

Contemporary Asian
Photography
亞洲當代攝影展
Part II

STS

HOU LuLu Shur-Tzy
TING Chaong-Wen
I-Hsuen CHEN

侯淑姿
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NOW

ARTISTS

HOU Lulu Shur-Tzy, (Taiwan, 1962–) was born in Chiayi, Taiwan. In 1985, she graduated from the Department of Philosophy at National Taiwan University and in 1992 she received a Master of Fine Art degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology, USA. Now she is an Associate Professor at the Department of Crafts and Creative Design of the National University of Kaohsiung. In 2017, her solo exhibitions “Out of Place — A Trilogy on Kaohsiung Military Dependents’ Villages” at Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, the artist’s creative work involving Kaohsiung’s Zuoying and Fengshan military dependents’ villages over the course of many years. HOU has been widely exhibited in numerous international exhibitions including the Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art (2019); Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (2018); Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (2012); Kokanecho Art Bazaar, Yokohama (2014) and in 2017, her works “Song of Asian Foreign Brides in Taiwan” were published in the book: “Creating Across Cultures: Women in the Arts of China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan”, which featured the stories of 16 leading Chinese women artists.

TING Chaong-Wen, (Taiwan, 1979–) was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. He graduated from the Tainan National University of the Arts in 2006, and currently lives and works in Tainan. Ting specializes in mixed media installation incorporated with images and objects. Drawing inspiration from his personal experience, his works often reveal specific historical narratives created by embedding readymades in specific exhibition contexts. With surprising and innovative attempts, the artist deconstructs, extends and re-interprets the collective history while examining material culture, historic conflicts, collective memory and transnational phenomena and problems. His works have been extensively exhibited in numerous art museums and biennials, among which are Asian Art Biennial (National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung; 2019); High Tide 17 –Fremantle Biennale (Artsource, Fremantle; 2017); Nakanojo Biennale 2017 (Former Hirozakari Brewery, Gunma, Japan; 2017); Citation from Craft (The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; 2017); Taipei Biennial 2016.

I-Hsuen CHEN, (Taiwan, 1982–) was born and raised in Taiwan. After receiving an MFA in Photography from Pratt Institute in 2012, he now lives and works in Taipei. He has an interdisciplinary practice that experiments with photography, publishing, video installation, and performance. CHEN’s work has been shown at photo festivals and biennials internationally, including New York Photo Festival (2012), Singapore International Photography Festival (2014), Taipei Biennial (2016), Lianzhou Foto Festival (2016), JIMEI ARLES International Photography Festival (2016), and Offline Browser—Taiwan International Video Art Exhibition (2018). His work is also in the Permanent Collections of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Kadist Collection.

CRISIS OF NOW
Contemporary Asian
Photography Part II

by Chun-Chi WANG

Contemporary Asian Photography is an exhibition series that takes a close look at contemporary culture and art practice from Asian artists’ perspectives. The exhibitions concentrate on specific pieces of history and life experiences, but also attempt to construct or discover relationships between historical contexts from varied perspectives. Specifically, they make observations either from different geographical locations synchronously, or from the same location at different times. The personal experiences and collective consciousness are linked with multiple historical trajectories charted by the vicissitudinal political and social forces.

In Part II of the Crisis of Now series we invited three Taiwanese artists—I-Hsuen CHEN, HOU Lulu Shur-Tzy and TING Chaong-Wen to present their contemporary photography through multi-cultural observations. Each work to liberate artworks and aesthetics from reductive classifications and fetishization ingrained in systems of power and interpretation. Each work on view takes up varying methods of collaboration that the artist has employed throughout their practice.

[01]–[08] I-Hsuen CHEN’s photographic series *Still Life Analysis II: The Island* (2015–16) feature household objects of vagrants living beneath the Taipei’s Civic Boulevard expressway. Such objects include trash, unidentified discarded objects, and plants. For the artist, the underside of Civic Boulevard resembles a subtropical island with its artificial stones and potted plants decor. On this island, “citizens” carry with them “objects” that temporarily occupy spaces that could be called home before being removed by the authorities. In contrast, real estate advertisements are crowded together nearby and praise an idyllic, beautiful housing environment and depict the collective desire of Taipei inhabitants for home and lifestyle. The artist collected the written information and advertising slogans, yet eliminated the sales details, such as project names and locations, leaving apparent the blanks and punctuations. What is left of these commercial messages takes the form of poetry, gathered in *Real Estate Poem*, shown alongside the photographs. A shift in the viewing perspective with the photographs’ subject occurs when pages of the poems are reversed (sometimes presented upside down), echoing the experience of the island “citizens” under the expressway. Between satire and mourning, the work attempts to situate oneself on the thin line separating the private and the public, to address tensions between homelessness and senses of home and to question the nature of property in constant, fluctuating relationships of occupation, re-occupation, and elimination.

[9]–[12]

HOU Lulu Shur-Tzy relies on her photographic record, interviews, and active intervention to produce art in social spaces. HOU utilized a scattered image narrative in *Here is Where We Meet* (2013) to illustrate the effortlessness and sadness navy military village resident experiencing in the implementation of Military Dependents’ Villages Reconstruction Act. Moreover, *Remains of the Day* (2015) reveals the historical memories and bereaved fate of the first Military Dependents’ Village in Taiwan, Huangpu Village. In the field, the artist has deep empathy with the residents. They create a public history and start a conversation with Taiwan’s societies. Her artwork related to the issue of the late military dependent village time, she carries on a dialogue with the residents and reflects social-economic issues of modern Taiwan.

*The trilogy, which consists of the *Here is Where We Meet* series published in 2013, the *Remains of the Day* series published in 2015 and the *Out of Place* series published in 2017.

[13]–[18]

TING Chaong-Wen’s work *Prophet and North* (2018) attempts to re-examine the political figures in the history of autonomy, especially the early Tainan County Council. The photographs are part of the *Prophet and North* series, discussing how the ideology of the country’s rulers can be spread or enhanced by symbols in space. Completed in 1980, the council building has an Eight Trigrams-shaped roof whose corners and ridge were ornamented with statues of immortals riding beasts appropriated from ancient Chinese architecture. This kind of architectural elements resembling the style of the northern palaces appeared abundantly in the official architectural design of the 1970s, incarnating how art was employed as an instrument for political propaganda. After the county council was moved into the building, the Eight Trigrams with the function of exorcism and golden glazed tiles as symbols of emperor failed to bring better feng shui. Many councilors died of disease or accidents, arousing clamorous rumors. The county people rumored that the Chinese-style official building had the negative effect of worsening the feng shui, leading to the final decision of the council to remove the roof crown to appease the voices from all parties. Although this incident happened after Chen Huazong had died of the car accident for more than a decade, all sorts of rumors around local politics implying coincidences and conspiracies remained to be exorcised.

This publication includes a series of texts: an essay written by CHANG Shih-Lunby, “Between Transparency and Blur”; HUANG Sun-Quan, “Out of Place—HOU Lulu Shur-Tzy and Her Trilogy on Kaohsiung Military Dependents’ Villages”; JIA Tzu-Chieh, “A Pleat in Tainan City Hall (Minzhi). On TING Chaong-Wen’s Photographic Works *Prophet and North*”.



I-Hsuen CHEN, *The Parking Space underneath the Taxi Driver*, 2016

[01]

[02] Stone Gap #3, 2016

by CHANG Shih-Lun



consideration, as a rather productive artist, his works seem to be often attached to the vague and unclear characteristics of image as a communicational medium. In other words, under the smooth and minimal compositions on the video screens or photo surfaces exists another layer of underlying essence which is more sophisticated and directs, on the one hand, toward the photographed objects depicted and, on other hand, overlaps the artist's own life history itself and the medium of image per se that he operates.

Nowhere in Taiwan (2011) is a photography project I-Hsuen CHEN undertook in the form of visual travelogue during his short stay in Taiwan after studying in the U.S. Due to the wandering and shifting position of his role, daily scenes which look ordinary, familiar yet also isolating, wonderful and even at times somewhat perplexing can now be, with his "defamiliarized" vision, extracted out of sceneries of his mother country supposed to be familiar. The most impressive feature of the series might be the perspective which seems to get closer to scenes of daily life yet always remains slightly distanced. Such angle seems to reveal to a certain extent the artist's complex between calm and passion; it involves a kind of "close yet distanced" vague identity and a certain viewpoint acquired through the impossibility to remain like before or completely become different due to personal experience and cultural impact.

The “nowhere” in the work’s title means, on the one hand, images that resist interpretation and are hard to pin down. These “nowheres” seem to be situated among edges and corners of our habitual vision; they are generally fleeting if we do not pay attention, yet always arouse some strange feeling of *déjà vu* but also some strangeness and isolation. The second layer of the meaning of “nowhere” signifies the artist’s reflection on his position. If his country is no longer so stable and reliable a “root” and the foreign land barely provides completely steady psychological comfort and source of meaning, perhaps from “here” to “elsewhere”, the thoroughly searched, ever-presenting “nowhere” and the convergent and divergent “routes” eventually still cannot lead to “somewhere” where all can be fixed and people, places and times can fall into place. Yet the key is actually the “process” of such “path-finding” and the meaning lies exactly in the “process” itself. The recurrent sense of path in the images do not seem to guarantee smooth rides and destinations

[03]

[04] *A Yellow Blanket on a Wooden Pallet*, 2016

Real Estate Poem #5, Print, 2016



園第一排經典的旁第一排塑造以紐約中央公園、在壯闊樹海之前，漂浮起如詩的賞景月灣閣臺。

鐘直達
、
近距
、
緊鄰
、
動靜分明的生活美學，因為一座
綿延的公園樹海更顯得珍貴。

公園、樹海森澗相伴、公園
道雍容風景。
擁景、賞景、也成為一。

10分

However, perhaps just as the crooked and seemingly endless routes full of obstacles in *Nowhere in Taiwan*, the meaning of the images remains open, as if under its smooth surface is hidden another inner side full of essence. Its blur and ambiguity characterized the work's visual aspects and also prove the similarity of this kind of visual creation to prose, with the charm of images mainly coming from intuitive and phenomenological experience and feeling rather than rational analysis on an intellectual level. In contrast to the conceptual path-finding of

in front. Rather, seemingly suspended or abandoned visual imageries reoccur. The abandoned cars, left objects, houses in decay and fatigued bodies seem to imply a longing for settling down, the difficulty of belonging and the necessity to get back on the road again and again, to search and explore (and...of the corresponding helplessness and vain to a certain extent). These scenes of “nowhere” are mostly photographed with a clear and transparent style. Yet, as if of a self-contradiction, they mostly imply blur and loosening of ideas of “home” or “homeland”. Perhaps the concept of “uncanny” in cultural theories allows for grasping some core spirits of the series. Originated from the Freudian theory and somewhat difficult to translate into Chinese, “uncanny” originally comes from the German term “unheimlich” which literally means “unhomely”, meaning that, despite the appearance of “home”, some strange and weird details and textures which are isolating and full of barriers are often revealed through seemingly ordinary appearances. Therefore, “unhomely” is neither simply “not home” nor a complete negation of “home”; it should not be regarded as sudden deviation of “home” but rather means, in a stable setting which “home” is supposed to be, all kinds of déjà-vu yet slightly estranged

home and homeland in *Nowhere in Taiwan*, I-Hsuen CHEN's experience of living abroad is treated through another series—*In Between* (2013). Pertinent comparative reading applies between the two works. *In Between* presented in the form of a book comprises an image documentation of his two years of American life. There is no footnote or caption. The content is entirely composed of single photographs on daily life presented in the form of double-page bleeding. Since each image's center is precisely at the binding seam of the book, the core of the photos supposed to be their "punctums" are no longer clearly visible due to the material interference of the vehicle of the images (the book). Rather, half covered, attracting yet also resisting, the series foregrounds the "close yet distanced" relation of gaze between the viewer and the image. The "in between" in

庭園景觀以補栽、生態、藝術為概念
創造景觀的深度與公私區隔
空間與環境無垠對接與自然共鳴。
讓出人行步道。
大幅退縮

the work's title tells I-Hsuen CHEN's position in a foreign land while demonstrating the impossibility of communication of the experience of being "in-between." Just like "punctums" of the photos printed at the seam "in between" pages imply another level of concealing and covering often brought by images in their revelation and foregrounding. Therefore, the visibility and the invisibility are actually two faces of the same coin. Thus, the "nowhere" in *Nowhere in Taiwan* and the "in-between" in *In Between* both represent I-Hsuen CHEN's reflection on his personal situation and a practical exercise about the limit of photography as a communicational act. Both series waver between transparency and opacity so as to seek a visual narratology that wanders between two poles and appeals to intuition and poeticness.

It is actually more difficult to regard *Nowhere in Taiwan* from the angle of genre. Even though the artist admits it is made with an artistic tradition similar to American road photography, there are still nuances between its more calm and steady visual expression and such style of being "on the road" in the Western context.

Some critics categorizes it into some new wave of photography with a tendency of what they call "field work". But the artist's image practice is centered on the "process" and the "route" actually does not carry such a strong orientation toward agenda and finality as in the case of field survey. It is also hard to cover the shooting range of "nowhere" with existed photographic categories like landscape, portrait, mental image, ruin, city, country, etc., as if much is to be lost if only one is picked, thereby limiting the space of image interpretation. Maybe the most outstanding artistic achievement of *Nowhere in Taiwan* lies in the fact that it is easily recognizable and allows for grasping a general idea at first glance while, magically, without having to reveal actual people, events, time, places and things, to show off local customs or to turn aspects of Taiwan into signs. Neither retro, nostalgic nor persistently contemporary and innovative, it turns and wanders among diverse routes, representing things with a lightness close to that of prose, thereby extracting some visual sensibility that characterizes Taiwan's context (without being attached to it only). It relates to an individual (without being narcissistic) while incessantly pointing to the significance of photography per se.



[06] The Objects under the Civic Boulevard, 2016

在 這裡，交匯著湖光山色、
腹地，以及 眼中的 順景、
優閒節奏、讓在地人喜愛， 嚮往，交織出最
豐厚的樂活地圖。
好嚮往、生活彷彿天天是輕旅行！
好迷人、喜出望外
好棒棒、
好難得、旁
！ ！ ！

[08] Some Wall Plants on the Acoustic Barrier, 2016



Out of Place—HOU Lulu Shur-Tzy and Her Trilogy on Kaohsiung Military Dependents’ Villages

by HUANG Sun Quan

In *Here Is Where We Meet*, the art critic and novelist John Berger invented a unique perspective: it is through a city space that we really come to know people; a city’s cultural and historic aura as well as smells are the real encounters in the world. Space is both a reminiscent mechanism and a base for human encounters. Parents, lovers, teachers and the brilliant minds influencing him profoundly are all spatialized social relations. Rather than aiming at a fiction of spatial context of human encounters, Berger cleverly demonstrated a new

genre where space is considered acquaintance; we do not encounter in place but rather, each encounter is an encounter of place.

Such is the relationship between HOU Lulu Shur-Tzy and military dependents’ villages in Kaohsiung. It is not that they encountered in these villages in Kaohsiung, but military dependents’ villages in Kaohsiung produced their encounters. A woman artist from Taipei and teaching in Kaohsiung, she encountered a group of retired Navy servicemen and their families; such encounter led to the profound power of the work. Like Italo Calvino’s insight, true love or pleasure for local historic landscape usually lie in its response to your question or a question it asks you and forces you to answer. For more than eight years, due to the absurd “Act for Rebuilding Old Quarters for Military Dependents” and the understanding of the crisis of extinction of cultural heritage of these villages as cultural heritages, HOU Lulu Shur-tzy entered these villages in Kaohsiung in an attempt to respond to the local issues. I heard her urgent voices over and over. She ran through the fields until strangers became familiar; she resorted to various channels until the villages became ruins. She cried over and over until the veterans’ stories came to a halt. Totally unrelated with these military dependents’ villages, she became a woman that undergo difficulties of the times with the servicemen and people of a former reign.

Therefore, the primary meaning of the exhibition lies in the artist’s attempt to intervene the society through action. Notes taken, sounds heard and allies trodden during difficult efforts of appeals thus become the true corpus of the woks and the recognition of her encounter with the military dependents’ villages is finally revealed through the exhibition.

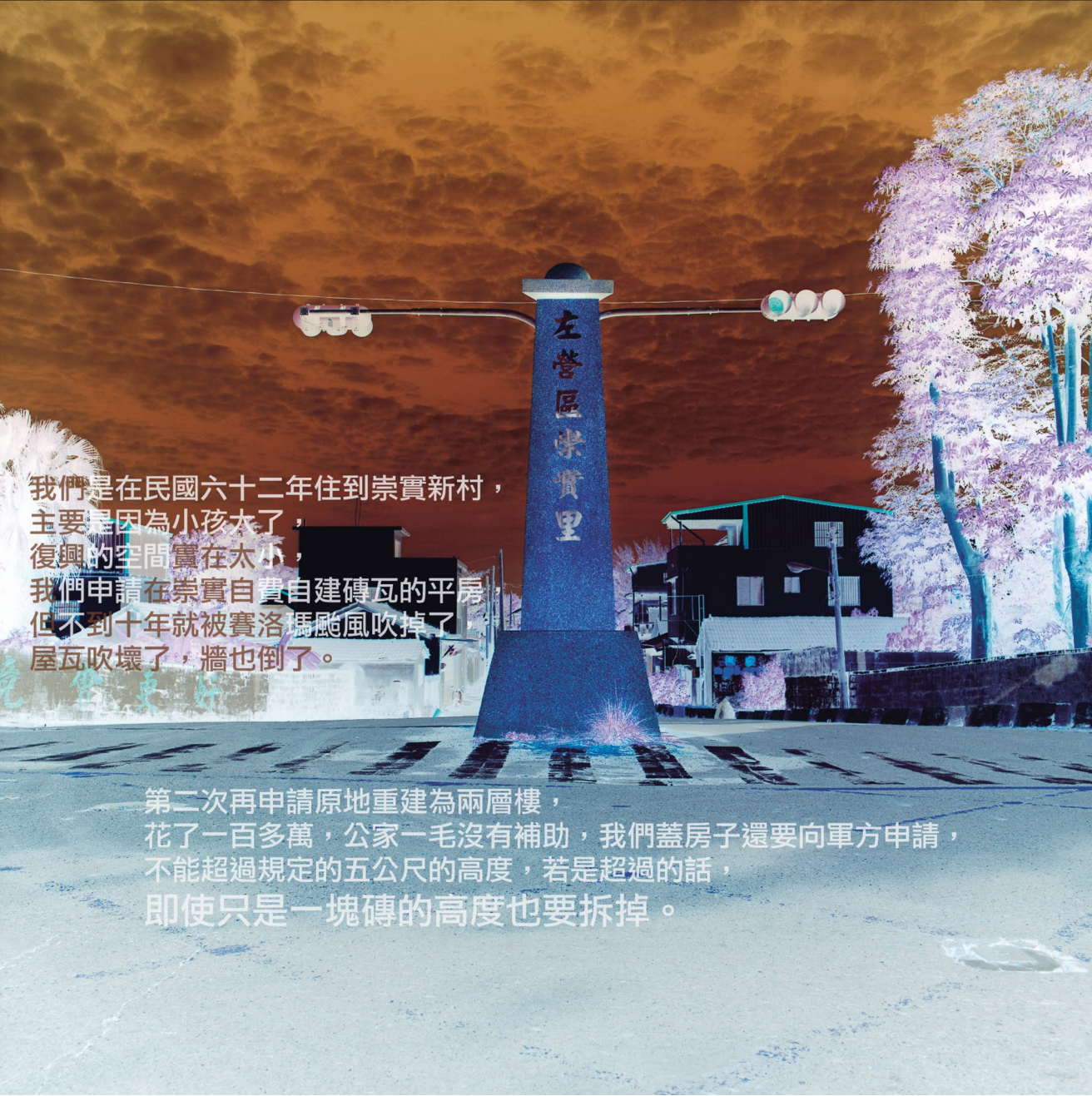
Nevertheless, there is a severe distance between the aesthetics of artworks and the artist’s action; the representation of the social relations of encounters involves multiple difficulties.

In continuation with the style of her last series *Look toward the Other Side: Song of Asian Foreign Brides in Taiwan*, presented through the original photographs, their variations in different tones along with texts, HOU Lulu Shur-tzy creates a new type of photography which I term as the style of “Double-gaze”: the gaze of the lens (evidence, documentation) through technic caption and imaging through light, and the gaze of the creator (witness) coming from subjective feeling and the intervention of tools and techniques. In making negative photo images, it is the negative images that document and the positive images witness while the situation is reversed in making positive photo images. HOU Lulu Shur-tzy practices the latter. The production of negative images required post-production so they assume an illusory and vanishing feeling while being the results of the subject’s interventions. By juxtaposing positives/negatives, the artist approaches this principle of production dialectically, uniting the documentality and the witness of photography; the photographed objects in front of the lens and the artist’s subjective feelings and thoughts are presented together. The lens is not only objective and neutral. Due to long-term interviews and appeals, each documentation reflects an understanding of a spatial history. Subjective witness is not only a sense from subjective seeing, either. Shocked by life stories of the photographed or affected by direct intervention, the artist’s witness involves the process of re-designation of the place by the active subject. Works from this series make a

[09] Zhong Wen-ji & Huang Ke-zheng 01, From “Episode I: Here is where we meet (Chongshi Village Series)”, 2012

I married my husband when I was 19 years old. I am from Xinfeng, Xinzhu County, Taiwan. My husband is 10 years my senior; we were set up. At that time the Taiwanese did not have a good opinion of Mainlanders. My parents originally opposed my marriage to a foreign serviceman, but later agreed once they realized that he was a very good person. My husband was a captain in the marine corps. We lived in Taizhong when we got married, and were later assigned to Fuxing Village in Zuoying. We lived in Zuoying for 7 years; a family of four lived in a house less than 4 ping (13.2 m²). Neighbors in Fuxing Village had good relationships with each other. I often sat under a big tree with my next-door neighbor’s wife while we talked and knitted sweaters. The men usually lead the armed forces out of town for two or three months at a time before returning home in between intervals. I started working at a processing plant in Nanzi after our two children began elementary school, and continued to work there for 20 years while raising children.





[10] Zhong Wen-ji & Huang Ke-zheng 02, From "Episode I: Here is where we meet (Chongshi Village Series)", 2012

We moved to Chongshi Village in 1973, mainly because our children were grown up and there was not enough space at Fuxing Village. We applied to build a tile and brick single-storey house by ourselves and at our own expense. Typhoon Thelma destroyed the house less than 10 years later; the roof was blown away and the walls collapsed. The second time we applied to rebuild a two-story house that cost more than one million NTD. It was not subsidized at all by the state. The military had to approve our reconstruction plan. The house could not exceed the regulated height of 5 meters; it would be demolished if surpassing the limitation even by one brick.

breakthrough in terms of established photographic styles while disturbing our empirical understanding of photography aesthetics, approaching the making of new conceptual photography. The artist herself terms this as photography of “new topology” which can be understood in this way: the difference in meaning in the documentality of documentary photography and its “documentness” as artworks is produced through the difference between the time, site of photographing and those of exhibition since the indexical relation of *ça a été* of the time of photographing might differ from that of time and site of exhibition, leading to the distinction between “documentality” and “documentness” termed by professor Lin Chi-Ming in his Multiple and Tension. However, HOU Lulu Shur-tzy does not employs the difference of time and space but deliberately makes hybrids of documentality and documentness, thus unfolding the meaning of the artist’s action and the tensions of her works.

Episode I: *Here Is Where We Meet.* Disappeared Homes

Episode I: *Here Is Where We Meet* include 32 works on four military dependents’ villages, preserving the last faces of these disappeared villages. The original photographic works remain filled with documentality while works below them, made into negatives, represent the mourning for a

landscape already disappeared or which would soon disappear. The artist compiles her words of reluctance, passion for the Lord and the Bible as well as village residents’ oral histories into texts on the photos. The lens’ documentality represents people’s fluctuations while the creator’s thoughts fix people and landscape into archives, turning her own intervention into documents (interviews, appeals, persuasions, companionship and feelings). The visibility of photographic works and the non-visibility of the artist’s action are combined; the inter-reference among documentation, witness and documents blocks the consuming of images and avoids the shallow praise for works of landscape photography. The works equal the extended connotation of the artist’s action, which shall best characterize HOU Lulu Shur-tzy’s oeuvre. The artist curates her own action through photography.

The difference between the series and the artist’s previous works is that she is no longer a silent listener. The reserved text and feeling in her works rather reflect her heated discourse in practicing preservation. As an artist, she listens and responds to trivial sounds of history. As an intellectual, she bravely criticizes the injustice of policies. The artist listens to the residents’ stories, collects ghostly traces of the disappeared landscape and carries out the action of “supplement”. The cat and the wall in *Echo 02* cannot speak; she writes:

All is about destiny; all is timed—birth, death, plantation and harvest. Issues around Zuoying military dependents’ villages touched many sensitive nerves. When the interviewed grandmother in a military dependents’ village began to sob, the memorized scene and pain of farewell with parents 50 years were revealed. Who would expect they could only cry over their parents’ tombs back home in Mainland haunting their dreams after 50 years of turbulence and wandering? I cried beside her, feeling sad for the long years of repression in these grandmothers and their fear to trigger that memory just because things past all became but trivial foams under billows of time.

The series of *Echo, Reverberation* are historical supplements to empty landscape. The collapsed houses and departed residents of the villages will no longer speak. The artist becomes the narrator, speaking about remaining echoes collected from the landscape. In works featuring people, the artist becomes a documentarist, depicting local features through personal histories, each personal history is also a local history while the latter is part of public histories. He/she narrates how policies about military dependents’ villages in Taiwan shifted from Kuomintang’s demand for legitimizing its reign by appeasing servicemen to its greed in making the land into commodities. He/she narrates the histories of cross-community marriage and migration between cities and the country in Taiwan. For example, in the story of *Zhong Wen-ji & Huang Ke-zheng*, an indigenous Hakka woman was married to a Mainland soldier and all four family members lived in a cell of 4-ping (13.2m²) for 7 years before moving to Zupying’s Fuxing Village from Taichung and then to Chongshi. The husband was often absent for leading armed forces out of town; the wife depended on neighbors for recreation. After her children grew up, Zhong Wen-ji worked at a

processing plant in Nanzi for more than 20 years. She lived in Zuoying for almost four decades; it was almost her second home. The couple did not select any of the two options in “Act for Rebuilding Old Quarters for Military Dependents”. Suing with Ministry of National Defense for four years, they did not know where to go. The simple text and 8 works suffice to reflect the general historical significance of military dependents’ villages. As for *Shang Jui-Ji and Lu Duo*, it concerns the encounter in Taiwan of two persons from different provinces. Through images of the couple, the house and the domestic living room, the artist creates a cultural recognizability of military dependents’ villages. *Yin Chen Cheng-Lan* revolves a female narrative and includes personal portraits, scenes of houses and trees, and corners in allies. Except for replacing the living room with public spaces, this work resembles the previous work: the similarity of subjects and repeated, lingering charm achieve the recognition system of local space while foregrounding the totality of life in military dependents’ villages. Besides, corners in allies and domestic living rooms are all “public spaces” with the same functions. The village residents all knew what public life meant—it meant your living room became others’ allies. Many details all came from the artist’s interviews carried out during several years, which explains the aforementioned “witness”.

The photographic works by HOU Lulu Shur-tzy are never wild and explicit. The social relations intended to be foregrounded do not become more convincing by cropping certain parts of the scenes captured. She avoids the seduction of instigation and does not show off trauma. Like the best quality of photography Roland Barthes endowed to a photography in *La chambre Claire*, this series represents the artist’s sincere feeling—“there that I should like to live” and the pulsation that even makes the viewer feel “having been there.” Rather than being visible, the sceneries in these works are habitable. Neither do they incite dreams (of having one such building) nor are they empiric (of buying one such house). They evoke some fantasmatic feeling that leads us temporarily into a utopia of time or back to somewhere in ourselves, travelling back and forth between the double longing chanted by Charles Baudelaire in two poems: *L’Invitation au voyage* and *La vie antérieure*.

Roland Barthes quotes Sigmund Freud, “there is no other place of which one can say with so much certainty that one has already been there”. It perfectly describes the series by HOU Lulu Shur-tzy. For the same reason, HOU’s works come to possess what Barthes termed as the essence of the landscape (selected by desire) to be the power of *heimlich*, a German term designating private home.

Berger’s novel starts with the description of a hot afternoon in Lisbon in May. On a bench in a park, he encountered his mother who died 15 years ago. The latter told him the dead would not forever stay where they were buried. When she was about to leave, she asked Berger to document more things about “the dead” so living people understand them more. Berger thus embarked on an odyssey of time and space. From *Song of Asian Foreign Brides in Taiwan* to works of this trilogy on military dependents’ villages, artist HOU Lulu Shur-tzy embarks on her odyssey through photography. Differing from Berger, she does not intend to reproduce her own emotional life; differing from the Odyssey, her goal is not returning home and reuniting with her lover. Rather, she took people encountered on the way as her homeland. Dwelling in encounters, she sought a private home somewhere that people gaze toward.

Berger’s mother continued, saying that people can freely choose the cities they want to live in after they die. Where will residents of Zuoying Military Dependents’ Villages go remains a question. Yet, at least, they will move freely. And through the artist’s works, we witness visages of those who protected us but were then forsaken, the faded landscape, and the shame of the country and of oneself.

Composed of 20 works, *Episode II: The Remains of the Day* revolves Huangpu New Village in Fengshan, reflecting homes that are impossible to return. Compared to houses already damaged and collapsed, Huangpu New Village became the land reserved for a national museum about military dependents’ villages. Following the cultural bureau’s policy of “inhabit to protect”,

original residents left and many young people moved in, running art co-operatives or living together. With the same “Double-gaze” structure, the same juxtaposition of objective images and subjective texts and the same familiar sceneries: collapsed homes emptied of residents and large dense trees, yet no longer anyone to be protected by their shade. We only come to be aware of Granny Liu (Mrs. Chen Jing-Chen) as shown in these works during the exhibition. Due to historical and real situations, our concern with the elderlies’ past is far less than that with the houses they lived.

Episode II: *The Remains of the Day*. A Home Impossible to Return

[11] Zhong Wen-ji & Huang Ke-zheng 03, From “Episode I: Here is where we meet (Chongshi Village Series)”, 2012

We have lived in Chongshi Village for 40 years. It is our second home. I lived in my old hometown for only 10 years, but I have spent the majority of my life here. We are already very accustomed to life here. It is extremely convenient to catch buses and go to the market. There weren’t any two-story houses in this area back in the day; we were the first family to build one. The regulation stipulated that we could not build a flat roof, but we had to build an inclined roof. There are now multi-story skyscrapers next to the naval port. There are many well-renovated houses in Chongshi Village in which residents have lived even longer than we have in our home, but we all must move. We filed a lawsuit 4 years ago in order to preserve this home; we have put a lifetime of energy and effort into this house. We did not choose either option for relocation proposed by the government as part of the Village Reconstruction Policy, and we know that our house will likely be razed to nothing.





[12] Zhong Wen-ji & Huang Ke-zheng 04, From "Episode I: Here is where we meet (Chongshi Village Series)", 2012

My heart aches. This way of demolishing the military village is simply crude and unreasonable. The Ministry of National Defense revoked my qualification as a military dependent, even though my household is registered here. It was the Ministry of Defense that gave us permission to construct our house in the first place, otherwise how could we have built? In order to build our own house, we had to borrow money from close friends. We were only able to fully repay the loan a few years ago. God had been kind to me. My children and daughters-in-law were all very hardworking. I am content with my life, but I do not know if I could continue living this way. If by any chance I am not able to live like this, I can't imagine what life would be like. How could I afford to buy a house in Gaoxiang? I suppose I could if I did not eat or drink. We have made up our minds to continue living here until it is unlivable.

Some architects stand in the forefront of the war for historic preservation. As warriors of formal historic preservation, they vigorously proceed one after another to save the histories of stones. They presume if these histories are preserved, the culture of human inhibition can be passed on to the future while architecture can become part of the history of civilization. Some architects understand the impossibility to avoid capitalism's power to tear down old buildings in the battle of historic preservation; it is a kind of historical imagination that can really be preserved and even defended. Such imagination attempts to preserve time and thereby ourselves. Once the time passes, we feel a certain sorrow since only few houses are left.

Now, even such devotion in preserving the histories of stones or our regret through time and the sorrow that once existed are all gone. Stones and sorrow all evolved into consumer goods of the capitalist cycle. Following the disappearance of military dependents' villages around Taiwan, there is a proliferation of many more culture festivals, food festivals, films, TV series and stage plays about these villages. In these splendid funeral ceremonies held for the demise of the villages, their culture is shaped into cultural forms that deplore the time past. They cannot reflect a group of left citizens' real lives in the Big History and Cold War structure. Neither do they represent any understanding about the autocratic yet harmonious life, narrow living environments, conservative political realities, the pressure of comparison for the second generation due to close neighbor relations in these villages. In sum, nothing can be more "reusable" than houses that cannot speak.

For example, according to Article 4 in the "Act for Rebuilding Old Quarters for Military Dependents", residents who want to preserve their houses have to empty them and for preserving the culture of military dependents' villages, municipal and county governments would select emptied old military dependents' village buildings not yet dismantled and awaiting to be sold; preservation plans shall be written and submitted to the Ministry of National Defense. Nothing can be closer to the architectural formalism and to what David Harvey terms as the rules of space fix required by the capitalist cycle. Space fix originally designates large-scale spatial production as a specific way of capitalist production. Yet even a small historical land indicates its cruelty.

Since 1949, Huangpu New Village has been the training base and campsite of New Army of Sun Li-jen's troop. Meanwhile New Army 1's families were relocated to Taiwan and the Fourth Training Class for Officers was founded. The staff and their families were relocated in Chengzheng New Village (renamed Huangpu New Village afterwards), becoming the first military dependents' village in Taiwan. Since the implementation of "Act for Rebuilding Old Quarters for Military Dependents", the military dependents' villages in Fengshan were torn down one after another. Huangpu New Village became one of the few villages luckily preserved. In May 1955, the glory badge of Huangpu New Village was removed due to the Case of Spy Kuo Ting-liang and the Case of Sun Li-jen. Related staff lost promotional opportunities and wasted their excellent abilities as officers, and their families lived in incessant fear. Besides, the harmony in the villages fell into fear and doubt. Even today, they are not appeased and could not speak about the past easily. Continuing her method in making *Here Is Where We Meet*, HOU Lulu Shur-tzy made filed interviews, studied and wrote preservation plans. Faced with the rigid regulations, the Ministry of National Defense and the cultural bureau, her warm and resolute documentation with images is a tool that penetrates politics and the laws, and exposes these things to the society. Each time I see Granny Liu's eyes and hunchback in these works, I pounder on the very nature of military dependents' villages. At the remains of the day, we somehow feel the eventual disappearance of a kind of historical facts. What can artists do when everyone hurriedly sells off the last glory, turning history into cultural creative industry and making village houses into museums and sites of artistic residency?

In the preface of the re-edition of *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, the art historian T. J. Clark mentioned feminists' discontent for the fact that he spent more than 50 pages to describe the lying white woman in *Olympia* by Édouard Manet, almost without a word about the black maid beside her. Indeed, the snake of ideology continues to haunt and attack in turn those who want to win it over. Clark deplored this was also the most lamentable example and always involved deeper blind spots.

Now, all the cultural forms related to military dependents' villages and their derivatives, as well as cultural creative products produced through capital in Taiwan's society describe that white woman. And the work carried out by HOU Lulu Shur-tzy in Huangpu New Village precisely consists in summoning anew the dim and painful old souls from the background, making them be heard again, gazing at their visages in the

billows of history, their figures once protected under a big tree’s shade. These village houses should not just be places for future young artists to stay, or eventually become noodle places, bistros and art stores.

Beyond the frames of the photographs, Granny Liu asked HOU Lulu Shur-tzy to take her home. She wants to go home, even just to take a look. She imagines one day she can move back to Huangpu New Village, her only historical and geographic home. If she does not have a home, neither do we. She is not humpbacked. It is Taiwan that has always been humpbacked.

Episode III:
Out of Place Trilogy:
Ca a été

In the trilogy composed of 26 works, the artist focuses her lens on two military dependents’ villages in Zuoying—Mingde New Village and Jianye New Village—which luckily escaped bulldozers. Village residents fought for 12 years to resist the improper execution of “Act for Rebuilding Old Quarters for Military Dependents”. Mingde New Village is represented by General Han Bin and his wife, General Tsao Cheng-Gang and his wife as well as Mrs. Lin Chen Bi-Hsiu while Jianye New Village is represented by Mrs. Wang Jian Yi-Feng, Professor Jia Jian-Chin and General Chiu Jing-Hsien.

These works might be the last images on the history of military dependents’ villages. Lucky senior officers might be able to fight, like General Han Bin even learned the law by himself to sue the Ministry of National Defense despite his physical weakness. They preserve a part of our history and sceneries which remain for us to witness while also bringing more cultural spillover effects for Zuoying. The officers’ stories explain our misunderstanding about military dependents’ villages. These villages do not belong to fixed histories. The residents include not only servicemen who will “finally return home” but also people born in Taiwan and resolute to protect the next generation in Taiwan. Many among them were born and grew up in Zuoying; Taiwan is their only home. The cultural spillover effects of military dependents’ villages appear even more obvious. Just in terms of food, the famous Shandong Grandma dumpling restaurant in Zuoying was founded by Mrs. Wang Jian Yi-Feng alone. Besides, there are many noodle places run by Mainlanders and special snacks like lamb paomo, meat pies, etc., not forgetting delicious dishes combining Taiwanese and various Chinese foods in Guomao New Village. Maybe when the houses and the elderlies will be gone, our tongues will become the organ of memory.

This exhibition represents the trilogy of disappeared, remaining homes impossible to return in a theatrical manner, which also seems to reflect any collective memory. The exhibition also incorporates important historic photographs and documentation presentation drawn from military dependents’ villages in Zuoying and Huangpu, tables, chairs and potted plants saved by the artist, alongside objects filled with memories borrowed from village residents.

The trilogy of Kaohsiung military dependents’ village represents the generalization principles of military dependents’ village as well, Taiwan’s destiny and urban development. With rebuilt public residences’ private nature, the publicness and military dependents’ village with the nature of social residence were gone. In addition to striving for house preservation, we should also be aware to the loss of publicness. Now, if art can, like politics, effect the distribution of perception, in terms of specificity and generality, relations between people and houses are not only attachments in terms of property or feeling, but material and objectivized existence from our encounter here to *ça a été*. Artist HOU Lulu Shur-tzy’s work preserves some faint aura for us, like the remains of the day. Such vanishing aura shall incite an awareness in us, pushing us to ask ourselves about where “one’s own home” deserving habitation is located.



A Pleat in the MinJhih Civic Center. On TING Chaong-Wen’s Photographic Works *Prophet* and *North*

by JIAN Tzu-Chieh

In mid-September, 2018, I visited the MinJhih Civic Center in Xinying, Tainan to see the project “Site of Consciousness: Council Room” curated and produced by TING Choang-Wen and fellow artists. I remember, due to the fact that the works mostly responded to the venue, we visitors from afar could not but perceived the specificity of the space. Due to county-city integration, MinJhih Civic Center which used to be the site of Tainan County Council now does not function anymore. The Center has lost its glorious status of representative democracy despite regular maintenance. Guided by the works of TING Choang-Wen and others, the building attesting to modern Taiwan’s democratization process came to bear the attributes of a modernological site. We are no longer sure if we were looking at the works or attesting to a social transformation process beyond art.

The change in the political atmosphere is reflected by the building’s outdated palatial style. Meanwhile, a different imagination about the future is incarnated through the re-organized administration division. Xinying in Tainan County was thus restored from the site for county governmental office into one of many places. If style and taste mean “distinction” as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, now the boundary distinguishing the site from the outside is blurred. The temple- or palace-like official residence is deprived of some superior taste. Cars blocking the way rather occupy what are parking lots in the eyes of drivers, instead of a passage leading to the stage on which elected representatives exerted power. Choang-Wen told me the palace of democracy in the past has now become a recreation spot for the community.

The Past Life
and This Life

However, just as the venue at the MinJhih Civic Center requires such narrative understanding in advance, an in-depth reading of TING Choang-Wen’s photographic

series *Prophet* and *North* also requires a return to two video installations he showed in “Site of Consciousness: Council Room” earlier on—*Prophet* and *North* displayed in separate rooms in the council room. With their condensed and smooth visual rhythms, they create a narrative gesture between documentary and fiction by pointing to past objects of the council room. The works per se seem to provide a tour about the background of the MinJhih Civic Center while the stories talk to us through “objects”—drawn from the council room itself or those lacked from it.

In *Prophet*, TING Choang-Wen sets the story of a youth’s journey back home, starting by the latter roaming in an abandoned house in an eclectic style. In fact, the building at Xuejia, Tainan was owned by Chen Huazong who grew up during the Japanese Rule and became an elected representative and the first chair of the Tainan County Council during the reign of Kuomintang. Later, the images bring us back to the MinJhih Civic Center; the youth encounters incidentally a Chen Huazong





[15] Hexagon, 2018

statue in the storage room of this center. Yet TING Choang-Wen's images do not rely on an explanatory language. Regarding the Chen Huazong statue and the history gradually falling into oblivion with the passage of time, these images merely remain the minimal gesture of objects in the works and moved by the youth in the film, which is captured by TING Choang-Wen's images.

As for *North*, TING Choang-Wen shot the entire process of embryo and pottery making. But the final pottery piece with a rounded shape is not a product of any sculptural motivation. TING Choang-Wen refers to an architectural element removed from the MinJhih Civic Center due to the rumor about feng shui historically—regarding the “roof crown”. A reproduction of the long-gone roof crown is like symbolically retrieving a lack in local history. Just like the first chair of the county council referred to in *Prophet*, the roof crown is also something lost incidentally during the course of history. But the creative gesture that seems to fill the historical lack eventually escapes an imagination path that is easy to speculate, for the reproduced roof crown does not return to its original place. TING Choang-Wen transforms it into a vase through his power as a creator. The roof crown is thus placed in a dim room with few idle plants over it.

There is a common tendency of Historicism in Taiwan's contemporary art in recent years. Artists have to make a series of field surveys whose subjects ideally involve experiences of modernity that remain to be corrected. Finally, they should make art a tool of truth that allows lost voices to be represented. However, TING Choang-Wen's *North* and *Prophet* differ from this tendency in that, although they concern with loss and some experience of colonization—modernity with studies carried out through thorough field survey processes, the spaces, objects and subjects he chooses rather bear some strange midtone. They always seem to be suspended in a perceptual state that is not heavy yet cannot be termed as light either. His narration through images actually is not the amazing story about the first council chair who went through imprisonment and sentenced to death in the period of White Terror before devoting to the camp in power and becoming a popular politician. However, the connection between the roof crown and the feng shui might just be a signifier in the history of local autonomy that cannot find what it signifies. The MinJhih Civic Center that lost its past function is an elsewhere somewhat regretful yet requiring no gaze of moral affection.

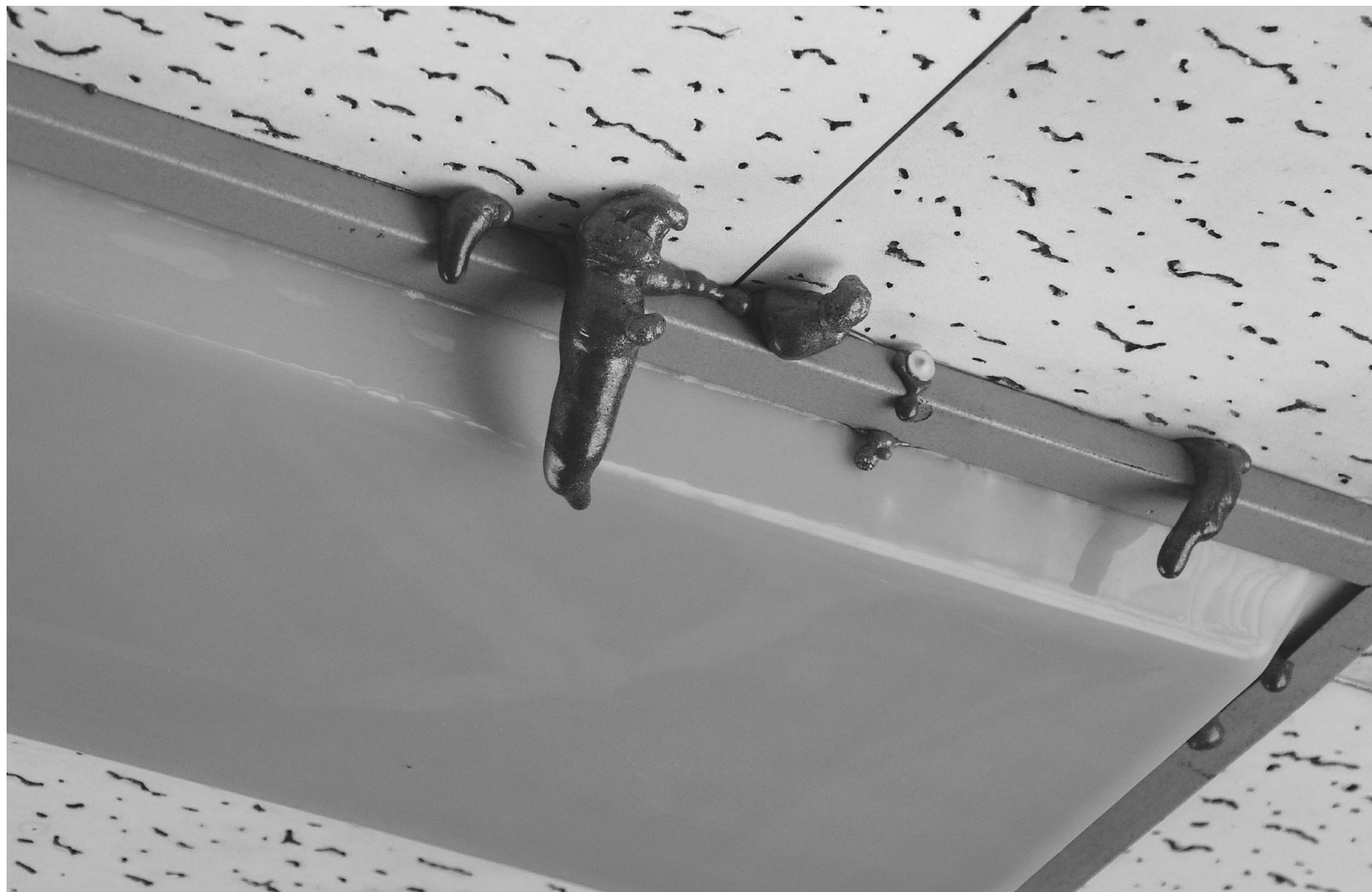


[16] Council Hall, 2018

The Midtone
of *Prophet*
and *North*

Yet it is through such midtone that we better obtain a proper position of viewing the photographic series *Prophet* and *North*. The midtone might be a visual unit for transition, a non-narrative mis-en-scène aiming at a passage to the next scene. The midtone might not be anything at all, as if it were just the artist or us wanting to have some temporal yet direct gaze, so as to re-endow additionally generated visual effects to the objects by the sovereignty beyond the symbolic order. The midtone is always implied in the dark area on each visage with clear messages. We perceive the slight muscle twitches of someone's face and think we touch some reality deep within. The midtone is when we are aware of the medium's textuality rather than what we encounter in looking at images which always contain messages. Roland Barthes discourse on cinematicity through what he termed as "le sens obtus" illustrated with stills from Sergei Eisenstein's films.

Certainly, as a visitor to the MinJih Civic Center and also a viewer of the videos titled *Prophet* and *North*, the photography series comprising 12 works is like behind-the-scenes photographs or film stills



[17] *Ectoplasm*, 2018

TING Choang-Wen shot for his *Site of Consciousness* project. For example, in *Storage*, we see a covered Chen Huazong statue in a storage room. As for *Former Residence* and *Statue*, they bring us to a homecoming youth's encounter with this almost lost episode of the council building. *Vase* and *Yellow Light* certainly refer to the lost roof crown in *North*.

On the other hand, however, we also find that although viewing with memories of the previous works facilitates the recognition of thematic meanings of the objects shot, these images mostly shot with a 50mm standard objective still escape the vague connections of meaning with the previous works due to the stills. Although the objective sometimes just stares at objects from the previous works, the rather square frame disconnects the objects from their surroundings as well as their contextual relations with the narrative of images. Similarly, in *Council Room*, although the title directly corresponds to the council building, the viewer only sees a corner of the old style conference room. The well maintained leather chair reflects the source of light; we cannot but associate this with the Northern Renaissance, a tradition of painting in the West which delicately depicting daily things. Through photography, the objects reveal some plain plasticity, which is close to the objects without referring to them, just like the vague links with meaning represented by the aforementioned "midtone".

A Pleat

MinJih Civic Center has now become a community activity center and an innovation incubation center. The political boundaries that used to distinguish the interior and the exterior, decision and implementation, elected representatives and general citizens also gradually disappear. *Prophet* and *North* are similar to TING Choang-Wen's previous works in "Site of Consciousness", attesting to the transformation process of the building from a center of political power to the "midtone", in which the

control of exclusivity of the official residence that used to be a symbol for authority was lifted. *Site of Consciousness* project also seems to bring us on a tour around the council building and its history gradually buried along with the current wave of equal rights. Yet as behind-the-scenes photographs or film stills of the previous works, *Prophet* and *North* enhance the “neutrality” of the “mid-tone” which often deviates from existing narrative line due to their static status as images and the gestures they invested in objects themselves.

Only that such “neutrality” in the past seemed to maintain the autonomy of form whereas not it becomes a pleat of the message from a space overloaded with meanings. The hiatus between the progression of diverse stories suddenly makes us escape signification. The decision is left to us regarding whether to continue digging within until we penetrate all the layers accumulated across the times, or to treat this pleat like treating poetry, letting our gaze stay on the surfaces of the objects which they suddenly stop to recount to us.



[18] Vase, 2018

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is a curator and artist based in Berlin. She is trained as an artist at New York University Tisch School of the Arts. In 2012, she worked on together with Anselm Franke as Assistant Curator for Taipei Biennial, Modern Monsters / Death and Life of Fiction. Her projects presented in various collaborations from 2010 to now. A collective and intergenerational investigation of feminism in the context of contemporary art practice that included a symposium, exhibition; and lecture. She is the founder and director of IDOLONSTUDIO (Berlin). WANG’s work develops ideas that lead into a collaborative process-based working relationship with artists to examine issues she considers crucial, such as: critically assessing contemporary culture, investigating the way meaning is constructed and endowing the world with complexity at a time when the surface is rarely scratched and time is short. Her curatorial voice endeavors to make people re-think, slow down, delve beneath the surface and to excavate rather than simply consume. It does not summarize or offer answers, rather it asks questions that lead to contemplation, discussion, and new thoughts about the world around us.

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born in 1974, the curator Tzu-Chieh JIAN earned his doctoral degree in art creation and theory from Tainan National University of the Arts and teaches in the Department of Fine Arts, National Kaohsiung Normal University. He served as a nominator for the 14th and 15th Taishin Arts Award. He started his first job in an advertisement company as an account executive, and had since taught as a member of the adjunct faculty at two art universities in northern Taiwan for almost a decade. During that period, he used to work concurrently as a project manager at the “Intransigent at the Beginning Studio”, a senior editorial writer of ARTCO, and an observer of 2015 Kaohsiung Awards. He also founded the artist group “Post-Eight” in 2000, since when it has participated in prestigious domestic and international exhibitions. His major curatorial works include *Missing Key Piano* (2017) at IT Park, *Everyday Thomassons* (2016) at Double Square Gallery, *In the Flesh* (2015) at Chine Gallery, *New York Travel Program* (2012) at Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, *Looking Up! Looking Down!* (2009) at Eslite Gallery, and *[Ctrl]Z* (2008) at inFIDI space.

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