

2010s

In the Southern Hemisphere, Yu Fang Chi was earning her doctorate at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University in Australia. Interested in emotional cognition, the passage of time, the environment, and societal issues, Chi uses weaving techniques in metal to map out the human experience. Unlike many of her peers, Chi decided to stay abroad and is currently a lecturer in the MFA program at RMIT University.⁹

Back on the island of Taiwan, a burgeoning jewelry scene was overflowing with new talent. Heng Lee—like Hung and Tsao—earned his master's degree at TNNUA. Lee tells me that one of the visiting lecturers, Felieke van der Leest, upended his conception of what jewelry and value could be. Under the guidance of his professor Meiling Hsu, Lee developed his own distinct visual vocabulary, where he juxtaposed embroidery inspired by traditional Chinese craft with a pixelated metal outline that references our digital lives on the internet.

Hsu strongly encouraged him and other students of TNNUA to apply to local and international exhibitions and competitions. At the SIERAAD Art Fair in the Netherlands, Lee met fellow Taiwanese jewelry artists who decided to come together as a group to amplify their voices. Shortly thereafter they established Bench 886, a collective of ten Taiwanese jewelry artists. The collective crowdfunded for their travel to Munich, Germany, and exhibited at Schmuck in 2014 and 2015. Their work sold well and the reception was enthusiastic, resulting in invitations to exhibit at Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h, SIERAAD Art Fair, and JOYA Contemporary Jewellery Fair.¹⁰

Each artist in Bench 886 has developed their own distinct aesthetic and innovative technique, with references to their home in Taiwan. Amal Yung-huei Chao focuses on industrial, human-made structures

that are specific to Taiwanese residential architecture. In her mind, jewelry is built onto the human body just as decorative window grills and corrugated steel rooftops latch onto buildings. Chao's work magnifies the details of everyday life that have been overlooked or taken for granted.¹¹

Ying-Hsiu Chen, in contrast, grew up on the even-smaller island of Penghu, off the coast of mainland Taiwan. Since she spent most of her childhood on the beach, she finds inspiration in the plethora of native marine animals and plants.¹² Through the unusual fusing of lightweight modeling clay and nylon stockings, Chen conveys the essence of ocean life through sea anemone-like forms.

Chen, Lee, and Ying-Hsun (Zita) Hsu, who all live in the southern city of Kaohsiung, established PIN sstudio, a gallery and workshop, in 2015. For their inaugural exhibition, they invited artists Märta Mattsson and Tanel Veenre, whom they'd met at Schmuck. PIN sstudio also offers classes such as enameling and basic metal fabrication.

Lee explains that, although PIN sstudio was turning a small profit, business growth was slow and customer cultivation was extremely time consuming.

The three artists felt burnt out and decided to pivot their careers to center financial stability.

After running the gallery and working as a substitute teacher for several years, Lee is now an art teacher at an experimental elementary and middle school that encourages hands-on learning. On his days off, he still teaches enameling workshops at PIN sstudio and exhibits his work internationally.¹³



Heng Lee
Floral Print of Formosa—Pleione formosana, 2014
Nickel silver plated with 20k gold, aluminum, auto paint, tread, silk organza
115 x 100 x 5 mm
Photo courtesy of the artist



Ying-Hsiu Chen
Life Sketches Series, 2012–2016
Gold-plated brass, clothes, washing bag, super light clay
12 x 6 x 8 cm
Photo courtesy of the artist



Clockwise from above:

Heng Lee

Auspicious Cloud Series—Ear Hook, 2022
Platinum-plate nickel silver, thread
Photo courtesy of the artist

Amal Yung-huei Chao

Transient-gemstone, 2021
Silver, used corrugated building sheet
12 x 16 x 5 cm
Photo courtesy of the artist

Amal Yung-huei Chao

Window, 2011
Nickel silver, paint
12 x 16 x 5 cm
Photo courtesy of the artist

In Amal Yung-huei Chao's mind, jewelry is built onto the human body just as decorative window grills and corrugated steel rooftops latch onto buildings.

