

Flash Art



Matthias Weischer
"Untitled"
Oil on canvas



Bunker Museum

N E W S

Susan Kendzulak reports on an ambitious project in the Taiwan Strait



Artist Cai Guo-Qiang has curated the Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art in Kinmen, Taiwan, as part of his "Everything is Museum" series. 18 solo exhibitions by mainly Chinese and Taiwanese artists have been installed in abandoned military bunkers, which for the local people are filled with tragic memories and ghosts. Under military law until 1992, Kinmen (a small island just over a mile from China, and 250 miles from Taiwan) was off-limits except to the 60,000 residents and soldiers stationed there. Even though the bombings are long over, minefields still remain.

In 1991, Cai published his proposal about turning bunkers into love hotels. After 9/11 though, he was determined to "make art, not war" on Kinmen, so for the opening event, erotic performer Yin Ling seduced a skeleton in *Lovemaking for World Peace*. Themes of war and aggression emerged in several works. Filmmaker Tung-wang Wu interviewed Taiwanese children about surrender. A native Kinmen artist, Lee Shi-Chi, installed a gambling site to highlight the locals' ambivalence. Liu Xiaodong's portrait paintings of soldiers on both sides of the strait restored

personal identity obliterated by the military culture. Da Lun Wei Art Squad documented the absurdity surrounding both sides' defectors.

Sound was also a major element. Composer Tan Dun's Arte Povera-like installation of smashed and reconstructed pianos showed that rebirth comes from destruction. Chinese artist Shen Yuan refers to China's huge cold war propaganda loudspeakers and installed a huge megaphone that one can sit in to sip tea while looking at nearby China. Music's healing and unifying powers were eloquently displayed by Taiwanese pop songwriter Yao Chien, who provided a public karaoke area for singing Chinese love songs. Ying Bo showed two videos, one a rowdy Chinese drinking game. Filmmaker Tsai Ming-Liang's homoerotic performance based on Eileen Chang's novel about a woman wasting away seemed a metaphor for Chiang Kai-shek's disastrous course.

Dealing with constructed space was seen in architect Chang Yong Ho's deconstructed Yin-yang bunker. Wang Wen-Chih wove an enormous bamboo structure on another. Wang Jian Wei cushioned a bunker's interior with virginal foam. Curiously, Lin

Hsing-Yueh planned a large pyramid built with local wine bottles, while Zeng Li had a platform for traditional operas. In addition, the local schools participated, showing that in-depth post-war discussion is taking place. Community building was also seen with Fei Dawei's art books in exchange for the local children's critiques. Lee Mingwei's interactive tour in a restored ancient village provided motion-activated speakers that tell half of the residents' stories, while visitors were encouraged to ask the locals for the rest.

Su-mei Tse's *Some Airing* best exemplified the uneasiness surrounding art gentrification. An oversize propeller rotates at eye level to push fresh air into the stale bunker, while the heavy force of the propeller could knock someone unconscious, as if to say that turning Kinmen into a cultural paradise while the threat of danger is very tangible is specious at best. But the real coup is that Cai Guo-Qiang, a mainlander, can accomplish such a grand undertaking in these politically sensitive times.

The Bunker Museum continues until January 10, 2005. Info: www.caiguojang.com/bmoa



SHEN YUAN, Speaker Tea; WANG JIAN WEI, Soft Target; SU-MEI TSE, Yellow Mountain; WANG WEN-CHIH, Dragon Dares Tiger Lair. Courtesy of Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art, Kinmen, Taiwan Strait.