

**Taipei Fine Arts Museum Press Release**

Released by: TFAM International & Public Relations Office

Release Date: 2015.01.30

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**Chen Shun-Chu: Coral Stone Mountain**

Exhibition date: 2015/01/24 - 2015/04/26

Venue: Gallery 3A&3B&3C



Memories In the Wind: Farm, 1998

The late artist Chen Shun-Chu's (1963-2014) first retrospective *Chen Shun-Chu: Coral Stone Mountain* has opened on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Taipei Fine Arts Museum at 3PM on Jan 24 (Sat). Chen Shun-Chu, emerging from the post-Martial Law era of contemporary art in Taiwan, had combined his photography with objects of historical sentiments and a concentrated sense of time into the composite video installation infused with personal feelings and memories of his heritage. Surmounting the pictorial and documentary functions of traditional photography, Chen was able to summon the collective emotion hidden within society in becoming a pioneer of the 90's composite video installation art in Taiwan.

Huang Hai-Ming, Director of TFAM, on this retrospective exhibition, commented on Chen Shun-Chu's courage in face of our inevitable death and his delicate treatment of the impact and strength brought forth by emotion and nostalgia of the family. Over the decades, his artworks were the media between life and death to transcend the barriers of personal life experience – further reaching into the reflective perspective for all of mankind.



Installation view

This exhibition is titled after the “coral stone” that is unique to Chen Shun-Chu’s birthplace of Penghu, where he departed and crossed into the Taiwan Strait. His attachment and nostalgia for his hometown and heritage have continued to circle his head and become the key subjects of his creations. The coral stone is a lightweight and porous reef-type rock that built the walls of homes of Penghu over the centuries. In Chen Shun-Chu’s creations, he then borrowed the coral stone as his hometown image and reflected upon the complex and inseparable emotions of nostalgic homeland.

On the exhibition floor, the curator Fang Mei-Jing evenly split the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of TFAM down the center into left and right sections. Chen’s works of *Shigandang*, *The Message of the Oceans*, *Family Dwelling 4x5 3 Times*, and among others are placed along the center line from the entrance respectively.



Installation View: *Assembly: Family Parade*, 1999; *The Message of the Oceans*, 1993

On the right side of the exhibition space are Chen’s early works on the subject of family. *The Family Black Boxes* is a 1992 series that was created using old photos of

Chen's family with fragments of old furniture that were hand painted and given new life as a piece of art. Accumulation of time and space layers is condensed into the aged objects – where dead insects, lint, light bulb, and antique furniture are the composite media in this photographic work. The thin sheets of photo paper are constructed and interpreted by the artist to exude a sense of alienation with desires of warm and strength. *Assembly, Family Parade* is a large-scale landscape installation and video project created by Chen that includes photo portraits of 6 family members from Penghu and 3 friends from Taipei that he took between 1992 and 1995. This piece then won the "Taipei Award" at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Taipei Art Exhibition and was also invited to be shown in Fukuoka Japan and Prague Czech. After finishing his 1990 photography series *Image & Imagery* on his hometown of Penghu, Chen used his sharp senses to pick out the once buried family memories and memorabilia to create a new dimension of aesthetics by combining the intangibles with the lives of the past.



*Assembly: Family Parade-Penghu House I, 1995*

The left side of the exhibition space features the most recent works of the artist's career within the decade. Chen had moved into his new home in the mountain area of Xindian, New Taipei City, in 2002 and married Fu Ben-Jun in 2006. *The Remnant Vision* series was infused with strands of his wife's hair to express his deep love and regret toward her, while the extraordinary landscape was the result of his pacing through life. *The Family Dwelling 4x5 3 Times* series was created after the renovation work was done to his Xindian home, an anchor to his journey across the Taiwan Strait. Living in the mountains of Xindian and breathing the nature air had provided the artist with rehabilitation and strength for a new start – far away from old memories. Chen and his artist friends banded together as the "Xindian Boys" in

an attempt to transform the Xindian mountain life into paintings, photographs, and video installation. This was a departure from his individual art style and Chen's work titled "Xindian Boys" is also to be showcased at the exhibition.



The Remnant Vision – Psychic Landscape II, 2011; Xindian Boys, *Determination of Life*, 2012

In 2014, Chen featured the images of coral stone in his new series titled *Reincarnation: Coral Stone Mountain* that combined serigraphy prints with acrylic ink to transform the towering and irregular coral stones of his hometown into majestic altars with offerings of flowers, beans, and fruits. The vitality of his art and creations is mixed with homeland nostalgia to fill in the holes of memories of his hometown.

"Chen Shun-Chu: Coral Stone Mountain" features nearly 200 pieces of artworks from Chen's career, including images, manuscripts, and video from the 80s during his days at the art college and mandatory service in the military. It is a comprehensive retrospective on his entire life and creative trajectory through his artistic experiments in the visual aesthetics and multi-fold semantics of photography in Taiwan. He draws inspiration from life but is able to see past the sentiments hidden behind the object through rational and solitary observation. Chen led a plentiful art career and was not afraid to break the creative mold to continuously expand upon the unfinished works and possibilities in photography. He saw through the past and peered into the future, and his works had then led us to see from the future into the past. For this large-scale retrospective exhibition, TFAM aims to present Chen's creative language, abundance of artistic performance to reach out to the general public. As for the contemporary and photography artists in search of a new context, Chen's achievement in art not only offers a glimpse into the past but also the paves the way toward the future.