> from a pictograph to its present-day form. It's a mesmerizing view of the oldest, original form of the character to the most recent, simplified character.

The Living Word is the centerpiece of the first of the two sections. The theme of the first part is san sui, a Japanese phrase meaning mountains and water, which Kim interprets to be the physical landscape. At the entrance to the show was a series of gray photos of misty mountains by Toshiya Kobayashi, recalling traditional mountain paintings, or sansuiga. In contrast, the ink drawings by Yoo Seng-Ho comprised of numerous little characters, and Whang Inkie's digital sansuiga drawings made of silicon dots on glass, reflect a funky take on something otherwise traditional.

The remaining work in the show was guided by feng shui, the Chinese system of physical placement of objects to attain optimum energies in houses and rooms. (Kim hired a feng shui specialist to help her plot the space each work occupied in the exhibition.) The first work in this section is Japanese artist Akira Yamaguchi's witty Portable Folding Tea Ceremony Room (1998). The artist adds a modern touch to the spirituality of the tea ceremony by making the whole (tiny) room portable.

KAY ITOI

HONG KONG

Tsang Kin Wah

John Batten Gallery

Asian Art Award's prize of USD25,000 (see NEWS, page 14), his first solo gallery show, "White Cube," opened at the John Batten Gallery. The show pokes fun at the ideas of art and money, and questions other social assumptions. The gallery's white walls and most of the other surfaces were covered with Tsang's silkscreen floral patterns on a white ground, recalling the swirls of curves of decorative wallpapers.

Upon a closer look, the flowers turn out to be composed of profanity and insults in English and Chinese. The language mocks and belittles art, the artist and his Chinese ethnicity, and questions conventions such as the art market. Yet the beauty of the installation, coupled with the ambiguity of the texts, contribute to the sophistication of the work. Seven additional silkscreen paintings also form part of the installation. Referring to the gallery's price list, the titles range from For You, Platinum Lover to Cool, It's Cheap, and the price of HKD24,500 (USD3,460) next to numbers crossed out that range from HKD5,000 to HKD50,000 for seemingly indistinguishable paintings. Here Tsang raises yet another set of questions, namely the relevance of titles and pricing to the true meaning and value of art.

When asked about artists that inspire him, Tsang cites the 19th-century English designer William Morris as well as minimalist Robert Ryman. One can see how Tsang has adapted Morris's Arts and Crafts designs to both hide and reveal his ideas. Like Morris, Tsang emphasizes the individual's personal touch, and is opposed to art that is mechanically reproducible. Although Tsang used a computer to generate stencils to aid him in his three-day task of silk screening the gallery, he intentionally allowed slight variations in opacity and design to appear in his work. He comments, "I would never employ assistants, [as] I found that while I was working, I changed things and came up with other ideas. This is all part of the art." This sense of the individual and the handmade in art is refreshing in a city that loves 21st-century technology and flaunts status symbols. ■CAROLINE CHIU

NEW DELHI

Purkayastha Prabir: LADAKH

Bodhi Art

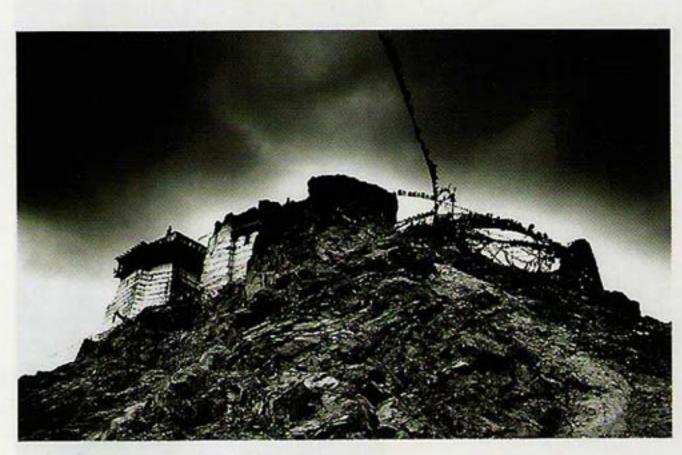
amid the rush of typical tourist images, when you chance upon an exhibit of photographs that stands out like a silent sentinel, it demands further scrutiny. Purkayastha Prabir's suite of photographs that comprise "Ladakh" is essentially different, as if darkness has wrapped the inner crevices of a bleak terrain, only to give way in the morning to the searing rays of pristine sunshine. Prabir's portraits speak within their own silence. The shaft of light captured on the face of the aged *Bakula August* (2001) reflects the solitude of the mystic. If it is possible for a region to be both sculpted and scripted in the tenets of time, it happens within these frames.

When the trees in *October* (2003) become twigs of barren bleakness, what stands in quietude and becomes their only comrade is the moon. The muted darkness lends an air of tranquility to this scene, and you wonder how there seem to be flat planes of velvet darkness that serve to delineate both the solitary trees and the moon that stands out in the distance. In another image, *June* (2003), the mountainous terrain with its arid desolation is completely devoid of human presence; the moon could almost be misplaced. There is no stylization, no modeling at all—only the far-away effect of the moon, a tiny sphere of luminosity that is more pleasant than devious.

Given Prabir's 14 years of travel to and from Ladakh, he understands the lingua franca of the shadow of the sun, the cold that can grab at your heart. Prabir's Ladakh becomes the resultant residue of a thousand sighs, one that is bound to be meditative and introspective. These are images that come from an inner



Tseng Kin Wah ■ Detail
of White Cube ■ 2005 ■
Silkcreen on textile ■
Dimensions variable ■
Actual painting is white
on white—reproduction
shows black on white
for clarity



Purkayastha Prabir ■ July 2003 ■ Black-and-white 35mm photograph ■Courtesy Bodhi Art, Delhi