

Press Release

## Chien-Chi Chang

*Azma and Burma: The Promise Betrayed*

March 10 — April 28, 2018

Opening reception : 4-6 pm, Saturday, March 10



Chien-Chi Chang, *Refugee Camp, Idomeni, Greece*, 2016, C-print, 66.6 x 54 cm

Chi-Wen Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of the recent video and photographic works by Chien-Chi Chang. Humanity is explored alongside investigations into arguably the most important social and political issue of our time.

For the past few years, Chang has observed and documented the migration of refugees from Western Asia to Central Europe. The Syrians refer to this chaotic displacement of people as “Azma”, also the title of the video work, in which the artist records a human experience, a seemingly endless one, among the Syrian refugees on their travels to Greece, and then via Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, to arrive in Graz, Austria where the artist lives. Chang tries to make a comprehensive video project that will measure how political and other events reverberate in the region and the impact these have in the years to come.

## Chi-Wen Gallery



Chien-Chi Chang, *Rohingya, Sittwe, Burma*, 2016, C-print, 86.3 x 106.8 cm

*“The Lady is in her seventies now, and the promise of her infant democracy is fading.  
The military steps into the vacuum.  
The Rohingya flee by the hundreds of thousands into Bangladesh.  
The future looks grim.  
Instead of being a shining star, The Lady will become a sad historical footnote.”*

*Chien-Chi Chang*

In *Burma: The Promise Betrayed*, Chang mourns the passing of the Myanmar’s symbol of democracy. Aung San Suu Kyi, now the 1st State Counsellor of Myanmar, used to be called ‘The Lady’ for her courage in fighting against a brutal military junta. People hoped she would put things right, bring peace and end the Rohingya tragedy. Nevertheless, the civil war continues, and the ethnic cleansing only gets worse and the believers in human rights are being betrayed.

Furthermore, in collaboration with TheCube Project Space in Taipei, Chang’s solo project “The War That Never Was” will also be shown at TheCube during the same period.

## 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 temple. His 2001 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 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 25 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.

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