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Taipei Fine Arts Museum News Release

July 12, 2018

Contact person: Yumei Sung, +886 2 2595-7656 ext.107; [yumei@tfam.gov.tw](mailto:yumei@tfam.gov.tw)

TFAM Official website: <http://www.tfam.museum/>

TFAM Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/taipeifineartsmuseum/>

Exhibition period: May 11, 2019 – November 24, 2019

Venue: Palazzo delle Prigioni, Venice, Italy

## **Artist Shu Lea Cheang to Represent Taiwan at 2019 Venice Biennale**

Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) is delighted to announce Shu Lea Cheang as the sole artist, representing Taiwan at the 58th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale 2019. She is the first woman artist to be selected since Taiwan began holding single-artist exhibitions at the Venice Biennale. The nominating committee was composed of a variety of professionals including independent curators, performing arts planners, artists, and art critics, affording broader room for debate and inspiration.

Taipei Fine Arts Museum director Ping Lin remarks: “The Venice Biennale is an international platform. Once every two years, we gather the Taiwanese contemporary art world together to imagine what this platform can be. In recent years Taiwanese artists and art institutions have elevated their participation in the global art community, generating a more refined and complex network of connections. For this reason, the nominating committee employed a greater level of strategic thinking, coloring their artist recommendations with stronger overtones of global strategy. Shu Lea Cheang, a pioneer of net art, not only in Taiwan but around the world, emerged as the first choice.”

Cheang remarks: “Since my net art work *BRANDON* (1998-1999), a trajectory charged with detours and deviations has teleported me to Palazzo delle Prigioni, Venice, where crimes and punishment are revisited in a 16<sup>th</sup> century prison setting. My growing up in Taiwan was much associated with a tightly controlled society under Taiwan's martial law (1949-1987). My return to Taiwan after decades of living abroad has exposed me to a liberated, intricate and generous new generation with whom I have only now begun to become acquainted. To be representing Taiwan in its current complex state is a tremendous task, and I am grateful to be accompanied on this venture by the visionary curator Paul B. Preciado and the dedicated VB team at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.”

### **Contemporary Net Art Pioneer**

Shu Lea Cheang (1954-) grew up in Taiwan and established her own distinctive perspective of art while living in the West, quickly carving out a terrain of her own in the internet world. Considering herself a “digital nomad,” her artistic footprints span Asia, Europe and North America. Her work encompasses such forms as net art installation, feature-length films, and art actions, in which she explores and rethinks the middle ground between technology and humanity in the era of globalization, repeatedly engaging in dialectic on social and political issues such as gender and body politics, ethnic and cultural diversity, history, and the environment.

The works of Shu Lea Cheang have always revolved around the nature of electronic/digital technology, emphasizing collective participation and intervention. In the 1980s Cheang was active in the production of independent videos and grass-roots television programs, as well as

documenting the street demonstrations taking place at the time in New York. She also began working in video art, launching her career as an artist. In the 1990s she began to explore net art, creating installations combining computer programs and video interaction that connected virtual networks with real spaces. She also started a series of creative, performance and action projects. Her work *BRANDON* (1998-1999) was the first web art commissioned and collected by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. Since 2000 she has anchored her works in the scenario of a post-netcrash age, developing a science fiction narrative as a countervailing force amidst the chorus of optimism about the future of the internet. Cheang's work initiates an alternative imagining of the internet beyond its essential function as digital communication technology, transforming it into an artistic medium of collective creation, and inviting viewers to enter its milieu to discuss contemporary social issues. By creating collective experiences that cross cultures and bridge the virtual and real worlds to promote the redistribution of ideas with the aim of achieving genuine social action, she manifests the concept of contemporary art as a form that spans physical boundaries in the digital age.

### **International Curation**

To strengthen the international connections of the exhibition and open up multiple dialogues with the global art community, Taipei Fine Arts Museum and Shu Lea Cheang jointly agreed to invite the Spanish philosopher Paul B. Preciado (1970-) to serve as curator, in light of his apprehension of the creative context and the tacit understanding he has formed with the artist through long-term cooperation. Preciado earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Theory of Architecture from Princeton University and studied under Jacques Derrida in New York City. Preciado is today one of the leading thinkers in the fields of gender, sexuality, and body studies, following the steps of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. He has taught at Université Paris VIII-Saint Denis and at New York University, served as Head of Research at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, and was Curator of Public Programs for documenta 14 in 2017. With his solid reputation as academic scholar and curator, Preciado's visionary projects dovetail with the Shu Lea Cheang's creative background, lending the upcoming exhibition an interpretive approach able to penetrate the tension of the artworks.

Preciado states: "We are living through a moment of planetary transformation with the advent of artificial intelligence, sophisticated warfare technologies, genetic engineering, and global internet. This is a paradigm shift only comparable to the one that took place with the invention of the printing press and global colonization. The political and poetic potentiality of this moment is as big as the risks of building new forms of oppression and exclusion. We need new grammars and new images in order to forge a new subjectivity, to invent new ways of feeling and desiring. I see Shu Lea Cheang's work as one of the most powerful creative and experimental tools to navigate this transition. Bringing together many underground traditions, from transfeminism, queer and anti-racist politics, as well as science fiction narrative, video art, and performance, Shu Lea Cheang's work is a reflection on what it means to be free, to act freely within contemporary society. The historic halls of the Palazzo delle Prigioni Venice, the former prison of the Palazzo Ducale, are an exquisite site to think about the conditions of contemporary subjection, about the constructed limits between normalcy and deviancy, as well as to imagine new emancipatory practices."

Further information on Shu Lea Cheang can be found at: <http://mauvaiscontact.info>