

Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen at Chambers Fine Art

This exhibition by two Chinese artists who have previously only worked solo was a team effort. Their show addressed the radical social and physical changes currently under way in Beijing (where they live), Western stereotypes about China, and the multiple meanings of food and dining in their native country. But even more, it was a celebration of the artists' first 10 years of marriage.

Intimacy between man and woman was a recurring theme here. The exhibition was titled "Chopsticks," and as one of the many gallery labels explained, chopsticks symbolize the close

relationship of husband and wife. These Asian eating implements recurred throughout the show. A pair of huge chopsticks, one made by each artist, represents their different genders.

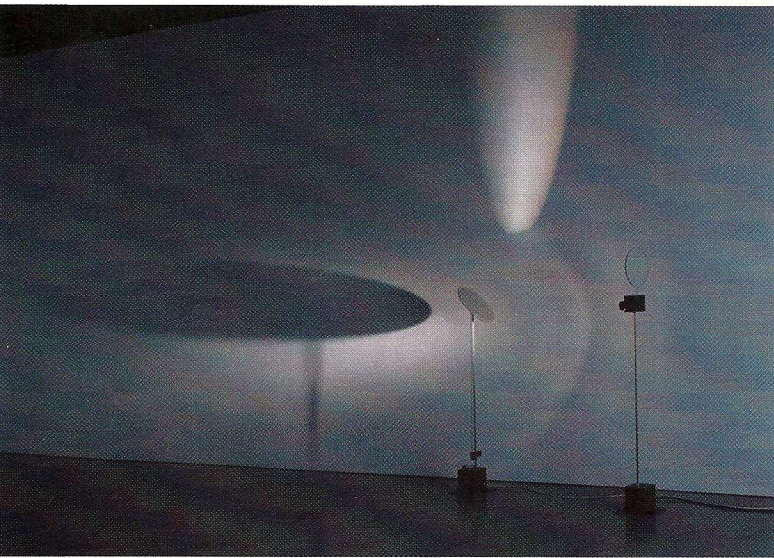
The "male" chopstick, by Song Dong, is made of metal and covered with dragon and landscape motifs, while Yin Xiuzhen's feminine counterpart has a fabric cover that unzips to reveal an assortment of small objects and toiletry items. In *United Hands*, two 78-inch arms clad in striped sleeves emerge from separate flowerpots; the arms each terminate in a hand (cast from each artist) holding a single chopstick. A small video monitor showing scenes from a bicycle trip the

two artists took through Beijing is suspended at the point where the chopsticks cross.

Moving on from the chopstick metaphor, *Life* presented a 360-degree panoramic view of Beijing photographed from an adjacent mountain and printed in a series of floor-to-ceiling C-prints on synthetic silk.

Images of both artists in various poses are repeated throughout the work. The label noted that Yin was seven months pregnant when the shots were taken (fruit of another collaboration). *Self Shot* is a video taken on the day of their 10th anniversary. For this piece, they filmed each other in their small modern home, and the results were projected side by side.

There were also several works



Rebecca Horn: *Heartshadows*, 2002, light, sound, motor and mixed mediums; at Sean Kelly.

on view that did not touch on the artists' relationship so directly. Yin contributed a solo work that plays off the ping-pong diplomacy that brought China and the West together in the '70s, and Song included a series of edible pieces in which traditional-looking Chinese landscapes are created out of cookies, broccoli and carrots.

The artists' celebration of their intimacy in this show is expressed with an unembarrassed sentimentality. Remarkably distant from their more hard-bitten Western counterparts, their view is literally worlds away from the veiled violence of Ulay and Marina Abramovic's work

recently on view at P.S. 1, or even the arch romanticism of Jeff Koons and Cicciolina's pornographic encounters. In the end, "Chopsticks" offers a take on love that is touchingly sincere. —Eleanor Heartney



View of Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen's *Chopsticks* (foreground), *United Hands* (right), and *Life* (background), all 2002; at Chambers Fine Art.

asked all the Galerie Huit artists he could track down, or their heirs, to exhibit one recent and one period work. If one could immediately identify which works were from the '50s and which from more recent decades, their continuity was also often impressive. Many styles and modes were represented, from hewn wooden monoliths to CoBrA-style expressionism, kinetic sculpture and lush figuration. Ortman's 1949 painterly box, suitably titled *Beginnings*, was rich in developmental possibilities; Hugh Weiss's painting of a ship conjured a mystic voyage; and Rivers's early figurative painting of an African-American barber-shop was a gem. Rivers's turn to geometric abstraction was revealed by a later work.

"Galerie Huit: American Artists in Paris 1950-52" at Studio 18

This deliciously recherché exhibition reunited 21 American painters and sculptors who showed together in Paris a half century ago. Galerie Huit was located in a very small studio at 8, rue St. Julien le Pauvre, across the river from Notre Dame. It fell into the hands of American painter Haywood "Bill" Rivers, who made it into a cooperative gallery. Financed by the artists themselves, it became a space for friends of friends and anyone who turned up. Many did.

The show made tangible the glamour of being an artist in Paris in 1950 (the very year the movie-musical *An American in Paris* was already cheapening the myth), even if many at the time could only regret having missed the excitement of the '20s. Among the many engaging works on view, special mention should be made of the short film *Vernissage*, the first effort by animator Carmen D'Avino, one of whose later films was nominated for an Academy Award. It contains a black-and-white sequence of coffee-making that any young video-projection artist would die for.

As is the way with such cultural retrieval and revival, Galerie Huit now crops up everywhere. In the press release for a recent show, feminist painter May Stevens proudly admits to having had her first show there, even if she slipped through the otherwise tight curatorial net of this truly major minor exhibition. —Adrian Dannatt