

Traces of the Disappearing
曾在的形跡

李悌欽 · 邱德雲

攝影捐贈展

Donated Works by
LEE Ti-Chin and CHIU De-Yun

| English |

Traces of the Disappearing – Donated Works by LEE Ti-Chin and CHIU De-Yun

Curator | FU Yuan-Cheng
Head of Taipei Office, National Center for Photography and Images

“A photograph is not a type of image, not merely an interpretation of real objects; it is also a trace...”

— Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Looking back upon the development of Taiwanese photography over the past hundred years, it was Realist Photography as a creative method that gradually came into vogue among photographers. Taking a direct and front-facing perspective, it reflected a microcosm of life, accumulating and recording Taiwan’s features over the years. In these images rich with realism and temporality, viewers of different generations each searched for their own point of resonance in reading the image - whether viewers near to the era from whence the work originated, seeking the lived experience of their memories, or youth discovering and listening to the stories held within the traces of the image. Different life experiences mould the multiple, overlapping, and multi-semiotic possibilities for reading photography; as such, photography does not only witness a bygone moment, but viewers can read images, using the puzzle pieces of memory to construct and imagine the sights and sounds of the image, bringing forth long-lost sentiments.

Through the work of two photography artists born around the 1930s, Lee Ti-Chin (1928-2017) and Chiu De-Yun (1931-2014), “Traces of the Disappearing” explores how they found their beginnings in Realist Photography, capturing moving moments of life through their lens, or fixing on their homeland over the years. They each accumulated a

photographic vocabulary unique to them, displaying very different facets of realist photographs.

Lee Ti-Chin found his origin in the Photography Association activities of the 1960s, joining amateur groups such as the “Photographic Society of Tatung” and “Society of Freedom Photography Exhibition.” Using down-to-earth and unpretentious visual vocabulary, he captured the quotidian appearance of life with a click of the shutter; with the changing of the seasons, he shot the shifting appearance of the city he was deeply familiar with. In the bustling streets, he captured light, form and shadow, displaying the spirit and ethos of the photographer. Chiu De-Yun was concerned his entire life with the working class and the changes of his hometown Miaoli. In the 1960s, he grew and found his way in nativist realism, pressing close to the spirit of the land. This shaped his visual vocabulary, which expressed sentiment and warmth towards the land using strong contrasts and stark juxtapositions. After his involvement in the launch of “Hard-Neck Photography Group” in 1991, he increased his efforts to deep dive into the Miaoli countryside, documenting the laborers working the land on which they stood, as well as the decline of farming communities brought by the changing times.

This exhibition is comprised of the large number of visual archives and works generously donated by the two photography artists, drawing upon their creative intent and the dialogue between images. Both Lee and Chiu were deeply intertwined with the spirit of realist photography as well as the values of their time. Facing urban development and rural transition, they showed different colors of photography; through their work, they span generational memory and transmission, connecting to the gaze of the viewer and alerting them to the presence of photographers past.

Lee Ti-Chin was born in Wanhua, Taipei. After graduating from the Taipei Industrial Institute (now National Taipei University of Technology) in 1944, Lee began working at Tatung Company in 1946. During his term as the leader of the recreation section of the company's welfare committee, he founded the "Photographic Society of Tatung" per the request of his colleagues in 1960. It was around this time that he purchased a Ricohflex 6x6 TLR camera and embarked on his photographic journey.

After the 1950s, amateur photographers created a flourishing scene of photographic societies in Taiwan. In 1953, the "Photographic Society of China" was re-established in Taiwan. Subsequently, Deng Nan-Guang and others founded the "Society of Freedom Photography Exhibition" and the "Photographic Society of Taipei", which facilitated the establishment of and exchange between photographic societies throughout Taiwan. During the initial period of the "Photographic Society of Tatung", Lee invited Lee Tiao-Lun and Deng Nan-Guang, who both pursued the aesthetics of realism in their photographic careers, to be jurors and consultants in the club's competitions. Consequently, various photographic approaches were introduced into the club, such as realist photography, street photography and snapshot, as well as photo-series combination, all of which influenced and formed the foundation of Lee's photographic style.

Lee's photography revolves around quick documentation of everyday life and his surroundings. The heartwarming moments unexpectedly

encountered and gleaned by the photographer in life have become realistic records that document the changes of people's lifestyle and the urban scene as time passes. In the book, *In Search of Photos Past*, Chang Chao-Tang thus comments on Lee's work, "his spontaneous and non-intrusive angles express an interest in and concern with people around him, demonstrating an ordinary sense of sincerity and preciousness in a calm, inconspicuous mood."

Spontaneous snapshots of street and quotidian scenes or photographic narratives composed with a single photo or a combination of numerous photos convey the warm ambience of everyday life. As the cityscape evolved, Lee's photographic subject also shifted towards portraying modern and urban forms. From realism to depicting mental images, the various creative vocabularies point to the photographer's endeavor in keeping up with the advent of modernity, and at the same time, express the realistic documentation of fleeting moments as well as the plastic form created by the interplay of ethereal light and shadow, composing the photographer's inner landscape.

Inspired and influenced by realist photographers Deng Nan-Guang and Lee Tiao-Lun, Lee Ti-Chin documented everyday life with his photography, finding joy in observing, discovering, collecting, and creating art. The streets he walked and the streetscapes he photographed became keys to unlocking memories of the past, unfurling realist scenes in boundless time.

Lee captured quotidian moments in Taipei in the early days, such as innocent children and random encounters in alleyways. He carefully framed the scenes, adjusted the aperture and shutter speed, and patiently waited for the tiny theater in the frame to put on the desired scene before taking his picture. Behind each shot is a long wait for the photographer. Decades later, when we review these realist scenes from boundless time, we can still perceive the candidness brewed over time and the air of life sealed in the images.



A View of Hejiang Street | 1968 | Gelatin silver print | 22.8 × 29.8 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



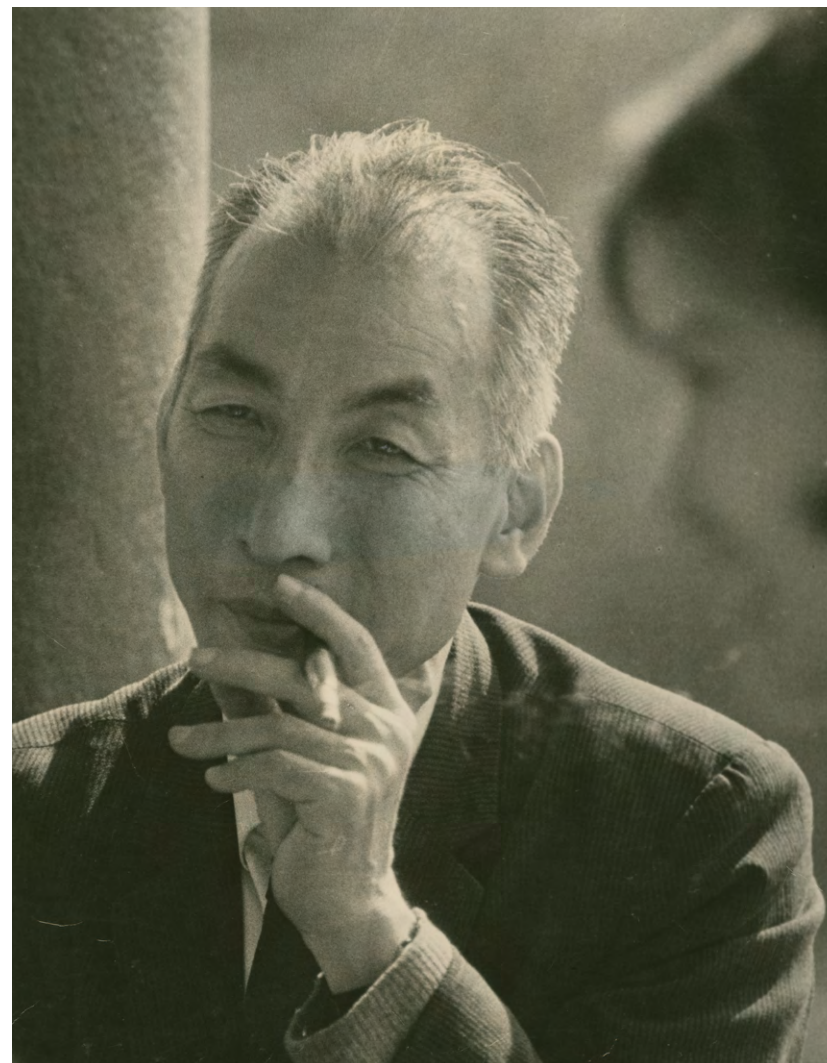
Playing Ball Outside | 1969 | Gelatin silver print | 22.9 × 30.9 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Cityscape After the Rain Series Chungwa Market | 1967 | Digital print
180 × 233 cm (exhibition version)
Reproduced by the National Center of Photography and Images

Through the countryside and the city, the photographer documented the visage of people and the time with piles of film rolls. These simple and candid portraits depict people's living situations at the time, and guide the spectators to revisit the bygone days.

The faces in the portraits naturally express inner feelings. Through photography, these past moments are frozen in the images permanently. The spectators are able to interpret or conjecture the stories of the people through their facial expressions, wrinkles, and other signs. The once vivid faces might have become blurry as time passes, but the feelings and emotions delivered through the photographer's photos are lastingly preserved in the images.



My Idol | 1967 | Gelatin silver print | 36 × 27.7 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Old Worker | 1962 | Gelatin silver print | 24.3 × 19.6 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Best Friends | 1972 | Gelatin silver print | 37.1 × 27.8 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images

Drawing inspiration from everyday life, Lee Ti-Chin created a series of photographic works featuring Taipei City. These images witness the evolution of the city, from the Chunghwa Mall in Ximending in the early days to Hejiang Street surrounded by rice paddies. These images, now only existing in memory, bear witness to the city's development. As high-rise buildings sprouted from the fields, Lee captured the different aspects of "the modern" with his photographic language.

From taking snapshots of fleeting moments to trying out compositions with forms constructed from dots, lines, and planes, Lee photographed the changing modern cityscape and its trendy signs. Through his photography, he documented the disappearing fields as well as the evolving scenes of the reinvented city.



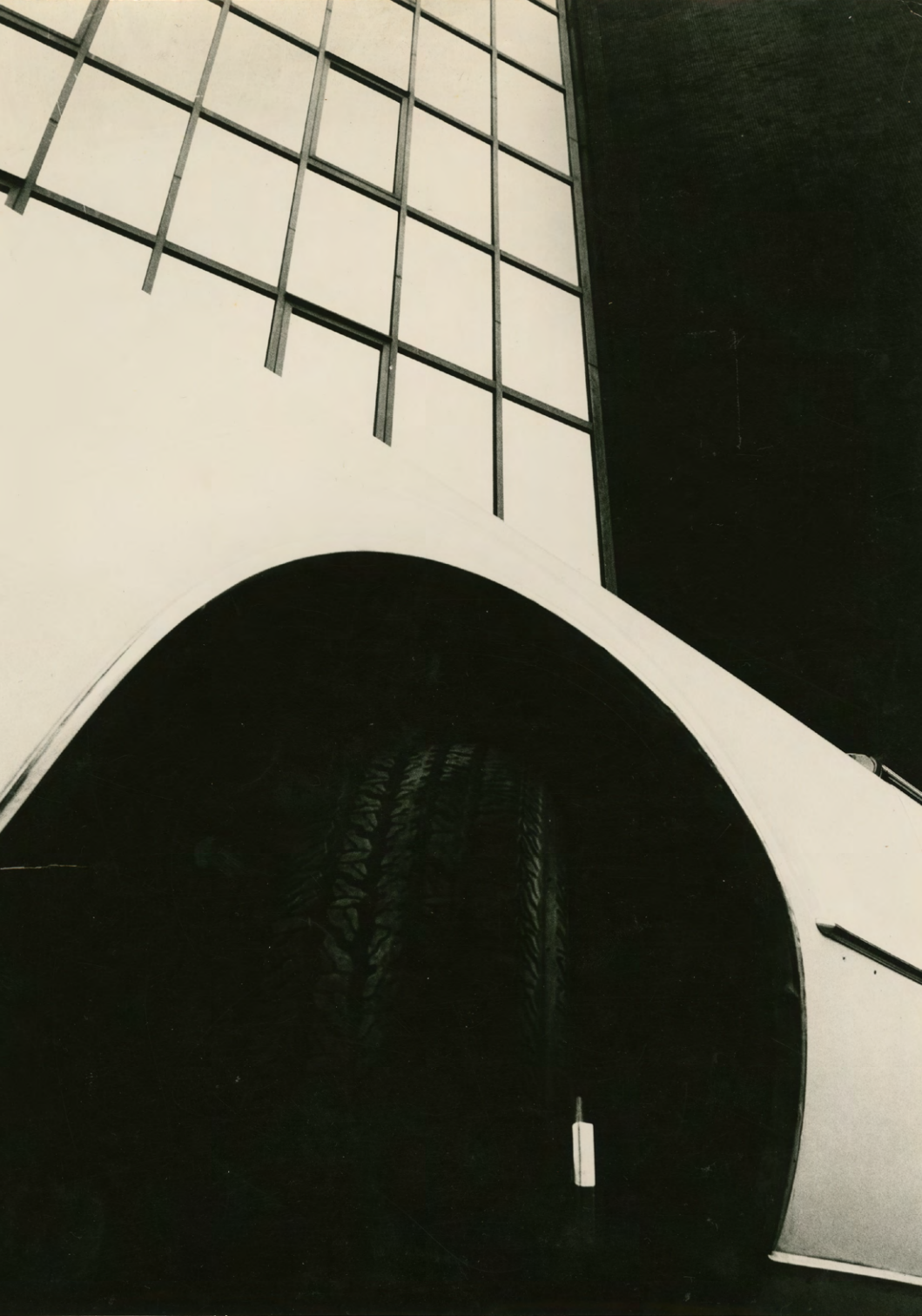
Rest | 1964 | Gelatin silver print | 28.5 × 42 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Affectionate | 1977 | Gelatin silver print | 40.7 × 34.8 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Ximendin Series | 1981 | Gelatin silver print | 43 × 31.8 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Imageries of Square, Circle and Line | 1981 | Digital print on Photo Rag Baryta paper
80 × 55 cm | Reproduced by the National Center of Photography and Images

“Heart-image photography” is a distinctive way to compose photographic narratives by expressing feelings through scenes and conveying meanings with objects. Using scenes and objects in still lifes, the photographer extracts the signs of difference embedded in the images to derive multiple meanings. This photographic approach, posited between figurative and abstract expressions, replaces realism with lyricism to visualize the photographer's subjective emotions. It is a photographic style uniquely developed in the Taiwanese photographic world.

In Lee Ti-Chin's heart-image photography, he took pictures of reality through a subjective point of view, complemented by visual vocabularies such as plastic form, light and shadow, color, and line. He created his own framing of scenes and produces the idiosyncratic atmosphere that permeates the images. Through this approach, he expressed his feelings evoked and echoed by the scenes. The photographer's state of mind is thereby projected towards the spectator through his pictures, and the spectator can follow potential traces in the images to further dig into and perceive them. Consequently, the interpretive space of the photographic works can continue to expand through imagination.



Traces of Wind | 1986 | Digital print on Photo Rag Baryta paper | 63 × 50 cm
Reproduced by the National Center of Photography and Images



Ginza, Japan | 1986 | Digital print on premium semigloss photo paper | 65 × 90 cm
Reproduced by the National Center of Photography and Images



Zebra | 1980 | Digital print on premium semigloss photo paper | 89 × 70 cm
Reproduced by the National Center of Photography and Images

Chiu De-Yun born in a generationally agricultural family in a Miaoli Hakka settlement, displayed a talent for sports from a young age. After graduating from Chien Tai High School in Miaoli, he was recruited into the Chinese Petroleum Corporation (CPC) baseball team and worked at the Taiwan Oil Exploration Bureau, a CPC subsidiary located in Miaoli. During his high school years, he stumbled upon a camera brought back by a classmate from Shanghai, sparking his interest in photography. Encouraged by the senior photographer in Miaoli, Chen Yen-Chuan, he joined the CPC Corporation's Photography Club in 1958, marking the beginning of his journey into photographic creation. Chiu personally described the photography scene at the time as a constant debate between pictorialism and realism. However, given his grassroots background as a farmer, he wholeheartedly embraced realism in photography, taking his free time after work to immerse himself in the fields and countryside of Miaoli, and using realistic imagery to document rural life and folk traditions.

In 1975, Chiu De-Yun, along with Chen Li-Wen, Chen Yen-Chuan, Hsieh Chyi-Jeong, Lo Han-Chang, Chen Yun-Jing (David Chen), and others, co-founded the Photographic Society of Miaoli, paving the way for local photography clubs in Miaoli. Chiu served as the president of the association during its 4th and 5th terms from 1981 to 1985. However, his involvement in administrative duties led him to feel that photography had been polluted with opportunism, and he even stopped taking photos for a period. It wasn't until 1991, when senior members of the association advocated for the formation of the "Hard-

Neck Photography Group," emphasizing a return to the essence of photography with a focus on black and white images and rural themes, with an eye towards long-term cultivation of an affective investment in the local, that he rediscovered his passion for photography and embarked on thematic series of works.

From his early documentation of his hometown in the series *Hometown under the Jiali Mountain*, to *Sweating* and *Shuifuteu (The Shorts Series)* which were closely intertwined with laborers, and later in the 1990s, through his lens, showcasing the temporal changes and decline of rural areas in series like *Revisiting the Rural Villages* and *Wind Blows and Sun Shines*, these series of realistic photographs span Chiu's creative journey. Through the intense emotions conveyed in his black and white images, he communicated the profound and powerful sentiments of a dedicated photographer.

Farmers labor with their heads bowed, they gaze upon Jiali Mountain when lifting their head, the source of irrigation for the Jhonggang River and Houlong River. Jiali Mountain nurtures Miaoli and the Hakka people who have found homes here. Chiu De-Yun, raised in a multigenerational farming family, possessed a down-to-earth character that drove him to capture, through a realistic lens, the familiar farming tasks, children, and local traditions of his hometown. The vibrant life beneath Jiali Mountain, presented in his imagery through stark black-and-white tones, vividly and powerfully conveys human nature in realist photography.



Children Playing under Jiali Mountain | 1960 | Gelatin silver print | 42 × 54.7 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Welcoming the God | 1965 | Gelatin silver print | 42 × 55 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Grain-sunning Ground | 1960 | Gelatin silver print | 40.6 × 56.1 cm
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images

In Hakka language, the term “Shuifuteu-wearing folks” refers to people working in the fields. However, “Shuifuteu” also implies poverty and shabbiness. Chiu De-Yun captured images of small and large farms in Miaoli with his cameras, portraying the farmers, who were often referred to as wearers of “Shuifuteu.” Sharing a similar upbringing and background with his subjects, Chiu shortened the emotional and spatial gap between himself and those he photographed. He took pride in encapsulating the ethos of frugality, self-sufficiency, and hard work embodied by those in “Shuifuteu.” During the chilly days of early spring, he employed his lenses to document diligent farmers toiling in the fields, as well as laborers at fishing ports and construction sites, illustrating the exertion and sweat of their labor. The photographer's presence was a testament to standing side by side with these laborers, enduring the scorching sun and chilling winds, with the intent of conveying their struggle and strength through his imagery.



Sweating Series | 1960 - 1970 | Gelatin silver print
50.8 × 61 cm each, the number of exhibits determined by the available space
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Sweating Series | 1960 - 1970 | Gelatin silver print
50.8 × 61 cm each, the number of exhibits determined by the available space
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images

In the 1990s, the industrial workforce in Miaoli County had significantly exceeded the agricultural workforce, shedding the agricultural identity of the photographer's hometown and transforming it into an industrialized area. The longstanding policy of "supporting industries through agriculture" brought substantial economic growth to Taiwan. However, the oversight of agricultural policies resulted in the exodus of the younger generation, leaving behind an aging population and abandoned farmlands. The remaining people still cultivating the fields were farmers who have dedicated their blood and sweat to the land throughout their lives.

In 1991, following the establishment of the "Hard-Neck Photography Group," Chiu De-Yun once again took up his cameras and ventured to Miaoli to capture its local culture and scenery. During his trips, he observed that the rural areas he had visited in his youth were deteriorating. The diligent farmers he had photographed back then were now elders living alone in the declining countryside. This motivated Chiu to intensify his photographic documentation of the fallow fields in Miaoli, the shift towards mechanized farming, the depopulation of rural areas, and the profound transformations in the landscape following the fast construction of highways and expressways.



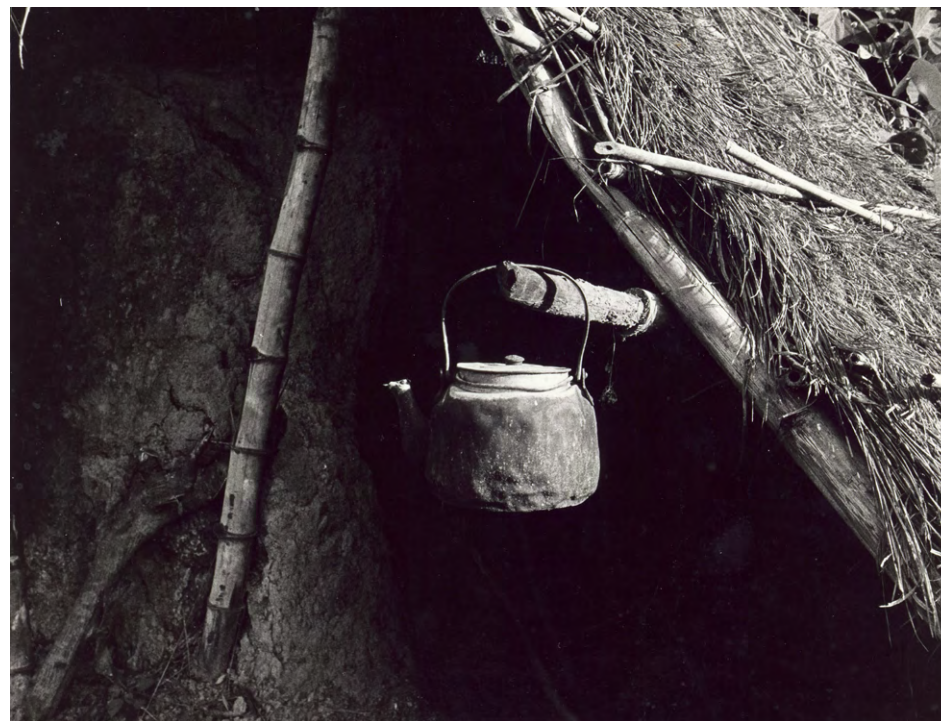
*Revisiting the Rural Villages Series | 1990 - 2010 | Gelatin silver print
50.8 × 61 cm each, the number of exhibits determined by the available space
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images*



Revisiting the Rural Villages Series | 1990 - 2010 | Gelatin silver print
50.8 × 61 cm each, the number of exhibits determined by the available space
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images

Agricultural tools take part in the daily work and life of farmers. They shape a culture by gradually evolving through life experiences and adapting to the local environment. Weathered by wind and sun, these tools bear unique marks and a tactile warmth. Although indispensable, they are often the first to be abandoned as their owners fade away.

In 1993, while documenting the dilapidated rural areas and elders left behind, Chiu De-Yun discovered many agricultural tools and daily utensils forgotten in old farmhouses. The idea of using objects to represent people surged in his mind. The project *Wind Blows and Sun Shines* series spanned four years, capturing over a hundred daily utensils. Chiu didn't arrange these items for his shooting; instead, he made simple photographic records of them in their original environment. These items, forgotten or abandoned by their owners, still retained traces of warmth. Their wear and tear is subtly connected to the labor and life shared with their former owners, and times they had for each other.



Wind Blows and Sun Shines Series | 1990 - 2010 | Gelatin silver print
50.8 × 61 cm each, the number of exhibits determined by the available space
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images



Wind Blows and Sun Shines Series | 1990 - 2010 | Gelatin silver print
50.8 × 61 cm each, the number of exhibits determined by the available space
Collection of the National Center of Photography and Images

EXHIBITION

Supervisor	Ministry of Culture
Organizer	National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts National Center of Photography and Images
Commissioner	CHEN Kuang-Yi
Vice Commissioner	WANG Chia-Cheng
Exhibition Director	TSAI Chao-Yi
Curator	FU Yuan-Cheng
Exhibition Supervisor	FU Yuan-Cheng , CHENG Su-Yuan
Exhibition Coordinator	LIN Hsieh-Min
Educational Exhibition Planning	FU Yuan-Cheng, CHENG Su-Yuan, LIN Hsieh-Min
Object Conservation	CHENG Su-Yuan
Exhibition Design	Tiny Scene Design, CHIANG Pei-Hsin
Graphic Design	Young Ci Co, Ltd. , LO Wei
Exhibition Technical Executive and Lighting	MadB CoLtd
Photographer	Sim CHANG
Translator	Alex Liang-Jung HUANG, C.J. Anderson WU Elliott Y.N. CHEUNG
Website	ncpi.ntmofa.gov.tw
Date	2023.12.7 - 2024.4.28
Venue	National Center of Photography and Images, Taipei Gallery 201, 202, 203 NO.70, Section 1, Zhongxiao W. Road, Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei 100007, Taiwan

指導單位
Supervisor



主辦單位
Organizers



NCPI 國家攝影文化中心
NATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGE