

Bunkers now a museum for all

BY GRACE YANG
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This major frontline museum is different from many others. With world-renowned artist Cai Guo-qiang as its curator, the Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art (BMOCA) opened to the public in Kinmen on Saturday, Sept. 11, a date that is remembered for the terror attacks in the United States that inspired Cai to develop those exhibitions on Taiwan's frontline island.

Kinmen has had a role as a battlefield during the years of standoff between Taiwan and China since the world-renowned Gungingou Battle in 1949. Military rule ended in 1992.

Now it is a museum for provocative international contemporary art exhibitions that are full of unique battlefield features. By incorporating innovative methods, the art museum is expected to open a new stage for frontline island's artistic culture and battlefield heritage.

Featuring 18 artists from Taiwan, China, Europe, Japan and the United States, the museum showcases major exhibitions at Kinmen's former military facilities, including bunkers, castles, bomb shelters and underground tunnels.

The artists are trying to convert some of the island's military facilities into modern-day artistic works.

The real on-location exhibitions contain multi-media artistic installations and live performances by visual artists, musicians, composers, architects, filmmakers, theorists, performers and many others.

All the exhibitions at the once-abandoned locations now tell the visitors the legends of history.

Eighteen participating artists include Taiwan's prestigious film director Tsai Ming-liang and internationally-renowned composer Tan Dun from China. Lee Shi-chi is the only native artist joining in the exhibitions.

He said he personally experienced the battle on August 23, 1958 in which mainland Chinese army dropped more than 470,000 artillery shells and some 10,000 Kinmen citizens perished in that battle.

Lee has set up a working team with artist Tsai Chih-rong specifically to create a large-scale installation work outside a bunker using 823 wine bottles of Kinmen's famous Kaoliang wine.

As a veteran artist, Lee has been dedicated to promoting contemporary art in Taiwan and is a pioneer in advocating the movement of art exchanges across the Taiwan Strait. His participation in the exhibition is expected to broaden the profound historical significance of the museum.

Lee said his exhibition is aimed at telling the world: No more wars. No more pain. And no more suffering from brutal battles.

Kinmen is an island which most participating artists said they have never visited. But they said they are strongly moved and deeply attracted by its atmosphere. The environment inspired and led them to the innovative creations on display.

Kinmen County Magistrate Lee Juh-feng said he hopes a new bridge also will be built to connect the two sides across the Taiwan Strait and make the island a peaceful land forever.

He also hopes to preserve the artistic facilities as Kinmen's historical treasure and make it a new landmark in Kinmen.

The recreated bunker sites on display include Nanshan, Tashan, Changliao, Tshu, the culture center, Shuitou community and Linchu command headquarters.

Organized by the National Museum of History and the Kinmen County Government, the exhibitions will run through January 10, 2005.



Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art Exhibition Site Map



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(1) Kinmen-born artist Lee Shi-chi installs 823 Kinmen Kaoliang liquor bottles as shelling bombs in one exhibition at the Kinmen Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art that opened over the weekend on Kinmen Island. The exhibition at the Nanshan Fortification No. 1 Bunker evokes the famous 823 Artillery Battle on Kinmen.
(2) Taiwan-born erotic model Yin Ling from Japan poses with a fake skeleton on a pink bed in a live performance called 'Lovemaking for World Peace' in an abandoned bunker at Nanshan Fortification No. 3 Bunker and Arsenal. Photo and video documentation of her performance will be shown during the exhibition.

(3) Chinese artist Shen Yuan recreates her art work 'Speaker Tea' with a giant megaphone at the top of Gungingou Cihu Great Bunker. The work was inspired by Shen's recent tour of Dadeng Military Base, the mainland island closest to Kinmen, where she was impressed with the world's largest military propaganda speaker. She replicated the megaphone by adding a large tongue to comment on the previous messages it had dispensed.