

「Flora & Fauna」系列油畫中的女性形像,曾傳言為章永佳「謬斯」的女性形像,竟從畫布中走出和他攜手創作這次的《Flora & Fauna III—SAFE HOUSE》。這其中到底有多少奧妙及不為人知的故事?

從這個展覽的個別物件上,或許可說它應證了章永佳的「Flora & Fauna」式美學的再次延續;但從展覽的整體來看, 又像是張敏華那種喜從點連成線、喜從個人感性記憶拼繪出集體敘述的貫穿式思維。兩人的面孔在這場展覽中,一時 看似是獨立的,一時又看似是重疊的。

章永佳解釋道:「當初我決定和敏華一起合作,是因為她對博物館概念的深刻體驗及不斷探究,再加上她對實體空間 本身的敏感度及想像力,以及對一場域中物與人互動的洞察力,讓我覺得她可以在這個計劃中沖擊我,或說是補我的 不足。」

「向來我『Flora & Fauna』系列中的三次元小物件都被視為二次元油畫的陪襯而已,我一直很想給予它們更獨立的存在價值。後和敏華討論過程中,她認為我對有機素材的巧思還沒有發展出更完整的創作概念,而這次《Flora & Fauna III—SAFE HOUSE》就是要突顯出它們所薀含的種種可能性。」

章永佳雖是名熱愛在平面畫布上創造另一屬於他個人次元世界的創作者,但同時又是個從科學奧秘性來喜愛動植物的 創作者,因此在極日常的生活中與自然互動的點滴,都深烙在他的成長經驗中,並逐步轉化到創作上。

二次元的畫面如何在三次元的物體上完成它的概念,同時保有了三次元物體存在的意涵——這是非雕刻家的章永佳, 對撿拾到的大自然有機物作為材料來思考的問題。這在他的《Flora & Fauna I》已可見端倪,不僅開始使用雞蛋殼, 甚至極小塊的魚骨、狗骨頭都被他取型轉化。2007年的《Flora & Fauna II》更趨不同的嘗試,其中就有以飛蟻落翅 組合成的肖像;由於所用的有機物質較為敏感脆弱,需特製箱櫃來保護及展示,這種方式使章永佳的作品漸似陳列於 博物管館內的藏品。

張敏華對章永佳「Flora & Fauna」系列創作過程中的觀察和理解,以她的獨特思維及表現方式,融合在這次《Flora & Fauna III—SAFE HOUSE》頗令人玩味的作品之中。

張敏華表示:「希望人們進入此展,就像進入一博物館『SAFE HOUSE』,感受到的是,這既是客觀又是主觀的空間 ——或許覺得參觀自然歷史博物館,突然又覺窺探著永佳個人博物館。另外,這容納的既是永佳極私密的回憶,又反 映出這塊土地上生長,或許是我倆這一代人共享的記憶——就像展覽中那棵被連根拔起的楊桃樹,那33年所含括的, 不僅是永佳的個人生命歷程。」

她再進一步解釋道:「這看似嚴肅的知性空間,其實充滿發現之趣,但要求看者主動參與,並支持出發點的多面性。陳 列的作品形象是確定的,但要用之產生含糊性,而人們從不同途徑或角度來看待它的方式,可構築出不同認知的博物 館。作品各有兩種文字敘述,有的之間甚至是矛盾的,看者或許會感茫然、好奇,甚至會懷疑先前想像的總體形象。」

如今,世界的博物館趨勢是幻化出種種可能來試圖滿足人們的欲求,博物館不但被膨脹為文化觀光政策寵兒,有的甚至被博物館建築物本身駕凌。這種五花八門的博物館現象,被學者們稱為沒有明確定位的「漂流現象」。

但章永佳及張敏華卻想回到博物館的本質——典藏及展示。所創作的《Flora & Fauna III—SAFE HOUSE》就是透過 空間安排來保存記憶的博物館,而其中陳列的「藏品」倒成為有機生命結構的血流與青筋脈搏——單獨一靜物,就蘊 含了人類存在的生活、精神表述;但同時,也是當地生物在整體生態間所互動的結果。

而「Safe House」這個博物館,是否隱喻一個創作者最安全的家?

The woman in Chang Yoong Chia's *Flora & Fauna* series, speculated as the artist's muse, emerged out of his canvases and together they collaborate on a new body of work—SAFE HOUSE: *Flora & Fauna III*. What's the story behind this magical occurrence?

Taken separately, the artworks in this show appear to pursue the same aesthetic concerns previously seen in the first two exhibitions of Chang's Flora & Fauna series. However, when seen as a whole, the influence of his collaborator. Teoh Ming Wah, becomes apparent. Her fascination with cultural history underscores her work of linking personal stories into collective narratives.

"I decided to work with Ming Wah because of her continuous exploration and questioning of the concept of the museum as well as her sensitivity to spatial-human relationships. I felt her involvement could inspire me to work in a different way, as well as make up for my own weaknesses in certain areas," said Chang.

On his canvases, Chang creates a private world of imagination and personal memory based on his childhood love of nature that is derived from playing in his garden every day as he was growing up. He also collects discarded organic objects that, for him, evoke similar memories. Moreover, he often questions how he can transfer this private world onto 3-D objects without causing it to lose its meaning and magic.

In *Flora & Fauna I*, there are already traces of this in works where eggshells. small pieces of fish cartilage and dog bones were used. By finding similarities in the shapes of these objects to things seemingly unrelated to them, he managed to transform these found objects into artifacts from his memory and imagination. In 2007's *Flora & Fauna II*, he increasingly used unconventional and fragile materials like seashells, eggshells, insect wings, spider's web and leaves that require custom-made cases to protect and display them. The choice of materials and the way these works were displayed were starting to resemble artifacts found in natural history or anthropology museums.

Teoh's understanding of Chang's aesthetics, filtered through her own thought processes and means of expression resulted in SAFE HOUSE: *Flora & Fauna III*, an archival space that invites the viewer's contemplation.

"I hope that when visitors enter this space, they will feel that this is both an objective and subjective space. Perhaps some people might think that they have arrived at a natural history museum but suddenly realise that it is Yoong Chia's personal museum. This museum contains his private recollections and memories but, at the same time, it is also the collective memories of both our generation and our ethnic community, who were born in this country and who grew up here." said Teoh.

"This space may at first seem like a serious and intellectual environment but it is also a place full of pleasant discoveries and human touches," she elaborated.

The current trend of museums is to reach out to a wider audience and cater to broader public expectations. Today, museums are not only marketed as must-see cultural-tourist destinations, but also as impressive modern architectural marvels, all at the expense of the quality of the exhibition. In response to this phenomenon, which scholars sometimes refer to as 'mission drift', Chang and Teoh attempt to return to the intrinsic function of the museum: as a place of collection and exhibition.

SAFE HOUSE, conceptualised as a museum is an important development in the oeuvre of an artist who is more closely identified with the medium of painting.

In Chang's words, "My Flora & Fauna 3-D objects are often perceived as being auxiliary to my paintings. I want to make them independent of the paintings. Ming Wah pointed out that my use of found organic materials is unique. but not conceptually strong. So SAFE HOUSE is a chance to focus on the objects' possibilities."

During their museum visits in Europe and Asia, Chang and Teoh were fascinated by the way exhibits were displayed and methodically catalogued, especially anthropological artifacts and natural history specimens. The stuff animals, or fragments from a lost civilization seem to become different things, have different meanings in their glass cases, after being remove from their place of origin.

An example would be the display of the human heads of Papua New Guinea that are adorned with feathers from birds of paradise. They contain in them the life and spirit of humanity, but at the same time also reflect that country's specific culture, way of life and ecology. Behind glass boxes, they exude an air of stability and security, as well as a certainty that their culture will be forever preserved.

And so is SAFE HOUSE, the museum, a metaphor for an artist's safest house?

CHANG YOONG CHIA (b. 1975, Malaysia) is fast becoming one of the most recognisable emerging artists in Malaysia. He graduated from the Malaysia Institute of Art in 1996 with a Diploma of Fine Art in painting. Since then, he has participated in numerous exhibitions in Malaysia and overseas including, 'Art Multiple 2008' at Ke Center for Contemporary Arts (Shanghai) in 2008, 'Parallel Realities - 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale' in 2005, '3 Young Contemporaries' at Valentine Willie Fine Art in 2002. In 2004, he held his first solo exhibition at Reka Art Space, where he debuted his Flora & Fauna series. He was awarded the Rimbun Dahan Artist-in-Residency in 2006. Most recently, he participated in the JENESYS Program 2008, spending two months in Tokyo as part of the Sapporo Artist in Residence programme. Chang Yoong Chia was also a founding member of the artist collective, Spacekraft.

TEOH MING WAH (b. 1975, Malaysia) graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work from the National University of Taiwan in 1999. She then joined The Organization of Re's (OURS) which initiated a number of community and social development programmes in Taiwan. Since returning to Malaysia, she was actively involved in the numerous theatre performances. Moreover, she wrote frequently on social and cultural issues in the Chinese newspapers "Oriental Daily'. She was also the contributor for 'The Encyclopedia of Malaysia, Volume 8: Performing Arts'. Ming Wah has collaborated with Chang Yoong Chia on various artistic projects since May 2007.

Special thanks to: Valentine Willie Fine Art Bombay Sapphire Chuah Chong Yong Vincent Leong Gabrielle Low Kate Po











# STAR FRUIT averrhoa carambola

The origin of the star fruit tree is unknown, but probably native to Malaysia, Indonesia and Southern China. The star fruit has never been located in the wild. It was domesticated throughout India and southeast Asia in prehistoric times. A small and slow-growing tree to 20–30ft, the star fruit is best adapted in the warm tropics. When cut, slices of the fruit have a star shape, and often adorn salads and other dishes.

#### CARAMBOLA 2008

OIL ON CHICKEN EGGSHELL MOUNTED ON CLOCKWORK AND STARFRUIT TREE TRUNK 180 X 50 X 70CM



### CARAMBOLA

My flight attendant aunt, 33 years ago, came to my parents bearing a gift from the skies. It was a star fruit from the aeroplane's flight menu. My parents loved it so much they planted its seed in the garden of their newly bought house. Two months later. I was born. I spent many years climbing its branches and eating its fruits until it was cut down a few months ago.



left pirate's bounty 2008 OIL, wooden cabinet drawer and forks 43 x 26 x 12cm

right PIRATE'S BOUNTY 2008

OIL, WOODEN CABINET DRAWERS, FORKS AND BROKEN WINE GLASSES 43 X 26 X 12CM (X2)



# BOMBAY 🍑 SAPPHIRE ART PROJECTS 2008

CHANG YOONG CHIA + TEOH MING WAH Safe House — Flora & Fauna III 17 October – 7 November 2008

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