



Chen Chieh-jen

Empire's Borders II – Western Enterprises Inc

Preview: 1 October, 18:00-21:00

Exhibition dates: 2 October to 20 November



Chinese Arts Centre is pleased to present a solo exhibition of the work of Chen Chieh-jen. The exhibition will be the UK premier of Chen Chieh-jen's latest video work *Empire's Borders II – Western Enterprises Inc.* (2010) together with the single-screen video *Empire's Borders I* (2009) and archival material.

Internationally acclaimed Taiwanese video artist Chen Chieh-jen sees his work as 'an act of connection, linking together the history of people who have been excluded from the dominant discourse.' In his concern with recent history he is acutely aware of Taiwan's own complex political status as a country with limited international recognition.

The main piece in his project for Chinese Arts Centre is a new three-screen HD video installation and photographic/documentary archive *Empire's Borders II—Western Enterprises, Inc.* The piece is based on a number of documents the artist's late father left behind, which painted an intriguing picture of a life lived in cold-war secrecy. They hinted at the politics of an era when the CIA cooperated with Taiwanese intelligence and trained the Anti-Communist National Salvation Army on its long-abandoned mission to retake the Chinese mainland. As Chen said, his father rarely talked about his work; the only fact he acknowledged was that the autobiography he wrote was fictional. Chen's new film project is about his father's journey, about his imagination and his own imagination.

Almost all of Chen's recent films have dealt with the impact of global capitalism on individuals, through various systems of exchange. Earlier works, like *Factory* or *Bade Area* focused on the impact that the free movement of goods had on the lives of people as factories for new goods (first textiles, then computers) rapidly became the sources of Taiwan's new wealth, only to close down even faster a few decades later when industrial production moved to mainland China and elsewhere. In *Empire's Borders I*, the artist shifted

his attention from the impact of global trade to the human stories of immigration and emigration, told in the words of Chinese immigrants to Taiwan and Taiwanese immigrants to the USA. This first film in the new series dealt with attempts of individuals to acquire or assert their normality and legitimacy in the face of bureaucratic state apparatuses (border controls, visa regulations).

Empire's Borders II, now, introduces another twist. The actors are the same: the USA, Taiwan and mainland China. But where the first film showed how states take bureaucratic and legal steps to lock down their borders against the movement of individuals, this second project takes its inspiration from the surreptitious cross-border movements of individuals in irregular army units acting on behalf of the state. To do this, Chen turns his gaze not on the secretive military episodes themselves but on the civilian companies set up to provide a legitimate front for these operations. *Empire's Borders II* becomes a search for Western Enterprises, Inc, in Taiwan today, updating the Cold War tropes to show up their legacy in the contemporary world.

The exhibition is presented as part of the AND festival and is curated by Dr Marko Daniel with Yu-Ling Chou as assistant curator.

The exhibition is made possible with support by the Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan.

Image credit

Empire's Borders II, Chen Chieh-jen, 2010, Video Still

Notes to Editors:

Chen Chieh-jen is an internationally acclaimed video artist. He represented Taipei in the Venice Biennale in 2009, has been selected for Artes Mundi 2010, was included in the curated shows at the 1999 and 2005 Venice Biennales, the Liverpool Biennial 2006 and is showing in the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial in 2009-10. He has had solo exhibitions at the Asia Society, New York, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía 2008. In 2000 he was awarded the Special Prize at the Gwangju Biennale in Korea and in 2009 he was awarded Taiwan's prestigious National Award for Arts for outstanding cultural achievement.

Abandon Normal Devices (AND) is a regional festival, taking place across the Northwest and is a catalyst for production and experimentation at the intersection of Digital Culture and New Cinema. The AND festival will be in Manchester from 1-7 October 2010.

Chinese Arts Centre was established in 1986 and is the international agency for the development of contemporary Chinese artists. Following on from a £2.5 million Lottery grant, it opened its purpose built Centre in November 2003 and received a RIBA award for architecture and was a finalist for the accessible building of the year in 2004. In 2006 Chinese Arts Centre was proud to receive a Pearl Award for Creative Excellence.

Listings information

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Public Opening Times: Tues-Sat 10am – 5pm * Please note that we will also be open on Sunday 3 & Monday 4 October as part of the AND festival.

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