

Island Tales: Taiwan and Australia Taipei←→Perth

By curator, Chien Cheng-Yi

Your geography has become a history; your history has become a fiction.

—Excerpted from Stand-up comedy *The Night We Became HsiangSheng Comedians*

The Chinese word for tales, *xiaoshuo*, first appeared in the chapter of *Zhuangzi* called “External Things.” Literally meaning “small talk,” it refers to trivial discussions or minor musings. Compared to the traditional ideal of histories – “to depict the past faithfully” – *xiaoshuo* actually rewrite the past and retell events using imagined words and writing, connecting interpretations of time and place through recollection (*remémoration*). This exhibition will attempt to conceptualize tales using the unique perspective of the “mirror images” of the history, exploring the two lands of Taiwan and Australia through a series of fantasy constructions, oral stories, ruminations, rumors, memoirs, little intimate accounts, or circuitous and trivial narratives.

The origins of this exhibition date back to 1999, when Taipei and Perth signed a sister city agreement. This year, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this sister city relationship, Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts will join hands to explore a constructed landscape of spatialized time, addressing the subversion and reconstruction of the authority over historical truth through the model of curatorial exchanges and planned exhibition themes. This is not only legendary rendering of local memories, but also “talk” about “small” things: private, insignificant matters that respond to the many possibilities of time and encounter in an ocean of words and stories. They may serve as anchors in the mutual history of Australia and Taiwan, Perth and Taipei. They may examine how, in an age of discontinuity, we encounter our own memories or forgotten experiences, and try to write and talk about them. Finally, the exhibition will be located on the second floor of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum: a historical space designated for the exhibition of modern art (as opposed to present-day, avant-garde contemporary art). How will we interact with this space and narrate its different meanings and interpretations?

For this exhibition, we anticipate recruiting the participation of 13 contemporary artists or art collectives from Taiwan and Australia. They will embark on a journey of narration, taken not to trace back the past, but to reimagine the imaginary gap between the past and the present. Like storytellers returning from afar, the artists will bring loquacious memories and dreams, plots both spoken and unspoken, frivolous words, strange stories and texts, projecting us into misplaced time, fictional reality, and tiny yet personal stories. They will cause us to reconsider whether we really understand our own encounters, or the meaning of time and space, or whether, perhaps, understanding itself is a completely illusory fiction.