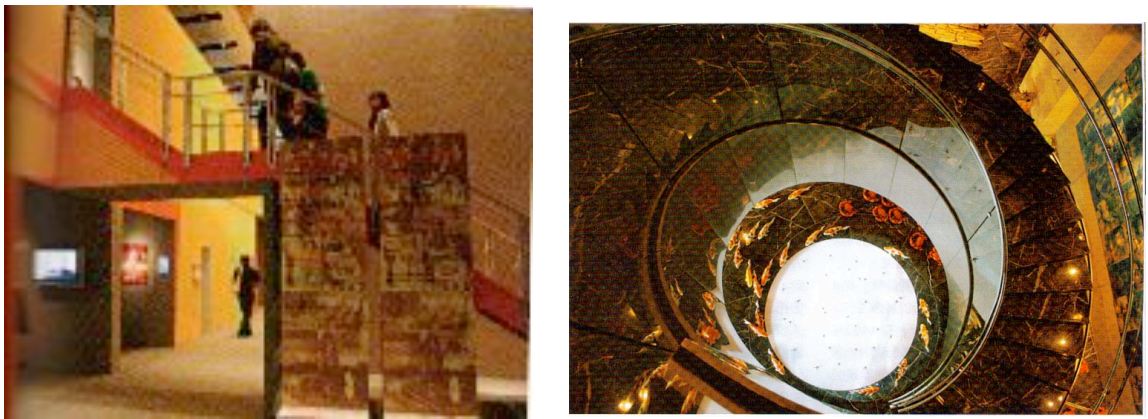


Figure 51. The finalist exhibition at the Taishin Art Centre in 2005.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Since 2007, Taishin Bank Foundation for Art and Culture began to develop cultural and artistic programs for the staff in Taishin. The aims were to promote better appreciating the arts and integrate the creative spirit into corporate culture. The training programmes included exhibitions visits, creative drama, and self-development to arts appreciation.

Taishin Bank Foundation for Art and Culture website: <http://www.taishinart.org.tw/english/in/list.php>. Accessed 30 August 2010.

⁵⁹ Matthews, Virginia. 'The Art of Banking – Reports on the Culture of Arts Sponsorship by Financial Institutions'. *Financial World*. London: Chartered Institute of Bankers. (Sept 2000), 60.

⁶⁰ Wu, Chin-tao, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s*, (2002), 2-3.

⁶¹ Photograph from article by Wu Yinhuei, 'Zai nifengzhong zhanfang de yishu guangmang' (The art that shines in adverse circumstances) *ARTCO Magazine* 164 (2006): 130-132.

The Moment of Tang Huang-chen's Celebritisation

Taishin Arts Award Ceremony as a 'publicity event'

In addition to its selection process, marketing strategies and finalist exhibition, the Taishin Arts Award mechanism also includes an award ceremony, a 'publicity event' similar to the annual Turner prize ceremony, as John J. Walker discussed in *Art and Celebrity*.⁶² Wu Chin-chao also describes it as 'media-oriented'.⁶³ Both the Taishin Arts Award in Taiwan and the Turner Prize in the UK host their own award ceremonies, which are not only set up to make the final selections and announcements of the winning artists, but to attract public and media attention. Nevertheless, one of the differences between the two awards is that the Turner Prize invites a different celebrity every year to present the prize, emphasising it as a celebrity art award. The Taishin Arts Award in contrast invites international professionals, such as well-known international art museum directors, to join local judges in the final selection and award presentation. This may tend diminish its commercial appeal, but emphasises its legitimacy and impartiality to the public and the art world.

The addition of international professionals to the panel of judges suggests the introduction of a global perspective to the locally selected candidates. This might produce conflicts and contradictions about what constitutes 'Taiwanese art', because whereas the local juries have cultural and artistic background knowledge of Taiwanese art and history, international judges can only make their selections in accordance with their understanding of the global art scene. This introduces new questions about globalisation and localisation of art, and the artistic validity and legitimacy of judgments made by international professionals about Taiwanese local art and culture. The example of the *Best of 2005*⁶⁴ demonstrates how in order to deal

⁶² See chapter two for fuller discussion of this and the original use of the term 'pseudo-events' by Boorstin. Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961, 1992), 12; Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 10.

⁶³ Wu, Chin-tao, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s* (London: Verso, 2002), 162.

⁶⁴ International Judges in 'the Best of 2005' Taishin Arts Award include: Performing Arts: Ching-His Perng, Chairperson, Professor of English and Drama, National Taiwan University; Ping- kuen Cheung, Chairperson, Hong Kong Arts Development Council; Dean of Liberal

with the legitimacy gap between the local and international, the judges are invited to arrive in Taiwan a few days before the finalist selections to give them the opportunity to understand the Taiwan's art environment by paying visits to local exhibitions and communicating with some of the local artists.⁶⁵ Although this approach helps the international judges to get a better picture of the local art, it does not provide a full understanding of the context of Taiwanese art, culture and history. In this situation, the fairness of the evaluation process can easily be contested.

The international judge, Marie Colin,⁶⁶ who served as Directrice artistique du Festival d'Automne in Paris and was one of the international judges of the 2007 Taishin Arts Award said that,

not being fully aware of the Taiwanese artistic environment, I hope to know Taiwanese contemporary art better with this opportunity of being one of the judges.⁶⁷

Although this might seem to contradict the nature of a judge's role, which is supposed to incorporate full knowledge of the context of local art, Colin's comment certainly suggests the importance of the new global perspective on local art. This

Arts, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (Hong Kong); Fergus Linehan, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Festival (Australia); Lina Yeh, Pianist; Associate Professor, Department of Music, National Taiwan Normal University (Taiwan); Cheng-his Chen, Lecturer, Theatre Arts, National Taiwan Junior College of Performing Arts; Theatre Critic (Taiwan).

Visual Arts: Jen-I Liao, Chair Chief Secretary, Taipei National University of the Arts; Former Director, Centre Culturel de Taiwan à Paris (Taiwan); Tai-sung Chen, Lecturer, School of Commercial Design at Chung Yuan Christian University; Art Critic (Taiwan); Ti-an Fan, Director, National Art Museum of China, Beijing (China); Hiroshi Minamishima, Director, Contemporary Art Museum of Kumamoto (Japan); Robert Storr, Commissioner, 2007 Venice Biennale; Dean, School of Art, Yale University (United States).

Information from the Taishin Arts Award website:

http://www.taishinart.org.tw/chinese/2_taishinarts_award/2_1_judge_list.php?MID=3&AID=2.

Accessed 20 August 2010.

⁶⁵ 'Taishin yishu jiang shijue yishu guoji jueshen mingdan gongbu, jueshen zhi yi David Elliott 26 ri xianxing fangtai' (The international juries list for the Taishin Arts Award was announced; one of the juries, David Elliott, visited Taiwan in advance on the 26th) News on the Taishin Arts Award Website. 26 November 2002. <http://www.taishinart.org.tw/activity/2002/1126.html>. Accessed 25 June 2006.

⁶⁶ Marie Colin served as Directrice artistique du Festival d'Automne à Paris, in charge of Theatre, Dance and Arts Programs. She was the Director of Nimes Theatre and Theatre Programmer at Georges Pompidou Centre. Information from the Taishin Arts Award website: http://www.taishinart.org.tw/chinese/2_taishinarts_award/2_1_judge_list.php?MID=3&AID=2.

Accessed 20 August 2010.

⁶⁷ Wu, Yinhui recorded and arranged. 'Yishujiang, shuangnianzhan yu yishujie de renwu—Taishin yishujiang guoji luntan' (The mission of art prize, biennial and art festival – the international forum of Taishin Arts Award) *Diancang jin yishu (ARTCO Magazine)* Issue176 (2007),156.

also plays a decisive role in that the award can be a pathway for local art and artists to internationalise themselves. The fact that the final selection is made by international judges suggests that the impetus of the award process is on the globalisation of local art in Taiwan. The Taishin Arts Award, however, is not the first award to suffer from this problem. The Chinese Contemporary Art Award (known as CCAA) in China also has a similar selection mechanism. The Art Director of the CCAA, Gu Zhenqing, describes the situation of international juries' participation in the award selection mechanism as follows:

although the award prize itself might be unfair, such a mechanism is still needed, because this process can help the international judge to have better knowledge of contemporary Chinese art. Besides, there is dual encouragement – the actual monetary prize and the spiritual—for the award winning artists.⁶⁸

Thus, whether it is fair or not, it has become increasingly important to welcome international judgments on local art through the award mechanism which grants opportunities for local artists to explore exposure beyond their national boundary.

The moment of celebritisation

In 2006, when Tang Huang-chen was announced as the *Best of 2005* of the Taishin Arts Award, the award ceremony took place in the Guangfu Auditorium (*Guangfu ting*) of the historic Taipei Zhongshan Hall (*Zhongshan tang*).⁶⁹ This particular 'publicity event' invited many guests including illustrious figures in the art scene and corporate leaders, such as Wu Tongliang, Chairman of Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture, and his former film-star wife Peng Xuefen, Chiu Kunliang, Chairman of the Council for Cultural Affairs, Li Kuixian, Chairman of the National

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ *Zhongshan tang* (中山堂 Zhongshan Hall) is a concert venue originally functioning as the Taipei City Hall. It was built by the Japanese colonial government in 1936. In 1945, Taipei City Hall was renamed Zhongshan Hall and functioned as an official meeting place under the R.O.C. government. *Guangfu ting* (光復廳 Guangfu Auditorium) in the historic Taipei Zhongshan Hall is mainly used for arts and cultural events and performances, academic activities and various types of meetings and gatherings. Information from the Zhongshan Hall website: <http://english.zsh.taipei.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=143661&ctNode=11029&mp=119062>. Accessed 19 August 2010.

Cultural and Arts Foundation, and the Director of the National Palace Museum, Lin Manli. Hundreds of other people from the arts and cultural sector attended the event.

After a series of performances and folk dances, the announcement of the winning artists began. When finally Tang's name was announced, she went up on to the stage to receive the prize from the previous winner, Shy Gong, and gave a sensational speech about her struggle for the chance to follow her star.⁷⁰ Tang was wearing a conspicuous red coat for the event, a colour which symbolises 'fortune' in the Chinese context. While she was speaking on stage, journalists and photographers were all waiting to catch the particular moment of celebrityisation, and guests' cameras flashed throughout just as at the Oscar ceremony. Many news reports in the next few days displayed the images of the celebrityised moment when Tang received the award. A news report in the *Taipei Times* said that when Tang received the Visual Arts Award, 'there was barely a dry eye in the house'.⁷¹ It also likened the Taishin Arts Award to the 'red carpet' for movie stars and the 'Nobel Prize' for scientists and economists.⁷² These terms convey the important status of the award and the winning artists in the contemporary Taiwanese art scene.

⁷⁰ This observation is from my own experience of attending the ceremony in April 2006.

⁷¹ "Recognition where it's due," *Taipei Times*, April 20, 2006, 15.

The sensational moment was also depicted by the other news reports, such as in the *Min Sheng Daily* which ran an article under the title 'Tang Huang-chen's 'social sculpture' finally dispels the clouds and sees the sun' to describe the hardship that Tang had been through in her past fifteen years of being an artist in Taiwan. Information from, Lai, Suling. 'Taishin Yishu jiang, disijie banjiang dianli, lede xiang chu jixing xiju' (The Fourth Taishin Arts Award ceremony was as happy as an improvisational comedy) *Yiwen xin wutai* (The new stage for art) *Minsheng bao* (*Minsheng Daily*) April 17, 2006.

⁷² 'Recognition where it's due,' *Taipei Times*, April 20, 2006, 15.



Figure 52. The moment when Tang Huang-chen won the ‘The Best of 2005’ Visual Arts Prize and received the award from last year's award winner, Shy Gong.⁷³



Figure 53. A glory moment for Tang Huang-chen as the winning artist of The Best of 2005. The other people in the group include the winner of the ‘Performing Art Prize’, the local and international juries, the Chairman of Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture Wu Tongliang and his wife Peng Xuefen.⁷⁴

⁷³ Photograph from article by Wu Yinhuei ‘Zai nifengzhong zhanfang de yishu guangmang’ (The art that shines in adverse circumstances) *Diancang jin yishu (ARTCO Magazine)* Issue164, May (2006), 130-132.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Tang Huang-chen was interviewed widely in magazines, journals, newspapers and the internet.⁷⁵ Since then, she has been constantly referred to as ‘The Visual Art Award Winning Artist of Taishin Arts Award’. Following the award ceremony, Tang’s images started to appear in several magazines, and notably on the front cover of the art magazine, *ARTCO*.⁷⁶ In this image, Tang appears with simple clothes and no make-up, both arms crossed and placed in front of her chest, and smiling confidently. In the background are some images from her award-winning art project. Regardless of whether the pose was arranged by the photographer or herself, it suggests Tang’s confidence in her artistic achievement. Such celebrityisation of Tang represented the pinnacle of her artistic career.

⁷⁵ Magazine, journal, newspaper and website reports include: Li, Yuling. ‘*Taishin yishu jiang, Yunmen, Tang Huangchen bao dajiang*’ (The Taishin Arts Award, Cloud Gate and Tang Huang-chen have the big prizes) *Lianhe bao (United Daily)* 2006.04.17; ‘Recognition where it’s due’. *Taipei Times*. 2006.04.20; ‘*Taishin yishu jiang baiwan dajiang dezhu*’ (The Taishin Arts Award and the million award winner) *Taishin yinxing yuekan (Taishin Bank Monthly News)* 1 May 2006; Zhou, Meihui. ‘*Taishin jiang dezhu zhuanfang: Tang Huangchen luxing qinian, zouchu dajiang*’ (Special interview on the winner of Taishin Arts Award: Tang Huangchen, who has the big prize after travelling for seven years) *Lianhe bao (United Daily)* 21 April 2006; You, Wei. ‘*Disijie Taishin yishu jiang shijue yishu lei dezhu Tang Huangchen fangtan*’ (Cover Story on the Taishin Arts Award Winner Tang Huang-Chen) *ARTCO magazine*. 164 (2006), 136-8.

⁷⁶ *ARTCO Magazine*, 164 (2006), front cover.



Figure 54. Tang Huang-chen's image on the cover page of *ARTCO* in May 2006, the month that she was declared as the winner of 'the Best of 2005' Taishin Arts Award.⁷⁷

Conclusion: Media Hype or the Advance of Tang Huang-chen's Artistic Career?

Although Tang had many important exhibitions in prestigious museums and galleries in Taiwan, the Taishin Arts Award was definitely a turning point for her artistic career. The *China Times* observed,

after Tang came back to Taiwan from studying in Paris in 1991, for many years she experienced ups and downs in the art world. When she won the Taishin Arts Award this year, and was invited to exhibit in the Taiwan Pavilion in Venice Biennale, finally she felt a bit relieved, but her stress and anxiety were not relieved.⁷⁸

Just as art critic Sarah Thornton says, 'selling for high prices and winning prizes are two of the most newsworthy things an artist can do—hard facts in a life of relatively

⁷⁷ Photograph from *ARTCO Magazine*, 164 (2006), front cover.

⁷⁸ Li, Weijing. 'Ziwo fangzhu, Tang Huang-chen houtian jinzhu fengdian chuan' (Self-exile, Tang Huang-chen will go into the boat of madness the day after tomorrow) *Zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*). 14 July 2007. <http://queenwen.pixnet.net/blog/post/6369461>. Accessed 23 July 2010.

unquantifiable achievement'.⁷⁹ However, this thesis argues that although the Taishin Arts Award provides monetary and 'spiritual' prizes to the winning artists—a form of cultural capital—the artist's sudden visibility through the media hype promoted by the Award diminishes just as quickly as it emerges.⁸⁰ The media focus quickly moves on to the next round of the Taishin Arts Award winners. Previous winning artists, like Tang, find their images fade from media attention once the selection period ends.

Nevertheless, for Tang Huang-chen, although her public image and name faded from the media, her artistic career reached another pinnacle when she was selected as one of the representative artists to participate in the Taiwan Pavilion in Venice Biennale in 2007 with her art project *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery (part 4—Italy)*.⁸¹ This accomplishment a year after winning the Taishin Arts Award was definitely a huge step forward in her artistic career. It also provides evidence of the Taishin Arts Award's power to celebritise an artist's name, image and art works, encourage her achievements by acknowledging her as winner of the award, and thereby legitimate the continued advance of her career.

As regards the cultural protests in which Tang had been involved, she continued to participate in activities and protests about Huashan Art and Cultural Park. Although there is no obvious relationship between winning the art prize and her involvement in the protests, she carried on promoting the cultural and environmental movement. In 2008, the movement 'Planting Arts' Action (*zhongzhi yishu xingdong*)⁸² was originated by a group of artists, cultural workers, scholars,

⁷⁹ Thornton, Sarah. 'The Prize', *Seven Days in The Art World* (Croydon: Granta Publications, 2009), 112.

⁸⁰ Gamson, Joshua. 'The Assembly Line of Greatness Celebrity in Twentieth-Century America,' in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 150.

⁸¹ The theme for the Taiwan Pavilion in the 1997 Venice Biennale was *Atopia*, curated by Lin Hongzhang (林宏璋), an artist and independent curator. The selected artists included Tsai Mingliang (蔡明亮), Tang Huangchen (湯皇珍), Li Guomin (李國民), Huang Shijie (黃世傑), and VIVA. *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery (part 4- Italy)* was a project based on the same concept as *I Go Travelling V—A Postcard with Scenery (Taiwan)* whereby Tang reconstructed scenery according to an old remembered photograph.

⁸² 'Planting Arts' Action formed a website to elaborate their concepts and ideas, as well as to document actions taken, and this is the main communication channel for the group. 'Planting Arts' Action website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

curators and independent media, and Tang again acted as the leader of the group to express their concerns about Taiwan's current cultural policy and art and cultural activities.⁸³ In June 2009, Tang proposed establishing a 'Creator's Union', an organisation/union dedicated to providing a basic environment for artistic creativity, and to promote artists' rights, share resources and monitor government cultural policies. A similar idea was proposed by Lee Ming-sheng as early as 1983 in his project *Purification of the Spirit* through which he hoped, but failed, to raise funding for an 'Art Worker's Foundation'.⁸⁴ But, in contrast, Tang's proposal in 2009 used contemporary technology and mass media as propaganda to promote her ideas. Besides elaborating the idea of the 'Creator's Union' on the website of 'Planting Arts' and issuing an online petition targeting people in the art and cultural sectors, Tang also attended a radio programme 'UFO Lunch' (*feidie wucan*)⁸⁵ to draw

⁸³ The four main concerns of the group related to current cultural policy and art and culture in Taiwan: 1. The development of arts ecology in cultural construction; 2. Self-reflection on the relationship between the existing cultural creative industry and the body of art; 3. The relationship between the government authority in charge of culture and cultural construction; 4. A consensus reached by a third mechanism on policy and the feedback of cultural construction to push the group's agenda forward in innovative ways. Information from 'Planting Arts' Action website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

The group claimed that the movement was spontaneous and originated from their love of art. Through the artistic ecology is mainly managed and influenced by the government's cultural authority through its control of the budget. The group claimed that a flourishing environment for art can only be made through the transformation of cultural construction. Information from 'Planting Arts' Action website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact>. Accessed 8 February 2010.

⁸⁴ The idea of the 'Art Worker's Foundation' in Lee Ming-sheng's project *Purification of the Spirit* (1983), was intended to improve the art environment in Taiwan, assist in the development of young artists and make a spiritual contribution to Taiwanese society. 'Planting Arts' Action website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact>. (Accessed 8 February 2010). In the project, *Purification of the Spirit* (1983), Lee continuously walked around Taiwan for 42 days and nights, and sleeping on the street. In the process of challenging his own physical strength, his ultimate goal was to raise funds for the establishment of the 'Art Worker's Foundation', which was to assist in the development of young artists and to make a spiritual contribution to Taiwanese society.

⁸⁵ The radio programme *feidie wucan* (飛碟午餐 'UFO Lunch') is broadcast on FM92.1 every Monday to Friday during the lunch time. The programme is hosted by the social activist Cheng Tsun-chi.

people's attention to the importance of the 'Creator's Union'.⁸⁶ By February 2010, 184 groups and 623 individuals had signed the online petition.⁸⁷



Figure 55. Tang (on the left) attended the *The survival of artists in the financial crisis* on 1 April 2009.⁸⁸

Tang's involvement in the Venice Biennale and her continued power in Taiwan's cultural and environmental campaigns demonstrate that even though she was used by the Taishin Corporation's strategy of celebritisation, she gained her own cultural standing and had the opportunity to advance her career. In fact, in this case study, the relationship between the Taishin Arts Award, the Bank, the Corporation, and the nominated and winning artists, is one of co-existence. For artists who are nominated, or win the prize, the Taishin Arts Award is like a cultural sanction of their artistic achievement, which celebritises their name and image nationally, and

⁸⁶ In the radio programme, Tang talked about how difficult it was for creators in the current artistic environment in Taiwan, and that an organisation was needed to secure their rights. 'Feidie wucan: fangwen Tang Huangchen—chuangzuoze gonghui' (UFO Lunch: An Interview with Tang Huang-chen—The 'Creator's Union'.) *UFO Network*. 6 November 2009. The online radio programme can be accessed on the 'Planting Art' website: <http://blog.roodo.com/plantartact/archives/10589741.html>. Accessed 20 August 2010.

⁸⁷ The online petition for the establishment of the 'Creator's Union': <http://campaign.tw-npo.org/sign.php?id=2009091603490900>. Accessed 9 February 2010.

⁸⁸ Photograph from *POTS* newspaper website: <http://pots.tw/node/2129>. Accessed 20 August 2010.

globalises their artistic recognition. For the Taishin Bank and Corporation, the marketing strategy and use of the finalist exhibition are the means to popularise their brand image and accumulate their cultural capital; their business power also expanded when they moved the finalist exhibition outside Taipei. The next chapter will explore another example, the VT Artsalon group, which uses a series of celebritisation strategies as means to link art and business in order to popularise its commercial space and celebritise its artistic recognition.

Chapter Seven

The Very Temple Artsalon Group



Figure 56. The VT Artsalon group photographed in the bar area of the VT Artsalon: (from left to right) Tu Wei-cheng, Chen Wen-chi, Wu Da-kun, Su Hui-yu, Yao Jui-chung, Chen Chun-hao, Hu Chao-sheng and Ho Meng-chuan.¹

In 2006, recognising the signs of the commercialisation and celebrityisation of art in Taiwan, a group of artists and a curator decided to launch a business to found a space that combined art gallery and lounge bar. The innovative art-lounge space was named the Very Temple Artsalon, shortened to the VT Artsalon. I therefore refer to the group of artists and the curator who founded the enterprise as the VT Artsalon group. This chapter argues that the VT Artsalon group acquired celebrity status in two main ways. One was through the construction of taste as a marker of social

¹ Photograph posted online by a member of the VT Artsalon group, artist Chen Wen-chi: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/sets/72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.

distinction associated with the consumption of its own cultivated brand. Its difference from other nightlife bars as a space that claimed to cater to cultivated 'cool' taste attracted widespread media attention. The second, linked to the first, was through the Artsalon group's interest in identifying themselves with members of Taipei's trendy cultural and consumer elite who would then acknowledge the group's niche celebrity status.

This chapter looks into the innovative business initiatives of the VT Artsalon group in art, and examines how they combine high art with a consumer space, and organise diverse artistic, cultural, entertainment and social activities to promote their business. In describing the running of a business with art as the central idea, this chapter observes that the commodification and celebritisation of the VT Artsalon has effectively transformed its artists and their work into products and services, constituting the characteristic selling points of the VT Artsalon. In the initial stage of its establishment, this innovative idea attracted diverse artists, people working in the arts and culture community, and the general public, as well as numerous journalistic reports on art, culture, business and even gourmet cooking. This chapter argues that, the VT Artsalon group's self-promotion was based on a new business idea, which gave them the social distinction of belonging to the cultural elite.

This chapter also argues that, in the process of running the VT Artsalon as a social space, the VT Artsalon group sought to contribute to a new taste culture in Taipei via its combination of serious art works with other popular activities. Its attempts to combine serious (high) art and popular culture bring to mind Herbert J. Gans's observation that both popular culture and high culture have equal value and function to entertain and inform people's lives.² Nevertheless, in attempting to do this, instead of catering to the wider popular taste, VT appealed more to a 'cool', young and sophisticated elite that celebritised the VT Artsalon group through acknowledging its social and cultural distinctiveness. The VT Artsalon had to transform itself in 2007 when it found itself obliged to separate out its gallery and entertainment roles. In analysing the factors that led to this transformation, I argue that the group managed to retain its reputation for social and cultural distinction in

² Gans, Herbert J. *Popular culture and high culture: an analysis and evaluation of taste* (New York: Basic Books, 1975, c1974), 10.

Taipei's taste culture. This chapter will analyse in detail how the VT Artsalon space and the group have influenced and intervened in Taiwan's art scene and consumer culture, as well as how it demonstrates its cultural and political significance as a new art establishment.

The VT Artsalon Group and the VT Artsalon

The initial gathering of the artists of the VT Artsalon group can be traced back as early as 1996, a decade prior to the establishment of the VT Artsalon space. At the time, the artists who were included in this group were different from the VT Artsalon group as it is now. The early group was formed by the artists Yao Jui-chung and Liu Shidong, along with others who were their classmates from the Taipei National University of the Arts.³ Their first group exhibition '1997 – Roaming End of World'⁴ was held in an abandoned space in Sanzhi in March 1997,⁵ with a group name of 'Abnormal Temple'. The exhibition was held with a very low budget of NT\$ 30,000 (equivalent to GBP 600) which included the expenses for the exhibition and the cost of inviting media artist Antoni Muntadas to travel to join the exhibition.⁶ These early experiences attributed to the name 'Very Temple' the capacity to overcome all difficulties.⁷

³ Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中) and Liu Shidong (劉時棟) (born in 1970) are both Taiwanese artists. Both of them are still very active figures in the Taiwanese art scene today.

⁴ '1997 – Roaming End of World' (1997 *Moshi manyou*) was an exhibition held in Sanzhi in Taipei County, Taiwan, in 1997.

⁵ Sanzhi (三芝) is an area near the sea in Taipei County.

⁶ Antoni Muntadas was born in Barcelona, Spain in 1942, he has lived and worked in New York since 1971. His work addresses social, political and communications issues, the relationship between public and private space within social frameworks. Muntadas works in different media such as photography, video, publications, internet and multi-media installations. He has received prizes and grants including those of the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others. His works have been exhibited throughout the world, including the Venice Biennale, Documenta VI and X in Kassel, the Sao Paulo Biennale, la Biennale de Lyon et La Havana and The Museum of Modern Art in New York and other art institutions and events. Information from MIT Visual Arts Programme, http://web.mit.edu/vap/people/faculty/faculty_muntadas.html. Accessed 22 September 2010.

⁷ Chen, Houhe. "'Feichangmiao" zhuanji' (Very Temple Artsalon) *Yishu guandian (Art View)* Tainan National University of Arts. Issue 37. 1 January 2009.

However, within a few years after their ‘Very Temple Exhibition’ in 2000, the Abnormal Temple group became disheartened because some of its members went abroad and others had families and careers to look after.⁸ Some artists, including Yao Jui-chung and Chen Chun-hao, had the feeling that Taiwan was always half a beat slower than the contemporary global art scene, and that Taiwanese artists had to struggle alone to establish their global reputation on their own in order to return home in glory. Then, a few years later in 2005, when there were already obvious signs of the commercialisation of art in Taiwan, the successful business operation of the Blue Print lounge bar in Tainan city, run by Chen Chun-hao,⁹ gave a sudden inspiration to these artists to launch a business that would combine an art gallery and lounge bar space. This lounge-art gallery space would also form a place in Taipei where artists could communicate and mutually support one another. They decided to extend the concept of their original name ‘Abnormal Temple’ by changing it to ‘Very Temple’, shortened to VT, and were joined by a new group of artists specialising in different materials and forms, and a curator.¹⁰

The members of this reconstituted group had different roles in the construction of the VT Artsalon. Artist Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中, born in 1969), who is an artist, curator and art critic, is the President of the VT Artsalon, and his works are often satires of political and civil society. Curator Hu Chao-sheng (Sean) (胡朝聖, born in 1970), who has a great sense of fashion and new art trends, and is seriously concerned with the relationship between art, business and urban space, is the Art Director of the VT Artsalon and responsible for policy and administration. Artist Chen Chun-hao (陳浚豪, born in 1971), who runs the Blue Print lounge bar in Tainan city, is the Executive Director of the VT Artsalon. Artist Wu Da-kun (吳達坤, born in 1974), who has long hair tied back and often wears a leather jacket, and specialises in video arts and cross-border arts, is the Digital Director and often plays

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Blue Print is a lounge bar in Tainan city run by artist Chen Chun-hao. The place became popular and had a good reputation in the southern part of Taiwan.

¹⁰ Artists Chen Jun-hao and Yao Jui-chung invited curator Hu Chao-sheng and other artists including Chen Wen-chi, Tu Wei-cheng, Wu Da-kun and Su Hui-yu to join the new VT Artsalon group. Artist Ho Meng-chuan was also invited to join because she was trained as a professional bartender. Information from, Chen Houhe, “‘*Feichangmiao*’ *zhuanji*’ (Very Temple Artsalon) *Yishu guandian* (*Art View*) Tainan National University of Arts. Issue 37. 1 January 2009.

as a DJ in the VT Artsalon. Artist Tu Wei-cheng (涂維政, born 1969), whose most famous work ‘Bu-Nam Civilization Revealed’¹¹ won the Taipei Arts Award in 2001 and Taishin Arts Award Jury's Special Award in 2004, is the Creative Director. Wu Da-kun and Tu Wei-cheng are both responsible for the interior design and exhibitions in the VT Artsalon. Artist Su Hui-yu (蘇匯宇, born in 1976), who specialises in multi-media cross-border creative works, is the Deputy General Manager and responsible for the design of leaflets. Artist Ho Meng-chuan (何孟娟, born in 1977), whose art works mainly involve costume role-play in characters such as the Snow White Princess, is the General Manager and a skilled mixer of cocktails. She is also the only female artist in the VT Artsalon group. Artist Chen Wen-chi (陳文祺, born in 1969), who is skilled in photography and spatial design, is the Design Director and responsible for collecting ideas from the other artists and transferring them to the space of the VT.¹²

Although all these are serious artists who exhibit their works in museums and galleries, some were and continue to be more celebrated than others. Among them, curator Hu Chao-sheng and artist Yao Jui-chung were the most celebrated figures, and in the initial establishment period of the VT Artsalon, the other members of the group and the name of the VT tended to become associated with their reputations.¹³ Hu's greater celebrity status can be explained in various ways. His original job as curator allows him to be an active figure on the international and local art scene, creating many avenues to express his views about contemporary art. Many of the exhibitions he has curated have attracted considerable public interest, and he has thus been able to influence public tastes in art and urban aesthetics. Many of his exhibitions have been on art in commercial spaces, consumer culture and urban life,

¹¹ The work ‘Bu-Nam Civilization Revealed’ is a series of installations and sculptures that imitate the form and texture of ancient heritage. The works look like real heritage objects from a distance, but their modern significance as works that make use of contemporary science and technology can be clearly seen when looked at more closely. Information from Tu Wei-cheng's website, <http://www.tuweicheng.com/>. Accessed 22 September 2010.

¹² “‘Feichangmiao’ zhuanji’ (Very Temple Artsalon) *Yishu guandian (Art View)* Tainan National University of Arts. Issue 37. (1 January 2009), 8-26.

¹³ Although I have found no reports produced merely with the name and reputation of Hu Chao-sheng, in my field research in the VT Artsalon in April 2006, many guests knew the space because they had heard that, ‘Hu Chao-sheng and other artists have opened an interesting lounge bar’.

and he has also curated exhibitions sponsored by corporations.¹⁴ His position as Art Director of the VT Artsalon means that, on the one hand, he often acts as spokesman in media interviews about the space and its artistic activities. On the other hand, he has the power to decide on the content and direction of the art works displayed in the VT Artsalon.

The other relatively well-known artist is Yao Jui-chung, whose reputation is built on his active presence in the national and international art scene as a creative artists,¹⁵ curator¹⁶ and art critic.¹⁷ In 1997, he represented Taiwan in ‘Facing Faces – Taiwan’ at the Venice Biennale and took part in the International Triennale of Contemporary Art in Yokohama in 2005. When the VT Artsalon was just established, newspaper reports used his name in their descriptions of the new art-salon space.¹⁸

In order to fund the space, each member of the eight-person group each contributed NT\$ 500,000 (equivalent to GBP 10,126). They also looked for other

¹⁴ As a professional curator, Hu curated many popular exhibitions in Taipei city, including: Very Fun Park – Contemporary Art Exhibition in East Taipei (2003), Random-ize Taipei – International Video Art Exhibition (2003), Fashion Incidentally (2007), Very Fun Park – Contemporary Art in East Taipei (2007), Breathing Deeply – New Media Art Exhibition (2007), Dwelling Place 2008 – Taiwan International Video Art Exhibition (2008), BO PI ARTS: Fusion Folks – Contemporary Art Exhibition (2009). In 2007, Hu also established his own studio, named Hu’s Art Company, in which he could carry out his own curatorial projects independently. His previous exhibitions revealed constant concerns around the issue of ‘city’ and ‘urban life’ including bringing the arts closer to urban life by displaying art works in commercial spaces and public areas.

I did not choose Hu Chao-sheng as one of my case studies because the VT Artsalon group’s vigorous development of a commercial celebritisation strategy to present themselves as an important part of popular culture had a particular impact on Taiwan’s art scene during the period of my field research .

¹⁵ Yao Jui-chung specialises in photography, installation and art theory. The themes of his works are varied, but most of them examine the absurdity of the human condition. Information from Yao Jui-chung’s website: <http://www.yaojuichung.com/>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

¹⁶ Yao has curated exhibitions including: The Realm of Illusion – The New Wave of Taiwan Photography (2002), King-Kon Never Dies: Contemporary Performance & Video Art in Taiwan (2003) and Spellbound Aura – The New Vision of Chinese Photography (2004). Information from: <http://www.yaojuichung.com/>. Accessed on 27 August 2010.

¹⁷ Yao’s publications include *Installation Art in Taiwan 1991–2001* (2002), *The New Wave of Contemporary Taiwan Photography since 1999* (2003), *Roam the Ruins of Taiwan* (2004), *Performance Art in Taiwan 1978–2004* (2005), *A Walk in the Contemporary Art: Roaming the Rebellious Streets* (2005), *Ruined Islands* (2007), *Yao Jui-chung* (2008), *Beyond Humanity* (2008), *Nebulous Light* (2009), and *Biennial-Hop* (2010). Information from: <http://www.yaojuichung.com/>.

¹⁸ Liu, Yuqing. ‘Feichangmiao, bage yishujia kai yiwon yedian puluo fangshi kan yishu, Yao Jui-chung deng qixu tashi chuanyu peiyangmin’ (Very Temple, eight artists open a night club to see art from a popular aspect, and Yao Jui-chung expects it to be a “petri-dish of the Culture and Creative Industries) *Wenhua* (Culture page) *Minsheng bao* (*Min-sheng Daily*) 24 March, 2006.

investors, including collectors, people from the art community and heads of museums.¹⁹ With a total amount of six million NT dollars (equivalent to GBP 121,520), the VT Artsalon was established as a new artistic space in March 2006, and its founding group started to run the space as a real business. It initially claimed to be the first lounge-gallery art salon in Taiwan dedicated exclusively to modern and contemporary art.²⁰ The name ‘Very Temple’ is *feichang miao* in Chinese, which is a homonym of the phrase ‘very ingenious’. It is also a metaphor for the special use of art outside the conventional white cube gallery, and thus challenges traditional perceptions of what art is. The name of the space reflects the founders’ initial idea of hoping to provide a specific space in Taipei for those working in the arts, cultural and other creative communities to visit and network. The space was also purposely designed to offer more functions in order to influence directly the ways that art works were displayed and received. With such a clear intention, Hu Chao-sheng, the Art Director, pointed out that the place would be an innovative ‘petri-dish of the Culture and Creative Industries’,²¹ and that he and his colleagues were looking forward to the future and ‘feeling excited to see what will be fomented’.²²

¹⁹ Huang, Qiling. ‘*Yishu yedian feichangmiao*’ (VT Artsalon–Art Nightclubs) *Chuangye zhoubao* (Entrepreneurs page) *Jingji ribao* (Economic Daily News). 1 August 2008.

²⁰ Information from the VT Artsalon website: <http://www.vtartsalon.com/eng/about.html>. Accessed 24 March 2010.

The term and concept of ‘salon’ can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ Paris, when it referred to the place where high society people socialized and gathered. According to Steven Kale, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, salons encouraged socializing between the sexes, brought nobles and bourgeois together, and afforded opportunities for intellectual speculation. In the early nineteenth century (during the Bourbon Restoration 1815-1830 and the July Monarchy 1830-1848), salons became the principal centres of elite political networking and discussion. Also, there were many kinds of salons in nineteenth century France, including literary salons, musical salons, and those identified with particular celebrities. “Salons were primarily for conversation, but they were also places of distraction and amusement, where people went to gamble, sing, dance, play charades, listen to poetry, view art or participate in the theatrical representation”. The term ‘Paris Salon’ also referred to the official art exhibition of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which was first held in 1667, and was the most prestigious annual or biannual art event in the world. Information from: Steven Kale. *French salon: High society and political sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848*. (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 3-4; and on-line source ‘Paris Salon: Annual exhibition of French Academy of Fine Arts’, <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/salon-paris.htm>. Accessed 12 September 2010.

²¹ The concept of Culture and Creative Industries was proposed by the Taiwanese Government for the development of the fields of visual arts, music and performance, design industry, advertising industry etc. Information from: Culture and Creative Industries website, <http://cci.culture.tw/cci/cci/index.php>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

²² Interview with Hu Chao-sheng. 3 May 2006. Taipei.

The VT Artsalon's ambition of being a creative petri-dish is manifested in three aspects. The first can be seen from its particular way of displaying art works. Graphics and paintings are hung on the walls around the lounge seats, while sculptures and installations are placed by the main entrance or allocated between the sitting areas. One might suggest that this way of displaying art is closer to the concept of artwork as decoration, but in an art salon run by a group of artists, the art works are one of the major characters within the space. The second aspect of its petri-dish character is shown in its creative lists of art activities and programmes. Since its opening in 2006, the VT Artsalon has aimed to bring together the various fields of visual art, design, architecture, performance, music and literature, and to integrate them with social life. The Artsalon's art, cultural and social activities were not only to provide audiences with diverse visual and sensory entertainment, but were also designed as part of a strategy to popularise the space and promote the name of the VT Artsalon. The third aspect of the VT Artsalon as a creative petri-dish is manifested in its function as a new social space for artists and people from the arts and cultural communities to gather.



Figure 57. The bar area at the VT Artsalon.²³

²³ Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/sets/72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.

A New Space for Art

VT Artsalon as a diversified artistic apace

As art is its core interests, the VT Artsalon's key display concepts are two permanent visual art installations and a special exhibitions that change every three months. At its opening in March 2006, the art works displayed on the walls were produced by the artists of the VT Artsalon Group, and were all serious art works that had been shown previously in galleries or museums, or had received art prizes. Some of the art works displayed in the lounge space included Tu Wei-cheng's works in imitation of the architecture and sculpture of an ancient civilisation, located by the main entrance; Yao Jui-chung's works *The Cynic—Chinese* and *The Cynic—Taiwanese* (2004-2005), and Ho Meng-chuan's *You can only love me* (2005). The Artsalon's first special exhibition was called *100 Very Video Art Installations*,²⁴ which included videos projected onto a big projection wall every night for a period of three months.



Figure 58. The interior space with art works displayed and a big screen for video art works to be projected.²⁵

²⁴ Exhibition *100 Very Video Art Installations (100 Luxiang dazhan)*, VT Artsalon. 23 March–30 June 2006.

²⁵ Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/216776120/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

Other popular and social activities were also held in the lounge-bar space where the art works and video installations considered as high art were exhibited and projected. These included DJ nights over three days during the opening period, hosted by locally and internationally well known DJs, including Canadian Dominik T, Italian Feel Good Productions and Taiwanese singer-DJ Lin Qiang,²⁶ Fish and JJJ. Other entertainment activities included tarot fortune-telling on ‘lady’s night’ every Thursday, an Absolut Vodka night held every Tuesday,²⁷ and ‘irregular’ activities such as wine tasting, a bikini girls’ night, and a ‘VT Battle Paradise’ street dance competition.²⁸ In the following months, the VT Artsalon also held other art and cultural exhibitions, including a Manga Exhibition with 31 ‘cosers’ performing cosplay on-site.²⁹

²⁶ Lin Qiang (林強) is a musician, DJ, composer, songwriter, music producer, music director and also an actor. He has been a leading figure in the Taiwanese experimental electronic music scene since the 1990s.

²⁷ Absolut Vodka has had a close relationship with art since the 1980s. It was initiated by Andy Warhol, who was commissioned to make a painting of the Absolut Vodka bottle. The painting appeared as an advertisement and was a success in catching media attention. According to Stallabrass, who also discusses the corporate relation between the brand and art, ‘These pieces, which make the relation between artist and corporation particularly transparent, have continued into the present; many dominant artists, including Keith Haring, David Levinthal, Ed Ruscha, and Vik Muniz have made them.’: Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 132.

²⁸ Information gained from my research trip to the VT Artsalon on April 2006.

²⁹ *Manga Exhibition*. 25 August–15 September 2006. VT Artsalon. The term ‘cosplay’ and ‘cosplayer’ (shortened to ‘coser’) is from 1970s Japan and refers to participants who use the role-play to interpret cartoons to attract the same cosplay lover. Through different costumes and props, incorporated with make-up, styling and body language, they cosplay in the role they like. Information from, Zhou Meihui. ‘*Mangao yishujie, cosplay tiguang*’ (Manga Festival, cosplay comes to the VT Artsalon) *C6 Wenhua ban* (Cultural Page) *Lianhe bao* (United Daily) 24 August 2006.



Figure 59. A scene at the Manga Exhibition, and the technological equipment for DJ nights.³⁰

These artistic, cultural, popular and social activities were not only for the purpose of putting the idea of a ‘petri-dish of the Culture and Creative Industries’ into practice, but the diversity of the activities was also used as a promotional strategy to attract more guests. In order to disseminate the information of these activities to the wider public, the VT Artsalon group chose different channels of media and communication for broadcasting, including the VT Artsalon website, e-mailing, hand-outs and leaflets, or Internet information circulation. The leaflets and information that were sent out by VT Artsalon, some with images of its most ‘celebritised’ members, Hu Chao-sheng and Yao Jui-chung, were used as a promotional strategy to attract the wider public.

³⁰ Photograph from:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/216772291/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 27 August 2010.



Figure 60. An EDM (Electronic Direct Mail) with information on the activities taking place at the VT Artsalon sent out to people's e-mail addresses. Images of the most famous artist and the curator—Hu Chao-sheng (left) and Yao Jui-chung—are used to promote the VT Artsalon.³¹

While the concept of displaying art works beyond the space of the white cube was very much an emerging trend in Taipei,³² its integration with other forms of cultural and creative activities within a lounge-bar space was even more astonishing, to the public, the media and people in the art world.³³ The opening event and

³¹ An EDM sent by the VT Artsalon to my e-mail box (April 2006).

³² As seen in the Estlite Bookstore and Taishin Arts Award finalists exhibition, both of which placed art works in public and consumer spaces, as discussed in the previous chapter.

³³ The newspapers that printed reports on the integration of art and lounge-bar space included: Chen, Yingshan. 'Yishujia kai yedian mai kafei, zhuanghuang bian zhanlan' (Artists open night club to sell coffee, the decorations are exhibitions) *Wenhua Yishu* (Art and Culture page) *zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 26 March 2006. Zheng, Qiushuang. 'Xinjiaodian yishu, feichangmiao de tongguanyu' (New focus of art – the password for the VT Artsalon) *Wenhua chuangyi* (Cultural and creative page) *Jingji ribao* (*Economic Daily News*) 1 April 2006. Zhou Meihui. 'Dangdai yishu, ronghe yedian chuiji'

exhibition were reported and photographs of the opening party were released via different forms of the mass media, celebrating the space's experimental vision of how high art could be legitimately connected to wider cultural production, consumer culture and popular social activities.³⁴ Media reports spread out across a wide range of newspapers and journals, from art and cultural sections to gourmet pages.³⁵ Overnight, the VT Artsalon space and the group were 'celebritised', becoming one of the most discussed topics of Taiwan's art scene and night life.

The VT Artsalon's integration of high art display, consumer culture and social activities challenged the boundaries of the white cube not only in its transformation of space, but also in its subversion of traditional ways of displaying and viewing art works. For instance, in traditional museums and galleries, or even commercial galleries, the standard visiting time is during the day,³⁶ but as a lounge bar, the VT Artsalon was open from 8 o'clock in the evening to 3 o'clock in the morning. This was described by the Art Director, Hu Chao-sheng, as an attempt to form an 'alternative space for art' for those people such as office workers who have no time to visit galleries during office hours, and for artists who are unable to find a place to gather in the evenings.³⁷

The lounge bar of the VT Artsalon offers comfortable surroundings to its guests, who can relax in soft sofas or stand at the bar to socialise. Guests sip their cocktails and sit chatting to each other, only occasionally looking at the art works around them. Moreover, there are no explanatory descriptions accompanying the

(Contemporary art, launched at the night clubs) *Wenhua* (Culture page) *Lianhe bao* (*United Daily News*. 24 March 2006. Liu Yuqing, 'Feichangmiao, bage yishujia kai yiwu yedian puluo fangshi kan yishu, Yao Jui-chung deng qixu tashi chuanyang peiyangmin' (Temple, eight artists open a night club to see art from a popular aspect, Yao Jui-chung expects it to be a "petri-dish of the Culture and Creative Industries) *Wenhua* (Culture page) *Minsheng bao* (*Min-sheng Daily*) 24 March, 2006.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ News reports that appeared on pages other than pages dedicated to art and culture: Chen, Yingshan. 'Yishu guashuai, meishi yedian hundehao' (Leading the name with art, the night club with good food is doing well) *Yuanqi shenghuozhan* (Life page) *zhongguo shibao* (*China Times*) 14 June 2006. Yang, Qianhui. 'Dang yishu yushang yedian, VT ARTSALON feichangmiao' (When art meets night club – VT Artsalon) *Xin shiqu* (New Food and Fun page) *Ziyou shibao* (*Liberty Times*) 30 June 2006. Liu, Yuqing. 'Wenhua xinchuangyi redian yedian jiehe dangdai yishu, feichangmiao' (New creative cultural idea of combining art and night club – VT Artsalon) *Shangye liutong* (Commercial circulation page) *Jingji ribao* (*Economic Daily News*. 24 March 2006.

³⁶ Although some of the commercial galleries in Taiwan might open in the evening, they still close before 10.00 pm.

³⁷ Interview with Hu Chao-sheng. 3 May 2006. Taipei

individual art works to give details of the works and their artists. Even if there were such descriptions, it would be hard for guests to read them because of the dim lighting and the bead curtains dividing the salon's spaces into individual compartments. This is a subversion of how art works are normally treated as the main 'subjects' of museums or galleries. Hu Chao-sheng admitted that the VT Artsalon group also noticed the contradiction with their initial concept that art should be the focal theme of the space, and developed a strategy to re-emphasise the importance of the salon's art works.

In an interview carried out in May 2006, just a month after the opening of the VT Artsalon, Hu pointed out that greater consideration needed to be given to how the salon delivered information about its art works. He said,

It is important to consider how much information we should give in depth to the audiences according to different backgrounds, educational levels and interests of visitors. And before that, I am happy to let some guests perceive art through direct senses because there are many ways of approaching art which has no right or wrong.³⁸

As well as including information on the art works on the VT Artsalon official website,³⁹ their new strategy also included waiters' giving brief introductions to the currently exhibited artworks as the guests prepared to make their orders. Occasionally, the artists themselves also made an appearance, giving guests the opportunity to chat with them about their work. This strategy of using artists and waiters to bridge high art and popular culture, attempted to turn both roles into art and cultural intermediaries.

The new role of contemporary artists and the commodification of art

Such promotion by artists themselves suggests a different way of promoting and marketing art from the previous examples in this thesis. As we have seen, artists like Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang actively promote their art in public and media spaces, but they do this through the marketing strategies planned by corporations. In

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The VT Artsalon website and blogs: <http://www.vtartsalon.com/>; <http://vtartsalon.wordpress.com/>; <http://www.wretch.cc/blog/vtartsalon>.

contrast, in the VT Artsalon space, artists' self-promotion is linked to a deliberate change in the artist's role in this unconventional space.

The idea that artists might promote themselves and their work as products and services for the purpose of maintaining a business is considered by Hu Chao-sheng as one of the major values in the VT Artsalon.⁴⁰ Here I refer to my experience in visiting the space in 2006. When in April, I and a group of friends were led to the lounge-bar and offered menus, the waiter introduced us to the names of the artists and their work. Without going into further details, the waiter then left us with the drinks menus. It was not until an hour later that we met one of the artists, Yang Zhihao,⁴¹ whose work was being exhibited on-site. This piece, *Puzzles of Time* (2005), was an interactive work that adopted the idea of 'high speed vision persistence' to convey the sense of confusion of space and time in contemporary society through views of Ximeng,⁴² one of the busiest commercial areas of Taipei. As we interacted with his artwork, Yang continued to share his ideas with us. For me at least, being a guest at a lounge bar and talking to an artist face-to-face about the work on display was a new and very enjoyable experience.⁴³ This also takes the idea to a further stage in which art works and artists are endowed with a contemporary mission to enlighten and entertain the space and its visitors.

⁴⁰ Interview with Hu Chao-sheng. 3 May 2006. Taipei

⁴¹ Artist Yang Zhihao (楊志豪) (born in 1974) specialises in new media arts and photography.

⁴² Ximeng is in the west end of Taipei, which is one of the busiest districts, attracting teenagers to shop and hang around.

⁴³ Yang Zhihao and I have maintained our friendship consistently since we first met at the VT Artsalon in April 2006.



Figure 61. The lounge space in the VT Artsalon with serious art works hanging on the walls.⁴⁴

Mark Hutchinson has suggested in ‘Notes on the Idea of Site’ that “ideas about alternative sites for art are often associated with the desire to escape from the perceived constraints of non-alternative sites in some way”.⁴⁵ For the VT Artsalon group, their desire to escape from conventional space was accomplished through the construction of the VT Artsalon space as an ‘alternative site/space’. Here, the group could begin to put their ideas about art and the artist’s identity into practice. However, in the process of turning themselves into business operators who run a commercial space—from ‘cultural producers’ to ‘cultural traders’—the main characters that they try to promote, ‘art’ and ‘artists’, were unavoidably commodified as the space’s key selling point as an unconventional art and lounge-bar space. As Julian Stallabrass put it, “As commodities have become more cultural, art has become further commodified, as its market has expanded and it has become increasingly integrated into the general run of capitalist activity”.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Photograph from:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/447302197/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

⁴⁵ Hutchinson, Mark. ‘Notes on the Idea of Site’. *British Art Show Fringe Festival*. (2006).
<http://www.markhutchinson.org/writing%20index.html>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

⁴⁶ Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*, 80.

The VT Artsalon group's decision to launch its business occurred in an environment that was already accustomed to the popularity of art. My previous chapters on Chu Cha-ray, Cai Guoqiang and Tang Huang-chen have described how in contemporary Taiwanese society, consumer spaces have become increasingly cultural, and art has become increasingly commodified under the intervention of corporate business in the art world. Similar to the Eslite Corporation and the Taishin Bank, the VT Artsalon's construction of its own 'corporate brand' has centred on its celebrityised commodification. Soon after it was established in 2006, Hu Chao-sheng said that hotel owners were approaching the VT Artsalon group to search for cooperative opportunities to transform some of their hotel spaces—for instance, the bar and restaurant—into integrative art and food spaces.⁴⁷ Although the Artsalon group refused this offer, the invitation signaled their opportunity to construct themselves as a 'brand'.

The art exhibited in the VT Artsalon in its first year seemed to have the dual function of being wall decoration as well as serious art, but its main purpose was to give a sense of cultivation to the loungebar space and to give visitors visual and social entertainment, as well as to highlight the trendy characteristics of its 'art' and 'artists'. Thus, this thesis argues that the core value—in cultural, social and business terms—of the VT Artsalon was as a social space bridging high art, trendy cultural interests and popular entertainment and consumption, all linked in the salon's promotion of itself as a niche centre of cultivated taste. This thesis also argues that, through its construction of taste, the VT Artsalon group was able to acquire the different aspects of their celebrity status. Although the two aspects can be contradictory as one associate to popular culture, and other one links to elite social distinction, in the following sections, I will discuss how these two aspects all contribute differently to the celebrityisation of the VT Artsalon group.

VT's Construction of Taste and Social Distinction

The art works and activities that take place at the VT Artsalon space are selected and implemented by the VT Artsalon group. The personal taste and celebrity status of the

⁴⁷ Interview with Hu Chao-sheng. 3 May 2006. Taipei.

group play an important role in shaping the aesthetic style of the VT Artsalon and in promoting its space, art and activities. Displaying high art in spaces and alongside activities that cater to popular consumer interests in fact gives the Artsalon a ‘cool’ appeal that emphasises its unique distinction from other lounge bar spaces in Taipei. The ‘taste culture’ with which it is associated is a clear marker of social distinction. The idea of taste, according to Chris Rojek, is “pivotal in celebrity culture. Indeed, the growth of celebrity culture is closely bound with the aestheticization of everyday life”.⁴⁸ Rojek further explains that,

Taste became a mark of recognition in which individuals acknowledged solidarity in regard to specific cultural mores and values. Groupings of fans in celebrity culture can be regarded as taste cultures, cultivating and refining standards of emulation and solidarity in respect of the celebrity to whom they are attached.⁴⁹

According to Rojek’s analysis, the notion of taste is tightly connected to celebrity culture in that celebrity is able to group fans who share the same sets of value. However, in the case of the VT Artsalon, this chapter suggests that further aspects of its construction of taste lies in its negotiation between high art and popular culture, in which art becomes an integral part of popular consumerism. Although Rojek did not discuss the notion of ‘taste cultures’, American sociologist Herbert J. Gans, who looks into the fields of popular culture and high culture, suggests that both cultures are equally ‘taste cultures’ and consist of values that can be expressed through the cultural forms of music, art, design, literature, drama, comedy, poetry, criticism, news, and the media in which these are expressed – books, magazines, newspapers, records, films and television programmes, paintings and sculpture, and – insofar as ordinary consumer goods also express aesthetic values or functions – furnishings, clothes, appliances, and motor vehicles as well.⁵⁰ For Gans, different taste cultures and taste publics exist because of “the diversity of and disagreement about aesthetic standards and values”.⁵¹ Although one might question whether the definition of taste culture here is rather too broad, Gans usefully points out that he would “demarcate

⁴⁸ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 102.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Gans, Herbert J. *Popular culture and high culture: an analysis and evaluation of taste*. (New York: Basic Books, 1975, c1974), 10.

⁵¹ Ibid., 68.

taste culture as the culture which results from choice; it has to do with those values and products [in] which people have some choice".⁵² In other words, taste culture is not only produced by the cultural creators, but just as importantly by the choices made by the 'taste public'.⁵³

While there are many other lounge-bar spaces in the city of Taipei, the VT Artsalon's display of high art works and their artists offers an element of choice not widely available elsewhere. Through visiting the VT Artsalon and consuming its activities, guests identify themselves with its experiences and aesthetic values as aspects of the taste culture to which the VT Artsalon contributes. The salon's combination of high art works with other cultural and social activities provide a unique consumer and cultural experience which communicates the idea of art as an integral 'part'—as Gans put it—of the taste culture of daily life.⁵⁴ In this sense, the Eslite Bookstore, contributes another, contrasting part of the taste cultures of urban life.

Although Gan's analysis of the formation of taste cultures is helpful for my analysis of the significance of the VT Artsalon in contemporary popular culture, the way he treats all cultural forms as equally important in generating taste cultures is not, in my view, completely adequate, especially in the case of the VT Artsalon. As I have shown above, in the VT Artsalon the display of high art plays a more important role than its other popular activities. This is due to the fact that art works that the Artsalon considers as 'high arts' emphasise the unique character of the space, and it is this that gives the VT Artsalon group its social and cultural distinction, and the opportunity to build up its celebrity status through appealing to media and public interest. The high art work on display in the VT Artsalon enables the space to appeal more to a 'cool' elite taste than a popular taste, as I discuss below when I refer to two incidents that highlight the elite characteristics of the space. Even after April 2007, when VT transformed its business strategy to divide the lounge space and the gallery

⁵² Ibid., 12. Gans gives an example of the idea of 'choice': 'Refrigerators are today an accepted product of the larger American culture and it is difficult to live without them. Which of the various kinds and styles of refrigerators to buy is a matter of relatively free choice – except for people who lack of money or the space to choose from the most expensive models – and that choice involves an application of taste culture.'

⁵³ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 13.

into two separate parts, it continued to display art works in the lounge space in an attempt to retain its character as an art-lounge space catering to the same ‘cool’ elite taste. The details of the transformation and the new VT Artsalon will be discussed in a later section.

According to Yang Zhihao, the young artist I met in the art salon, the people who visited the VT Artsalon mainly included bar lovers, people working in the creative industry, the arts and cultural communities.⁵⁵ These were generally quite wealthy and represented different elements of the ‘cool’ and ‘trendy’ taste public. While bar lovers went to the art salon because of its unique blend of night-life entertainment, artistic people gathered there to use it as a social space to network and talk about common interests. These different groups’ identification with the taste provided by the VT Artsalon enabled the VT group to carve out an exclusive niche in Taipei’s consumer society as a provider of an innovative part of taste culture. The VT Artsalon therefore stood out from other lounge-bars, and attracted media reports on the uniqueness of its lounge-gallery space. All this contributed to the celebritisation of the VT Artsalon group as artists and creators of taste culture. The group’s celebrity status was thus inseparable from its role in constructing a taste culture that distinguished it from other consumer spaces in Taipei. However, as I point out in the next section, controversies arose when different ‘taste publics’ came together in the VT Artsalon. These controversies called into question the salon’s initial aim to appeal to cool and popular consumer taste, but contributed to the further celebritisation of the VT Artsalon group and its claims to social distinction.

In locating itself as an important cultural and social space devoted first and foremost to art, the VT Artsalon prioritises artists and members of the art world over the general public, and as we have seen cultivated a reputation for its cool, elite consumer taste. Its claims to social distinction were based in its appeal to a particular taste. In Bourdieu’s terms,

it [taste] functions as a sort of social orientation, a ‘sense of one’s place’, guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards

⁵⁵ An informal conversation with artist Yang Zhihao took place at the VT Artsalon in April 2006.

the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants that position.⁵⁶

For the VT Artsalon group, its social position was clearly marked in the opening party held to declare the launch of the VT as a business on 23 March 2006. The opening party was exclusively by invitation only, mainly to artists and people working in the arts and cultural communities, many of them occupying important positions in the arts scene. The party was a display of the Artsalon's social and cultural distinction in the art scene and as a demonstration of how people networked, showed the extensive social capital that the artists' group held. The event was widely reported in the media, and photographs were broadcast and circulated on the Internet via websites including Flickr, posted by the participating artists.⁵⁷ The celebrityisation of the VT Artsalon group focused on them as part of a small social and cultural elite whose association with high art appeared as a means to display their social and cultural distinctiveness.



Figure 62. The opening party on 23 March 1996. Many important people attended the party. From left to right: Lin Changhu, Professor at the School of Fine Arts, Taipei National University of Fine Arts, Liao Xianhao, the former Commissioner of the Taipei City Department of Cultural Affairs, with artist Yao Jui-chung.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1984), 466.

⁵⁷ The photographs can be seen at the Flickr website of VT Artsalon group artist Chen Wen-chi: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/sets/72057594090737771/>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

⁵⁸ Photograph from:

An art critic, Zhang Qingwen, who also attended the party, captured the moment vividly:

On the evening of 23 March, I walked into the ‘Very Temple’ Artsalon which is near the Yi-tong Park. After pushing the heavy stainless steel door, a space came before my eyes that looked like a normal lounge bar with dark lighting and noisy crowds. With background music played by the DJ, and art videos projected on the walls, the place was very crowded and it was too dark to recognise anyone. When I moved aside the small steel balls woven curtains used to separate the individual compartments, there were also art works hanging on the walls in the small booth area. Then I was surprised to see that some of those who sat on the sofa chatting and laughing were museum directors, professors from the university art department, critics, artists and curators etc... It was such a unique scene to see all these people from the art scene gathering together.⁵⁹

Zhang’s report was published in *Artist Magazine* along with a full picture of the VT Artsalon’s opening party showing the particular relationship between the salon, the guests and the art works it celebrated. Images and photographs were also displayed on the internet, offering the general public a view of how the VT Artsalon group socialises with the other artists and cultural bureaucracies, such as artist Lin Shumin, Shi Ruiren, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei,⁶⁰ the former Commissioner of the Taipei City Department of Cultural Affairs, Liao Xianhao, and the former Director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Huang Cailang, all of whom went to congratulate the group at the opening. The participating artists were all elegantly dressed, chatting and circulating between crowds of people; their smart and trendy credentials were not only explicit in the way they dressed, but also in their gestures as they talked and moved around.⁶¹ Demonstrating their social connections as members of an inner artistic elite was a core element of the Artsalon group’s ‘celebritisation’. When Ivan Massow, former Chairman of London’s Institute of

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/117993892/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

⁵⁹ Zhang, Qingwen. ‘*Shi yishu ba*’ (Is this art?) *Yishujia zazhi* (*Artist Magazine*) No. 372. May 1996, 250.

⁶⁰ Shi Ruiren (石瑞仁) has been the Director of Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei since 2008.

⁶¹ This is observed in photographs and images at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/sets/72057594090737771/with/117993892/>. Accessed 16 April 2006.

Contemporary Art, discussed the vogue for conceptual art, he made the following comments that could well be used to describe the ‘glossy’ character and confidence that these artists displayed in the VT Artsalon’s opening:

Frequently boasting ‘craftlessness’ and ‘thinness’ in terms of talent, the current trend seems to have replaced the art with the artists. As for the artists themselves, they must be ‘glossy’ – or to risk being replaced by those who understand the celebrity game better.⁶²

The importance of the ‘glossy’ character and look in the celebritisation of the artist has already been seen in the previous case study of Chu Cha-ray, in which her appearance, dress and behaviour were all key elements of her celebritisation. In the image below, one can see clearly how Hu Chao-sheng deployed his interaction with the former director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Huang Cailang. In fact, as I have already noted, Hu was already a celebrity figure before the VT Artsalon was established. His demeanour, behaviour and his particular taste in fashion is described by the editor of a magazine *Art View*, Lin Liyin:

He has a smart English name, ‘Sean’. After returning from studying in New York, he worked in Fubon Arts Foundation and the colleague sitting next to him was Lin Zhiling,⁶³ but he seemed to care [more] about her Prada shoes. Sean is always on the cutting-edge in fashion, any clothes on him will look like famous brands (in fact they are). His standard action is to lift a finger and smile charmingly at you.⁶⁴

⁶² Massow, Ivan. ‘Why I hate official art’. *New Statesman*. 21 January 2002. <http://www.newstatesman.com/200201210007>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

⁶³ Lin Zhiling is a one of the most famous models in Taiwan. She has a great interest in the arts due to her educational background in Art History. In artist Cai Guoqiang’s press conference at the exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum*, Lin Chi-ling acted as a celebrity supporter with Kevin Tsai to promote Cai’s exhibition.

⁶⁴ Lin, Liyin. ‘*Shi kuajie, shi jieru—tan Hu Chaosheng de cezhan gainian*’ (It’s cross-field and intervention—Talking about Hu Chao-sheng’s curatorial concept) *Yishu guandian (Art View)* Tainan National University of Arts. Issue 37. 1 January 2009.



Figure 63. At the opening party on 23 March 1996. From left to right: Curator Sean Hu, the former director of Taipei Fine Arts Museum Huang Cailang and artist Lin Shumin.⁶⁵

The celebrity status of the VT Artsalon group in this case was produced through appealing to its social distinction as a ‘glossy’ member of the artistic elite. The way they socialised with each other, sat around and enjoyed the space demonstrated their identification with an exclusive taste that marked their ‘cool’ elite claims. As Bourdieu pointed out,

taste.... transforms objectively classified practices, in which a class condition signifies itself (through taste), into classifying practices, that is, into a symbolic expression of class position, by perceiving them in their mutual relations and in terms of classificatory schemes.⁶⁶

Demonstrating the same interests in artistic practices and being seen to belong to the same cultural and social circle, functioned as a classificatory scheme through which the VT Artsalon group and the artistic elite marked their taste and distinction.

Another main way in which the VT Artsalon group acquired its social distinction was through intentionally differentiating the roles of the artists and the general public in the salon space. This strategy proceeded through establishing a potentially exclusive ‘system of membership’ (although the Artsalon never claimed

⁶⁵ Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/sets/72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.

⁶⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre. (1984), 174-5.

officially that it had a system for membership). This became clear during my research visit to the VT Artsalon. A visitor who had visited the VT Artsalon on several occasions, and who I came across one evening at the Artsalon space, told me that she once asked, as she was paying her bill, if she could have a discount or join the membership. She was told by Hu Cho-sheng that only ‘artists’ would receive memberships and discounts, and that since they were all individually known to him, they did not need an official membership card. As she and I chattered, she expressed her sense of exclusion when she began to question the definition of what makes an artist. “So who is considered as ‘real’ artist?”, “How do you define them? By the numbers of exhibitions that they have held?”. Lastly she said, “I guess it is all about ‘social connections’ in this place. If one from the art scene is recognisable by the group of artists who run the space, then they are considered as ‘friends’ or ‘artists’ who can receive discounts and memberships”.⁶⁷ Ironically, although the initial aim of the art salon was to construct an alternative space for artists and the art world which appealed to public consumption as the main means of maintaining the business. This instance showed that the VT Artsalon had fundamentally elitist view of the ‘general public’. This unavoidably caused some negative reactions amongst the public, and deterred them from visiting the VT Artsalon.

Those two instances demonstrate how the VT Artsalon group acquired their social distinction and unique status as ‘artists’ through attempting to build up a celebrity status as members of an elite group. In other words, by using art and the salon space, the VT Artsalon group successfully identified themselves as a celebrity group and carved out an exclusive social and cultural niche in the Taiwanese art scene. Such cultural and social status gives the VT Artsalon significant cultural significance in Taiwan, confirming the cultural and political significance of the VT Artsalon as a new artistic space, especially in comparison with its neighbouring gallery, the IT Park Gallery.

⁶⁷ *Ad-hoc* interview conducted in the fieldwork research trip in the VT Artsalon. April 2006.

The Cultural-political Significance of the VT Artsalon

While the VT Artsalon plays an important role in constructing Taipei's taste culture, at the same time it also occupies a significant role in the Taiwanese art scene. Its cultural significance in this derives from two aspects. One is the fact that, as I have mentioned above, the VT Artsalon group set up its space at a specific cultural moment when the links between art and business had become a prevalent phenomenon. The other is that it challenges the conventional ways in which art was displayed and traded in Taiwan, and how artists interact with their audience. Also, the fact that the VT Artsalon is located on Yi-tong Street, next to the influential IT Park Gallery, marks the cultural-political significance of both as models of new artistic spaces in Taiwan.

The IT Park Gallery was established in September 1988 by a group of artists including Chen Huiqiao, Liu Qingtang, Zhuang Pu, and others.⁶⁸ They originally met regularly at a restaurant in Chung Hsiao East Road (in the east end of Taipei), but were looking for a fixed place for artists' gatherings.⁶⁹ As mentioned previously in chapter one, the 1980s was the 'museum' period in Taiwan's art scene. The group of artists aimed to find a space to engage with fresh and vibrant perspectives of the arts outside the official museums and commercial gallery spaces. At the time, photographer Liu Qingtang was also looking for a place to set up his photography studio. He found a place to rent on Yi-tong Street, and then opened up the space next door, where the IT Park Gallery was established.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Chen Huiqiao (陳慧嶠) is a female artist who frequently uses feathers, roses, table tennis, cotton wool, needle and thread and other materials, to represent the image of objects in her dreams. Liu Qingtang (劉慶堂) is a famous photographer and Zhuang Pu (莊普) is an artist who established a reputation in the 1980s after he finished the education in Spain. Zhuang's paintings are poetic, abstract, and reflective, and are full of Utopian ideals. These artists are the dominant figures in the establishment and still play important roles in the operation of the IT Park gallery and the selection of its exhibitions. Information from, Taipei Fine Arts Museum: http://www.tfam.museum/03_Exhibitions/Default.aspx?PKID=346; the IT Park Gallery: <http://www.etat.com/itpark/gallery/it-park/formation.htm>; and Art Emperor website: <http://artemperor.tw/artists/1681-Chen-Hui-Chiao-陳慧嶠>. Accessed 27 September 2010.

⁶⁹ You, Wei. 'Mengxiang de zhuanwan zhichu: Yitong nian beiwanglu—fang Zhuang Pu, Chen Huiqiao, Liu Qingtang' (The turning of the dream: Twenty years of the IT Park Gallery—Interviewing Zhuang Pu, Chen Huiqiao and Liu Qingtang). IT Park Gallery Website: http://www.itpark.com.tw/people/essays_data/174/328. Accessed 12 September 2010.

⁷⁰ Ibid.



Figure 64. The exhibition space on the first floor of the IT Park Gallery.⁷¹



Figure 65. The balcony space on the second floor of the IT Park Gallery.⁷²

Due to the fact that the IT Park Gallery hoped to provide opportunities for artists to converse with each other, the interior structure was built around the concept of a ‘bar’ and gallery, in order to meet the purpose. However, the idea of ‘bar’ at the

⁷¹ Photograph accessed from an on-line blog: <http://michelleoboe.pixnet.net/blog/post/24761211>
Accessed 12 April 2010.

⁷² Ibid.

IT Park was different from the ‘lounge bar’ concept at the VT Artsalon. Although both focus on providing spaces for artists to meet and exchange ideas, the VT Artsalon was established at the time when the ideas associated with the commercialisation, commodification and celebritisation of art and artists had become a prevalent phenomenon. The two places thus represent different forms of ‘alternative spaces’. Also, while the VT Artsalon sustains its business by selling alcoholic drinks and food, the IT Park Gallery focused on experimental art display and holding talks and seminars,⁷³ and its bar space was used as a communal area for artists to chat and share artistic ideas. Art Critic and curator Wang Jiaji describes the specific relationship between the IT Park Gallery and the ‘bar’:

In the first decade, when exhibitions held in the IT Park, an active atmosphere was promoted to create discussion about contemporary art in the form of seminars and talks. It was the period when the ‘bar’ was still in the IT Park that it became the gathering place for art professionals, including artists, art critics, art lovers and cultural enthusiasts.⁷⁴

Although the idea of an ‘art bar’ had a central role in the IT Park Gallery, it had to be removed when the IT Park entered into its second decade because of financial difficulties.

A similar situation also arose in the VT Artsalon after its first year of operation, which shall be discussed in relation to the transformation of the VT Artsalon in the next section. After 2000, the operation of the IT Park mainly relied on a personal loan from artist Liu Qingtang, while the management of the gallery and exhibitions mainly relied on government support – especially the National Cultural and Arts Foundation and the Department of Cultural Affairs of Taipei City Government – and some private corporate sponsorships.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this did not detract from the importance of the IT Park Gallery in the Taiwanese art scene, as Wang Jiaji points out,

⁷³ Artist Tang Huang-chen’s first action art project in Taiwan, 72, took place at the IT Park Gallery in 1992, when ‘action art’ was still an unfamiliar concept in Taiwan’s art scene.

⁷⁴ Wang, Jiaji. *‘Wuketidai de dangdai yishu kongjian—Yitonggongyuan ershi zhounian zhiji’* (Irreplaceable contemporary art space – the twentieth anniversary of the IT Park) 2008. The IT Park Gallery website: <http://www.itpark.com.tw/aboutus/index/8>. Accessed 12 April 2010.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The IT Park Gallery's importance only gradually developed in the Taiwanese art scene. Along with the trend towards globalization of the art world, the Taiwanese government began to join the international biennale track. The exhibitions and artistic data that artists accumulated in the IT Park became an important channel for international art professionals to explore Taiwanese art and artists. Whether they were official cultural administrators, art professionals, curators or artists, international visitors to Taiwan all considered the IT Park an important artistic landmark.⁷⁶

Since its opening in 1988, more than 20 artists who were exhibited in the IT Park have become nationally and globally established artists.⁷⁷

Although the IT Park was initially seen as an alternative space run by artists, its 'establishment' status became increasingly important as the government set up art museums in 1980s and 1990s.⁷⁸ The establishment of the IT Park offered a political and economic alternative to the official and business initiatives in art, and offered an innovative challenge to the official art exhibitions and art associations which had flourished between the 1920s and the 1960s.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the irony of the IT Park is that, with its 'alternative' and 'avant-garde' character, the artists who exhibited in this space in the past twenty years have now become mainstream artists in Taiwan. It is now another established 'art space' where contemporary artists strive to exhibit in order to make their way to fame or onto the global art scene.⁸⁰

While in the late 1980s the IT Park strove to frame art within its autonomous

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ These artists include Lu Ming-te, Chen Chien-pei, Chen Kai-huang, Chi Ti-nan, Tang Huang-chun, Ku Shih-yung, Chu Chia-hua, Yuan Goang-ming, Chen Shun-chu, Yao Jui-chung, Michael Lin, Peng Hung-chih, Tsui Kuang-yu, Wang Te-yu, Wu Chi-tsung, Wu Mali, Mei Dean-E, Wang Jun-jieh and Hung Tung-lu.

⁷⁸ The 1970s and 1980s was a prosperous period for Taiwan's commercial galleries as the economy began to take off. By the 1980s, official museums were already playing the central role in Taiwan's art scene, with the opening of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in 1983 and the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in 1988.

⁷⁹ The official art exhibitions and art associations that flourished particularly in Taiwan in the period between the 1920s and the 1960s in Taiwan.

⁸⁰ The cultural significance of the IT Park Gallery in Taiwan's art scene is similar to the ICA (Institution of Contemporary Arts) in London in the British art scene. The ICA was established by a group of artists, poets and writers to explore contemporary culture across the broadest platforms. However, the scale of the ICA is much bigger than the IT Park Gallery. The ICA focuses on a diversified contemporary culture including art, music, and films; but the IT Park Gallery only focuses on the contemporary arts. Information about the ICA: <http://www.ica.org.uk/>. Accessed 12 September 2010.

space, the VT Artsalon in the mid-2000s attempted to disrupt the boundaries of art, and even to challenge the idea that art has any boundaries. However, as the IT Park gradually lost its position as a non-mainstream or alternative space, and became another ‘art centre’, the VT Artsalon took over the status of being one of Taiwan’s main experimental ‘new artistic spaces’. The VT Artsalon, as a contemporary example of the convergence art, consumer and celebrity culture, corresponds with the other art and cultural spaces that adopt a similar strategy, such as the Eslite Bookstore and the Taishin Arts Award, or even the Taipei Fine Arts Museum that has been discussed in Cai Guoqiang’s case, reflecting a specific cultural moment in Taiwan.

As artistic spaces, the IT Part Gallery and the VT Artsalon represent different approaches to the construction and use of artistic space which reflect the bigger cultural-political environment of Taiwan’s art scene. The establishment of the IT Part Gallery in 1988 was a counterforce to the authoritative museum system and the mainstream commercial galleries, whereas the establishment of the VT Artsalon in 2006 was a manifestation of artists’ interests in consumer and popular culture. These two places represent the shifting meaning of artistic space in Taiwan constructed by different groups in response to their own needs and interests. In their different ways, the two places also represent a kind of bottom-up power, exerted by artist groups who wanted to influence the existing cultural environment. The spaces of these galleries were endowed with distinctive cultural-political dimensions that corresponded with the changing forms of artists’ engagement with the wider social, cultural and economic environment of Taiwan.

The Transformation of the VT Artsalon

As an innovative addition to Taipei’s art scene, the business enterprise of the VT Artsalon business looked attractive as part of consumer culture in Taiwan, however, the VT Artsalon confronted increasing difficulties. By early 2007 it was forced to face the choice of whether to close down or transform. The official reasons for its difficulties given by the VT Artsalon group were first, the poor financial situation, and second, the disruptive effects of frequent spot checks by the police. The former

point was explained by Tu Wei-cheng, an artist from the VT Artsalon group, who recalled that,

We were very excited at the beginning, organising many activities, including wine tasting, bikini girls' nights and street dance competitions. Due to ineffective cost control, large expenses were incurred especially in the first year, when about 2 million NT dollars were lost, at which everyone was frightened to death.⁸¹

He also admitted the 'blind spot' of running a business by a group of artists and a curator who knew little about budgetary management. Another artist, Chen Jun-hao, also pointed out one of the major problems when he commented that: 'At the beginning the VT Artsalon also provided meals, snacks and other food. The monthly ingredients cost between 120,000 to 150,000 NT dollars, and the salary for a chef was around 400,000'.⁸² Additionally, the high personnel expenses included three full-time bar staff and around 10 part-time workers.⁸³ These factors caused escalating costs, explaining why the VT Artsalon could not afford to continue business.

The second reason given was that frequent police interference made matters worse. Chen Jun-hao said that when the VT Artsalon first opened, the police went in to do spot checks almost daily. 'The people who were being checked in the VT included the Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs at the time and well-known writers, which made a rather embarrassing scene'.⁸⁴ During my research trip, I also witnessed a similar situation. One evening when I visited the salon, the police stayed for more than an hour, examining the artworks hanging on the walls after checking the guests' ID cards.⁸⁵ The art works in question contained some sexual and violent metaphors, and it occurred to me that it might be infringing the law to display such images in public. Nevertheless, all the artworks on show in the VT Artsalon at the time had already been exhibited in museums and galleries; they

⁸¹ Huang, Qiling. 'Yishu yedian feichangmiao' (VT Artsalon–Art Nightclubs) *Chuangye zhoubao* (Entrepreneurs page) *Jingji ribao* (*Economic Daily News*). 1 August 2008.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Huang, Qiling. 'Yishu yedian feichangmiao' (VT Artsalon–Art Nightclubs) *Chuangye zhoubao* (Entrepreneurs page) *Jingji ribao* (*Economic Daily News*). 1 August 2008.

⁸⁵ Administratively, Taiwanese police are authorised to visit nightclubs and lounge bars just after midnight in order to see whether there any illegal drugs are being taken or any guests are under 18.

were considered as serious ‘art’. Was the problem then that here they represented such scenes of violence shown outside the ‘safe’ space of the white cube?

It was hard to find out whether the police checks were in relation to any seemingly inappropriate displays of the artworks, so I tried to ask one of the waiters about the situation when I visited the VT for the second time. The waiter told me that one reason might be that one of the artists from the VT Artsalon group had a record of taking illegal drugs, so the police were keeping a watchful eye on the premises. However, the waiter said this was a rumour and no one confirmed it, and there still could be other reasons for the police checks.⁸⁶ In my interview with Hu Chao-sheng in May 2006, he commented that it was just a routine procedure for the police to come and to see if there was any illegal business running or drug-taking. Hu also pointed out that this could be a good opportunity for the police to visit such a diversified lounge bar, to see how art can integrate with a space like this at night.⁸⁷ However, the ‘real’ reason for the police checks was finally revealed in 2007 when the news of the VT Artsalon’s transformation had already spread. The VT Artsalon group then claimed that the constant disruptions were:

due to the previous gun shots that had fired in the place, and the licence for running the business at this place did not conform the existing law, which then resulted in constant checks by the police. The police speculated that there were some illegal activities taking place inside the VT Artsalon. Eventually the staff were unable to solve the troubles, and the romantic atmosphere that had been created for artistic activities was disrupted.⁸⁸

In addition to these two main reasons explaining the VT Artsalon’s transformation in April 2007, I would also like to argue that its spatial and commercial configuration proved to be a serious limitation. Although the VT Artsalon was a combination of lounge bar and art gallery, the major form of its business was still as a bar. In other words, it would be more difficult for a visitor to go there just to see the art than just to have a drink. It would be also hard for visitors to go individually, because staying in a lounge bar and drinking alone would not

⁸⁶ For example, in Taiwan, it is said that businesses have to give security funds to the local police in for protection, otherwise there might be some unnecessary disturbances.

⁸⁷ Interview with Hu Chao-sheng. 3 May 2006. Taipei.

⁸⁸ Huang, Qiling. ‘*Yishu yedian feichangmiao*’ (VT Artsalon–Art Nightclubs) *Chuangye zhoubao* (Entrepreneurs page) *Jingji ribao* (*Economic Daily News*). 1 August 2008.

always be appropriate. Furthermore, as discussed in the foregoing sections, the VT Artsalon initially prioritised artists over the general public in its unofficial ‘system of membership’, potentially excluding people from other occupations. Although the VT Artsalon group was able to acquire their social distinction and celebritise themselves by constructing the salon as a social space for artists and people from the arts and culture community, they limited their business to artists and the elite group, rather than for the general public.

After its transformation in April 2007, the new VT Artsalon continued to occupy its original space but was divided into a lounge-bar area and a formal art gallery space. The bar area still had artworks displayed on its walls, but its main function was to provide a space for drinking and socialising, no longer claiming itself to be a bar and a gallery at the same time. There were still some activities that took place irregularly in the bar area, such as alcoholic drinks promotions like ‘Happy hour time’, but not the cultural and social activities that used to be held. Also, the bar space was available for hire for artistic activities, press conferences or seminars and talks. The gallery space became a formal commercial art gallery, the main function of which was to exhibit and trade art works. The exhibitions were changed monthly. The first exhibition held in this commercial gallery space was *Cynics Republic – Yao Jui-chung’s Solo Exhibition*⁸⁹ in which all the art works were sold out. Following this, the new VT Artsalon gallery started to have different exhibitions every month in order to sustain the business of both the gallery and the lounge space.

⁸⁹ Exhibition ‘Cynics Republic – Yao Jui-chung Solo Exhibition’ (*Quanru gongheguo—Yao Ruizhong gezhan*), 13 April 2007–12 May 2007. The VT Artsalon.

Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/474708426/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.



Figure 66. The gallery space of the VT Artsalon after transformation. First exhibition ‘Cynics Republic – Yao Jui-chung Solo Exhibition’, 13 April 2007–12 May 2007.⁹⁰

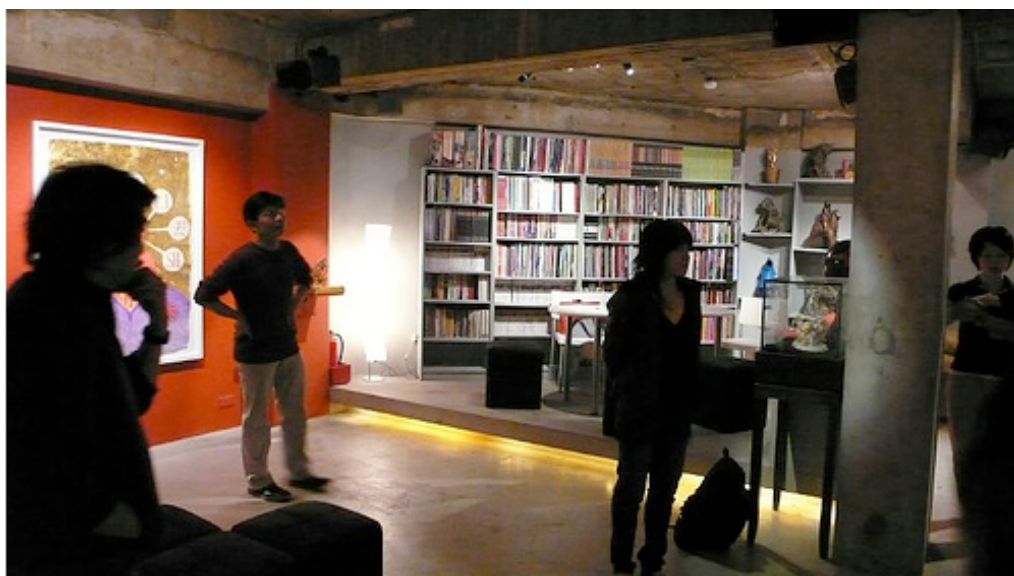


Figure 67. The gallery space of the VT Artsalon after transformation. ‘Cynics Republic – Yao Jui-chung Solo Exhibition’, 13 April–12 May 2007.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/sets/72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.

⁹¹ Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/474720621/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.



Figure 68. The lounge area in the VT Artsalon after transformation. One can see that there are still art works displayed on the walls, but it no longer claims these displays of artworks as exhibitions.⁹²

After the VT Artsalon transformed its business strategy and started to sustain its business successfully by selling art works, the group's celebrity status also experienced some change. Some of the news reports started to introduce the VT Artsalon group as entrepreneurs. For example, the 'Business Weekly' section in *Economic Daily News* carried a report on the group's successful transformation after one year of continuous commercial loss. In addition to a brief description of the establishment and its art works, the report focuses on the reasons for the losses and the successful business transformation of the VT Artsalon since 2007. The article also showed the appearance of the artists in photographs in which they showed off their great confidence, and were described by the article as the 'masters of chasing dreams' (*zhuimeng gaoshou*).⁹³ The report suggested that the 'secret of their success' was that:

Besides a positive downsizing, the VT Artsalon also uses its biggest advantage of being a 'magnet of art' to develop new sources of revenue. The most common ways to make revenue are renting the

⁹² Photograph from:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/447295166/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010.

⁹³ Huang, Qiling. 'Yishu yedian feichangmiao' (VT Artsalon–Art Nightclubs) *Chuangye zhoubao* (Entrepreneurs page) *Jingji ribao* (*Economic Daily News*). 1 August 2008.

places for art and cultural conferences, press conferences, to make full use of the space during the day when there are fewer guests. In future the VT Artsalon will aim to attract guests from other fields. Tu Wei-cheng points out that in the past, most people who gathered and chatted in the VT were from art and cultural circles. When we started to have exhibitions in the new gallery space after transformation, there were new faces who came only for seeing the exhibitions. This will stabilize the operation of the VT Artsalon and the artists and [we will] see the support and love from the Taiwanese audience.⁹⁴

This passage shows that the VT Artsalon group was well aware of the limitations before its transformation, and realised that for the purpose of promoting or even selling art works, they needed to divide the lounge space and art gallery in order to provide a proper display space for art works. The VT Artsalon group had also noticed the fact that the space had been limited to those in the arts and culture areas. To their surprise, when they separated the gallery space, there were even more new customers who came to the VT Artsalon just for the exhibitions.

In the process of its transformation, the VT Artsalon group did not lose its social and cultural distinction. Before the space was transformed, they used art as a means to attract public interest and media attention to build up their celebrity status marking their social distinction among the public and the people on the art scene. However, after the transformation, their social and cultural distinction was even more prominent because they allowed themselves to play the role of ‘judges’, making decisions about whether certain artists or art works could, or could not, be displayed in the gallery space of the VT Artsalon. Also, as one can see from the exhibition lists on the VT Artsalon website,⁹⁵ they occasionally held exhibitions for the artists in their group. The VT Artsalon group plays the role of ‘cultural producer’ and ‘cultural trader’ at the same time, and although they were responsible of the operation of the VT Artsalon business, in which they risked their economic capital, they actually benefited themselves by raising their cultural status from artists to the position of ‘judges’.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ The art exhibitions by members of VT Artsalon group included: ‘Cynics Republic – Yao Jui-chung Solo Exhibition’, Yao Jui-chung. 13 April 2007–12 May 2007; ‘Chen Chun-hao Solo Exhibition’. Chen Chun-hao. 17 October–16 November 2007; ‘Ho Meng-Chuan Solo Exhibition’. Ho Meng-chuan. 5 April–4 May 2008. Information from the VT Artsalon website: <http://www.vtartsalon.com/exhibition.html>. Accessed 28 August 2010.



Figure 69. A photograph of the VT Artsalon group taken in the gallery space after the transformation took place.⁹⁶

Despite the VT Artsalon's change in business strategy and its space layout, it still plays an important role in bridging high art and popular culture in the Taipei. This is due to the fact that although the spaces are divided, there is no partition between the spaces and they share the same door. Through the lounge-bar space still has serious art works hanging on its wall, although the bar space is no longer described as an art-lounge space. Furthermore, by renting the lounge-bar space out for other activities, it still welcomes different artistic, cultural and creative activities. For instance, a fashion magazine *GQ Taiwan* selected the lounge-bar space of VT Artsalon for a series of fashion photograph shootings in August 2009,⁹⁷ and a screening of the film *Water in Milk Exists* in the Urban Nomad Film Festival was held in the VT Artsalon in September 2009.⁹⁸ Such cooperation with other cultural

⁹⁶ Photograph from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mickeyphoto/447295166/in/set-72057594090737771/>. Accessed 12 April 2010. The series of photographs of the VT Artsalon group are also published on the cover and side page of the magazine *Art View*: Chen Houhe, 1 January 2009.

⁹⁷ Zhang, Guangyi. '100 zhong miren de biaoqing' (100 kinds of fascinating expression). *GQ Taiwan*. August 2009.

⁹⁸ Information from the VT Artsalon website: <http://www.vtartsalon.com/eng/news.html>. Accessed 27 August 2010.

arenas enable the VT Artsalon to retain its significance as a diversified cultural and elite social space in the urban city of Taipei.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the VT Artsalon group established the VT Artsalon space using of art as a means to acquire social distinction by building up their celebrity status. This argument refers to the two main stages of the salon's history, before and after its transformation, for while the initial plan for the VT Artsalon did not work out, it successfully celebritised its founding group. As a new art establishment, the VT Artsalon showed how much Taiwanese art and artists were willing to cooperate with and integrate themselves into consumer culture and urban life, and to use art as a means to mark their distinctiveness and build up their celebrity status. In all these ventures, the salon offered an alternative to the traditional artistic spaces of museums and galleries. Since its opening, the VT Artsalon has gained considerable media attention for its innovative combination of art and lounge-bar space, with business strategies oriented to creating a new space for art, integrated with diverse artistic, cultural, entertainment and social activities. Its process of commercialising, commodifying and celebritising art and artists into products and services became the main characteristics and selling points at the VT Artsalon. In occupying an important consumer space, the VT Artsalon has successfully established its role in contributing to Taipei's taste culture and in the process has become associated with a cultural and social elite who sustain the VT Artsalon group's position of cultural and social distinction.

In 2007, when the VT Artsalon had to change its business strategy, it transformed half of its space into a commercial gallery and hoped to sustain its business operations by selling art works. The transformation signalled that in order for art works to be displayed, viewed and traded properly, they had to be returned to the legitimate context of a 'white cube' gallery space. After transformation of the gallery space in the VT Artsalon, as one can see in the images, it presented the characteristics of a conventional gallery that had bright lighting, large walls and spaces to display art works. The gallery also provided descriptions on the artists and

art works. The new gallery space contrasted with the earlier art-lounge bar space with its dim lighting and lack of information about the art on display. The VT Artsalon still maintained the other half of the space as a lounge bar, on the one hand, representing their insistence on having a communal area for artists to gather, and on the other hand, they still looked for opportunities to push the boundary for artistic possibilities, even though the art salon no longer claimed itself to be a ‘petri-dish of the Culture and Creative Industries’.

As a privately funded space, the VT Artsalon group is the main operator of the business, and they have total authority to make decisions about what to do and what not to do including the selection of what to display in their space. After a few successful exhibitions (in terms of the amount of the art works sold), this business strategy not only allow the VT Artsalon group to empower themselves as judges of both art and taste culture, but also to ‘celebritise’ themselves by being described as ‘successful entrepreneurs’ by news reports.

It is difficult to predict whether the space of the VT Artsalon will transform itself again in the future with a different artistic concept. The space occupies an important cultural-political role as it represents a model of contemporary artistic space in Taiwan through its commodification and celebritisation of art and artists, revealing the prevalent phenomenon of the close relationship between art and business.

Conclusions

Since martial law was lifted in 1987, celebrity art has become a prevalent phenomenon in Taiwan. Through a close examination of five case studies, this thesis has analysed the different processes and interests that contribute to the construction of celebrity art and artists, and has explored their changing significance in contemporary Taiwanese society and its art scene. As these case studies demonstrate, celebrity art has emerged in Taiwan through a continuous negotiation between artists' desire for fame and business, media and sometimes political interests.¹

In the celebritisation process, celebrity art is, on the one hand, utilised by business and corporate interests to develop marketing strategies, enhance brand images through media exposure, generate commercial activities and consolidate power and political influence. This may be to the detriment of art's autonomy.² Significantly, however, I argue that artists are empowered by the celebritisation process, since its exploration of diverse media and social and economic interests and spaces enable artists to engage more effectively with broader social, cultural and political forces.

This chapter will draw together insights from my case studies and relate them to Taiwan's changing cultural situation and to ongoing academic discussions about celebrities. First of all, I shall review the extent to which the discourses of celebrity studies I discussed in chapter two do or do not are applicable to and explain the particular features of the celebritisation of art in Taiwan. Second, I will discuss the effects of the celebritisation of art and artists on the changing character of the art

¹ Although I have not approached the subject of celebrity art from the perspective of media studies, this would be an interesting and fruitful area for further research. Works relevant to such an approach would include Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media*. (Pantheon, 1988), and Cheng Louchian and Lo Shiaunan. *Critical Media Literacy*. (Taiwan: Cheng Chung Book. 2009).

² In regards to 'art's autonomy', Julian Stallabrass refers to sociologist Niklas Luhmann's idea that, "art's exclusive feature is that it uses perceptions, not language, and is thus separated from mundane forms of communication. Its role may be integrated the incommunicable into communications networks of society". However, Stallabrass argues that different economic and institutional tensions constrain art's autonomy, including the market, the university and the museum. Also, specific recent forces threaten to dissolve the fabric of art's autonomy: "the modernization of the art market, and the competing claims that art should be useful, promulgated by the state and business". Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 114-124.

scene in the context of Taiwan. Third, I will summarise how the celebrityisation process has empowered artists in a range of social, cultural and political issues. Fourth, I will argue that celebrity art plays an important role in bridging high and popular culture in Taiwan. I shall finish with some concluding observations about the distinctive characteristics of celebrity art in its particular historical, political, and social context of post-martial law Taiwan.

A Critique of Celebrity Artists' Rise in Taiwan

As John Walker points out, "It is not only the attributes and skills of celebrity that account for their fame. Major celebrities seem to embody or exemplify cultural aspirations, social trends or mood; such personalities, one might say, personify something grander than themselves".³ The study of the development of celebrity art in Taiwan in the post-martial period is also able to represent and reflect a trend of the times in Taiwanese society. It is tightly connected to the development of society, the transformation of social values, the growth of the economy and the changing political situation. Chapter two of this thesis demonstrated that many existing Western analyses discuss celebrity in relation to the construction of role models and their economic value. However, while some of these analyses are applicable to Taiwan, others do not entirely offer insights that are relevant to a critique of the rise of celebrity art in Taiwan.

Taiwanese celebrity art studied in this thesis manifests the characteristics of Walker's observation that, "A precondition for art stars is thus mass media coverage that enables them to become famous far beyond their principal profession".⁴ Daniel Boorstin's concept of 'pseudo-events' is thus particularly significant for its consideration of the mechanisms of news making and the manipulation of media exposure by news agencies, art institutions, corporations and artists.⁵ As discussed in chapter two, in the light of the notion of 'pseudo-event', I propose the term 'publicity

³ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 13.

⁴ Walker, John. *Art and Celebrity* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 14.

⁵ Boorstin, Daniel J.. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1961, 1992), 12.

event' to describe the contemporary media events as a deliberate attempt to appeal media reportage. Besides the early example of Lee Ming-sheng's celebrity, other case studies have also shown the different applications of publicity events in their celebritisation processes. The most common approaches are, firstly, press releases and the launch of press conferences, which offer a channel for artists, art institutions and corporations to actively disseminate relevant information; secondly, the finalist exhibition and awards ceremony, in the form of the the Taishin Arts Award, can gather extensive media attention to the winner of the award through its strategy for holding the event; and thirdly, the launch of opening parties, such as that for the VT Artsalon. These examples not only show the importance of the publicity event as a way to attract media attention in order to generate as many news reports as possible, but also demonstrate that publicity events can be applied in diversified forms according to the different needs in the individual case study. Additionally, these applications share a very similar purpose, that is, to reach as wide a public as possible and enable the images and names of celebrity artists and art works to be spread beyond the professional field of the art scene.

While popularity and public recognition play a central role in celebrity art construction, it is important to also consider the impact of fame on the artists and the art scene, and whether the fame is as 'fleeting' as Chris Rojek suggests.⁶ As the case studies demonstrate, while artists go through different processes of celebritisation that offer them different levels of media exposure, most of them are able to present distinctive artistic and cultural achievements that consolidate their cultural status, or push their artistic careers on to new stages. Examples include Lee Ming-sheng, Tang Huang-chen, Cai Guoqiang and the VT Artsalon, whose empowerment in a range of social, cultural and political issues I shall discuss later. The cultural significance of their work has enabled them to enjoy durable fame. In contrast, although Chu Charay continues to participate in and curate exhibitions sponsored by corporations, and attends television talk shows, I suggest that when her image and name fade from the mass media, her celebrity status may also disappear. Without substantial and acknowledged achievement, she depends on the media to sustain her celebrity status. These findings are important for this thesis because they demonstrate that in the

⁶ Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Book, 2001), 9.

process of commercialisation and celebrityisation artists are still able to maintain agency and cultural influence because they engage more significantly in the creation of new social and cultural values. These findings present a counter-view to Adorno's, Horkheimer's and Stallabrass's suggestions about the rather destructive impacts of commercialisation and celebrityisation for artistic autonomy.⁷ More analysis of this will be provided in the following sections.

In chapter two, we saw that Joshua Gamson suggests two forms of celebrity production: one is that fame is deserved and earned in relation to achievement and quality; the other is that the publicity apparatus itself becomes a central plot element in fame construction.⁸ The examples in this thesis show that the two forms are simultaneously and equally important in the production of celebrity art. According to my research findings, in celebrity art construction, it is not only media exposure but also the cultural and artistic creativity that is shown in their art works that are important, and have a mutual influence on their media image. In addition to the two forms of celebrity production, Julian Stallabrass's idea of the 'artist persona' is also vital in celebrity art construction. When he examines the fame of the four artists Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Tracey Emin and Gavin Turk, he argues that the artistic persona plays an important role in their fame production.⁹ Most of the artists in the cases of the Taiwanese celebrity artists I have studied present their artistic personae to differing extents; only Tang Huang-chen reveals less of her personality in her celebrity art.

The requirement for artistic achievement and media publicity as well as the artist persona in the process of celebrity art production differentiates these celebrity artists from other Taiwanese entertainment celebrities. The latter's fame very often depends largely on frequent media exposure, which can be even more important than their performances. Therefore, Chris Rojek's classification of celebrities into three

⁷ Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', *Dialectic of enlightenment: philosophical fragments*. (1944 with Horkheimer) ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Trans. Edmund Jephcott (United States of America: Stanford University Press, English translation: 2002), 94-136; and Stallabrass, Julian. *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸ Gamson, Joshua. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994).

⁹ Stallabrass, Julian. 'Famous for being famous' in *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. (London: Verso, 1993), 48.

categories—‘achieve celebrity’, ‘attributed celebrity’, and ‘ascribe celebrity’—does not apply to these examples of Taiwanese celebrity art.¹⁰ Most of the Taiwanese examples are a synthesis of ‘achieve celebrity’ and ‘attributed celebrity’; they are combinations of achievement and media exposure. None of them constitute ‘ascribe celebrity’.

Many of the Western discussions about celebrity are devoted to the analysis of celebrity’s social functions. These discussions are very useful for studying celebrity artists’ social significance in the context of Taiwan, especially the social and cultural influences of celebrity art in the processes of commercialisation and celebritisation. Richard Dyer’s idea of ‘social types’ and how the celebrity can construct a particular type of image that exercises power through the production of social type is particularly important, especially in terms of Chu Cha-ray and the VT Artsalon Group.¹¹ Chu Cha-ray constructs her image as an independent fashionable woman, through which she presents a social type of womanhood in Taiwan. As a group of artist-entrepreneurs who identify themselves as an elite group—a specific form of social type—The VT Artsalon group constructs a new kind of taste culture in the urban environment of Taipei. These examples clearly demonstrate how celebrity artists can exert their power through the construction of specific social types in contemporary Taiwanese society.

The examination of social types leads us to David Marshall’s point about ‘audience-subjectivity’, whereby he argues that each celebrity represents a complex form of audience subjectivity.¹² Although this research does not focus on audience studies, it observes that, compared with film or television industries (as discussed by Marshall), the interaction between celebrity artists and their audiences is at a greater distance. Audiences do not often see these celebrity artists on screen or in public places, but only when they hold exhibitions, achieve specific artistic achievements, cooperate with businesses or attend other artistic or non-artistic activities that allow them to have public exposure. Furthermore, unlike the entertainment industries

¹⁰ Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Book, 2001), 16.

¹¹ Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. (London: British Film Institution, 1979, 1998); Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987).

¹² Marshall, David. *Celebrity and Power*. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota, 1997), Preface.

which allow the audience to support celebrities by going to films and concerts, or buying music albums and posters, it is normally difficult for the public to purchase art works owing to the cost and rarity of the original works. Accordingly, the power of Taiwanese celebrity artists is exerted at a greater distance in that their specific talent places them on a higher level of the cultural hierarchy. The way for the audience to identify themselves with celebrity artists is by going to exhibitions, talks, and places such as the Eslite Bookstore and the VT Artsalon and it is through these means, as well as through the media, that celebrity artists influence the style of consumption in the context of contemporary Taiwanese society.

In discussing celebrity artists' economic importance, Turner, Bonner and Marshall point out in their book *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* that, "The celebrity's ultimate power is to sell the commodity that is themselves".¹³ This viewpoint strongly suggests that once an artist is involved in the process of celebrityisation, the status of 'artist' is not merely an identity or one's profession, but is commercialised and commodified into a product. This breaks the traditional concept that only art works are tradable and is recognised as a very specific form of 'goods'. In celebrity art, however, not only can artists sell their art works and iconic images as commodities, but their ultimate power is also generated because they are able to create more values for other products, people or corporations. These specific characteristics enable positive image branding for other celebrities, corporations, cities and even nations; and they are able to influence the construction of taste culture. All the case studies demonstrate such power in different ways. These celebrity artists' complicity with capitalism and consumerism can be analysed in different layers. First of all, when the clear line between 'white cube' and commercial spaces is eliminated, not only can art works enter into consumer or commercial spaces, but commercial products and logos can also be displayed in museums and galleries. Although the latter point is not relevant to all the case studies of this thesis, a similar point can be made about the artistic creations displayed in the VT Artsalon. Other examples of celebrity art who present similar feature such as artist Murakami's collaboration with French luxury brand Louis Vuitton, that the international reputation and celebrity status of Murakami enabled Vuitton's products

¹³ G. Turner, F. Bonner and P.D. Marshall. *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*. (2000), 13.

to be exhibited along with other Murakami art works, provoking debates about the boundary between art and commercial goods, and the differences between museum and fashion boutique.¹⁴ Secondly, when the images of artists and art works are displayed in unconventional places, such as the Eslite Bookstore, Taishin Bank's office and VT Artsalon, they change the original structure of consumption styles by bringing elements of art and aesthetics into the spaces, contributing to the construction of a specific taste culture that transforms the original style of the places. Thirdly, when celebrity artists and art works are used as marketing tools for businesses, they play vital roles in constructing corporate cultures and to a different extent assist corporations to obtain further economic capital.

With the prevalent development of celebrity as a global phenomenon, Graeme Turner points out in the newly published journal *Celebrity Culture* that, a significant gap in celebrity studies is the need to establish a stronger base for studying the industrial production of celebrity, and the importance of studying celebrity construction within a specific regional context in relation to its specific media industry and market.¹⁵ This thesis takes this suggestion as an important point of departure to look into the discourses about the development of celebrity culture and the commercialisation and celebritisation of art in East Asia, especially China, Japan and Taiwan. These discourses enable us to locate the study of celebritisation of art in Taiwan in its regional and national context, and thereby to identify the distinctive characteristics of the emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan (discussed in the following sections).

In the course of the development of Western celebrity art, the main concerns of Adorno, Horkheimer and Stallabrass are that the development of celebrity culture and culture industry under the constant intervention of governments and corporations that use artistic activities for their different purposes, causes the loss of art's critical

¹⁴ Author of the book *Arts Management*, Derrick Chong, has pointed to the controversies raised by the involvement of a public art museum, notably the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art with its Murakami exhibition and its the collaboration with LV, since it "raise the issues regarding exhibition collaborations between American art museums and for-profit enterprises." Warnings and criticisms also came from the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMA) and some fashion journalists, all of whom expressed their concerns about the relationship between art and commercial products, as well as their legitimate display fields. Information from: Chong, Derrick. *Arts Management*. (2010), 72.

¹⁵ Turner, Graeme. 'Approaching celebrity studies'. *Celebrity Studies*. (1:1, March 2010), 11-20.

edge. Although this thesis suggests new ways of thinking about the critical voice of celebrity art and their agents, and offers a comparatively positive appraisal of their function, it also suggests that strong political intervention in art and popular culture, especially in China and Taiwan, is an issue that needs future consideration.

The Celebritisation of Art and Artists

With a focus on five cases of celebrity art and artists in Taiwan, this research has explored the qualities, characteristics and market and media strategies that construct an ideological understanding of celebrity art specific to the cultural and social context of Taiwan in the post-martial law period. The cases I have studied in the previous chapters demonstrate a continuous interaction between different forces, all of which contribute to the construction of celebrity art, including artists' desire for fame, media interests, attempts by business interests to construct positive corporate images and, to a certain extent institutionalised political interests. We have seen how these interests influence each other in the production of celebrity art, and though the boundaries between them merge in the process of celebritisation, each separate field of interest is indispensable to that process.

Lee Ming-sheng's case is perhaps the most obvious one that presents no clear sign of business interest in his celebritisation process. In the early post-martial law period, his celebrity was not only associated with newspaper reports in the late 1980s context of a politically and spiritually repressed society, but also with his desire to be acknowledged as a legitimate artist who used his body as an instrument to express his artistic ideas in public spaces. The media exposure his unconventional approach to artistic legitimisation gave him initially resulted in his characterisation as an 'agitator' in the conservative social environment of Taiwan immediately after the lifting of martial law. In the early 1990s his celebrity was again linked to extensive media attention, but this time owing to his inclusion in the Venice Biennale and the ensuing 'hero' status he acquired through his assertive approach to the globally prestigious exhibition.

Unlike Lee's heroic celebrity status that evolved through a tough process of performance art projects that were unique in Taiwan's art scene, the celebritisation of

the other artists studied here reveal the strong influence of business interests in utilising of their work to obtain positive media exposure and commercial benefit. As we have seen, businesses and corporations developed marketing strategies including the creation of ‘publicity events’, ‘celebrity endorsements’, and cooperation with media channels to enhance their brand images. In Chu Cha-ray’s case, although she was first celebritised by news reports as a ‘hot female professor’, because of her unconventional role in Taiwan as a female professor, her image, name and art were later commercialised to promote the exhibition *Sixteen Close Encounters*, which the Eslite Bookstore used as a form of ‘publicity event’ to enhance their corporate interests. In this commercialisation and celebritisation process, Chu’s image, art works, and personality were commodified into a book and a DVD to be sold at the exhibition and the bookstore.

The marketing strategy in the celebritisation of artist Cai Guoqiang adopted a slightly different approach. It focused on promoting his retrospective exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* at the prestigious Taipei Fine Arts Museum instead of directly promoting the Eslite Corporation, the sponsor of the exhibition. Alongside the commodification of Cai’s image and art into art-related merchandise, the Elite Corporation promoted Cai and his art through every possible communication channel owned by the corporation. A series of media strategies followed in the form of major ‘publicity events’ such as press conferences to announce exhibition information and to welcome the arrival of Cai’s art work from his hometown Quanzhou in China, and an open demonstration, broadcast live, of Cai’s signature explosion art in front of the public and the media. Eslite further used ‘celebrity endorsements’ by inviting two famous celebrities, television presenter Tsai Kang-yung and model Lin Zhiling to ‘endorse’ the exhibition as a way of openly supporting Cai and his art. Cai also appeared on television talk show programmes.

In the celebritisation processes of Chu Cha-ray and Cai Guoqiang, their economic value was quickly recognised by the mass media and corporations which packaged their personas and artistic achievements, into what, as I noted in previous chapters, David Marshall and others termed ‘celebrity-commodities’.¹⁶ In Cai’s case,

¹⁶ Dyer, Richard, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education, 1987), 17-18; David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, (Minneapolis, London: University of

this was constructed by the Eslite Bookstore through a process of commodifying his image and name as well as his art works in order to generate maximum profits. Chu's 'celebrity-commodity', in the Eslite exhibition, was associated with a promotional strategy oriented to audience consumption of her image, name and art. In the later stage of her career, her 'celebrity-commodity' was increasingly associated with a gendered challenge to traditional Chinese notions of womanhood through her individualist display of her life story, thoughts and inner feelings to the public and the media.

The effects of the Eslite Corporation's involvement in Chu and Cai's celebritisation were considerable. For the Eslite Bookstore, the exhibition *Sixteen Close Encounters* enhanced its brand image, promoted the culture of 'reading' and consolidated the bookstore's status as a landmark cultural and social space in the urban environment of Taipei. It confirmed the bookstore as an innovative space of multicultural activities and contributed to the Eslite's role in the construction of Taiwan's taste culture. The Eslite Gallery also benefited, since Cai Guoqiang's celebritisation increased his popularity and the sales of his work. The marketing strategy, media exposure and merchandise used to promote Cai's retrospective exhibition also reinforced Cai's artistic position and his global status within what I described in chapter five as a celebri-scape.

Chu and Cai are highly mediated figures who, as I have already noted, actively embrace their own celebritisation. Very often they present themselves like showmen. They actively seek photograph opportunities and cooperate with planned media events such as press conferences. Whereas Chu concentrates on topics related to herself, Cai is more like an entrepreneur. He creates his art projects with his well-established studio team, the 'Cai Studio', which negotiates opportunities to exhibit globally and carefully controls the media usage of his art images. In Taiwan, he even adopts a specific 'glocalisation' strategy to promote his cultural identification and

Minnesota, 1997), 4, 19, 55, 101; and Graeme Turner, Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13.

communication with Taiwanese people and to distinguish him from other Chinese artists.¹⁷

This thesis has also suggested that both Chu's and Cai's fame construction can be observed in their social relationships with celebrities in other fields, showing how they benefit from each other's fame through making connections and mutual references. Cleveland Amory (1959) discussed the idea that celebrities are described as "the names" who "once made by news, now make news by themselves".¹⁸ In Chu's and Cai's cases, they also make news for each other through their interrelationships. In turn, the increased media attention such mutual referencing brings further confirms their celebrity reputations, such as in the celebrity endorsements by Tsai Kang-yung and Lin Zhiling for Cai in the press conference held at the exhibition *Hanging Out in the Museum* (2009). This exchange of fame may also contribute to artists' social and political influence, as we have seen in the case of Cai's friendship with Chen Wenqian and President Ma's daughters. When celebrities 'borrow' fame from each other, however, it does not always have positive results. As we have also seen, Cai's friendship with the celebrity politician Chen Wenqian was questioned by cultural critic Deng Weiwei who suggested that Chen was using Cai's fame for her own political gain.¹⁹

The celebritisation of artists in Taiwan has had clear political uses, and the government has sometimes played an important role in promoting a celebrity artist's fame, as we can see in both Cai's and Lee's examples. The KMT government promoted Cai as a local celebrity through inviting him to host a retrospective exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. This on the one hand confirmed the prominence of Taiwan's art scene and the name of Taiwan on the global stage, and on the other constructed a specific national identity built on cultural and political

¹⁷ Famous art critic and author Ni Zaiqing analysed the importance of Cai in comparison with the other Chinese artists on the Taiwanese art scene. He argues that Cai can be located in Taiwanese art history because of his national and international media: 'It can be said that in contemporary Taiwanese art, Cai is already steady and secure in his role as an art celebrity'. Ni, Zaiqing. 'Cai Guoqiang de Taiwan chuanqi' (Cai-Guo-qiang—A Taiwan Legend) *Diancang jin yishu (ARTCO)* February 2002. 53-58.

¹⁸ Cleveland Amory, editor-in-chief., *International Celebrity Register*. (US edition, 1959), 135.

¹⁹ Deng, Weiwei. "'Wenhua pinglun' baopo Cai Guoqiang, meihua Chen Wenqian" ('Cultural Criticism' Exploding Cai Guoqiang, beautify Chen Wenqian) *Ziyou shibao (Liberty Times)* 21 October 2009.

integration between mainland Chinese culture and local Taiwanese identity, previously emphasised during the DPP regime. In Lee's example, the government's use of art for political purposes was more oblique. It utilised Lee's experience in the 1993 global biennale and established a 'Taiwan Pavilion' in the following Venice Biennale in 1995. As the first Taiwanese artist in the Venice Biennale, Lee played a significant role in promoting the nation's name in the global art scene and inspired the government to use cultural activities as a means of building up Taiwan's status as a nation. After 1996, Taiwan started to host its own Taipei Biennale at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and through this drew increasing international attention to Taiwan's art scene and its social, cultural and political impact.

In comparison with Chu and Cai, Tang Huang-chen appears to have had very little desire to exploit the celebrityisation process that she was swept into on winning the Taishin Arts Award. After her return from studying in Paris in 1991, Tang gave the impression of being a serious artist devoted to her artistic practice and to participating in cultural and environmental protests, in particular to promote the cultural use of an alternative space in Huashan Creative Park. Tang's celebrity did not emerge until her nomination for the Taishin Arts Award, when as a nominated artist and eventually winner of the Visual Art Prize, she was widely praised by important figures on the local and global art scene, as well as by the Taiwanese media. Subsequently, however, she did not join the celebrity game in the way that Cai and Chu did.

The Taishin Bank's contribution to Tang's celebrity status brought it considerable rewards. First, similar to the Eslite Corporation, it enhanced the bank's name and image. Second, it constructed a corporate culture through using the bank's premises for exhibitions to appeal to customers, and provided opportunities for the social interaction between employees through sharing of aesthetic and cultural interests. Third, it helped the bank to accumulate cultural capital that distinguished it amongst its competitors in financial circles, and increased its influence on the Taiwanese art scene. The Taishin Bank's use of art also offered it a new channel to expand its business in other regions of Taiwan beyond the capital.

In contrast with these examples of already existing corporate use of celebrity art to benefit business and brand image, my case study of the VT Artsalon group

shows how a group of artists and a curator actively turned themselves into a business and celebritised themselves by marking their social and cultural distinctiveness, on the one hand commodifying their art, and on the other presenting their business initiatives as art. This case is a prominent example of the economic importance of celebrity as commodity to the sustainability of a business in which artists' status as 'cultural producers' was transformed into that of 'cultural traders'. In the process of their celebritisation they achieved an influential cultural position in Taipei.

Business utilisation of celebrity art has emerged as a very visible phenomenon in Taiwan in recent years, especially since the turn of the millennium, and business sponsorships have become common practice, as discussed in chapter one. This would seem to support Julian Stallabrass's critique of the consumerist devaluation of art's independent critical capacity, resulting in the prevalence of artwork that reproduces well on magazine pages, the rise of the celebrity artist and work that 'cosies up' to commodity culture and the fashion industry.²⁰ Corporate and business intervention in using art to benefit their own needs necessarily leads art and artists to engage more closely with consumer culture. Through repeated media exposure on television, newspaper, radio, popular and fashion magazines, and recently in the new communication channels such as Facebook and Twitter, celebrity art and artists are also produced to give the corporate world more cultural face.

Nevertheless, while Stallabrass and other Western scholars including John Walker see the danger of art's commercialisation and celebritisation for artistic autonomy, this research suggests a more positive appraisal. From the findings of the case studies, it is clear that to different extents, commercialisation and celebritisation can advance an artist's career and attract public attention to their artistic creativity. Lee Ming-sheng was celebritised as a 'national hero' which enabled him to exhibit globally thereafter; Cai Guoqiang held a retrospective exhibition in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, which would not have been possible without the sponsorship of the Eslite Corporation; Tang was the winner of the Visual Art Prize of the Taishin Arts Award and was awarded one million Taiwanese dollars that paid off her debts and allowed her to start her next art project; and the VT Artsalon group redefined the meaning of artistic space. In these cases, appropriate commercial activities have

²⁰ Stallabrass, Julian. (2004), 136.

brought benefits to both artistic creativity and corporate interests. Chu Cha-ray, however, constitutes an excessively commercialised and celebritised example in that she changed her focus from being an artist to being a celebrity.

Additionally, this research also argues that celebrity status provides a platform for artists to speak out in different ways that give them a sometimes positive and progressive social, cultural and political significance in Taiwanese society. This suggests new ways of thinking about ‘agency’ and the possibility of a ‘critical voice’ for celebrity artists. Moreover, as we have seen in earlier chapters, the social, cultural and sometimes political authority celebrity artists acquire in the process of their celebritisation enable them to make innovative contributions to the construction of taste in Taiwan, especially in urban Taipei, bridging high and popular culture, as I discuss further below. This is a counter-argument to Adorno, Horkheimer and Stallabrass’s view of the destruction of art’s critical ability in the culture industry. These core arguments do not appear in the existing literature on celebrity, and they arise from observation of the specific context of Taiwan in shifting global conditions.

Celebrity as a Form of Empowerment and Critique

Graeme Turner points out that the celebritisation process is “widely seen as transformative but with marked varying political significances”, by which he means that being celebritised “changes how you are consumed and what you can mean”.²¹ He also questions whether the celebritisation process is better described as a form of enfranchisement and empowerment, or a mode of exploitation or objectification.²² Significantly, as I have noted in the previous section, the examples in this thesis show that these alternatives are not inconsistent with each other. While celebrity artists are exploited by business and media interests, they may simultaneously be empowered with a specific social, cultural or political significance and status which may in turn serve critical as well as commercial purposes.

²¹ Graeme Turner, “Approaching Celebrity Studies”. *Celebrity Studies* 1:1, (2010): 11-20.

²² Ibid.

This challenges Adorno's standpoint that capitalism and the massification of popular culture have destructive effects on the autonomy of high art and lead to a decline in social and aesthetic values.²³ It also questions Julian Stallabrass's argument concerning the effacement of art's free and critical capacity caused by business and state interventions in art in the post-Cold War period.²⁴ The examples in this thesis demonstrate that whereas corporations attempt to use art to benefit themselves in different ways, celebrity art and artists are not entirely manipulated by commercial interests; in fact, they still have agency and critical voice.

Chu Cha-ray, who was initially derogatively labelled by the mass media as a 'hot female professor', was later more positively appreciated as the 'new modern woman'. The image of this 'new modern woman' progressed through a series of displays of her character in her art and media discussions, in commodity products, including books and in her public appearances. Commercial and media interests in her persona expanded the opportunities she had to display her creativity as a female artist. The empowerment she gained from this process gave her a voice to publicise issues related to women's public and social roles. As explorations of the artist's self, her art works have made an important contribution to the representation of the new feminist values in Taiwan.

Tang, as we have seen in chapter six, represents a different model of womanhood in Taiwan in her non-feminist appearance, hard-working and serious attitude, and her determination to strive for artistic use of the Huashan Creative Park, and her involvement in the other cultural political campaigns. Tang's activities as a campaigner presents a new type of womanhood who plays an important role as a leader in cultural environmental protests. Although Tang and Chu are both female artists who were born in the same period and were educated abroad, they represent different kinds of gender awareness. While Tang shows the firm characteristics of

²³ Theodor Adorno, *'Culture Industry Reconsidered': The culture industry: selected essays on mass culture* (Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' London: Routledge, 1991).

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr; translated by Edmund Jephcott. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-136.

²⁴ Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

being a woman who perseveres in her artistic career and wider cultural interests, Chu intentionally displays her femininity and inner sensitivity. Though different, they each offer alternatives to ‘traditional’ Taiwanese views about women’s social and public role. In a way, Chu’s and Tang’s social-political empowerment allows them to represent different categories of womanhood in Taiwan, which could be considered as embodiments of the ‘social types’ that I discussed previously.²⁵

Lee Ming-sheng’s cultural significance as a radical performance artist evoked people’s consciousness of Taiwan’s political and social conditions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With his artistic status established through such performances, he acquired further celebrity recognition through his participation in the Venice Biennale in the early 1990s, which heroized his contribution to Taiwan’s art scene and international status. Lee not only opened the door to global art events for future Taiwanese art and artists, but his experiences also supported the government’s interests when it established the ‘Taiwan Pavilion’ at the Venice Biennale in the following years. Although the ‘Taiwan Pavilion’ was not officially a national pavilion sanctioned by the main organiser of the Venice Biennale (due to Taiwan’s unstable political relationship to Mainland China), it increased Taiwan’s international exposure along with its local art and artists. In such circumstances, Lee was empowered with cultural-political significance that consolidated his own cultural status in Taiwanese art history.

Cai Guoqiang, who also recognised his own political significance in Taiwan, used his global cultural influence to hold a retrospective exhibition in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (the TFAM). Although such an enormous exhibition helped advance his international career and the TFAM, this thesis argues that in the process of glocalising himself into the local market and promoting the exhibition, Cai in fact lost the capacity to retain a critical voice. As a Chinese artist, his celebrity status and the exhibition were used as a strategy by the KMT regime to publicise its political identity, in which Cai fulfilled the specific needs of the government.

²⁵ My research has not included analysis of audience and public responses, and the issue of how audiences identified with the different feminist positions foregrounded by Chu and Tang has to await further research.

Apart from Chu Cha-ray, the celebrityisation of these artists did not diminish their artistic and cultural achievements—Lee Ming-sheng’s in the Venice Biennale, Cai Guoqiang’s retrospective exhibition in Taiwan, and Tang Huang-chen’s visual art prize that advanced her artistic career in the Venice Biennale. The celebrityisation of the VT Artsalon suggests a different kind of critical agency, oriented not to the articulation of ideas about gender and politics, as in Chu, Tang and Lee’s cases, but to the redefinition of cultural space. The celebrityisation of the VT Artsalon group was also manifested in different ways from the other celebrity artists, who repeatedly appeared on diverse media channels. The celebrityisation of the VT Artsalon group was acquired in two ways, through the construction of ‘cool’ taste as a marker of social distinction associated with the consumption of its own cultivated brand and that differed from other nightlife bars, and through the Artsalon group’s interest in identifying themselves with members of Taipei’s trendy cultural and consumer elite, who would then acknowledge the group’s niche celebrity status. In this process, the VT Artsalon challenged ‘traditional’ ways of displaying and trading art in Taiwan. It also suggested new ways for artists to interact with audiences. In all this, it played an important part in popularising art, breaking down conventional divisions between high and popular culture, making a significant contribution to the construction of a diversified cultural and elite social space in Taipei. The significance of the VT Artsalon did not diminish after its transformation a year after its establishment. Not only did its cultural and social significance as a cool elite social space remain, but the VT Artsalon group was able to raise its cultural status from artists to the position of ‘judges’, selecting high art works to be displayed in the VT Artsalon gallery.

Celebrity Art as a Bridge Between High Art and Popular Culture in Taiwan

As noted in chapter two, Leo Lowenthal pointed out long ago that the 1940s saw the transformation of social values from the ‘idol of production’ to the ‘idol of consumption’ in western society.²⁶ This transformation led Adorno and Horkheimer to identify the popularisation of culture as a source of political passivity. They pointed out that the easy pleasures available through the consumption of popular

²⁶ Leo Lowenthal, “The Triumph of Mass Idols,” *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 109-140.

culture made people docile if not content.²⁷ One can, however, see spaces such as the VT Artsalon and the Eslite Bookstore in a different light. Their active invitation to high art to move into spaces of popular consumption provides more spaces for contemporary artists to display their works and encourages creativity in relation to the surrounding environment. It also communicates the idea of art as a part of everyday aesthetics. As the VT Artsalon group points out, the art works displayed in VT Artsalon are serious art works created by serious artists and belonging to the high arts. Previously such works could only have been exhibited in museums or gallery spaces. When the VT Artsalon group uses a series of marketing strategies to popularise its space, these same works of art undergo a similar process of popularisation, commodification and celebritisation, but they do not simply lose their 'high' quality as a result. Similarly, the cultural tastes that the VT Artsalon seeks to promote combine diverse aesthetic and cultural values, including those of its guests from the 'elite culture' community of the art world. The VT Artsalon's bridging of high art and popular culture suggests an alternative to Adorno's standpoint.

On the other side of Taipei, the Eslite Bookstore contributes to another form of cultural taste. Though my previous discussion about the Eslite has focused on its role in Chu Cha-ray's celebritisation, it should be noted that, as an important social and cultural landmark in Taipei, especially for young 'cool' people and social elites, the Eslite Bookstore uses artistic activities to create a culturally diversified space. Its use of art and its attempts to foster an 'creative reading culture' within its corporate framework can all be seen as attempts to play an important part in the construction of a specific and even becomes part of the 'mainstream' cultural taste in Taiwan. Such an approach incorporates Eslite's brand commercial concerns in ways that contribute to, rather than diminish art's critical potential.

Both the Eslite Bookstore and the VT Artsalon bridge high art and popular culture in different and distinctive ways that contribute different sets of values to taste culture in Taipei. Although Herbert J. Gans, as I have noted before, points out

²⁷ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr; translated by Edmund Jephcott. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-136.

the equal worth of popular and high culture in the construction of taste cultures,²⁸ high art plays an important role in both these instances in promoting and distinguishing them from other bookstores and bars in Taipei. By providing more opportunities for the people of Taipei to access art in everyday life, the celebritisation of art and artists that take place in these spaces also adds innovative and influential characteristics to the Taiwanese art scene.

The Distinctiveness of Celebrity Art Development in Taiwan

This final section brings together the distinctive features of the emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan. Firstly, the case studies in this thesis demonstrate that not only the development of celebrity art in Taiwan connects strongly to the democratization process in the post-martial law period, but it also plays an essential role in stimulating democratic progression. The idea of democratisation here does not only refer to political developments but also to the social and cultural changes that took place consequently in the post-martial law period. Since 1971 when Taiwan withdrew from the United Nations, the Taiwanese government has been continuously searching for ways to re-establish its international status, and Lee Ming-sheng's artistic achievement in the late 1980s pioneered Taiwan's international reputation in the global art scene. Lee's global achievement inspired the Taiwanese government to use art and culture as a strategy to expose itself in the global stage. Consequently, the Taiwanese government actively promoted the performance and display of Taiwanese art globally and at the same time set up its own biennales to invite international artists and performers to exhibit in Taiwan. Such strategies of promoting arts and culture are therefore applied as a diplomatic means. In the post-martial law period, political openness has also enabled substantive exchanges and communication across the straits between China and Taiwan, including the flow of people, business, mass media, and the mutual influences of popular culture. Even in 2009 after the Kuomintang party returned to power, art and culture remains one of the government's key policies in promoting cross-straits communication.

²⁸ Gans, Herbert J. *Popular culture and high culture: an analysis and evaluation of taste*. (New York: Basic Books, 1975, c1974), 10.

Besides its direct political interventions in art, the government has also encouraged business sponsorship of art in Taiwan, to the extent that it has become a key force stimulating the emergence of celebrity art. As Taiwan's economy matured during the 1980s and moved into the period of mass consumption in the 1990s,²⁹ corporations and their brands started to re-consider their market positions to further promote their brand names, and also began to feed back to society. Sponsorships of art and cultural activities have thus become one of the best strategies for these corporations to search for brand identities and obtain economic capital.

As mentioned in chapter one, during the post-martial law period, increasing social openness, the intervention of commercial capital and the competition of foreign media and culture transformed the Taiwanese media ecology, also stimulating the production of Taiwanese celebrity art. In turn, changes in the media represented the possibility of stronger manipulation by political and commercial forces, and the news focused increasingly on celebrity gossip and entertainment. Along with society's overall political and economic changes also came transformation in social values. In this thesis, this has been addressed with particular reference to changing gender values and to women's courage in overthrowing traditional gender ideology to convey their emotions and needs through different platforms and fields, including art and social protest. Since the mass media can also be an effective channel of communication, female artists are able to construct a new model of womanhood through the display of artistic creations, self-images, and public speeches in various media channels. These are considered in this thesis as an important part of Taiwan's democratization process that has been aided by the emergence of Taiwanese celebrity art.

Secondly, in the past decade, under the global influence of the development of the cultural industry, the Taiwanese government promoted a five-year 'Cultural and creative industries development plan' from 2003 to 2007,³⁰ and implemented the 'Cultural and creative industry development act' in 2010. The purposes of these are

²⁹ Wei E. *Zhongguoshi zibenzhuyi: Taiwan maixiang shichang jingji zhi lu* (Chinese Capitalism: Taiwan's pathway the market economy) (Taipei: San Min Book Co., Ltd., 1993).

³⁰ 'Chuangyi Taiwan—wenhua chuangyi chanye fazhan fangan xingdong juhua 98-102 nian' (Creative Taiwan—Cultural and creative development proposal and action plan 1999-2013). Wenjuanhui (CCA). October 2009. <http://www.cci.org.tw/cci/upload/law/20100604104150-8dd3d038610f19c0bd08739c496f4052.pdf>. Accessed 6 March 2011.

not only to vitalize Taiwan's cultural and creative development, but also to enter the international market in order to pursue Taiwan's national identity. In fact, the construction of the concept 'national identity' was brought up by the Democratic Progressive Party in 2000,³¹ and through such strategies as promoting local dialects, and holding art exhibitions concerning Taiwan's local culture, it aimed to establish Taiwan's new status in national and international arenas. Since 2008 when the KMT party came to power, they also advocated a cross-straits cultural communication policy by inviting Chinese artists to exhibit in Taiwan, and promoting business cooperation to support such exhibitions and to compensate for inadequate funds in the national museum sector. Thus although corporate intervention in art has promoted the vigorous growth of art and cultural activities, contributing to the development of social and cultural democracy in Taiwan, it has also developed under political encouragement.

Lastly, Taiwanese celebrity art also manifests another feature, as previously mentioned, namely that it links art with everyday life. In fact, this is also a consequence of the influences of the cultural industry and corporate intervention in art. Nevertheless, unlike Adorno and Stallabrass's arguments that art is becoming vulgarized, the promotion and sponsorship of business and government have not only given Taiwanese artists more opportunities to develop diversely and creatively, but they also have contributed to the construction of new forms of taste culture which are reshaping the social and cultural value of urban Taipei.

The emergence of celebrity art in Taiwan does not mean that it now dominates the Taiwanese art scene. In fact, celebrity art is just one aspect of Taiwan's recent artistic developments, alongside experimental arts, women's arts, performance arts, imperial arts, traditional Chinese paintings and other art works. Nonetheless, little academic discussion in Taiwan has paid attention to the study of celebrity art as an important cultural and social phenomenon. This thesis then

³¹ In chapter one Introduction, the thesis has discussed the fact that although the concept of Taiwanese 'national identity' was brought up by the DPP regime after 2000, the whole 'bentuhua', or indigenization movement, was brought up and strongly supported by the the former president of Taiwan, Lee Teng-hui, in the early 1990s that was associated with the assertion of distinctive 'Taiwaneseness'. Please refer to chapter one for detail information. Information from, 'Lee Teng-hui devoted to promote localization and strengthen "Taiwan identity"'. <http://taiwannation.50webs.com/plee3.htm>. Accessed 10 May 2011.

establishes the foundation for further research into the phenomenon and offers critical insights into the existing literature on art and celebrity studies.

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