

“Tao” and “Technique”—Reflection on Viewing Lin Pey

Chwen’s Exhibition

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When discussing philosophy and art, the relation between “Tao” and “technique” is a topic that cannot be ignored. Besides being an expression of faith, thought, and introspection, artwork is also a reflection on the truths of life. Being an artistic expression of shape, body, color, and image, an artwork can achieve amazing levels. This is not only dependent on artistic techniques, but also on the “Tao” behind the techniques. Tao is the artist’s passion for and experiences in reality, human interaction, society, and private life. If technique stems from the artist’s Tao, then techniques are the traces of Taos. If the artist’s Tao form the technique’s foundations, then the techniques are the manifestations of Tao. When viewing Lin Pey Chwen’s exhibition, her works struck a chord with my philosophical introspections on the relation between “Tao” and “technique.” As a result, I was touched by Lin’s life experiences. Her works are like sermons, which could reveal, inspire and drive human acceptance or rejection of the complexities of technology civilization. It could lead to real/virtual feelings towards artificial landscapes and life forms, eliciting deep thought and reflections on the philosophies of life. Between technology and nature, artificial and natural creations, destruction and creation, virtual reality and reality, rebellion and devotion, humanism and spiritualism...where does one draw the line? How should we choose?

After receiving her Doctor in Creative Art from the University of Wollongong in 1995, Lin drew from her inspirations to create many works. The main theme to her works is the opposing relationship between nature and technology. Through technological symbols and media, she uses metaphors, satire and reflections to criticize artificial, unnatural and false realities and express the concept of “back to nature.” Expressing her worries regarding the development of our twenty-first century technological civilization, Lin stated the following: “Through my work, I continuously criticize artificial, cloned, digital and virtual productions and

appearances. Through the use of unnatural digital prints, I attempt to construct many kinds of artificial landscapes to mimic urban civilization's luxuries and illusive slenderness as well as its unnatural appearances. The introspective and satiric tone (?) behind my creative concepts and methods has become the theme to my works since 1999. The works' installation form can be adapted to any environment. For example, works can be integrated with nature or placed indoors in a dark room. A shining acrylic body is conspicuous, and a lovely sight to behold in the exhibition. However, I intend to make criticisms through the use of my works and reflect on the perceptions of urbanites: conditioned to artificial landscapes and unsurprised by its absurdities. Humans are unaware when artificial objects replace nature, as if they are now too used to copies or mimics of nature. This kind of work attracts people even more, serving as proof of people's affinity to artificial, superficial appearances. Additionally, it highlights my concept more accurately: if people do not return to nature and escape from civilization's myths, perhaps nature itself will one day be transformed into a fictitious appearance comprised of digital images, light boxes, virtual images, 3D animations, raster and messages. What will be left of the notion that people's existence depends on nature?" Professor Lin's series, *Back to Nature*, successfully conveys this message.

In 2004, Professor Lin presented *Eve Clone No.1* and *Capture* in her *Back to Nature—Artificial Life* series. Created out of 3D images and specimen-like forms, these works mimic virtual, artificial life. By showcasing these works, Lin criticized the fact that this kind of artificial life can be stored, numbered, changed and deleted. In 2007, she presented her interactive installations, *Virtual Creation* and *Eve Clone No.2*, which featured images of virtual human-pupa and human-butterfly hybrids. The two works criticize the deviation of virtual, man-made life from God's original creations. In 2010, Lin announced her works, *The Portrait of Eve Clone*, *Eve Clone Hands* and *Eve Clone No.3*, which featured Eve Clone's head and hands imprinted with the Mark of the Beast, 666. Borrowing from the Book of Revelation in the Bible, she warns about the catastrophic dangers that result from becoming a technology-driven civilization. This is expressed using an image of an evil-looking human-beast hybrid.

Eve Clone is indeed beautiful. But, in her eyes lie suspicion, uneasiness, and loneliness. Her portrait is placed in a black frame made of acrylic and transparent materials, which makes her look like a corpse. Yet, she is alive, which is made

apparent when her eyes follow the viewers. This portrait is seemingly a tribute to indoorsman and indoorswoman: a phenomenon of our modern era. Are they beautiful or not? Eve Clone's hands are of a three-dimensional form. Her wrists and fingers' gestures are pretty even though they are imprinted with the Mark of the Beast, 666. They are placed into medical jars, making them appear like organs and preserved in formalin for use in experiments. Thus, the beautiful hands seem horrible, lifeless, and strange. *Eve Clone No.3* is an expression of six different, large Eve Clone faces placed underwater. The installation is a large hexagon surrounding an interactive device. Eve Clone's eyes follow the viewers' movements. The background ambient sound is comprised of underwater and left-to-right movement noises. Inside the hexagonal projection, the viewer's feel as if they are in a strange environment while conversing with the huge Faces of Eve Clones. The work alludes to thoughts about the dangers of a technology-driven civilization. Presented in a dark room, the message conveyed by this work is unforgettable.

Professor Lin's works indeed deliver a sermon. The Tao of the artist stems from Biblical prophecies discussed by prophets from all over the world and her concern for humanity's ultimate fate depicted in the New Testament. Professor Lin is Christian who loves God and humanity. She believes in Jehovah and the prophets sent by God. Thus, her artistic concepts are always about the relationship between humans and their creator, and between civilization and technology. In the *Eve Clone Series*, she seriously ponders the fight between God and the evils described in Revelations. The Bible states that: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Professor Lin is a wise woman who fears God. Her philosophical and religious works have attracted the attention of the international art community and are timeless in nature.

