

## 弄木溯源:香港當代木雕藝術(2004)

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木頭在中國人的眼中永遠是中性、和諧和自然的材料。堅硬是一般材料具備的製物必須條件，但是木質特有的氣味、具生命意義的年輪以及有機特性，使它更具條件，成為重視天人合一的中國人的心頭好。由此，中國各地都出現了不少具特色的木雕，例如浙江省的黃陽木雕、東陽木雕、福州木雕、泉州木偶、劍川木雕、天津木雕、鄂南木雕、大冶木雕等等，都是聞名於世的絕活。各地不同手法和風格使中國木雕兼收鏤雕、浮雕、拼雕及劈雕的特色，成為中國文化藝術中最具特色的寶藏之一。

自古以來，從房子建構中的主樑到日常生活中的用品，從純建築用料到觀賞的雕塑作品，中國木雕所經歷的，是從功能性到觀賞性以至觀念性的轉變過程。從前的工匠習以為常以雕廟宇中的佛像、建築物上的裝飾物或生活用品為生，雖然現存不少佳作，但是只被視為實用功能；及至工匠們的精雕細鏤，漸為文人雅仕或是達官貴人賞鑑，也可惜只限於珍貴木材為料的作品，其亦只入工藝品之列；時至今天，隨著西方藝術觀念的傳入，對雕塑材料觀念的開放，使木雕正式成為雕塑家庭的重要成員之一。中國的雕塑家也隨著時代的巨輪，注入西方概念之餘，不忘中國的木雕特色，在當代藝術中扮演重要的角色，例如是次參展的藝術家張義，即是以其獨特的現代木雕在中國當代雕塑史上作出承先啟後貢獻。

香港，作為中西文化的交集之處，早在六十年代初，已經開始現代藝術運動，「中元畫會」則是歷史的見證。時至今日，短短四十年，香港的當代藝術發展生機處處，各種形式的藝術接二連三呈現異彩。木雕藝術亦經歷了幾番面貌。隨著電子時代的衝擊，無論平面或是立體藝術中人性的感覺和人類的痕跡，皆面臨去/留的嚴峻考驗。許多人開始質疑人性在藝術中的角色，質疑人類重要的工具一手的重要性，本來以技巧和意念相結合的藝術，現在是否只賴以模擬的意念生存？是次展覽中的特色之一，即是重新建構技巧、意念與情感所結合的藝術面貌，藉此引起社會大眾的共鳴，亦與藝壇諸子共勉之，推動以人為本的本地藝術。

作為世界金融中心，香港寸土如金，人人皆知。在此地創作，已是舉步艱難的事情，何況要發展佔地龐大，需要大量工具的媒介—木雕。是次展覽以木雕為例，只是作為展示一群本地藝術家努力獻身藝術的引子，希望引起各界對視覺藝術的關注，同時也鼓勵其他藝術家繼續堅持理想之餘，也實踐理想。

是次展覽藝術家集藝術前、中及青三代，其中有香港當代木雕前輩張義、唐景森、李其國，他們影響了數以百計的藝術家，在藝壇及藝術教育界扮演著重要的角色；有專心致志近十載於木雕創作的周順強、馮力仁及戴尚誠，他們默默耕耘，在木雕藝術領域中，開發道路及實踐理想；亦有近年積極參與

各大展覽的年青女藝術家林嵐。是次展覽，三代藝術家，各有面貌，但卻譜成近四十年來的香港當代雕塑史的縮影。

## **Concept in Wood: Contemporary Hong Kong Wood Sculpture**

**Jaffa Lam** (translated by Victor Tai)

Wood, in the eyes of the Chinese, always represents the natural element of neutrality and harmony. The instinctive characteristics of wood – the delicate scent, the visible passage of time marked by the age rings and the organic touch against a tough and sturdy mass, declare its special status among all useful raw materials. Wood is treasured by the Chinese, who care very much on the unity of man and nature. Specialized woodcarving skills and famous wood sculptures are found in many places in China, such as Huangyang (boxwood) woodcarving in Zhejiang Province, Dongyang woodcarving, Fuzhou woodcarving, Chuanzhou puppet, Jianchuan woodcarving, Tianjin woodcarving, Enan woodcarving, Dazhi woodcarving, etc. The different techniques employed by woodcarvers at different places enrich Chinese woodcarving with a variety of styles, including lattice carving, relief carving, amalgamative carving and intuitive carving. Woodcarving has developed into one of the most distinguished and cherished art forms in the Chinese cultural heritage.

Since the ancient times, wood has been widely used as a material for all sorts of purposes in China. From the practical application as the post and beam for architecture and the mundane daily tools to the making of precious woodcraft, woodcarving has come a long way before transforming into a form of art. The change was not only in the use of wood, but it also involved a change in the mindset. In the old days, woodcarvers made their livings by carving religious figures in the temples, molding architectural decorations or manufacturing handy tools. Although large amount of these handiworks have been preserved for their excellent craftsmanship, they are still functional objects of a class that cannot be compared with art objects. In the later development of woodcarving, the quality of the wooden objects and the craftsmanship were gradually appreciated by the scholars and the rich. Collectible objects in precious wood with superior carving skills were sculpted for pure enjoyment.

Nowadays, with the influence from the West, wood sculpture has finally become a member of the sculpture family. Not only has wood been accepted as a valid form of art objects, with the long history of woodcarving in China, it has become an important medium that is capable of inheriting and evolving upon the tradition. Taking advantage of the art movement, Chinese artists have included ingredients from the West into their works, however they have not forgotten their Chinese tradition in wood sculpting. An example is the master artist in wood sculpture, Mr. Cheung Yee, whose works are displayed

in this Exhibition. He has contributed enormously in the recent and current development of art and sculpture in China with his distinctive contemporary wood sculptures. His sculptures embrace the tradition and yet widen the perspective to another horizon, anchoring roots and providing the stem for branching out by future generation of artists.

Hong Kong, at the junction where East meets West, responded quickly to the Western art development with its growing momentum of modern art movement in the early 60's. The birth of the Circle Group was the witness of this movement. Hong Kong has experienced dynamic art development activities following the 60's. Wood sculpture has also gone through series of transformations. Stepping into the digital age, the human touch and the humanity spirit in art are facing a serious re-examination. Whether it is art in 2-dimension or 3-dimension, a replacement with digital replica is possible. People question the necessity of the human touch in art when anything made by hands can be simulated. The basic concept and practice of art, being the manifestation of ideas through the process of creativity by human hands, are now bombarded by the concept of art as the virtual simulation of ideas. One of the aims of this Exhibition is to re-introduce the basic concept of art as humanity. We hope that this belief will be shared by other artists having the same faith, and this belief can be echoed in the local artists' community.

As an international finance centre, space in Hong Kong is precious. Finding a small place for an artist's studio is already a difficult task, having a space large enough for the mechanical tools and storage of raw material for a wood sculptor is almost impossible. This Exhibition shows the sculptures by a group of artists, which are the outcome of the artists' devotion under the hostile conditions of this densely populated city. These artists are just the representatives of the many who have the same conviction in searching for their ideals through art. Hopefully interest will be aroused among the public and a sense of encouragement will be felt by other artists.

This Exhibition shows the works of three generations of artists. The master wood sculptors, including Cheung Yee, Tong King Sum and Li Ki Kwok, have played an important role and planted seeds in the evolution of contemporary art in Hong Kong. They have contributed greatly and are influential in educating and nurturing the young artists. A group of artists, including Chow Shun Keung, Fung Lik Yan Kevin and Tai Sheung Shing Victor, has the same focus in the exploration of wood sculpting over the past ten years. They are paving their boardwalks with their wooden creation and quietly venturing over the uncharted swamp in the sculpture field. The energetic young female artist, Lam Laam Jaffa, has keenly involved in numerous art exhibitions in recent years. This Exhibition shows the vibrant works of these three generations of artists, who have their own uniqueness while all are connected to wood. It will act as a prism, through which the forty years' spectrum of the contemporary sculpture scene in Hong Kong can be revealed.

