

Parklife: questioning the personal and the political in video art at Chi-Wen Gallery in Tianmu, Taiwan

Posted on 08/11/2017



Chi-Wen Gallery opens in Tianmu, Taiwan, with the inaugural exhibition "Parklife".

The exhibition features the artists Chien-Chi Chang, James T. Hong, Yin-Ju Chen, Jawshing Arthur Liou, Paul Gong and Heidi Voet.



Paul Gong 宮保睿, 'Human Hyena 人類鬃狗', 2014, images, tools details diagram, objects (Hyena Inhaler, Smell Transformer, Taste Transformer). Image courtesy artist and Chi-Wen Gallery.

A panorama of themes and ideas pervade **Chi-Wen Gallery's** first ever exhibition in its new Tianmu location. Featuring six emerging and mid-career contemporary artists, the exhibition investigates questions both political and personal, from different geographies. With artists intertwining their narratives with one another, "**Parklife**" at



Chien-Chi Chang 張乾琦, 'The War That Never Was 非戰之戰', 2017, single channel video, colour and sound, 15:40min. Image courtesy the artist and Chi-Wen Gallery.

Some of the works in the exhibition take a distinctly political bent, including **Chien-Chi Chang's** single channel video *The War that Never Was*. Using a range of archival material, such as photographs, film and sketches, Chang's video presents an intricate story about growing up in Taiwan. Investigating the past of his mother, who was born in 1938, the artist delves into her roles as a wife, a mother and a labourer. Weaving the personal narrative of his mother with the backdrop of the Cold War, the video is a look at the ways in which wider political issues intersect with more private, intimate family moments.

A member of the Magnum Photos cooperative since 2001, Chang often grapples with themes of migration, displacement, as well as conditions of life and living. Previous notable works include *China Town* (1992- ongoing), which sheds light on the lives of illegal immigrants who reside in New York City's Chinatown neighbourhood after being smuggled into the city. His photographic series *The Chain* (1993- 1999) was the subject of the Taiwan Pavilion of the **Venice Biennale** in 2001. Evocative and haunting, the series explored the profiles of patients in the Long Fa Tang sanatorium in Taiwan, where certain controversial methods of treating the mentally handicapped are still practiced.



Tao Hui 陶輝, 'The Dusk of Teheran', 2014, single channel HD video, colour and sound, 4:14min.
Image courtesy the artist and Chi-Wen Gallery.

Shifting the focus to Iran, **Tao Hui's** video work *The Dusk of Teheran* (2014) places an Iranian girl in the position of famed Hong Kong star Anita Mui, commenting on the parallels and divergences between the situation of the two women in life, love and marriage. Tao's film comments on the fact that certain rights of women are not upheld or protected by law in Iranian society. By having an Iranian girl re-create an iconic dialogue that took place between Anita Mui and her fans in a private car, Tao's film juxtaposes the real-life situation of the Iranian girl with Anita Mui's spoken dedication to pursue love and marriage on very different terms. Bringing together two different cultural perspectives into the same video frame, the work is strangely unnerving, with dialogue and image acting as counterpoint to one another.

Tao Hui's works often focus on culture and identity, and often revolve around staged scenes constructed for his video works. An established figure on the Chinese art scene, Tao Hui has exhibited at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Red Brick Art Museum and the Fondation Louis Vuitton, amongst other venues in Berlin, Shanghai and Hong Kong.



James T. Hong 洪子健, 'Apologies', updated for 2016, single channel video, colour and sound, 80min. Image courtesy the artist and Chi-Wen Gallery.

"Parklife" continues its political explorations in **James T. Hong's** *Apologies* (updated for 2016), a video work that features a compilation of public apologies by heads and other representatives of state. An 80-minute long work, the work considers the staging of public apologies, attempting to study it as a political and symbolic act. As Hong himself writes in the synopsis of *Apologies*,

The passage of time does not heal all wounds; it cannot settle all accounts or resolve all disputes. But the identities of the perceived perpetrators can change, and a national apology's task is to document and record a symbolic act as a prelude to possible reconciliation and forgiveness. To achieve these ends, one's sincerity is paramount, especially when reading from a script.

Based in Taiwan, James T. Hong often addresses philosophical themes and political issues, investigating narratives of Asia's histories and geographies through his film works. His four-channel video *Neitzsche Reincarnated as a Chinese Woman and their Shared Lives* (2016) was shown in the 10th **Taipei Biennale**. His films have been shown at international platforms such as the International Documentary Film Festival Rotterdam, The Berlin International Film Festival and the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, amongst others.



Yin-Ju Chen 陳滢如, 'Notes on Psychedelics 致幻記', 2015, installation: 3 videos, 1 recording, numerous archival images, texts and objects. Image courtesy the artist and Chi-Wen Gallery.

Other notable works include Paul Gong's *Human Hyena* (2014), a series of images, diagrams and objects that imagine a futuristic version of the human digestive system. Able to create new bacterias in order to consume and digest rotten food, not unlike that of hyenas, Gong's projections of a "human hyena" tackles the question of transhumanism and synthetic biology to deal with the problem of food wastage.

Jawshing Arthur Liou's *Sonnet 27* (2014) is also an exploration of scientific processes. Studying the ability of the brain to produce the chemicals that bind to the same receptors as marijuana's chemicals do, Liou's video shifts between visions of brain cells and landscapes, creating the illusion of distant memories and altered streams of consciousness. Yin-Ju Chen's *Notes on Psychedelics* (2015) is a video installation very much in the same vein. As a survey on drugs, consciousness and the soul, the video looks at why people consume psychedelic drugs and attempts to unpack the chemical processes that take place in the body after consumption.



Jawshing Arthur Liou 劉肇興, 'Sonnet 27', 2014, single channel video, sound, colour, 14:33min. Image courtesy the artist and Chi-Wen Gallery.

A show comprised of varied themes and ideas, "Parklife" covers a great deal of ground, providing a glance into

contemporary Chinese film and video art being produced in the region. The thirteen-year-old gallery continues with its focus on video and photographic work. According to Chi-Wen Huang, Director of the gallery, the space moved to Tianmu because of the conscious desire for “moving away from just showing art in a traditional white box environment, [but] instead looking at artists to create site-specific installations”. Now located in a residential house formerly used by diplomats with garden grounds, the gallery can look forward to introducing artists and their art into new contexts.

Junni Chen

1912

Related topics: **events in Taipei, Chinese artists, political art, photography, video**

Related posts:

- **“Captive of Love”: exploring urbanity with Danwen Xing at Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing** – October 2017 – drawing its title from French writer Jean Genet’s *Un Captif Amoureux*, the exhibition looks at Danwen Xing’s personal relationships with herself, her peers and her city
- **A Growing Platform for Photography and Moving Image in Asia: PHOTOFAIRS | Shanghai – round-up** – September 2017 – PHOTOFAIRS | Shanghai took place over the weekend, with over 50 galleries from 28 different cities exhibiting at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre
- **An Arena for Taiwanese and Korean contemporary artists at Taipei Fine Arts Museum** – September 2017– “An Art Arena for Taiwanese and Korean Contemporary Art” questions the distinction between ritual and installation, performance and exhibition
- **“Empirical Atlas”: the “post-post-colonial experience” of the 21st century at Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore** – October 2017– the latest show at Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore, takes a look at the identities, beliefs and society in our 21st century
- **An Electronic Monster: the light and sound art of Yao Chung-Han at Project Fulfill, Taipei** – August 2017 – Taiwanese sound and light artist Yao Chung-Han creates an electronic monster at Taipei Gallery Project Fulfill

Subscribe to *Art Radar* **for more news on contemporary art events in Taiwan**

Posted in **Chinese, East Asian, Feature, Gallery shows, New media, Photography, Promoting art, Taiwan, Taiwanese, Video**
Tagged **Chi-Wen Gallery, Chien-Chi Chang, Heidi Voet, James T Hong, Jawshing Arthur Liou, Junni Chen, Paul Gong, Tao Hui, Yin-Ju Chen**

 **permalink [http://artradarjournal.com/2017/11/08/parklife-exhibition-launching-new-chi-wen-gallery-space-in-tianmu-taiwan/]**