

From Sunflower 2014 of the 10th Year before and after

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Taking a stand on contentious issues may result in a particular group of peoples who act as a whole by refusing to compromise their statements or actions. In this peoples' movement exhibition, we have examples of this. These movements, as James Davison Hunter highlights, may project solidarity and support. If we explore the arena of social strife - which goes by the name "Culture Wars" in the US - Hunter has observed "the whole point of civil society ...is to provide mediating institutions to stand between the individual and the state, or the individual and the economy." Movements like these, when successful, leave a feeling of empowerment and the ability to make a difference, and may thus provide the desired mediation. On the other hand, cultural and art institutions can offer their communities a place to decompress, take a break, and hence might play a role in inclusive framing of values. [2] Peoples' movements explore the cultural, political, and economic challenges facing society and devise strategies to shape a better tomorrow. They might change the boundary to serve society, and can provide a window and spotlight on the current challenge of efficiency to the world of volatility.

In March 2014, young people led Taiwan's Sunflower Movement which in time completely reversed the course of Taiwan's foreign and domestic policy. On the 10th anniversary of the movement, we would point out that social and political change is won through the brave spirit and effort of the movement leaders and the people - not awarded as a lucky accident. This program will involve artists celebrating peoples' political movements - largely youth-led - that took place around the world circa 2014. We select 5 movements: the Sunflower Movement, the Arab Spring, the Chilean Winter, the Ukrainian Euromaidan movement, and Hong Kong's umbrella movement - all of approximately the same era as Taiwan's Sunflower movement - to which artists will respond.

First among them, of course, is Taiwan's Sunflower Movement in which students and other youth occupied Taiwan's legislative body in protest of the plan by the ruling government (that of Ma Ying-Jeou) to strengthen trade ties with China. The Sunflower Movement was successful in blocking the proposed legislation, and led to many of its participants eventually entering formal political life and thus rejuvenating Taiwan's political culture. Its tenth anniversary will be on March 18, 2024.

Artists were not absent from the Sunflower struggle, or the others. Many were in the first line of chargers, and they were also present to leave records. They may have used a paintbrush, a camera, or a video recorder. All reports - in any medium - have become documents, and some have also been selected to be displayed in this commemorative exhibition.

Other movements to be celebrated will be Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, which took place between 26 September and 15 December 2014 - so 2024 will also mark the 10th anniversary of this movement. Led by Hong Kong youth, this movement was sparked by China's proposed changes to Hong Kong's electoral system - changes that the movement unsuccessfully opposed and were later imposed unilaterally by the government in Beijing. However, this movement was resurrected on its fifth anniversary in 2019 to protest the bill enabling extradition to China - and trial there - of residents of Hong Kong. Beijing eventually imposed this bill on Hong Kong, further eroding the special status of Hong Kong in violation of the 50-year special

administrative status of Hong Kong negotiated by the United Kingdom and China in 1997. However, this exhibition glorifies the spirit of public self-sacrifice exemplified in Taiwan's Sunflower Movement, and in evidence in each of these popular movements. In addition to participating in actions, behavioral simulation performances and complete documentation of documents, artist K.C. Wang also established a database of the movement on social media.

The Arab Spring is represented in this exhibition by the movement of refugees that it occasioned, like many other revolutions and all social upheavals. While the Arab Spring took place in several Arab countries, with varying degrees of success, in the early 2010's, it started in Tunisia, and then spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. In Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Tunisia, rulers were deposed. Protests took place across the Arab world, most particularly in Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Sudan. All these were movements by youth in opposition to authoritarianism and in pursuit of democracy as well as a brighter economic future, and so fit the theme of this exhibition. While 2024 will be the 12th or 13th anniversary of this movement (depending on which country one looks at), it deserves to be included in this exhibition because of its aims.

The artist chosen this time, Mourad, is a Syrian member of Armenian descent. The "Four Acts for Syria" video animation work is a sad historical lyric poem. The panorama opens with written Arabic characters on the screen to open the preface and story. A work directly recalling desperate emigration was chosen, a ship entitled *Sailing to Nowhere*, carrying the faces of the victims and the dead.

Numerous political movements in South and Central America were youth-led protests. Perhaps one of the most notable was that in Chile in 2011 to 2013. Known as the Chilean Winter, it was a student-led protest against the poor for-profit educational system – especially the post-secondary educational system - extant in Chile at that time which tended to perpetuate Chilean class structure because the children of the very rich had adequate educational choices, but not the children of middle-class families. This system dated to the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, who was not more benign than General Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan. The Chilean female artist, María Verónica San Martín, listed the names of some of the people who were massacred by the dictator in her artist's book. In both Taiwan and Chile, the transition to democracy took place peacefully – without a revolution – while political movements such as those discussed herewith fine-tuned that democracy.

The youth movements in Ukraine were known as the Euromaidan Revolution or Revolution of Dignity. The movement is named after Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kiev, one of the first sites of demonstration on 18 February 2014; the protestors at one point also attempted to occupy the legislative branch. Unlike with the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan, armed police stymied this move, killing, wounding or arresting numerous protesters. The achieved aim of the Euromaidan movement was to topple President Yanukovich whom the protestors considered too close to Russia. Yanukovich had negotiated an agreement for Ukraine to join the EU, then declined to do so in favor of closer ties with Russia – an echo of the closer ties with China advocated by Ma Ying-Jeou in Taiwan.

Ultimately, the success of the Euromaidan revolution, which was supported by speakers of Ukrainian and opposed by Ukrainian speakers of Russian, emboldened Russia to seize the

Crimean Peninsula, a Russian-speaking area of Ukraine. I have chosen two artists; one is the exiled Ukrainian artist Oleksii Koval who highlights traditional Ukrainian cultural spirit; a highlight that does not seem political until one considers that the right to celebrate Ukrainian culture was won in the Revolution of Dignity. The other is Taiwanese American artist Lin Shih-pao, who has been addressing the Ukrainian-Russian war explicitly through artistic creation and action in recent years. In keeping with his overall concentration on human rights issues.

This exhibition thus celebrates youth-led popular movements of approximately 10 years vintage and simultaneously highlights both the similarities and differences between them. Social and political change is never straightforward and compartmentalized, let alone complete – which is why we have chosen a variety of such movements.

Artists in Peoples' Movements

Tsung-Jung Liu was a Sunflower Movement frontline artist in the sense that he participated in the movement. Liu uses art to comment on social issues such as Taiwan's Dapu controversy. In June 2010, Miaoli County Magistrate Liu Zhenghong deployed construction cranes in the rice fields of Dapu, thus destroying the rice that was about to be harvested and shocking the country. The issue of land expropriation spread. The forced demolition incident in Da po moved 20,000 people to take to the streets in Taipei to protest, and they occupied the Ministry of the Interior for an all-night sit-in, demanding an apology and compensation, return of the land to its original owners, thorough investigation of the abuses, and immediate amendment of the law. Many members of the Sunflower Movement were also involved in protesting this policy of land appropriation.

From 2012 to 2014, large mural portraits were completed, symbolizing the determination of Da Pu residents to protect their homes. In July 2014, artist Liu Tsung-Jung started his wall painting at the original site of demolition Cheung Pharmacy to create the "Four Evil Men" paintings. The paintings included portraits of Ma Ying-jeou, Wu Dunyi, Jiang Yihua, Liu Zhenghong who caused the Da Pu Incident. In following such events, he participated and walked the frontline to show a strong will to advance social justice. In his studio, numerous archives are collected to document the historical records. His large painting *Illuminating Darkness* is a spirit symbol of the Sunflower Movement. He skillfully painted other portraits such as Lee Deng Hui, embedded in Jade Mountain. Also he depicted the pioneer of Taiwan Independent Shi-Min. Passionate in care of his country, his humble personality and love emanates from his deep Christian belief.

Enbion Micah Aan is a New York human rights activist photographer, currently living and working in Taipei. He cares about all people's movements, as may be seen from his photographs of demonstrators for numerous causes. For example, he documents support in New York for the Sunflower Movement, protests demanding textbook reform - which mirror those needed in Taiwan - and the conflicting passions initiated by Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. His picture of indigenous people protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline recalls the plight of indigenous people world-wide.

Island Sunrise is a group of participants in the Sunflower Movement. Although the portrait artist would like to be identified simply as a member of Island Sunrise, he has painted over 12 paintings during the occupation of the legislative Yuan. These portraits might be of any people

participating in the protest, and their names are unknown - in keeping with the democratic spirit of the movement. The group also made a documentary video to record the demonstration.

Hsin-Yi Liu, participated in the Sunflower Movement protests. In keeping with her artistic practice, she used soft middle tones to paint two large abstract paintings revealing the chaos of Taiwan, China and the world situation.

Chia-Hsuan Kuo is a social activist sculptor who made a bust of Dr. Lai Ching Te, who was elected President of Taiwan in 2024 in a continuation of the evolution of Taiwan's democracy. This is in the spirit of Liu Tsung-Jung's portraits of former President Lee Teng-hui, the father of Taiwan's democracy, who ended the rule of the Chiang Dynasty. It also connects with Liu's portrait of Shi Ming, the godfather of Taiwan independence. The appearance of these people together represents Taiwan's democratic transformation to a large extent, and supports the values of the Sunflower Movement.

Oleksii Koval is an Ukrainian artist in exile. His chosen method is hot enamel, and he makes large lithographs, and paintings. His work is detailed and ornamented, and presents a type of royal and metallic surface atmosphere which persists even in a two dimensional print or silk fabric. In this exhibition, he shows a large striped fabric print similar to what a queen or king might wear, and includes imperial motifs on the fabric. While also in some way this piece is relevant to the current Ukraine-Russia war, it shows the classical splendor the past is gone with the wind, and at the same time celebrates traditional Ukrainian culture in the face of tumultuous political events. Two palms placed together pray for a future unknown and unpredictable.

Taiwanese American artist **Shih-Pao Lin** is an artist with themes of humanitarianism in the Ukraine-Russia war. He was walking to the war zone in person. In 2023, he started a drawing series entitled "One painting, one prayer", in which he first painted the blue and yellow background on the paper, then started his small paintings which were only 8 by 10 inches in size, and he did fundraising for Ukrainian artists.

In the exhibit, we can see a 5,000-kilometer map showing the road that Shih Pao Lin traveled in Ukraine with Ukrainian NGOs members in two weeks. They passed by various towns and got close to the front line. Along the way, there were many cemeteries with winged statues of soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the country. Each time a cemetery was visible, we all got out of the car to pay tribute to the soldiers. Lin said, there are so many cemeteries that I cannot remember that there were so many people in that town

Turning to the catastrophic **Chilean Winter**, the revolution in Chile was ironically non-violent and successful in that the country is no longer under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The violence practiced by the regime came during Pinochet's reign and afterwards. Female artist **María Verónica San Martín**, a Chilean human rights print artist and scholar, has very bravely chosen to use her art work to maintain the memory of and to memorialize the people who sacrificed and were sacrificed by the government. She uses woodcut prints and silk prints in making fantastic art. She also uses mixed media to reveal her beautiful country in a sublime beauty landscape, while addressing the suffering of the people

Arab Spring, for the countries in the middle east, I might include artists from Yemen, Egypt, Jordan or Tunisia - or many other countries which experience unrest. I choose **Kevoork Mourad**, a Syrian-Armenian artist whose family was exiled due to the Armenian genocide perpetrated by the Turks. In all periods of human history genocide has occurred but most prominently in the 20th century. The Turkish killing of Armenians might almost be almost forgotten - for example, Hitler famously said "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Mourad's "Four Acts" video piece that follows his black-and-white fabric cutting and illustration style, is a sad historical lyric. Over a background of haunting, exotic music, the video shows in Arabic characters, over an English translation, a poem describing the desolation of a migrating people. The viewer enters an unpopulated, empty, abandoned splendor. Pathetic bundles reveal death, ruin, slaughter, and exposure. To complement the bleakness of this video, I have selected a work showing a sailing ship, titled *Sailing to Nowhere*, carrying the faces of the victims and the dead.

Many artists are unlike **Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement** artist **Kacey Wong**, a Hong Kong social activist artist. He has mentally and physically suffered in Hong Kong's movements. Although now he is living peaceably in Taiwan, yet the shadows still make him tremble and cause him nightmares. Not only did he walk Hong Kong's streets during the protest, participating in the Movement, he acted, performed, and documented it. His studio shows all the performance masks, toy humans, and Molotov cocktails transformed into visually beautiful sculpture. His under-the-yellow-umbrella drawings, sketches of anonymous protesters underlines the solidarity generated by the movement.

A people's movement often provides a spotlight on timely perils and exposures, and thus helps give potential clues about how the government can modify its behavior to better serve the community. The movements, as a whole in common ground, in Hunter's words "are mediating, educating." by launching these movements as an echo of society's concerns. People's movements engage in hard conversations, in their society, country and with communities. People are continuing to fill a critical role in each century.

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