



Yao Jui-cheng and the VT Art Salon are injecting some excitement in the stale art scene.

PHOTO: JULES QUARTLY, TAIPEI TIMES

Putting Taipei's best artists on the map

Another dot on the cultural map was inked last night when VT Art Salon opened its doors, revealing an underground art gallery and lounge bar that oozes style and aims to provoke, entertain and lull the senses.

It's a lot to ask for, but seven artists, one curator and a few investors believe that it can work.

A few doors from IT Park on Yitong Street, off Nanjing East Road, VT Arts Salon has a European minimalist look, with exposed breeze blocks and ducting, and large spaces for the installations. There is the obligatory DJ box and bar, plus VIP rooms sectioned off by glass bead curtains and a small stage for performances.

VT has an ambitious agenda. Its first exhibition is called *Very Video 100* and features different works each day from 100 artists. This will be followed by 100 animators; and then 100 performing artists. That will give Taipei nearly a year of original art and if it works the city will be culturally richer by a factor of 300.

VT has been built on the foundations of the influential *avant-garde* art group Very Temple (非常廟), led by Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中) among others.

Yao's *Cynic* series of paintings features prominently and makes puns on Chinese characters to deliver a message that appears to be overtly political. For instance 他玩妳死 ("Tawanisi") has a red devil fornicating with a green cynic. Asked whether this meant that Taiwan was being screwed by China, Yao deftly sidestepped by saying, "Actually, in Taiwan everything is political."

Isa Ho, who is a Taipei Fine Arts Museum award-winning artist, has a large triptych and five related pieces on show, dubbed *You Can Love Me Only*. They are digitally manipulated photographic works in which she stars as Snow White, who has killed five other characters — also herself. It's an intriguing piece that plays with the concept of personality, self-perception and how others see us.

"It's better to be ourselves, so people love us for ourselves," Ho said.

Principal curator Sean Hu (胡朝聖) said his role was to be a bridge between artists and the public and VT was an ideal venue to achieve this.

"Eight of us got together and thought that the artistic environment [in Taiwan] was not exciting ... even boring. We thought we could change this," Hu said.

Howard Chen (陳浚豪), an architect, curator and artist who opened a similar and influential lounge called The Blueprint, provided the basic model of a



VT Art Salon curator Sean Hu.

PHOTO: JULES QUARTLY, TAIPEI TIMES

Performance notes:

What: VT Art Salon, a gallery and lounge bar

Where: B1, 45-47, Yitong St, Taipei (台北市伊通街45-47號B1)

Times: From 8pm to 3am, every night

Phone: (0937) 378 405

salon and bar.

Forty members have chipped in with finance and the idea was born. It took just three months to identify a site and build the dream.

"We want to be a model art group, a creative melting pot. Controversial and challenging, but not illegal. In this way we think we can reach out to people but remain true to our principles," Hu said.

Dominik Tyliczszak, also known as Hooker on the club circuit, is an investor in VT and said he got involved in order to breathe some life into a stale art scene.

"VT is a nexus for artists, a meeting place for artists in general. The music is angled toward these types of people. It will not be your typical lounge bar experience, but will be more experimental," Tyliczszak said.

"Many of these Taiwanese artists works are locked away in institutions, galleries and private homes. VT will show them to the world."

As well as enjoying art, buying it and discussing it, customers can eat Western- and Taiwanese-style dishes, drink and take in a performance.

Tonight, DJ Feel Good Productions will be playing from 10pm and tomorrow former pop star electronica artist Lim Giong (林強) will be doing the entertaining.

— JULES QUARTLY