

Chi-Wen Gallery at Art Basel Hong Kong | May | 15 -18 | 2014

Booth No. | 1D19

Participating artists and artworks :

Galleries | Chang Chien-Chi 張乾琦 | China Town | 1992- present
Encounters | Yu Cheng-Ta 余政達 | The Letters (Live Performance) | 2014
Film Sector | Chang Chien-Chi 張乾琦 | Burmese Days | 2011

Venue: Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center (HKCEC)

For the first time ever, Chi-Wen Gallery will present the complete series “China Town” by acclaimed Taiwanese artist Chang Chien-Chi. This ambitious project has been in the making since 1992 and was only completed this year. Using photography and video as his artistic medium, Chang Chien-Chi (b.1961) explores alienation and connection between people in contemporary society by developing long-term, interactive relationships with his subjects. Chang first became interested in themes related to the dispersion of individuals and families from their homeland in 1992, and in the years since, followed the lives of illegal immigrants in New York City's Chinatown who left China as a matter of survival. China Town was exhibited at the National Museum of Singapore in 2008, at the Taiwan Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2009, at Museum der Kulturen in Basel in 2011, and at the International Center of Photography in New York in 2012. This year from May 24th it will be exhibited at the National Arts School Gallery in Sydney in association with Sherman Contemporary Arts Foundation.

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Immigration is propelled by suffering. To witness the shifting patterns of populations is to see the world in all its exigencies—war, natural disasters, repression, famine, poverty and persecution. But there is a rainbow at the bottom of that Pandora's box of troubles; hope, too, propels immigrants to settle in strange lands.

Perhaps the most aspirational of the world's people are the Chinese. For them, New York's Chinatown is the capital city of promise, the place you go to make a new life for your family, a fortune. It is no coincidence that the boatload of illegal immigrants who grounded on a New York City beach in 1993 sailed on a ship called the *Golden Venture*. And this movement of people is an increasingly critical social issue. As the relationship between the U.S. and China grows ever more complex on an economic level, these individual stories, too, are weaving together the future of two nations.

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To contrast the bleak, black-and-white lives of the men in the U.S. Chang Chien-Chi chose to photograph the families in China in color. Like the families who have granted access to him, the project has also grown and changed over the years. In 2005 he began using audio recordings and, in 2007, video recordings to continue to document the divided families. Now he is ready to move the project to a higher dimension through the combination of still images and moving images within a soundscape. And, ultimately, to do what has never been done before—to make these invisible families, with their sufferings and triumphs, at last, visible.

The past 22 years of developing these relationships are now culminating in a tri-generational drama. Some of the first waves of illegal immigrants are choosing to return to China to enjoy the prosperity they have created there and spend the rest of their lives with family members they have not seen for nearly two decades. Yet their sons still choose to be smuggled to New York, leaving their own families behind. Divided families remain divided.

The compelling quality of this project is its universality. It is about the essential human need to hold hope in your hands and about having the willingness to sacrifice one's own immediate happiness to realize the dream of giving children a "better" life. But is economic prosperity worth the social cost? Perhaps the answers to such questions we all ponder can be found in the lives of the people left behind in China and in those of the second and third generation immigrants growing up in the United States. Look at them, and listen to their voices. You may not understand their language, but you can feel their longing.



China Town, Single-channel Video Installation, 1080x1920p, 19min 23sec, 1992-2011

Courtesy of Chang Chien-Chi / Magnum Photos / Chi-Wen Gallery

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Tang Z. family, left, New York City, 1998 / Tang Z. family, Philadelphia, 2007

Mr. Tang arrived in New York in 1997. He was reunited with his family in 2001 in New York and then settled with them in Philadelphia.

96.5x64.3cm(x2) Diptych, Silver Gelatin Print / C-Print

Courtesy of Chang Chien-Chi / Magnum Photos / Chi-Wen Gallery

Film Sector | Chang Chien-Chi | Burmese Days | 2011

Burma: Inside the Land of Shadows

In the past half century, Burma went from the richest country in Southeast Asia to the poorest, becoming one of the most obscure and obscured nations in the world. Burma is an anomaly. It's the most religious Buddhist country with every male entering the monastery at some point in his life to complete his monkhood. Along with Buddhism, fortune tellers and palm readers still have great influence on the people of Burma. Astrologers are treated like rock stars and publications touting predictions for coming years are among best sellers on newsstands.

In the past, the king was once guardian of the religion; today, the junta has assumed that role. Its military rulers operate with force and fear and with ubiquitous informers to control every aspect of life. Citizens are led to believe that every move they make is being watched and every word they said is being listening to. Foreign tourists, who are allowed to see the most Buddhist of peoples and pagodas, are reminded that behind the cultural façade stands the repressive regime that has held Nobel laureate democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest for 15 of the past 21 years. Economists say the country has a "resource curse"—the rulers make money off resources but don't share the wealth. The average per capita income is \$US435. Burma, once the rice bowl of Asia was in tatters. According one source, Burma now exports a meager 20,000 tons of rice.

When Chang Chien-Chi posed as a tourist to make these pictures, there always seemed to be shadows on his tail. Big Brother has many little brothers. Meanwhile the rest of Burmese continue to live through a real-life version of Animal Farm.

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Burmese Days , Single-channel Video Installation, 1080x1920p, 5min 37sec, 2011
Courtesy of Chang Chien-Chi / Magnum Photos / Chi-Wen Gallery

Encounters 12 | Yu Cheng-Ta | The Letters (Live Performance) | 2014

Have you ever opened your email trash folder to check for a lost message, only to find a long plea for help from an important bureaucrat of a foreign government? I get them often and love reading them. Commonly referred to as Nigerian scams, these emails are usually automatically deleted, and tell of some personal difficulty, or perhaps promise an international job, but ultimately aim for the recipient's banking information in the hopes of committing fraud. I find it interesting that at the start of their game the writers often try to construct a recognizable identity, thus merging reality with their convoluted stories.

All of the emails for Yu Cheng-Ta's project *The Letters* were selected from his trash folder. For the project he has invited participants who match the description of those in the letters to read them aloud while sitting at a desk in front of a green backdrop with an image of the Earth. Reading aloud transforms the letters into oral accounts, and simulates a mutually imagined scam, that of the imagined figure of the performer and the self transformation of the letter writer. The project includes video screenings of a dying Kuwaiti widow, a Libyan prime minister's son in need of help, an Asian woman affecting a British accent, and an Irish salesman using an assumed name. Audience members are also invited to commit a crime with a teller from an international African bank. All of this is to help the audience visualize the global enterprises these letters represent, as well as associate faces, ways of speaking and political realities with those represented by the letters.

At Art Basel HK14, the video works will be transformed into live performance, and the visitors will be the performers during the art fair. As Yu will provide a selection of scam letters, visitors will be invited to choose and read one of the letters. The performers will be required to show or play the emotions according to the content of the letter. Through this act of re-reading, the imagination of the relationship between public and

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scam will be revealed. All performances will be recorded completely, and then played between the shows.



The Letters (Live Performance) , Dimension Variable, Live Performance / Video Installation
Courtesy of artist and Chi-Wen Gallery

YU Cheng-Ya

Born in 1983, currently lives and works in Taiwan. Yu studied at the Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan. In 2008, he received the 1st place of Taipei Arts Award (TFAM, Taipei) and was awarded Beacon Prize at Art Fair Tokyo in 2012. Yu participated in the 6th Taipei Biennial and was selected as one of the artists to represent Taiwan at the 53rd Venice Biennale. In 2009, he participated in the Biennial Cuvée 08 at OK center for Contemporary Art in Linz, Austria, and In 2012, he participated in the 5th International Biennial of Media Art at Experimenta in Melbourne, Australia and Made in Asia Art Festival in Toulouse, France

About Chi-Wen Gallery

Founded in 2004 by Chi-Wen Huang, Chi-Wen Gallery is one of Taiwan's leading galleries, showing the best of contemporary Taiwanese art with a focus on video and photography. The gallery is dedicated to supporting emerging artists with curatorial projects that explore the most cutting-edge subjects and has been actively participating in local and international art fairs. As such Chi-Wen Gallery is very much connected with today's art and represents artists whose work continues to grow in historical importance.

Over the last decade Chi-Wen Gallery has fostered the careers of a diverse group of internationally renowned artists, both emerging and established, whose practices transformed the way art is made and presented in Taiwan today. These artists include Chen Chieh-Jen, Chang Chien-Chi, Peng Hung-Chih, Yao Jui-Chung, Hung Tung-Lu, Yuan Goang-Ming, Chen Shun-Chu, Wu Tien-Chang, Yeh Wei-Li, Tusi Kuang-Yu, Jawshing Arthur Liou, Yu Cheng-Ta and Tseng Yu-Chin among others.

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Gallery Location Map

1D19 | CHI-WEN GALLERY

Level 1 | To access the stand please enter level 1 through entrance 1D or 1C if you are holding a VIP card, otherwise through 1B.

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