

CHEN Qiulin

(born 1975 in Yi Chang, Hubei Province, China. Lives and works in Chengdu, China.)



Farewell Poem (2002–2007), video, 9:00, colour, sound

Chen Qiulin's early video work *Farewell Poem* signals the passing of an era as the inevitable destruction caused by the building of the Three Gorges Hydro Electric Project impacts not only on the landscape but also on people's lives in the area of Sichuan Province in which she grew up as a child. As its title suggests, her film *Farewell Poem* has an elegiac quality: a nostalgic goodbye to a way of life already in the past. The demolition of the old town of Dachang had already begun, and people were starting to move away, uprooted from their native homeland and landscape – a landscape which was soon about to be drastically changed through human intervention, paving the road to the future in the name of rapid modernization.

Chen Qiulin's filmic collage of poetic juxtapositions captures the daily life of a town on the threshold between past and future. Intercut with the continuing bustle of the city and life of the river are scenes of demolition, neighbourhoods reduced to rubble. Capturing both a way of life and its absence, the artist performs in the empty places already filled with ghosts, dancing atop the debris of her hometown. Interlaced throughout the film as soundtrack and imagery, are the actors of a travelling Beijing Opera company, whose performance of the traditional romantic tragedy *Farewell my Concubine* amongst the ruined buildings, strikes yet another timeless note comingling the past with the present. Chen Qiulin dedicated this film to her parents and "to the people like them who lived on that land."

***Peach Blossom* (2009), video, 16:40, colour, sound**

Chen Qiulin's video *Peach Blossom* was made in Wenchuan, a city in Sichuan that had just been ravaged by an earthquake. Like in her earlier work *Farewell Poem* (2002-2007), this city in ruins is also caught on the threshold between past and future. In another time-bending parable, Chen interweaves historical and contemporary tales of the courtship and marriage of a young couple against a backdrop of ruined factories, shanty towns, and the beautiful mountains that surround them. The man who reappears throughout the film as the bridegroom carries a bouquet of peach blossoms that are believed to express beauty, fertility, good fortune and a long life. Against a backdrop of gruelling manual labour, of people made homeless, and the start of reconstruction, in a fluid timescape that could cover several centuries, we see loneliness, sadness, beauty and desolation, as well as the persistence of love. Flowers bloom amongst the rubble as those uprooted by the disaster of the landscape shattering beneath their feet, try to find new ground to rebuild their homes. The narrative alternates between stability and sadness, domesticity and hardship; the bride and groom haunt the ruins coming ever closer, but never speaking, until eventually they stand together. At times theatrical, with the pace and timbre of Peking Opera, this work is also a tribute to a lost way of life, and to the way in which timeless stories will always keep repeating themselves.

Courtesy A Thousand Plateaus Art Space, Chengdu

ARTIST BIO

www.1000plateaus.org/artists/30-chen-qiulin/

Chen Qiulin graduated in 2000 from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Department of Printmaking, in Chengdu. She works primarily with the moving image but also with performance, photography, installation and sculpture; her main interest is in the different realities of "ordinary" people living in China today. Her practice explores notions of memory, social justice, rapid development and displacement whilst also reflecting on feelings of nostalgia, confusion and hope. With a unique sensitivity, Chen introduces new viewpoints and perspectives into frequently discussed social issues.

Chen Qiulin's awards include: The Best New Artist Award of the first Montpellier Chinese Contemporary Art Biennale (2005), the recipient of ACC (Asian Cultural Council in New York) grant at China (2006), the First Asian World Women Forum Rising Talents Programme Nominee (2008), The Fourth Annual AAC Award for the Most Influential Participants of Chinese Art 2009 - the Annual Young Artist Nominee (2010), Reshaping History Academic Award Nominee (2010), Loop Award of Loop Art Fair (Barcelona) (2017). Her works were collected by The Sondra Gilman and Celso Gonzalez-Falla Collections (New York), Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art (Oslo), T-BA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Vienna), Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), The Bohlen Foundation (New York), Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane), Art Museum of Central Academy of Fine Arts (Beijing), A4 Art Museum (Chengdu), Tsinghua University Art Museum and many other art galleries and private collectors. Important group exhibitions that Chen Qiulin has participated in include: "The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art"; THIS IS NOT FOR YOU: Sculptural Discourses; T-BA21 Collection exhibition; the 7th Gwangju Biennale; the 6th Asia Pacific Contemporary Art Triennial (APT6, Australia); China Power Station Part II, III, IV; The Land Between Us (The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, England); Moving Image in China: 1988 - 2011 (Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China); the 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art (Yekaterinburg, Russia); and others. Chen Qiulin's several influential solo exhibitions were held in Hammer Museum (Los Angeles); Long March Space; A Thousand Plateaus Art Space; Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum (Los Angeles); Honolulu Museum of Art (Hawaii); and A4 Art Museum (Chengdu).