



Ullens Center for
Contemporary Art
尤伦斯当代艺术中心

Tehching Hsieh: One Year Performance 1980-1981

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Exhibition Dates:

June 28 – September 15

Exhibition Venue:

Long Gallery, UCCA

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

UCCA exhibition marks the first mainland China showing of the complete installation of a landmark work from highly influential Taiwanese/American performance artist

UCCA is pleased to present **Tehching Hsieh: One Year Performance 1980-1981**, a concise exhibition of the work of one of the world's most important performance artists, and the founding influence on Chinese performance art after 1989. Born in Taiwan and based in New York City, where he conceived and executed five "One Year Performances" in the late 1970s and 1980s before abruptly ceasing to make and show new work, Hsieh is a pioneer of the avant-garde whose practice is currently undergoing a scholarly re-examination. The full installation from one of his most iconic works, "Time Clock Piece" ("One Year Performance 1980-1981")—a work in which the artist punches a time clock every hour for an entire year—will be shown in the UCCA Long Gallery alongside posters and statements pertaining to his other four "One Year Performances" and "Thirteen Year Plan."

Tehching Hsieh (b. 1950, Taiwan) is renowned for the way his works collapse the distance between art and life. Hsieh's five "One Year Performances," executed between 1978 and 1986, give flesh to concepts central to theoretical investigations into the mechanics of late capitalism—presence and surveillance, production and control, discipline and submission. In his first One Year Performance, "Cage Piece," the artist locked himself in a cell in his New York studio for a year, no reading, writing, talking, watching television, or listening to the radio permitted for the duration. This was followed by "Time Clock Piece" several months later, and then "Outdoor Piece," in which the artist stayed outside, not entering any interior space for a year. With incarceration and homelessness unlikely states to enter into voluntarily, Hsieh's works demonstrate extraordinary levels of individual will. Hsieh's fourth piece, however, is relational in its focus. For a year, the artist was tied to another performance artist, Linda Montano, with an eight-foot-long rope, the rules being that the two remain bound together but unable to touch each other. The final two pieces in Hsieh's extraordinary oeuvre include the "No Art Piece," a total removal from all art practice for a year, closely followed by "Thirteen Year Plan," a period in which Hsieh made art but did not show it publicly, ending on the artist's birthday on the eve of the new millennium, December 31, 1999.

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The five “One Year Performances” and Hsieh’s 1986 to 1999 “Thirteen Year Plan” are so compelling in part because they are so opaque. The “Time Clock Piece,” or “One Year Performance 1980-1981,” comprises a poster, an artist’s statement and witness statements, a record of missed punches, the time clock itself, 366 time cards, 16 mm time-lapse film, 366 filmstrips, and the uniform that Hsieh chose for himself. The artifacts that remain after a year of preternatural commitment to a set of rules are not much more illuminating than the rules themselves. Photographs that Hsieh took of himself every time he clocked in—pose fixed, expression blank—are presented in movie form, a piece that runs at 24 frames per second and lasts just over 6 minutes in total. The brevity of the film combines with the paucity of residual evidence to emphasize the proposition set out in “Cage Piece” that life is no more than “serving time,” with one moment no more important than the next.

The second part of this exhibition at UCCA is a six-part collection of posters and statements covering Hsieh’s output from 1978 to 1999, a total of 21 years of radical art practice. The contemplative and visionary nature of Hsieh’s work is grounded in its own place and time, but also highly transportable both physically and conceptually. The exhibition, mounted in a hall that was once a factory chamber and the site of so much clocking in, marks the first time that the complete documents of “Time Clock Piece” are shown in full in mainland China, as well as Hsieh’s first solo presentation in the People’s Republic, offering the Beijing audience a unique opportunity to engage with one of the most provocative and perplexing art practitioners working in the last century.

The exhibition is part of an ongoing focus on performance at UCCA this year, marked also by the inclusion of several performative pieces in the recent exhibition DUCHAMP and/or/in CHINA and to be capped with an exhibition by Tino Sehgal this coming autumn.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tehching Hsieh was born in Nan-Chou, Taiwan to an atheist father and devout Christian mother. Hsieh dropped out of high school and took up painting before doing three years of military service from 1970 to 1973. Hsieh’s first solo show was at the gallery of the American News Bureau in Taiwan, but he stopped painting shortly after this, turning to performance with



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“Jump Piece,” in which he jumped from a second story window and broke both of his ankles. Hsieh was soon to enact another jump, this time from a ship, when after having trained as a sailor he used his role to enter the US illegally, arriving at the port of a small town near Philadelphia in July 1974. Hsieh was an illegal immigrant in the US for 14 years until he was granted amnesty in 1988.

The role of the immigrant, denied access to social and cultural institutions because of language and resource limitations, informs much of Hsieh’s work. The artist’s refusal to domesticate his work through explication and analysis both underscores the totalizing effect of the systems he engages with and also facilitates an absolute negation of that system, possible only in terms of the fully negated subject. Hsieh’s art is the opposite of escapist entertainment. He occupies spaces that he has very little power to control, the elective component of these acts a specter of free will in a brute and mechanistic world. Though Hsieh’s work seems to defy narration and integration into the art world system, it is gaining traction in academic studies of performance art. *Out of Now*, a monograph on Hsieh by Adrian Heathfield and the artist himself, was published in 2009, with a Chinese translation published in 2012. The book examines the socio-economic concerns manifest in Hsieh’s work—the condition of the immigrant, the nature of labor in late capitalist society, the pretensions of the art world—as well as the abstract and timeless questions the works explore.

Since 2000, released from the restriction of not showing his works, Hsieh exhibits and does presentations in North and South America, Asia, and Europe. Hsieh’s “One Year Performance 1978-1979” (“Cage Piece”) was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in “Performance 1: Tehching Hsieh” in 2009; “One Year Performance 1980-1981” (“Time Clock Piece”) was included in “The Third Mind: Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989,” at the Guggenheim Museum, 2009; the Liverpool Biennial in the United Kingdom and the Gwangju Biennial in South Korea, both in 2010; and in the São Paulo Biennial, 2012. Hsieh is represented by Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, and lives with his wife, Qinqin Li, in Brooklyn.

RELATED PROGRAMS

TALKS & FORUMS

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- Tehching Hsieh, the Storyteller
2013.07.20 (Sat) 14:00-16:00 UCCA Auditorium
Art critic Lee Weng Choy discusses a lecture tour with Tehching Hsieh and the role of narrative in the dissemination of his work.
In English with Chinese translation

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Additional support for this exhibition comes from Sean Kelly Gallery, New York.

ABOUT UCCA

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is a comprehensive, not-for-profit art center serving a global Beijing public. Located at the heart of the 798 Art District, it was founded by collectors Guy and Myriam Ullens and opened in November 2007. Through a wide array of exhibitions and programs, UCCA promotes the development of the local artistic environment, fosters international exchange, and showcases the latest in art, design, and other fields. UCCA's cultural and educational programs bring the public into close contact with cutting-edge thought in art and the humanities, advancing the public cultural sensibility and bringing new experiences to its audience.

CURRENT AND UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS AT UCCA

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- Tino Sehgal, 2013 September 27 – 2013 November 21
- Taryn Simon: A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I-XVIII, 2013 September 27 – 2014 January 5
- Wang Keping, 2013 September 27 – 2014 January 5

For general information, call +86 10 5780 0200, email visitor@ucca.org.cn, or visit

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