



Taiwanese artists succeed to pleasantly surprise audiences, and their presence is well received and awarded. And **Ars Electronica** makes no exception. Carefully curated and selected VR pieces were definitely one of the highlights of this year's Festival, and as such **TAICCA** (Taiwan Creative Content Agency) can be proud of the ecosystem it helped to develop.

This will be the third consecutive year that **The Virtual and Physical Media Integration Association of Taiwan (VPAT)** has participated in the festival through the “**Garden Taipei/Formosa**” exhibition, and **VPAT** chairman, **Hsin-Chien Huang** continued to serve as the curator. The selected artworks for the theme **Humanity Island – Data to be Continued** reflects Taiwan's Island characteristics and cultural heritage and uses the common language of art to speak to the world.



“Samsara” compares political prisoners in the era of white terror to the pressures on human nature in the digital age.

“Blue Tears” examines Matsu’s beautiful bioluminescent phenomenon and marine ecology.

“Childhood Revisited” reproduces a Hakka community from the 1960s. “Sandbox”, inspired by computer security testing, immerses viewers in an ironic “safe” information space.

For those that could not attend, we will review two experiences –  
”Samsara” and ”Childhood Revisited”

## SAMSARA



“Samsara” is a remarkable experience that makes you reflect on the eternal spiral of evolution and involutions, and the hardship of finding a way to jump to the next level of growth. It exposes in a poetic way how the history of the evolution of the being repeats itself till spirits learn through mistakes, to heal and find forms that suit developments.

The experience begins and ends with the same topic – Mother or Mother Nature? – surrounded by magical creatures, mythical animals that are there to guide...

It is an intriguing moment that combines somehow elements of an ancient traditional line and aesthetics underlining the relation of humans with the Mother, with the Mother as Nature, and with the Mother as the Universe, who sings a lullaby song for a newborn – that tries to remember, to grow, to learn, to evolve into perpetuum transformation.

As if the history of each of us is linked to the history of our joint evolution, the director transports the audience through different significant times and spaces.

It starts (somehow similar to the evolutionary Genesis of Darwinian human being) in the hunter society with our primitive but proud humans, who discovered the power and at the same time the superiority over others – through different elements like fire, prehistoric weapons and later modern armaments – being able to destroy other living creatures and nature.

As powerfully it swings the fire while having blood on one's the hands, the next scene, it presents the angle of the victims; the audience embodies a starving and helpless refugee that has to pass a wired fence (*the imagistic paraphrase of the Holocaust*), with the body that was brought to the level of almost a skeleton, but still recognised as a human being; it force you to recall pages of our historical DNA.

And as an unfortunate chain reaction, the next embodiment is a fighter that hates everything including itself, while destruction, chaos, and war prevails.



Samsara\_@Hsin-Chien\_Huang

The attention of the director to small details is really remarkable during the entire experience – when you are embodied as a refugee, not just but the effect is enhanced, by the small house fly on the hand, which just highlight the decaying status of the refugee; or in the war scene, the small ashes that almost resemble the lost magic of the snow.

The destruction becomes total when even supreme technological advancements such as building spaceships to conquer the cosmos, cannot replace spiritual advancement; as such, a fatal attack comes. And the supreme creation of human – the spaceship to conquer the universe – disintegrates, alongside the humans itself; the destruction of man and the most cherished technological advancements come at the same time, ironically annihilating one another.

**W**hat remains from humans? Something is saved, and the user can feel, and see, bodies that move in unison, in tubes that resemble a chemical lab maintained by AI that works to maintain the collective consciousness and memories of humans.



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As the audience is acknowledging its decomposed bodies, interconnected with other human destroyed bodies, an explanation comes: ***“You are alive or dead depending how you want to put it,”*** highlights the AI. And years will pass to heal.

**T**he healing process starts with a journey through fractals and trials to experience new forms. **Is our form related to our evolution?**

We don’t know, but the user gets to experience some diaphanous and intriguing shapes and possible bodies – luminescent bodies, multiple hands, bodies with hands like wings.

A form is chosen for evolution that can live in harmony with other creatures, it can fly and its voice generates new forms of beings. Till a new generation of primitive creatures are gaining power and start destruction. Or is it only a glimpse of return in time for now the more evolved former humanoid to see its past?





But this new form leaves the primitive creatures behind, continuing its evolution in the universe, in the galaxies, trying to find a new shelter where it can develop and be able to travel with the speed of light, to discover new dimensions, and to build new cities. To realize that individuals are also linked collectively.

After the first part showed the destruction and chaos and suffering that we all know humans can cause, the second part shows the search and the possibilities of evolution.

A spiritual uplift and optimism that reveals multitudes of possibilities for our fulfillment in a much evolved (human?) Being. It somehow reminds us of the **Kardashev**-inspired scale of evolution and its contemporary versions, developed by many physicians and the prevision and anticipation that this will be achieved by humans as well...



**Read about the scale of evolution here:** <https://techvangart.com/2021/08/26/from-dummies-to-type-i-civilisation/>

The finale it returns you to the Mother, and as a much evolved being, Mother can now tell:

***My child,  
You were once in my songs,  
From now on, I will be in yours.***

An uplifting and powerful experience that combines forceful visuals, a sensitive and poetic (sub)text, and a bold and optimistic storyline about our evolution, Samsara is an astonishing experience that brings Hope.

#### **Credits:**

Director: **Hsin-Chien Huang** (TW)

Producer: **Hsiao-Yue Tsau** (TW)

Music: **Jason Binnick** (US)

Project manager: **Chung-Hsien Chen**

Programming: **Wei-Chieh Chiu, Hua-Lun Wu, Chun-Yen Yu, Pei-Yang Yeh**

Concept design: **Guan-Yi Li, Zu-Wei Chen**

Actor: **Sheng-Fang Hsu**

Singer: **Su Yang**

Voice actress: **Francesca Lo Russo, Chiao-Chieh Lu, Dumile Dlamini**



With support from: [Kaohsiung Film Archive VR Film Lab](#); [Taiwan Creative Content Agency](#) (TAICCA)

**SAMSARA is an awarded experience, the recognitions include (but, not limited to)**

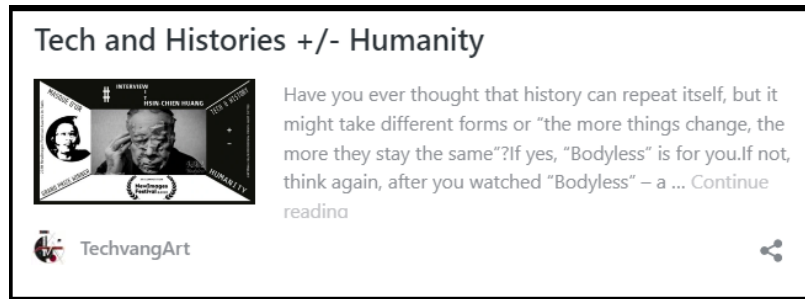
**2022 Prix Ars Electronica, Computer Animation, Honorary Mentions**

**2021 South by Southwest Film Festival, Jury Award**

**2021 Cannes XR, Best VR Story Award**

**Hsin-Chien Huang** – a new media artist, born in **Taipei City**, is adept at combining VR, interactive installations, performing arts, and power machinery to explore greater possibilities for human life through technology. He is a distinguished professor in the **Department of Design at National Taiwan Normal University**. In recent years, Huang's revolutionary VR works have attracted international attention and won a variety of awards.

You can read the Interview with **Hsin-Chien Huang**, about VR experience Bodyless, winner at [NewImages Festival](#)



<https://techvangart.com/2020/10/19/tech-and-histories-humanity/>

## CHILDHOOD REVISITED



“**Childhood Revisited**” reproduces a Hakka community from the 1960s. The scenes in the film are based on old photos of a **Hakka village in Wanluan Township, Pingtung**, taken by local photographer **Liu An-Ming**. Through VR technology, the past Hakka environment and culture are vividly recreated for the viewer. But the experience can make adults related to the magical paradise of childhood, while discovering elements from the Hakka community.

As we mature, we tend to forget how childhood was; so this unique experience invites audiences to (re)enter the magical world of childhood.

The experience begins with positioning the user into an old-type photo studio where photographs were still made by exposing light-sensitive photographic film and paper, which was processed in liquid chemical solutions to develop and stabilize the image. And the user is invited to do this process to develop and revive an old photo that will act as a magical memory trigger to transport you back in time... to childhood.

Throughout the experience, the audience can see the world as a child; the director combines flawlessly the sound and visuals –the sound element is more for remembering, while the visuals are carefully calibrated to see the scenes through the

eyes of a child, trees are a little bit bigger, and you can actually walk through the greens.



The user can revisit the magic of childhood and can experience the fantastic imagination of the magical childhood.

The actions and interactions used are chosen so that the audience gets pulled into the world of children, and an experience that reminds us of childhood is offered.

The idea of childhood reminds us of play, so the user can play with the elements that the children play with; you can see other children playing near the water, while the actions motivate you to play with them – a child gives you a boat, you discover a toad; later you can crawl after another child through nature, just to stumble on a magical playground.

At the same time, magical elements specific to children's imagination appear in which you can get immersed and experience them: the user can ride the buffalo in the water, and you can swim underwater, while oxygen-like water small bubbles come to you, and the turtle will guide you. And later you can grab a bamboo copter that can lift you up in the sky and make you fly and see the world of the village from above.



The sequence of storyline and engagements is carefully selected – after in the first part the user gets to warm-up while playing as a child, and experiences the fantastic sensation of swimming under-water, a magical playground is discovered.

The playground may be preparing you for the passage of time; once you enter it, between the wooden construction of the plays, you can see elements that remind you of the



inevitable time. The alley you walk contains black and white photos – most probable memories from childhood, while elements remind you of the clock with its pendulum, which makes you think that it is time... Maybe it is not... That the user is taken out of this scene while flying.



Getting out of the play, as if somebody called you, that time is up to return to life, as so many times happened in our childhood. Landing back in the reality of the everyday life of the village, magical imagination is almost disrupted, and users have to return home. Or not yet? Or can we just stay a little bit longer?

But, calling home is strong, a bridge has to be crossed, where magic appears maybe for the last time through bioluminescent small insects.

Another picture is taken by the Memory on the bridge. At the same time, in the middle of the bridge, the experience ends, letting you wonder if you return back before you return home – in our everyday life.



Might the ending suggest that this new photo might just be a new trigger for a new episode where you discover or re-discover childhood? Who knows?

“**Childhood Revisited**” is a very sensitive and idyllic experience that plunges you into the magical moments of childhood, making you feel playful again. An unmissable experience, if you would like once more to see the world through a child’s eyes.

**Production team:**



TECHVANGART

“**Childhood Revisited**” was co-produced by OREADY INNOVATION LAB INC and Director Chang, Wen-Chieh, with consultation by **Huang Hsin-Chien** and published by the Hakka Public Communication Foundation.



*Virtual and Physical Media Integration Association of Taiwan* aggregates a group of top-notch new media creators, scholars, and software/hardware suppliers to research and develop cross-disciplinary practices based on digital technologies such as virtual and physical media integration, VR/AR/ XR, metaverse, digital twins, NFT, real-time computer graphics, interaction, electronic control, etc.



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<https://techvangart.com/2022/09/18/samsara-childhood-revisited/>