

ENGLISH

CHEN ZHEN

OPENING: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2017 / 5PM

Open every day, from 10am to 6pm

ARTE CONTINUA is pleased to present, for the first time in Cuba, a solo exhibition of Chen Zhen. An artist of Chinese origin, he was based in Paris from 1986 until his untimely death on December 13, 2000, following a serious illness.

He gained international recognition for the quality of his artworks and his open-minded approach.

Jardin Lavoir occupies the main space in the former cinema, and transforms it into a space of purification and healing.

This artwork was first presented in 2000 at the Cimaise and Portique regional center of contemporary art in Albi (France), in the middle of an old mill. Eleven bed frames (the number references the number of essential organs in the human body) are transformed into metal washtubs filled with water, where all sorts of everyday objects are subjected to a constant wash.

The arrangement of beds in the space creates a full-blown “washtub-garden”: the flowing water washes the objects and transforms the beds into placid lakes.

These “bed tubs”, a metaphor for the body and the materialization of human life, become a perennial site of ablution and natural therapy. Water is at the center of this artwork, giving the space an intimate and secret atmosphere.

¹ Quote from Chen Zhen’s notes.

On the first floor *Six Roots - Enfance / Fille - Childhood / Girl* and *Six Roots - Mémoire / Memory* face and engage with each other. Both are part of a series of six pieces that are an allegory for human life: birth, childhood, conflict, suffering, memory, death-rebirth.

“Nothing exists by accident... It was during my visit to the MOCA in Zagreb in 2000 with six successive rooms linked together by doors, that I conceived *Six Roots*. The space has a human scale that made me think of a series of organs: a body in six parts, a life in six stages... *Six Roots* is a Buddhist expression that describes the principal bodily senses: sight (eyes), hearing (the ears), smell (the nose), taste (the tongue), touch (the body) and knowledge (consciousness). These fundamental human “capabilities” condition and tie together our diverse behaviors and thoughts. They evolve with age and different temperaments for better or for worse. Adopting this Buddhist theme is a pretext for questioning the six stages of life and the multiplicity of contradictory aspects in human behavior”.

Watching over everything, finally, is *Lumière innocente* (Innocent Light), a casket of life whose light spreads all around, and with the life energy it still has in reserve keeps hope alive and indicates the path that awaits us to make the world a better place for future generations.

ARTECONTINUA
SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

C N P
CONSEJO NACIONAL ARTES PLASTICAS

Águila de Oro, Rayo 108 entre Zanja y Dragones, Barrio Chino, Centro Habana, Cuba
habana@galleriacontinua.com | www.galleriacontinua.com

Chen Zhen was born in Shanghai in 1955 into a family of Francophone doctors. He grew up during the Cultural Revolution in the former neighborhood of the French Concession. At a very young age the artist became interested in the links between traditional Chinese philosophy and Western culture. He studied at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Shanghai (1973), where he taught from 1976, and then resumed his studies in stage design in 1978 at the Dramatic Arts Institute of Shanghai, where he became a professor in 1982.

At the age of 25, Chen Zhen was diagnosed with hemolytic anemia, an incurable disease that led him to develop a deep knowledge and appreciation for the value of time and space.

He decided to move to Paris in 1986, and upon his arrival in France he experienced culture shock from a first-hand perspective. He put his painting practice on hold to work on installation pieces.

The work of Chen Zhen follows a line of thinking that is transcultural, a concept that the artist calls "transexperience." He explored the relations between the human being, consumer society and nature.

Two years before his death, Chen Zhen decided to learn traditional Chinese medicine, which he regarded as a system of thought and action very close to his own artistic vision; he transformed and distilled this knowledge in his last works, creating a dialogue between the body, spirit, the human being and the universe.

Since his death his works have been shown around the world, and he has had solo retrospective exhibitions in a number of important museums

and institutions: the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 2001; the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens and the ICA, Boston, in 2002; the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, and the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, in 2003; the Kunsthalle Wien in 2007; MART, Rovereto, in 2008; and the Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, in 2015.

Between 1990 and 2000 he received six grants from French and American art institutions, and took part in major shows such as:

Chen Zhen au Magasin, Le Magasin – CNAC, Grenoble, 1992

Light of Confession, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, 1994

Field of Waste, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1994

Dialogue de Paix, Palais des Nations Unies, Geneva, 1995

The Quiet In The Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art and the Shakers, ICA, Boston, 1997

Artists' Projects, The Re-opening Show of the P.S.1 Museum, P.S.1 Art Center, New York, 1997

Jue Chang / Fifty Strokes to Each, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1998

Cities on the Move, Louisiana Museum of Contemporary Art, Humlebaek, 1999

Chen Zhen, Elogio della Magia Nera - In Praise of Black Magic - Eloge de la Magie Noire, GAM, Turin, 2000

He participated in various international art events, including: the Lyon Biennale, the Johannesburg Biennale and the Gwangju Biennale in 1997; the Montréal Biennale in 1998; and the Venice Biennale in 1999, 2007 and 2009.

ARTECONTINUA
SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

C N P
CONSEJO NACIONAL ARTES PLASTICAS

Águila de Oro, Rayo 108 entre Zanja y Dragones, Barrio Chino, Centro Habana, Cuba
habana@galleriacontinua.com | www.galleriacontinua.com