MASTER OF CALLIGRAPHY, CHANG BING-HWANG, INVITES YOU TO HIS E-WORLD

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Most of people may find the idea of combining traditional Chinese calligraphy art with computer technology extremely odd and unacceptable. Yet, Chang Bing-Hwang, a maestro in calligraphy and the vice-director of the TKU Carrie Chang Fine Arts Center has revealed to many skeptical fans that such a combination was doable without compromising the integrity of calligraphy in his most recent solo exhibition, in which digitalized calligraphy was also on show. This show that was just opened in Chang Kai-sheik Memorial Hall last Saturday (Dec. 10) will last until January 15 next year.

In this solo exhibition, fans will be able to appreciate some of Chang's more traditional works as well as experimental ones. The latter are often written with modern poetry and come in horizontal format instead of the usual vertical style of writing. Chang had also experimented with big canvases, too, and the results can be seen at the exhibition. His biggest one is 6x16 feet, a landscape painting of Jade Mountain, the tallest one in Taiwan, and it seems only such a size is worthy of depicting this spectacular and awesome mountain range. In parallel to this innovation with bigger paintings, he also innovated his own writing by touching it up with some modern strokes to write about poetry describing four seasons and the Qin period bronze inscriptions. Both his paintings and writings, be it traditional or experimental or not, are fluid and entwined in elegant movements.

Unlike any of his previous exhibitions, Chang shows off his digital calligraphy in this exhibition for the first time. These calligraphies were written with computer software that stores a database containing a wide range of character styles and practice books. Users can outline, cut, paste

or write words on the computer with different colors as well as shades of ink. Traditional Chinese watercolor landscape paintings are also possible with this software.

Visitors to the exhibition who are keen on the idea of writing calligraphy with virtual brushes are welcome to drop by between 2 and 4 pm every weekend to experiment with the software hands-on. They can even keep their own computerized creations, should they wish to.

Chang reveals that the patent of this software is pending at the moment, but is confident that it will get approval in the near future. Should that happens, this software can be used widely to help learners to get the hang of calligraphy quicker and easier. This software allows several links to related websites, such as those for word games, Chinese poetry, and proverbs. It also allows the creation of tablecloth, greeting cards and bookmarks with calligraphy.

Most important of all, according to Chang, this software will break down any cultural barrier so that learners of all ages, educational levels and backgrounds can find calligraphy less intimidating and is surmountable. Hopefully, he wants to involve more young people in writing calligraphy when they see practicing calligraphy can be totally "cool" through this computerized program!(~ Ying-hsueh Hu)