

Tim Budden's Art Journey in Taiwan

TEXT: Tim Budden
IMAGES: Yuan Ru Gallery
LAYOUT: Natalie Martinez

Tim Budden is a long-term resident of Taiwan, having arrived in 1990. Originally from Wales, Tim discovered the island and was so beguiled and intrigued by its exotic Asian culture that he decided to stay. Since arriving, he has been a teacher and a writer, but for the last 15 years he has devoted himself to developing as an artist. The one thing that inspires his art is Taiwan itself, especially its nature, traditions, and folk culture. Tim has always felt that to be an artist he has to be immersed in the culture in which he lives and works. Tim can be fascinated by the shapes, forms, shadows, and atmosphere in a Chinese temple. He can marvel at the multitude of colours of pebbles found on a Hualien beach as well as gaze at the beautiful butterflies which Taiwan is so famous for. All these things and many more are thrown into the creative soup of Tim's mind which combines these Taiwanese experiences with his memories of growing up in the UK, his art education, and especially his previous work as a sculptor. His art is clearly a mix of east and west. If you are already familiar with some of Tim's earlier work, you will know that he was first inspired by traditional paper cutting. He loved the storytelling and designs in this traditional folk art. He was also fascinated that a paper cut is made in much the same way as sculpture is, in that the paper is cut away to reveal the form just like a stone or wood carving.



Tim's current work, though still inspired by paper cutting, has evolved significantly over the years, leading to exhibitions in Asia, Europe and the USA. He has also collaborated with Twinings Tea and Shiseido cosmetics in package design as well as working as artist in residence at such diverse institutions as Taipei American School and National Chengchi University. Nowadays, as he prepares for a solo show, his work is still about cutting and making numerous holes, but he's become increasingly inspired by traditional lattice design.

Traditionally used in walls, screens and windows in old buildings, latticework allowed air and light to flow from one private space to another. It also has the added effect of casting interesting shadows when lit; a feature Tim loves. His process for making these works is quite meditative but intense. After cutting lattice patterns out of very thick paper he paints or covers them in gold and silver leaf. For others he burns the edges to make the shapes and patterns dark and jagged. These burned, painted and gilded layers are then glued together to create new forms and patterns. This element of burning has become increasingly important in Tim's work. It is an aspect of many rituals in Taiwanese culture, such as burning incense and paper money. Not only that but fire represents passion and changing states. Fire can be destructive in the real world but also helps create new life, and in this age of climate change fire has become more evidence of our changing earth. Fire is a metaphor for the transience and fragility of life.



Tim's Enso series of larger works are burned circular lattice shapes. These larger works are hung in space and spot lit to create dramatic shadows. Their circular shapes look dynamic and represent the energy of the cycle of life. To enhance this effect Tim was commissioned by National Chengchi University to work with video artist Wei Ho-Ting. Together they produced a video projected onto one of his Enso works entitled *Transient Nature*. The video shows the natural elements of fire, water, air, and earth. The effect of the projection on the artwork is to bring it to life whilst filling the exhibition space with dramatic moving projections and shadows.

Other series of artworks by Tim can seem completely different and unrelated to the lattice and Enso works, but in fact they are all connected. He keeps the cut out scraps from his cuttings and recycles them by gluing them onto paper to create collages. They seem very abstract yet if you look carefully, you may get a glimpse of a landscape or a rock. He even collects the ash from his burnings which is carefully glued onto paper in a variety of shapes. If you look carefully at the ash you will see sparkles of gold and silver making the pieces shine like the night sky.

If you are interested in seeing more of Tim's work then you're in luck. From December 4, 2021 to January 28, 2022 Tim has been invited by the Yuan Ru Gallery to hold a one man show exhibiting the artworks described here.

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