

Tishan Hsu: Liquid Circuit

Sep 24, 2020–Jan 25, 2021

SculptureCenter

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Tishan Hsu: Liquid Circuit is the New York-based artist's first museum survey exhibition in the United States. The exhibition traces Hsu's key ideas and demonstrates how they clearly resonate in the works of younger artists coming of age today. In the mid-1980s, Hsu began a series of works that considered the implications of the accelerated use of technology and artificial intelligence and their impact on the body and human condition. His work is distinct from well-documented approaches to artmaking in the 1980s that relied upon strategies of appropriation, a use of references to popular culture, as well as Neo-geo and other tendencies toward abstraction. Yet Hsu's work takes on minimalist legacies in its reduced forms, and also processes the textures and colors of screens and other aesthetic clues of the emergent information age. The artist's work throughout this period considers the object's phenomenological properties and the shifting visual landscape.

Trained as an architect at MIT, Hsu's art has an idiosyncratic materiality that is informed by both his education and the budding East Village scene of the time. Moving to New York in the early '80s, Hsu worked the night shift as a word processor in a law firm in the World Trade Center.¹ There, while sitting in front of a computer in the early days of its integration into daily life, Hsu, who had also experimented with evolving technologies at university, saw how technology was becoming an extension of our bodies—and minds. Shifting the art historical notion of painting as a window onto the world, Hsu's work opened into the digital display that processed it. But at the same time, the artist did not let go of the corporeal for the immaterial.

Referencing the work of scholar Elaine Scarry, the artist remarked that while the critical theory of the 1980s interrogated the subject and saw its autonomy emptied out, pain remained the nagging anchor that kept it from dissipating into thin air. In other words, it was pain that kept the genie in the bottle of embodiment. In Hsu's work, the body in pain, administered through the institutions of modern life (the office, the hospital, the prison, the factory), manifests itself as fragmented, sundered, and wounded. Reflecting on how his work operates simultaneously in the virtual and physical, artist Matthew Ronay writes, "this is the suffering, untheoretical part of Hsu's art: a body falls apart, only to cybernate later."² Hsu constructs his paintings into objects to be confronted by the viewer. Their corners become rounded and the works distance themselves from the hegemonic illusion of the frame. When the artist depicts the screen he does so by scratching layers of paint off of plywood panels, lacerating the surface of the painting. His pervasive use of mass-produced tiles suggests the architecture of domestic/institutional interiors, but also points to the construction of digital images as many discrete units of data. Additionally, his use of alkyd, resins, and urethane responds to materials developed and used in burgeoning industries while also

serving as the work's body matter.

Bringing together key sculptures, paintings, works on paper, and media works from 1980 to 2005, the exhibition surveys Hsu's architectonic paintings and sculptures from the 1980s that considered the materiality of the image in the ever-expanding digital landscape; his first experiments in Photoshop, marking some of the earliest instances of artists using the newly available digital photo manipulation software; further explorations of sound and video multimedia work; and a selection of drawings that bring to light the recurring concerns of the artist's work. The exhibition demonstrates Hsu's prophetic practice and exemplifies how art responds to and processes the pressing questions of its time. Regarding the presentation at SculptureCenter, the artist recently remarked: "The logic of the installation is not of an exhibition of paintings and sculptures, but rather of devices, screens, and robotic vehicles." *Tishan Hsu: Liquid Circuit* reintroduces the work of this visionary artist to a contemporary audience that has finally caught up with the issues he began to address over thirty years ago.

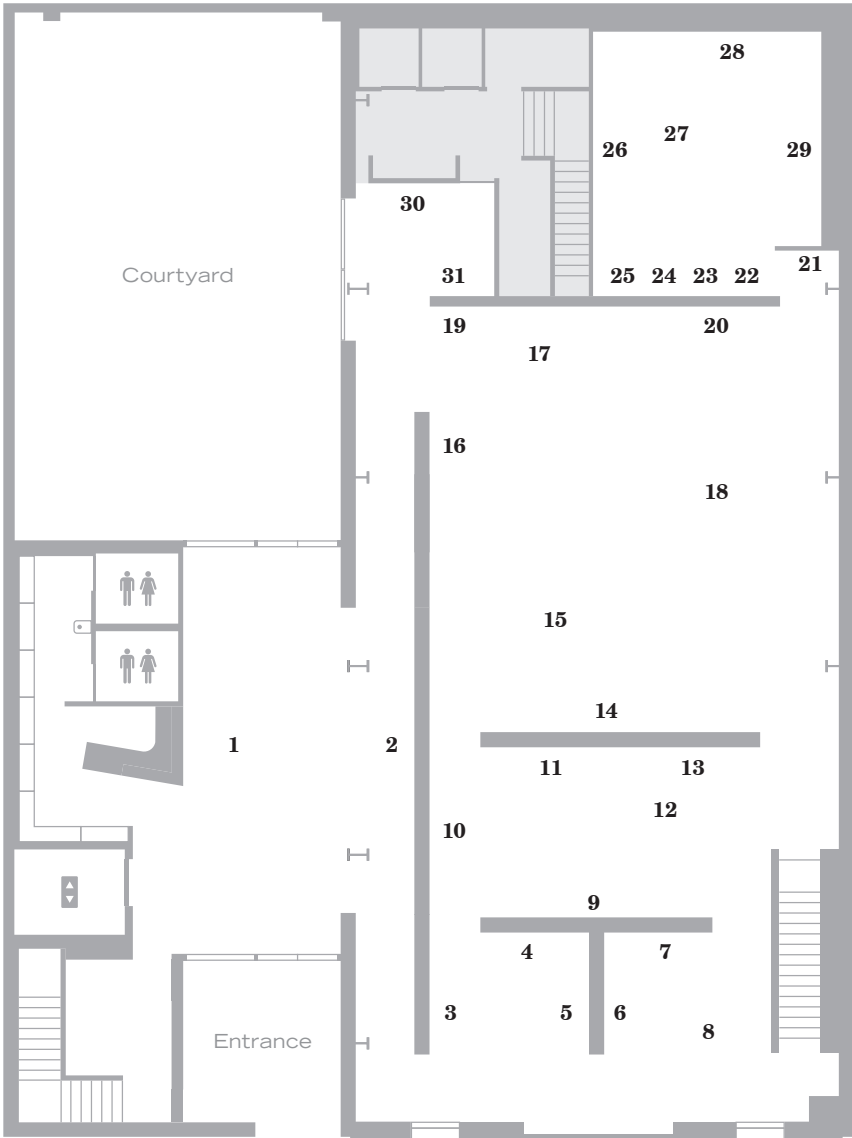
Born in 1951 in Boston, Massachusetts, Tishan Hsu spent his first years in Zurich, Switzerland, after which he grew up in Ohio, Wisconsin, Virginia, and New York. Hsu had his first one-person exhibition as a teenager in Virginia, where his paintings were shown throughout the region. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he received his BSAD in 1973 and M.Arch in 1975, during which time he also studied film at Harvard University's Carpenter Center. He moved to New York in 1979, where he currently resides. Hsu first exhibited in New York at the Pat Hearn Gallery in 1985, and over the past 35 years he has shown throughout the United States, Europe, and Mexico. From 1988–90, Hsu lived and worked in Cologne, and from 2013–16, he maintained a studio in Shanghai.

Hsu's work is included in many private and public collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main; High Museum, Atlanta; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami; and the Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis. Hsu has served as a member of the board of White Columns and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He has been a professor of visual arts at Sarah Lawrence College, and a visiting professor at Pratt Institute and Harvard University.

¹ The exhibition includes a 1985 work on paper titled *Flowing tile sketch on Brown & Wood stationery* executed on Hsu's former employer's office supplies.

² "BODY HORROR: Matthew Ronay and Lane Relyea on the art of Tishan Hsu." *Artforum*, Vol. 58, No. 9 (May/June 2020).

Works in the Exhibition



Ground Floor Plan

Ground Floor

- 1** *Autopsy*, 1988
Plywood, ceramic tile, acrylic, vinyl
cement compound, stainless steel,
rubber
55 × 49 × 94 inches
(140 × 124 × 239 cm)
Collection of Ari Mir
- 2** *Interface Wall 2.0 – NY*, 2020
From *Interface Remix*, 2002–ongoing
Inkjet on vinyl on sheetrock
Dimensions variable
- 3** Works on paper, from left to right:

(Top Row)
study – Bloody Mary, 1980
Pencil on paper
11 × 14 inches (27.9 × 35.6 cm)
Collection of Carolyn Fine Friedman

study – continuous surface, 1980
Pencil on paper
14 × 17 inches (35.6 × 43.2 cm)

study – Vertical Ooze, 1980
Pencil on paper
11 × 14 inches (27.9 × 35.6 cm)

yellow tile drawing, 1980
Pencil on paper
14 × 17 inches (35.6 × 43.2 cm)

(Middle Row)
Rippling tile surface sketch, 1980
Pencil on paper
11 × 17 inches (27.9 × 43.2 cm)

TV sketch, 1982
Pencil on paper
11 × 14 inches (27.9 × 35.6 cm)

study – Portrait, 1982
Pencil on paper
11 × 14 inches (27.9 × 35.6 cm)

study – Upside Downside, 1982
Pencil on paper
14 × 17 inches (35.6 × 43.2 cm)
- (Bottom Row)
*study – It's Not the Bullet but
the Hole*, 1984
Pencil, gesso on paper
14 × 11 inches (35.6 × 27.9 cm)
Collection of Madeline Smoot &
Jeremy Achkar

*Flowing tile sketch on Brown & Wood
stationery*, 1985
Pencil on paper
8.5 × 11 inches (21.6 × 27.9 cm)

study – Closed Circuit II, 1986
Pencil, label, stamp, ink on paper
envelope
5 × 6.5 inches (12.7 × 16.5 cm)

study – Body Battery, 1986
Pencil on paper
8.5 × 11 inches (21.6 × 27.9 cm)

preliminary drawing – Ooze, 1987
Pencil on paper
14 × 17 inches (35.6 × 43.2 cm)
- 4** *Couple*, 1983
Oil stick, enamel, acrylic, vinyl
cement compound on wood
66 × 48 inches (168 × 122 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 5** *Portrait*, 1982
Oil stick, enamel, acrylic, vinyl
cement compound on wood
57 × 87 × 6 inches
(145 × 221 × 15 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 6** *Squared Nude*, 1984
Oil stick, enamel, Styrofoam, acrylic,
enamel on wood
90 × 48 × 7 inches (229 × 122 × 18 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 7** *Plug*, 1984
Acrylic, concrete, Styrofoam, oil,
enamel on wood
47.5 × 60 inches (121 × 152 cm)
Collection of Richard Chang

- 8** *Heading Through*, 1984
Vinyl cement compound, ceramic tile, acrylic, wood, Styrofoam, steel
39 × 82 × 60 inches (99 × 208 × 152 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 9** *Liquid Circuit*, 1987
Acrylic, vinyl cement compound, alkyd, oil, aluminum on wood
90 × 143 × 9 inches (229 × 363 × 23 cm)
Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis
Gift of Dolly J. Fiterman
- 10** *Outer Banks of Memory*, 1984
Alkyd, acrylic, vinyl cement compound, Styrofoam on wood
90 × 96 × 15 inches
(229 × 244 × 38 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 11** *R.E.M.*, 1986
Acrylic, alkyd, vinyl cement compound on wood
60 × 60 × 4 inches (152 × 152 × 10 cm)
Collection of Marian and James H. Cohen
- 12** *Holey Cow*, 1986
Acrylic, vinyl cement compound, Styrofoam, ceramic tile on wood
75 × 102 × 28 inches (191 × 259 × 71 cm)
Karin and Peter Haas Collection, Zurich
- 13** *Plasma*, 1986
Acrylic, alkyd, oil, vinyl cement compound on wood
16 × 93.5 × 4 inches (41 × 237 × 10 cm)
Collection of Daniel Newburg
- 14** *Cell*, 1987
Acrylic, vinyl cement compound, oil, alkyd, vinyl, aluminum on wood
96 × 192 × 4 inches
(244 × 488 × 10 cm)
- 15** *Virtual Flow*, 1990–2018
Ceramic tile, silkscreen on glass, acrylic, plastic, silicone, photographic emulsion, enamel on steel cart
Dimensions variable
Collection of the artist
- 16** *Manic Panic*, 1987
Acrylic, vinyl cement compound, alkyd, oil on wood
100 × 96 × 4 inches
(254 × 244 × 10 cm)
Collection of Ari Mir
- 17** *Vertical Ooze*, 1987
Ceramic tile, urethane, vinyl cement compound, acrylic, oil on wood
61.8 × 70.9 × 24.2 inches
(157 × 180 × 121.5 cm)
Centre Pompidou, Paris
Musée national d'art moderne-Centre de création industrielle
Gift of the Société des amis du musée national d'art moderne, 1988
- 18** *Ooze*, 1987
Ceramic tile, urethane, vinyl cement compound, acrylic on wood
137.5 × 181.5 × 68.5 inches
(461 × 337 × 174 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 19** *Closed Circuit II*, 1986
Acrylic, alkyd, Styrofoam, vinyl cement compound on wood
59 × 59 × 4 inches
(150 × 150 × 10 cm)
Rubell Family Collection, Miami
- 20** *Reflexive Ooze*, 1987
Ceramic tile, vinyl cement compound, oil, acrylic, alkyd on wood
58.75 × 59 × 3.5 inches
(149.2 × 149.9 × 20.3 cm)
High Museum of Art, Atlanta
Gift of Hillman R. Holland through the 20th Century Art Acquisition Fund in memory of Dr. Robert H. Brown
- 21** *Virtual Flow drawing*, 1991
Pencil on paper
14.5 × 23 inches (36.8 × 58.4 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 22** *Body flow installation drawing*, 1991
Pencil on paper
23 × 29 inches (58.4 × 73.7 cm)
Collection of the artist

- 23** *Dr. Hibbert screen module*, 1990
Pastel, Xerox copy, copy paper on board
8 × 24 inches (20.3 × 61 cm)
- 24** *thermostat module*, 1990
Pastel, Xerox copy, copy paper on board
10.25 × 15.5 inches (26 × 39.4 cm)
- 25** *Dental screen module*, 1994
Pastel, Xerox copy, copy paper on board
7.5 × 11 inches (19.1 × 27.9 cm)
- 26** *Fingerpainting*, 1994
Silkscreen ink, acrylic, on linen canvas
71 × 177 inches (180 × 450 cm)
- 27** *Biocube*, 1988
Plywood, ceramic tile, stainless steel,
acrylic, rubber
35.5 × 44.5 × 44.5 inches
(90 × 113 × 113 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 28** *It's Not the Bullet but the Hole 2*, 1991
Silkscreen ink, acrylic on canvas
71 × 71 inches (180 × 180 cm)
- 29** *R.E.M. revisited*, 2002
Archival inkjet on canvas
96 × 110 inches (244 × 279 cm)
- 30** *Cellular Automata 2*, 1989
Silkscreen ink on canvas
82 × 82 inches (208 × 208 cm)
Collection of the artist
- 31** Tishan Hsu
Programming: Samuel T. Jackson
Folds of Oil, 2005
Video capture of custom software;
SD, 4:3
21:06 minutes

Except where noted, all works courtesy
the artist, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong,
and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

Publication

Tishan Hsu: Liquid Circuit

(SculptureCenter, 2020)

Publication with an essay by Jeannine

Tang, an interview between Sohrab

Mohebbi and Tishan Hsu, and a text

by Brian Kuan Wood. Available in

SculptureCenter's bookstore and website.

On View Concurrently

Jesse Wine: Imperfect List

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