

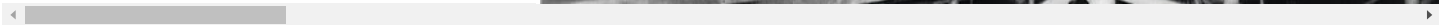
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Lin Chi-wei: Navigating Evil, Control and Disease



Zero and Sound Liberation Organization: "Broken Life Festival" in 1994. Image Courtesy of the Artist. Photography by LIN Zhi-Feng.



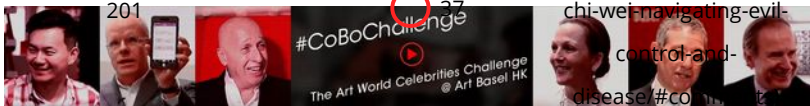
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Lin Chi-wei's latest show at Hanart TZ Gallery is anchored in a series of binaries.

TEXT: Christie Lee

IMAGES: Courtesy of the artist and Hanart TZ Gallery

Acrylics might be the star of his latest show, *Revolving Binary Forces: Paintings and Sound Art* by Lin Chi-Wei (<http://www.hanart.com/exhibition/revolving-binary-forces-paintings-and-sound-art-by-lin-chi-wei/?lang=en>), at Hanart TZ gallery, but Taiwanese artist Lin Chi-wei will be the 蘭rst to admit that they're the works of an "amateur".

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Christie Lee
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A Hong Kong-based arts journalist, Christie Lee's articles have been published in Art +...

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(<https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chi-wei-sept-2-performance-e1473957567924.jpg>)

Live performance of Tape Music on September 2. Courtesy of the gallery

“The brushstrokes, the colours. There is just so many things wrong with it! It’d take hours for me to tell you about it,” Lin says in his distinct brand of self-deprecation when we meet at the gallery, where his paintings are shown for the first time.

Broad strokes of orange, red, blue, green and black, hues that crashes onto and melds with one another. In *Black and White* (2014), the Chinese character for “white” is written on top of that for “black”. Blake, again. Allegories punctuate the show, with the mountain, long a symbolic for the pinnacle of knowledge and civilisation, being a particularly prominent feature.



(<https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chi-wei-1.jpg>)

Day of Victory, 2015

Acrylic on Canvas

84 x 126 cm

Courtesy of the artist

At the entrance of the gallery, *Day of Victory* (2015) blood orangish sunset is bookended by two Swastikas. It's very William Blake. "Yes, indeed. I'm a fan," Lin gives a small smile. Something closer to home provoked the actual painting of the piece though. "When I was 18, I was enlisted into the national conscription service. I had a mental breakdown after a month. What the military does is suck every ounce of individuality you have out of you," recalls Lin.

The military didn't succeed with Lin, who'd always treaded unusual paths. For a 蘭rst, he never formally studied art for a day in his life. Born and bred in Taiwan, the artist always held an interest in art, but upon getting rejected from art school, opted to study French literature at Fu Jen Catholic University. "The French put their culture on a pedestal. It's very much like the way the Taiwanese worship their gods," he humorously notes.



(<https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chi-wei.jpeg>)

Zero and Sound Liberation Organization: "Broken Life Festival" in 1994. Image Courtesy of the Artist; Photography by LIN Zhi-Feng

After graduation, he founded noise band Zero and Sound Liberation Organization (Z.S.L.O.) with Singing Liu and Steve Chan in 1992. For Lin, his musical and artistic pursuits have always been intertwined, and none epitomised this better than Taipei Ragged Living Festival, an annual event set up by Z.S.L.O. and a few associates and comprised of a mix of installation art, S/M and experimental 蘭lm, noise performances and experimental architecture.

Lin's long-running *Tape Music, Score for MUSARC* invites participants to read phonetic symbols 唎筭 a 204-metre-long "sound reel", as it is being passed through their hands. *Tape Music* has been performed a few dozen times around the world, but it was the iteration on September 2 that Lin 蘭nds the most bizarre. "There were a few who just refused to read the notes, so it made for a very di 唎筭 erent result. Perhaps the Hong Kong crowd is more individualistic than I'd thought," Lin laughs.



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chi-wei_tape-music-e1473957171704.jpg)

Live Performance of Lin Chi-Wei's Tape Music, using a 120 meter long tape with embroidered phonetic characters without further instruction, 2012, Tate Modern, London. Image Courtesy of the Artist; Photography by Wei-Yu

By allowing anyone to participate, *Tape Music* is democratising the idea of the music ensemble, yet it is also highly dictatorial, with humans being assembled into an “instrument” or “machine” that emits sound. *Tape Music* explores how human beings can be assembled into an “instrument” or “machine” that emits sounds. While reminiscent of Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain*, it also has tinges of French-Greek composer Iannis Xenakis' idea of combining architecture and music. But *Tape Music* a no mere derivative of the Dadaist' works, as it is underpinned by Lin's sensitivity to contemporary and electronic music.

If the 蘭rst room is where the artist expounds on his philosophical beliefs, then the back room is decidedly more personal, where mixed media collages serve as memory vessels.



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chiwei_ceremony-of-the-shell.jpg)

Ceremony of the Shell

2015

Mixed Media

131 x 102 x 19 cm

Courtesy of the artist

In the harrowing *Ceremony of the Shell* (2015), the words “I thinking of departing this world every day, I wish I could forget this all” are written on a yellowed slip. Lin tells me that it was found in one of his grandmother’s books. In *Nine Peonies* (2015), crab shells takes the place of foliage in a family tree. A black-and-white family photograph is carefully enclosed within each shell. “My father loved eating crabs, and he’d always keep the shells.” In the exhibition foreword, the artist writes.

“The house I grew up in had become marked for demolition as part of the city’s urban revitalisation project. My father’s valiant struggle against prostate cancer had failed and he was entering the 藺 nal stages of the diseases. Outside the doors of the hospital, another kind of struggle was going on: Student protestors had occupied the Parliament building to rally against the free trade agreements with China.”



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chi-wei_meditation-through-violence.jpg)

Meditation through Violence

2016

Acrylic on Canvas

85 x 126

Courtesy of the Artist

Talking to the soft-spoken Lin, it's hard to imagine that he is regarded as the pioneer of Taiwanese experimental music. But Lin argues that there are two ways of understanding "noise".

"First, there is the physics point of view, in other words, the music you hear. Beneath this music however, is another layer that speaks to the musician's consciousness," explains Lin. "It is for this reason that music that might appear very loud have a depth of calm to it."

Lin refers to this layer as "yin sing", which is related to Guanyin, in other words, the one who can perceive the sounds of the world. That heralded yet still elusive ability to not only empathise, but to "speak" across languages, ethnicities and races.



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lin-chi-wei_mercy-as-profound-as-the-sea.jpg)

Mercy as Profound as the Sea

2015

Mixed Media

115 x 116 x 15 cm

Courtesy of the Artist

"It was a pillar upon which ancient Chinese culture was found; unfortunately, its importance started to wane during during the Qing dynasty," the artist explains with a sigh.

Is he looking to bring that back into contemporary cultural discourse? The artist laughs. "That's a lot of pressure."

Revolving Binary Forces: Paintings and Sound Art by LIN Chi-Wei

(<http://www.hanart.com/exhibition/revolving-binary-forces-paintings-and-sound-art-by-lin-chi-wei/?lang=en>)

2 September – 8 October 2016

Hanart TZ Gallery

Christie Lee is a Hong Kong-based arts journalist, her articles have been published in Art + Auction, Artsy Editorial, Art in Asia, Baccarat magazine and Yishu. She has a degree in English literature and political science from McGill University.

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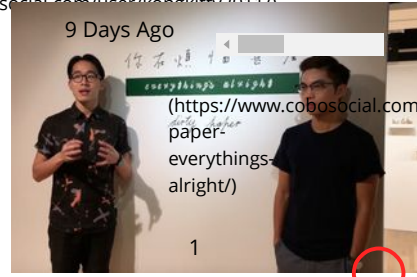


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