

# SEAN KELLY

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Tehching Hsieh To Represent Taiwan at the 57th  
Venice Biennale



Tehching Hsieh, *One Year Performance* (1981–82). Photo ©Tehching Hsieh. courtesy of the artist, Gilbert & Lisa Silverman, and Sean Kelly Gallery.

The Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) has announced that performance artist Tehching Hsieh will be representing Taiwan at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

Hsieh is a critically acclaimed New York-based artist whose work is determined to derail the status quo. In 1974, Hsieh came to the US as an undocumented immigrant and his art has since centered on defying the established socio-political hegemony. From 1978, Hsieh embarked on a controversial series of five "One Year Performances," wherein he adopted time as the medium through which to express ontological and existential difficulties.

The "One Year Performances" series explored self-discipline, physical, and psychological imprisonment, notions of freedom and vulnerability, as well as the limits to normalized human behavior and relationships. In 2009, *Cage Piece* (1978–1979), which saw spend a year locked in a wooden cage, was presented at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and *Time Clock Piece* (1980–1981), wherein he 'punched in' every hour of every day for a year, was shown at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in the same year.

"It is a great honor to represent Taiwan at the 57th Venice Biennale," the artist said in a statement. "This exhibition is 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. I am grateful for the support of the nominating committee, the director of TFAM Ping Lin, chief curator Chaoying Wu, and for the opportunity to collaborate with curator Adrian Heathfield."

Hsieh is sure to continue to rage against the machine at the Venice Biennale, with an exhibition curated by the renowned British curator Adrian Heathfield, who holds particular experience in time-based arts such as live art, dance, and experimental theater. Heathfield's research is devoted to performance, and he co-authored the publication *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh* with the artist.

"It will be a great joy to make the most extensive and in depth exhibition of Tehching Hsieh's work to date, spanning distinct decades, continents and artistic propositions," the curator said in the statement. "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."

Hsieh's work has a way of drawing out collective cultural anxieties and, over the past 20 years, the Taiwanese art scene has seen a shift in the power structures of the international contemporary art community. In the announcement of Hsieh's nomination, TFAM acknowledged this, classing the choice as an attempt to redress this imbalance, to stimulate bilateral dialogues with pan-European and global cultural contexts as well as to boost the standing of Taiwan's burgeoning contemporary art scene.