Exhibitions Checklist

Empire’s Borders II–Western Enterprises, Inc., 2010
2 parts, 23-5/8 x 16-1/2 in. (60 x 42 cm) each

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2010
Father's Legacies–II, 2010
Father's Legacies–III, 2010
Father's Legacies–IV, 2010
two-channel video, black & white, silent, 5:45 min.
photographic document

Chen Chieh-jen
Born in 1960, Taoyuan, Taiwan

Selected Group Exhibitions

2010
Tiefenrausch—Rapture of the Deep: Art and Tours through Taichung, Taiwan

Thermocline of Art: New Asian Waves, ZKM, Rennes, France

The 21st Century, The Feminine Century, and The Century of Diversity and Home, Taiwan Biennial 2008, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan

NS Harsha: Nations and Chen Chieh-jen: Factory, Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan

Memoria: Casting a Gaze, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan

Art Is For The Spirit: Works from The UBS Art Collection, Centro José Guerrero, Granada

Equal and Less Equal, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem

Revolt in the Soul & Body II, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei

Bijenkorf Award

Lingchi: Echoes of a Historical Photograph, installation in abandoned Haarlem, The Netherlands

Artes Mundi 4: Arts of the World, National Museum Cardiff, Cardiff, United Kingdom

Naked Life, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei

Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain, Museu d’Història de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Techniques of the Visible, 5th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai

Zones of Contact, 15th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney

Prospect.1 New Orleans, New Orleans

Quintessence, 17th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney

World Cinema Knoxville, The Standard is the official hotel of REDCAT.

The exhibition is made possible with support by the National Cultural and Arts Foundation of Taiwan.

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National Culture and Arts Foundation

631 West 2nd Street, Los Angeles, California USA 90012
Visit www.redcat.org or call +1 213 237 2800 for more information

Gallery Hours: noon-6pm or intermission, closed Mondays

Award

2004
National Award for Arts, The National Cultural and Arts Foundation, Taipei

2007
Prix de la Cité, Paris

2008
National Award for Arts, The National Cultural and Arts Foundation, Taipei

National Award for Arts, The National Cultural and Arts Foundation, Taipei

NS Harsha: Nations and Chen Chieh-jen: Factory, Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan

Memoria: Casting a Gaze, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan

Art Is For The Spirit: Works from The UBS Art Collection, Centro José Guerrero, Granada

Equal and Less Equal, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem
During the Cold War period of the 1950s, which coincided with ongoing hostilities between the Chinese Nationalist and Communist forces, the CIA established Western Enterprises in Taiwan. Working in cooperation with the Taiwan-based Nationalist Government, this operation trained soldiers in the Anti-Communist National Salvation Army, or NSA, for a surprise attack on Mainland China.

My father was a member of the NSA.

When my father passed away, he left a few items: an autobiography, a list of NSA soldiers who were killed in the attack on China when their vessel was sunk by PLA forces, an empty photo album and an old army uniform.

Father told my elder brother that those soldiers who had lost their lives in the attack were the sons of farmers and fishermen, just like himself. At that time, these men had few opportunities, and felt becoming soldiers was their only chance, even though it didn't pay a salary.

Father also said that the autobiography was not real, but just written to prove his allegiance to the authorities. He had burned the photographs that were in the album long before.

I once peeked at those photographs when I was a child. I remember seeing many pictures of my father with other NSA soldiers being trained by Western Enterprises.

I don't know why he burned those pictures, why he left that fake autobiography behind, or why he saved that hand-written and faded list of dead soldiers' names.

What did he hope to tell us with this empty album, fabricated autobiography and faded list of names? For my father, perhaps these things were difficult to face or impossible to forget.

I am unclear if he knew about the brutal crackdown on leftist factions in Taiwan at the time of his surprise attack on the Mainland; nor do I know how he viewed the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty, America’s politically motivated, cold-war economic aid and cultural propaganda during Taiwan’s martial law period, or the neo-liberal policies which followed.

Like many others of his time, my father preferred not to talk much about his life, but considering the surveillance of martial law, I can understand why he chose reticence. These fathers left behind a huge spiritual emptiness, and in this space devoid of evidence, we can only hear traces of their voices.

My video is a journey into this spiritual emptiness, a trip through the site of erased memories which Western Enterprises created, and an exploration of a society without records. It is not directed at discovering a distant other side, but rather at reaffirming the position of my own home in the world.

Empire’s Borders II–Western Enterprises, Inc.

By Chen Chieh-jen

These forms list soldiers from the South China Sea Division of the Anti-Communist National Salvation Army who lost their lives in a failed surprise attack against Mainland China. Most of the men wrote “impoverished” in the space labeled “family background.”

Father’s Legacies–II

One of the soldiers killed in the attack, Chen Rongchao, entrusted these items to my father. Among them was a photograph of the soldier’s newborn baby.

Father’s Legacies–III

My father wrote this autobiography for the military authorities to demonstrate his loyalty to the state.

Father’s Legacies–IV

This empty photo album originally held photographs of the CIA (Western Enterprises) training Taiwan’s Anti-Communist National Salvation Army. My father had burned the photographs.

Father’s Legacies–V

My father left this army uniform when he passed away.