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LOCK LEE 李	YIP HO NUNG 葉	CHANG GAR LOCK 鄭
SUN JOHNSON 孫	JIMMY YOUNG 楊	YE BING NAN 葉
DR ON LEE 李	GEORGE SOO HOO TEN 司徒	YE TONG GUI 葉
PHILLIP LEE CHUN 李	CHEN AH TEAK 陳	LIANG CHUANG 梁
MEI QUONG TART 梅	CHUNG GON, JOSEPH 鐘	LI CHUN 李
W.R.G. LEE 李	TSE TSAN TAI 謝	XIAN JUN HAO 冼
YU RONG 余	PING NAM 平	HENRY FINE-CHONG 鄭
LOUIE HOON 雷	BING GUIN LEE 李	NG HUNG-PUI 伍
JOE WAH GOW 周	JAMES SEE 時	WU E LOU 伍
GEORGE GAY 蓋	AH TOY 蔡	MEI DONG XING 梅
WAY KEE 魏	CHANG, VICTOR PETER 鐘	WONG ON 王
LOK KWOK 郭	LEON, LESTER 梁	HUANG ZHU 黃
CHUEN KWON 關	YONG YEW 雍	MA YING BIAO 馬
YAT KWAN (KEN WONG) 王	ZENG PINGING	CHANG WOO GOW
THOMAS PAN KEE 潘	(PERCIVAL CHONG) 鐘	(ZHAN SHICHA) 詹
CHEE DOCK NOMCHONG 莊	ZENG YINAN	LI BU 李
SHOON FOON NOMCHONG 莊	(FREDERICK CHONG) 鐘	YU XING 余
AH' YUNG 翁	THOMAS YEE HING 劉	WAN CHANG 鄭
MAK SAI YING	LAUN CHONG 鐘	ZHU BING HING 朱
(JOHN SHYING) 麥	LO KING NAM 康	WU CHAO QUAN 吳
HARRY CHINN	KOW YOU MAN 寇	SIMPSON LEE 李
(TUNG CHOW) 陳	ROBERT LEE YOUNG 楊	OUYANG NAN 歐陽
NAM YOU 尤	HONG ON JANG 康	LEE HWA 李
FONG BING 方	JAS WONG QUONG 王	SUN KUM LOONG 孫
LIU GUANGFU 劉	WILLIAM ROBERT GEORGE LEE	CHEN GONG 陳
KWONG SUE DUK 鄺	(LEE YIHUI/YIKFAI) 李	WILLIAM YOUNG 楊
JOHN SAMUEL YU 余	DR GEORGE ON LEE 李	LEE YUAN XIN 李
OLIVE MABEL	JAMES UNG QUOY	HUANG LAI WANG
CLARICE WONG 王	(JANG QUOY) 郭	(SAMUEL WONG) 黃
WONG AH SAT 王	GWOK AH POO 郭	CHARLIE HOY 許
YEESANG LOONG 龍	GUO SHUN 郭	AH CHUNEY 秦
WILLIAM CHIU 邱	TIN LEE 田	ONYIK LEE 李
KWOK BEW 郭	CHARLIE LEANFORE	AHCHONG WONG 王
WILLIAM JOSEPH LUMB LIU 劉	(CHAN LEAN FORE) 詹	AH FUNG 馮
JOHN YOUNG WAI 周	JOHN JUANSING ZHANG 張	CHOY YUEN GUM 蔡

陈秋林: 百家姓

# Chen Qiulin: One Hundred Names

January 16 - February 27, 2016

*Insofar as the French Revolution is the Event of modern history, the break after which 'nothing was the same', one should raise here the question: is this kind of 'undoing', of dis-eventualisation, one of the possible destinies of every Event in the twenty-first century?... And - even more interestingly - is it possible for an Event to be not directly denied retroactively?!*  
- Slavoj Žižek

As the largest and perhaps most notorious hydropower project in the world, the Three Gorges Dam has shattered records and garnered endless attention for the number of people displaced, more than 1.2 million, the number of cities and towns flooded (13 cities, 140 towns, 1,350 villages), and the length of reservoir (more than 600 kilometres<sup>2</sup>). But despite the environmental and social impacts which are already being felt by local populations, Chinese companies have begun to replicate this model both domestically and internationally. How is it then, that this profound Event has - according to Žižek - become 'dis-eventualised', and more importantly, what, if anything can be done to combat this social amnesia?

*One Hundred Names*, the first Australian solo exhibition of Chen Qiulin, considers this notion of the Event, its symptoms and side effects, through the artist's expansive practice over the course of the last fifteen years. It reflects on Chen's personal history and connection to the landscape of Southwestern China, and how the act of remembering is intrinsically connected to place. Through performative gestures, both theatrical and everyday, Chen is able to imagine alternative realities where the impact of these events can be played out on a personal scale.

Raised in Wanzhou City, located in the municipality of Chongqing in western China, Chen's home city was partially submerged by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River in 2003. Her work responds to this lived experience of natural and urban landscapes in flux. Unlike many other contemporary Chinese artists who have attended art schools and academies in Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, Chen began her education when she accompanied her mother to work at a local film studio in Sichuan Province. After graduating from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 2000, she returned to the film company to paint billboards and assist in film production.

Beginning in 2001, Chen Qiulin began to experiment with alternative forms of narrative through performance and its documentation in still and video photography, attempting to capture specific moments of intersection between her own practices and its reception within the urban landscape. *Ellipses* (2001), the earliest series of work exhibited at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, reflects on the Chinese colloquialism translated as 'sweet harm', signaling the double bind of the consumerist impulse, especially that which can tempt young women. In the performance Chen sits at a vanity table located in the rubble of an construction site, with new buildings, a power plant and factories in the distance. An impromptu audience of Chinese workers look on as Chen is pelted with cakes as she gazes endlessly at herself in the mirror. Her absorption in self not only symbolic of a new kind of individualism in contemporary China, but also the disparities between an emerging, cosmopolitan middle class and those largely neglected and untouched by China's economic rise. There also exists the brutality of the masculine against the quite stoicism of the feminine.

In the same year major construction began on the Three Gorges Dam. By 2007 it had become widely known that the construction would significantly raise water levels of the Yangtze River, submerging thousands of surrounding villages and displacing millions. Upon learning that her hometown would be lost, Chen Qiulin embarked on an ambitious new chapter in her practice, departing from staged and highly stylised performances towards a kind of social documentary whilst still incorporating elements such as traditional costumes which rupture the image of contemporary China as perpetually forward moving. *The Garden* (2007) presented as photographs and video, follows two workers on a pedestrian journey through a city that is at once bustling with construction and also in various states of decay and neglect. They wind their ways through abandoned alleys and under the eaves of a towering skyscraper, carrying with them magenta peonies in their arms, a gesture to commemorate the 'opening' of a new town, yet one that still resonates a sense of melancholy for a closing ceremony of sorts.

When Chen Qiulin arrived in Wanxian to shoot *Farewell Poem* (2007), she was shocked at the level of random and chaotic demolition taking place, mostly done by hand. Before her eyes, many of the places where she played as a young girl were disintegrating, and she was left speechless. In the film, grey, raw footage of the artist amid the town's destruction is intermixed with flashes of colourful Chinese opera scenes and authentic music. As a child, Chen accompanied her grandfather, a Sichuan opera aficionado, to many performances and selected a particular scene from *Farewell My Concubine*, played by a famous local troupe, to express her farewell to Wanxian.

In the following year, whilst undertaking research in Chengdu, Sichuan Province experienced one of the most destructive earthquakes in China's recent history which displaced almost 11 million and killed 70,000 Chinese citizens. Chen's response to this traumatic event was the series *Peach Blossom* (2009), which considered the impact of the earthquake within the context of Beijing's (inadequate) response prior to the 2008 Olympic Games. *Old Archway and Dawning Bell* (both 2009) revisit the format of staged photography in a gesture to commemorate the lives lost as a consequence of the earthquake. Equally, these highly stylised photographs involve local residents as the main characters, provided scenarios for those effected by the earthquake to imagine alternative realities for themselves either in the future, or their cultural past.

Shifting scale from the immense to the intimate, *City Manager* (2015) examines the gestures and transactions that take place between a local public servant (the city manager), a policeman and a property developer. Set against the backdrop of a European-style high-rise complex, *City Manager* is both playful and irreverent in its treatment of these three urban archetypes and the ongoing impact that their actions have in shaping the shifting landscape of Chengdu, like many other cities both in China and the region. Shot in slow-motion and accompanied by Beethoven's Ode to Joy (a popular song for Chinese political events), *City Manager* (2015) plays out as a surreal performance of the central conflict for the right to develop what is essentially publicly owned land.

Commissioned especially for 4A is *One Hundred Names for Kwong Wah Chong* (2015), the latest iteration of Chen Qiulin's ongoing *One Hundred Surnames in Tofu* (2004 - ) project that involves the artist carving Chinese names from tofu. For Chen, tofu is not only one of China's oldest and most commonly used ingredients but also an apt artistic medium that symbolises the material transformation through intensive labour. *One Hundred Names for Kwong Wah Chong* has been produced to commemorate Sydney's iconic Haymarket district and, in particular, Sydney's first Chinese-owned and operated shopfront business, Kwong Wah Chong, whose location at 84 Dixon Street which was an economic and social cornerstone for the Chinese community in the early decades of the twentieth-century.

Having not previously visited Sydney, Chen Qiulin approached the development of this new work by attempting to create psychic connections between some of these early migrants with families currently living in Chengdu, who themselves have migrated from other regions of China. Through a series of 15 documentary films, Chen locates and interviews individuals with shared families names of the early arrival in Australia, asking them about their own narratives of upheaval. Importantly, Chen frames these conversations around the simple act of asking each participant for a favourite or family recipe for tofu. Like in Chen's previous works with the ingredient, tofu becomes symbolic of a shared cultural and social history, and one that can be shared across historical and geographical distances. In *One Hundred Names...* the everyday event of cooking and eating become the artwork itself, utilising the documentary format to provide a medium together these otherwise disparate communities.

Similarly, *Scent, 2016* (2016) relies on the sense of smell as a tactic to explore the history of Haymarket and specifically the Corporation Building (1893) in which 4A is located. Chen has produced a collection of scents based on the first fruits and vegetables grown by Chinese market farmers that were sold a nearby markets. As olfactory element permeating one's experience of the installation, these smells are instant moments of recognition for the artist, evoking memories of her own childhood in Wanzhou, an area which, much like Sydney's Chinatown has exchanged market place for high density living.

As one of China's foremost artists working in Southwestern China, over the last decade Chen Qiulin has developed an artistic oeuvre which constantly attempts to identify and reflect upon specific moments from history and the present and their social repercussions. Her work is underpinned by a personal tenor and emotional sensitivity to individuals and communities that have been neglected by a desire for constant progress and development. Through an intuitive understanding of the role of performance and fictional narratives in remembering and re-enacting these moments, Chen is able to articulate past experiences and future potentials of the social and urban landscapes of our region.

- Toby Chapman, Curator, 4A

<sup>1</sup>Slavoj Žižek, *Event* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 138. International Rivers, <https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/three-gorges-dam>, accessed 22 December, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Slavoj Žižek, *Event* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 139

## Artist Bio

Chen Qiulin (b. 1975, Yichang, Hubei Province) belongs to a generation of younger artists whose work articulates the social repercussions of China's ever-constant push for political and economic reform. Visualising the many contradictions inherent to the condition of contemporary living in a country where the tension and conflict between tradition, custom and ritual are consistently challenged, Chen Qiulin's carefully considered photographic and video compositions are powerful provocations of progress and ambition.

Chen Qiulin has presented solo exhibitions including 'The Empty City' (2008), Honolulu Museum of Art, USA; 'Chen Qiulin: Selected Works' (2012), Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, USA and has participated in numerous exhibitions in China and abroad, recently featured in 7th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, Korea, 2008; 'Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art', David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, USA, 2008; 'China Power Station II', Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway, 2007; 'THIS IS NOT FOR YOU - Sculptural Discourses', Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria, 2006-2007; and 'The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art', Millenium Art Museum, Beijing, China and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York, USA (touring), 2005.

## List of Works

Ground Floor:  
Chen Qiulin  
*One Hundred Names for Kwong Wah Chong* (2016)  
25-channel video installation, mural  
dimensions variable  
Commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art

First Floor: (clockwise from left)  
Chen Qiulin  
*The Garden no. 1* (2007)  
Giclee print  
84x68cm

Chen Qiulin  
*The Garden no. 3* (2007)  
Giclee print  
84x68cm

Chen Qiulin  
*The Garden no. 4* (2007)  
Giclee print  
84x68cm

Chen Qiulin  
*The Garden no. 5* (2007)  
Giclee print  
68x84cm

Chen Qiulin  
*Farewell Poem* (2007)  
Giclee print  
84x68cm

Chen Qiulin  
*Old Archway* (2009)  
Giclee print  
68x84cm

Chen Qiulin  
*Dawning Bell* (2009)  
Giclee print  
68x84cm

Chen Qiulin  
*Ellipses no. 1* (2001)  
Giclee print  
33x48.5cm

Chen Qiulin  
*Ellipses no. 3* (2001)  
Giclee print  
48.5x33cm

Chen Qiulin  
*Scent, 2016* (2016)  
aroma diffusers, customised essential oils  
dimensions variable

Chen Qiulin  
*City Manager* (2015)  
single-channel HD video, sound  
9:25mins

All artworks courtesy the artist and A Thousand Plateaus Art Space, Chengdu.

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