

Chi-Wen Gallery



Chi-Wen Gallery at Frieze New York 2016 | Focus | A20

Represented Artist | Chien-Chi Chang

Chi-Wen Gallery for Frieze New York 2016 Focus will present Chien-Chi Chang's seminal work *The Chain*, which is a continuation of the gallery's objective to show Taiwanese art with a strong social message. While last year's presentation *China Town* addressed issues of international concern, *The Chain* has more local significance, bringing our focus closer to Taiwan.

The Chain is an intensely powerful photography project that contains forty-five 42 x 62 inches black-and-white images taken between 1993 to 1999 in a private mental institution in Taiwan. All of the photographs show the technique the institution has used to treat their patients: chaining two people together without hope of freedom or solitude. The institution calls the chains that bind these pairs of patients together the "Chain of Feeling." In this series, mental patients chained in pairs are photographed from a slightly low-angle vantage point and they appear larger than life when the photographs are installed two feet or higher from the ground.

Chang's photographs reveal the complex nature of alienation and connection how the chained men experience and explores the relationship between the individuals in each bonded pair. What makes this *The Chain* so powerful is that each pair photographed transmits a determined and individualistic existence before the lens, and many display almost confident expressions.

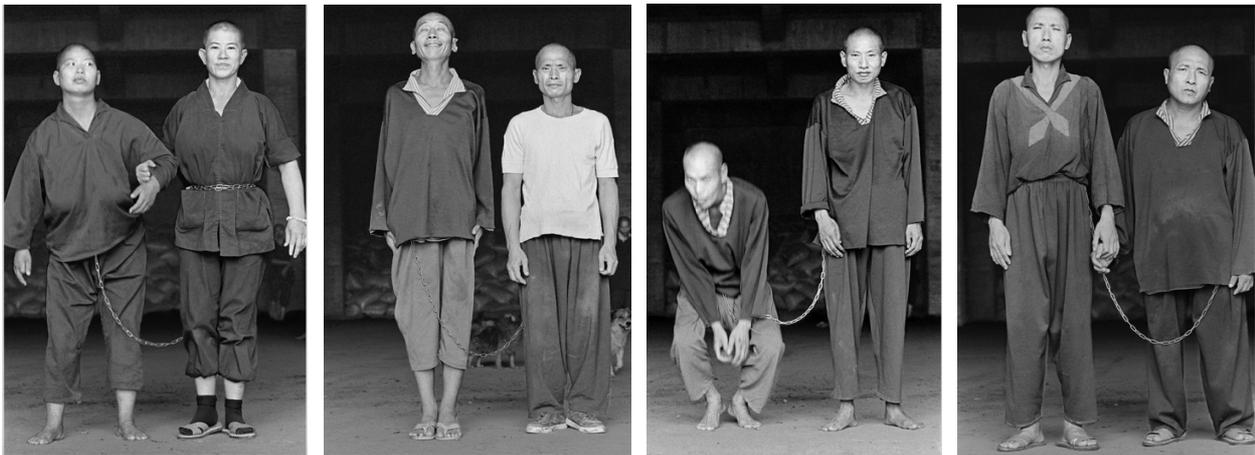
For Chang, the methodical repetition is not about repeating two identical things. It is about touching something universal. It's about adding another layer to the theme and, using visual means, intensifying the viewer's experience so that they see and feel, as he has, the power of the soul and humanity in the most helpless of people.

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"It can be said that the series probes beneath the surface of the complicated dialectical relationship among viewers, the viewed and the photographer: viewers as subjects, the artist as an observer, the subjects as artist." These co-existing and overlapping identities thereby arouse viewers' consciousness of the issues and images. *The Chain* exists as a metaphor on all levels in life. Often, the line between sanity and insanity is admittedly ill-defined and blurred. As the artist and the subject are "chained" together, the line is open for viewers to explore and investigate.

At the moment I press the shutter, I (the artist) am in control of the situation, but so are they (the subjects.)

— Chien-Chi Chang



About the Artist

Primarily using photography as his artistic medium, **Chien-Chi Chang (b.1961)** explores alienation and connection between people in contemporary society by developing long-term, interactive relationships with the subjects. In his earlier, well-known series *The Chain* (1993-1999) which was exhibited at the Taiwan Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2001 and the Bienal de São Paulo in 2002, Chang creates life-sized portraits of patients at Taiwan's Long Fa Temple psychiatric hospital. His 2002 series *I do I do I do* exposes subtle societal factors that underpin marriage using a photo album format. In his 2005 series *Double Happiness*, Chang

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uses a straight-forward format to document the marriage brokerage process used by Vietnamese brides and Taiwanese grooms.

Starting in 1992, Chang became interested in themes related to the dispersion of individuals or families from their homeland, and in the 20 years hence, followed the lives of illegal immigrants in New York City's Chinatown who left China as a matter of survival. Entitled *China Town* and still in progress, the series was exhibited in the artist's mid-career survey *Doubleness* at the National Museum of Singapore in 2008, and at the Taiwan Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2009. In 2007, Chang travelled with North Korean defectors from Northeast China to Thailand, documenting their lives for his work *Escape from North Korea*, which won the Canadian AnthroGraphia Award for Human Rights in 2011. In recent years Chang has expanded his medium to include sound and the moving images, which has enriched his photography-based narratives with additional, multiple elements.

Chang received his bachelor's degree from Soochow University in 1984, and his master's from Indiana University in 1990. He began a professional career as a photojournalist in 1991, and has worked for both the *Seattle Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*. He joined the world famous photographic cooperative Magnum Photos in 1995 and became a full member in 2001.

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

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transformed the way art is made and presented in Taiwan today. These artists include Chen Chieh-Jen, Chien-Chi Chang, Chen Shun-Chu, Hung Tung-Lu, Jawshing Arthur Liou, Peng Hung-Chih, Tusi Kuang-Yu, Wu Tien-Chang, Yao Jui-Chung, Yuan Goang-Ming, Yin-Ju Chen & James T. Hong, Yu Cheng-Ta and among others.