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Michael Lin and Heidi Voet



Michael Lin, *Cool and Sweet*, 2008
Installation view ('Cool')



Cool and Sweet (detail)



Heidi Voet, *As beautiful as the chance encounter on a gallery wall of a painter and a drill hole*, 2008
Work in progress



As beautiful as the chance encounter on a gallery wall of a painter and a drill hole, 2008
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As beautiful as the chance encounter on a gallery wall of a painter and a drill hole
Installation view



Michael Lin, *Cool and Sweet*, 2008
Installation view ('Sweet') detail



Illy espresso cup featuring design by Michael Lin, 2006

Photos courtesy IT Park
8.23 - 9.20-2008

[IT Park](#), Taipei by [Lin Hongjohn](#)

People tend to search beneath the surface of things for deeper meaning, yet forget that the surface itself can be revealing. Paintings are indeed testaments to just how revealing the surface can be. Michael Lin and Heidi Voet, who both started their careers as painters, are well aware of the potential in this characteristic of painting; meaning appears through their manipulation of the surfaces of things. Both artists address complex issues such as identity politics, transnational capitalism, cultural branding and fantasy using simple elements, and thereby, their works make our world known to us straightforwardly. Their recent joint exhibition was no exception.

Entering the gallery space, viewers confront an old bicycle decorated with colorful pinwheels, spinning in the wind from an electric fan hidden in the ceiling. To the left of the bicycle is one of Michael Lin's large-scale flowery paintings, in pink and silver, perched on Illy coffee cans featuring the very same pattern. One could not help but wonder whether the artist had appropriated the floral pattern from the mass product or if it was the other way around. A pleasant breeze cooling down the temperature of the hot Taipei summer day enveloped curious viewers in an inviting atmosphere as they pondered, or perhaps recalled nostalgically that it was here at IT Park gallery that Lin unveiled his first flowery floor paintings.

Up the stairs on the gallery's second floor we find Heidi Voet's installation, *As beautiful as the chance encounter on a gallery wall of a painter and a drill hole*, an allusion to the surrealist poet Comte de Lautreamont's phrase, "as beautiful as the chance encounter on an operating table of an umbrella and a sewing machine". Voet marked the plastered holes in the walls with neon colors to indicate spots damaged from works previously exhibited there. Consequently, by delineating and highlighting traces in the history of the physical gallery space, the forgotten background becomes the foreground surface. Interlaced between these spots of color were familiar tattoo images - a half naked woman, a skeleton, and a palm tree - created by drilling holes in the wall. Gesturing as both a tattooist and a painter, Voet references not only the sub-cultural kitschy practice but also the human body, as spaces, pierced into the skin of the wall. The random colors and funky sculptured images together cheered up the atmosphere of what is normally a rigid white cube, thus opening up a precarious grey zone between high and low, the body and the space, and the collective and individual memory.

Continuing through the exhibition, we encounter a second an old bicycle, this one loaded with all sorts of equipment and kitchen wares for sale along with assorted French and Italian desserts ranging from tiramisu to crème brûlée and cream puffs. The work also has a performative aspect: a street vendor, Xiao Cao, selling his products. Customers who bought a dessert also received a treat from the artists: a cup of espresso. Viewers then realized that the coffee they were drinking was made from Illy beans, packaged in the commissioned design by Lin. While enjoying espresso with their dessert and lingering in the gallery, viewers

finally began to make sense out of these seemingly absurd juxtapositions - old bicycles, western desserts, Taiwanese flowery patterns, transnational commerce, a street vendor, decorative design - as a mirror of our everyday reality where cultures mix and merge and embody a socio-historical matrix. Both Lin and Voet were able to transform the architectural space through the language of painting and, most importantly, with a grace and attractiveness that saw poetics overturn politics.

2008.10.20