

Active discussions need a space

Taiwan Contemporary Art Center

The Taiwan Contemporary Art Centre was initiated in February 2010 by a group of independent curators and art scholars to fill a gap in the Taiwanese art scene. It is intended as a platform for interaction amongst art thinkers and artists by complementing the activities of alternative art spaces. Sponsored by the *JUT Foundation for Arts and Architecture* over an experimental two-year period, the space hosts regular screenings, talks and other forms of expression in an attempt to provoke an exchange of ideas. The TCAC remains open to external propositions that nourish the creation of independent and original artistic programmes by curators and artists. Still in its budding phase the space is supported by individual donations, and works donated by artists.

"Our contract is until 2012, so before then we need to find a new space, this one is great and pretty much in the centre of the city," says Man-ray Hsu, independent curator and Chairman of the TCAC. He goes on: "the idea started in 2008 after the Taipei Biennial which I co-curated, we invited the artist Jun Yang, Chinese born and based in Vienna, who proposed a project called 'the contemporary art centre' - aimed at using the biennial format to organise events, discussions, talks and workshops with the local professionals". Jun Yang went on organising talks, revealing a lack of such form of artistic interaction and production facilitation in Taipei.

"We have museums, public institutions, we have alternative spaces: the oldest one being *IT park*, others are *Sly Art space*, *VT Art Salon*, *Open Contemporary Art Center*" says Hsu. "But alternative spaces are made to exhibit artworks and don't constitute a place where art-

ists can get together and really discuss things formally, or they aren't big enough to hold events. We realised that the situation in Taiwan called for carefulness about cultural policies and public museums - that we had problems around artistic practises and aesthetics, but no public forum to discuss them".

Hsu mentions magazines like *Artist Magazine* and *Artco* but notes that those are more about writing than engaging in active discussions - "for that you need a space" he insists.

"Funding was an issue because part of what we want to talk about here is not supported by the Taiwanese government. The government supports independent production and independent spaces at some level though, they give some money to rent spaces and hire staff, but if you think Hong Kong is bad, Taiwan is even worse. For example, a space like *IT Park* gets help of about USD 14,000 per year to run the entire space, it is not enough", says Hsu.

He also notes that more and more of the government funding goes towards policy based projects: projects done by the government, like the local lantern festivals, but not towards the independent production.

On the ground floor, Office Manager Hsiao-tsa Eleanore Chen shows us the office and a research facility on Taiwanese artists, about 100 - with updated archives, and the possibility for anyone to consult them. On the upper floors; performances, film projections, debates and get-togethers are organised almost weekly as the *Friday Bar* and the *Artists Salon* events providing an affordable and open-minded platform for art practitioners to meet and discuss their activities and the situation of the local art scene.

<http://www.tcac.tw/>

Left: Images and floorplan courtesy Taipei Contemporary Art Center

