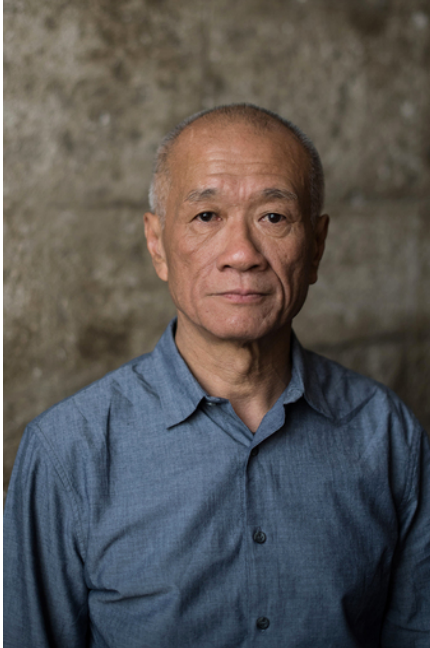


# SEAN KELLY

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## ArtAsiaPacific

### TEHCHING HSIEH TO REPRESENT TAIWAN AT 2017 VENICE BIENNALE



Performance artist Tehching Hsieh will represent Taiwan at the 57th Venice Biennale. Copyright Hugo Glendinnin

On July 28, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) announced that the New York-based Tehching Hsieh, known for his long-duration performances, will represent Taiwan at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Ping Lim, the director of TFAM, which has organized the Taiwan Pavilion since 1995, remarked: "Hsieh's work not only bears witness to a visionary perspective, but also sheds light on universal human conditions through his critical enactment of a biopolitics of existence." The pavilion will be curated by Adrian Heathfield, who was a curatorial attaché for the 2016 Biennale of Sydney and co-authored *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh* with the artist.

Born in 1950 in Nan-Chou, in southern Taiwan, Hsieh dropped out of high school to become a painter in the late 1960s. After three years of compulsory military service, he turned to performative actions before joining the merchant marines. In 1974, he walked off an oil tanker docked along the Delaware River and onto United States soil in 1974. Living in New York as an illegal immigrant, Hsieh began a series of five One Year Performances in 1978, which included *Cage Piece* (1978–79) for which he lived inside a cell measuring 11'6" by 9'8" within his studio for one year, without making conversation, reading, writing or watching television. The following year, beginning on April 11, 1980, at 7pm, Hsieh began punching a time clock in his studio every hour for one year. He wore a drab worker's uniform and every time he stamped the clock, a 16mm camera recorded him. He missed punching the clock just 133 times over the course of 8,760 hours, largely due to sleeping through the hourly alarm system he had rigged for himself.

After two years of performative confinement in his studio, Hsieh inverted the venue for his performance. From September 26, 1981, until September 26, 1982, he spent the entire year outside—except for 15 hours when police put him in jail for getting into a fight. The next in the series involved not isolation but an enforced interdependence. For the fourth yearlong performance, he tied 2.5-meter rope between

himself and performance artist Linda Montano, and they lived for the year—without touching each other—bound together. In his fifth and final year, he vowed to have nothing to do with art. After that he devised a “13 years’ plan,” which began on his 36th birthday, on December 31, 1986, to make art but not to exhibit it until his 49th birthday on December 31, 1999. During that period, in 1988, he was granted amnesty and given United States citizenship.

Hsieh remarked that the Taiwan Pavilion will be, “a rare opportunity to show previously unseen early works that I made in Taiwan, and to develop new understandings of my One Year Performances in New York.” His works before the New York period are less well-known than the One Year Performances, which were given prominence and press in 2009 when the Museum of Modern Art in New York presented *Cage Piece* and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presented *Time Clock Piece* (1980–81).

Following his appointment as curator, Heathfield remarked: “The historic halls of the Palazzo delle Prigioni Venice, the former prison of the Palazzo Ducale, are an ideal setting for the work of an artist who understands more than most, the meaning and cost of ‘doing time’, and the nature of lives lived at the edges of what we call society.” Located near Piazza San Marco, the Taiwan Pavilion is considered a “collateral pavilion,” rather than a “national pavilion” at the Venice Biennale because China does not recognize the independent sovereignty of Taiwan.