Abstracts

Panel II: Visualizing the Land 1:30-3:00

Mia Liu, Assistant Professor, Bates College

Paper: The Politics of Pictorialism: Topography, Location, and Iconography in Lang Jingshan’s Photographic Works in Taiwan

This paper examines Lang Jingshan’s oeuvre in Taiwan from the 1950s until his death in 1995, addressing both his photographic works and his activities as an important institutional figure in Taiwanese art. In particular, it examines how Taiwan as a location configures in his composite photography art during this period, what topographic features he favored, and the iconographic criteria he used to make his choices in his landscape compositions. This paper also considers how his works were exhibited and received. Furthermore, I examine his role as a photographer in the artistic and cultural debates regarding the discourses on the identity of Taiwanese art during these decades. Through these careful readings of his art and his writings, this paper hopes to further our understanding not only of the complex history and discussions of Taiwan’s photography history, but also the social and political engagement of Pictorialist photography, an international movement that is often thought of as a form of disengagement and an apolitical aestheticism.

Peter R. Kalb, Cynthia L. and Theodore S. Berenson Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, Brandeis University

Paper: Televisuality and Analog Landscapes in Turn-of-the-Millennium Taiwanese Video Art

This paper examines two strategies by which turn-of-the-millennium Taiwanese artists have addressed the integration of immersive televisuality with analog physicality that informs contemporary video art. From early examples such as Kuo I-Fen’s Dream in the Dream, Meditation on Existence (1986) to Wang Jun-Jieh’s The Night of Sodom (2016) there has been sustained interest in contextualizing the experience of video in sculptural environments often alluding to nature. This tradition suggests that the medium’s relevance lies not in projecting content beyond the frame, but rather, in integrating the work into our experience of real space. Complementing this approach are works that locate landscape within its narratives to address our combined existence in and off screen. Some cases, such as Hung Su-Chen’s On the Way Home (1994) presents landscape in a sculpted landscape setting, while works such as Chen Chieh-jen’s The Route (2006), convey the journey and the landscape with vision alone. In both, however the impact of the filmed narrative assumes rather than provokes viewers’ embodied experience of video. Theorist Paul Virilio has argued that our ability and desire to connect on-screen now has overwhelmed our appreciation of the poetics of being sentient here. The
artists under consideration offer tools to imagine how we might thrive in a reality of video and body, here and now.

Shelley Drake Hawks. Lecturer, Middlesex Community College


This paper analyzes the aerial cinematography and musical score in Chi Po-lin’s documentary film, Beyond Beauty (2013), from the perspective of Asian philosophy, landscape painting, and Taiwan’s aboriginal culture. An important characteristic of the film is the central importance assigned to non-human elements (mountains, rivers, trees, ocean, birds, and clouds). There is no human voice until five minutes into the film and no visual sign of humans for nine minutes more. The un-peopled landscape receives the viewer’s full attention. Like a slowly unrolling handscroll, majestic peaks appear one by one from a level perspective, as the Cineflex camera mounted on a helicopter, flies by each rock face at close range. In what respects is Chi’s approach in the film reminiscent of, or a departure from, Chinese and Taiwanese landscape painting? How does the structure of his film, camera angle and movement, use of color, and musical score shape audience reaction? This paper compares and contrasts Chi’s aesthetic program with selected Chinese and Taiwanese paintings, including works by Chang Dai-chien (1899-1983), Lin Fengmian (1900-91), Chen Cheng-po (1895-1947), Yen Shui-lung (1903-1997), Chen Hui-kun (1907-2011), and Liang Dan-fong (b. 1935).

Discussant: Pu Wang, Helaine and Alvin Allen Chair in Literature, Brandeis University