

ART REPLACES WAR ON TAIWAN CHINA STRAIT ISLE

TAIWANESE & CHINESE ARTISTS, ARCHITECTS & COMPOSERS TRANSFORM FORMER COLD-WAR DEFENSES TO PROMOTE FUTURE OF KINMEN, TAIWAN

Curator **Cai Guo-Qiang** has turned former fortifications into the *Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art* on Kinmen Island, Taiwan, where 18 solo exhibitions will be on view from September 11, 2004 - January 10, 2005.

PREVIEW EXHIBITION: *Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art - 18 Solo Exhibitions*
July 30 - August 22, 2004, National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan
Multimedia Renderings of 18 Artist Proposals for BMoCA

ARTISTS: CHAI Min-leong, CHANG Yongho, DA LUN WEI Art Squad, FEI Dawei, LEE Shi-chi Studio, LEE Mingwei, LIN Hsing-yueh, LIU Xiaodong, SHEN Yuan, TAN Dun, Su-mei TSE, WANG Jian Wei, WANG Wen-chih, Tung Wang WU, YAO Chien, YIN Ling, YING Bo, ZENG Li

KINMEN, TAIWAN: For five decades, Kinmen's strategic location (1.24 miles from mainland China and 250 miles from Taiwan) placed the island at the vortex of the Cold War political struggles between the Taiwanese and mainland Chinese. The seeds of the rift were sown in 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek withdrew a large group of Chinese to Taiwan and the surrounding islands. In 1950, the conflict deepened when soldiers from the mainland tried to capture Kinmen, and approximately 10,000 soldiers and Taiwanese civilians lost their lives.

Until the early 1990's, when the Taiwanese government demilitarized Kinmen, the island was used by both parties in efforts to "Liberate Taiwan" or "Reclaim the mainland." By some accounts up to 100,000 Taiwanese troops occupied the island at the height of estrangement. However, over the last half-century, as technology advanced to precision missiles and other methods of modern warfare, the fortifications gradually became obsolete and the island lost much of its practical military value. Although tensions between Taiwan and mainland China persist, today Kinmen's military significance is minimal. Two thousand vestigial facilities, bunkers and arsenals, remain scattered throughout the island as silent monuments to the hostilities of the Cold War era.

Though Kinmen is home to a wealth of local culture—historic villages, temples, indigenous cuisine—the island remains relatively underdeveloped and culturally remote compared with the rest of the region. Recently, however, the Kinmen County Magistrate, Lee Chu-feng placed great emphasis on Kinmen's potential to become a tourist attraction for its transitional state and strategic location.

Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA): Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang comes from Quanzhou in the Fujian province of China overlooking Kinmen, and for years dreamed of converting the island's network of vacant military structures for a project. The facilities have intriguing remnants of military rule such as stenciled notices of "Penalty for Desertion" and other martial laws. The landscape, in some cases, conceals structures overgrown with flowering vines. In others, the vegetation has been stripped away revealing subterranean bunkers in a desolate, earthen expanse. Kinmen's physical uniqueness, history, political symbolism and open future make it an ideal and captivating site for experimental artistic programs such as ***BMoCA, September 11, 2004 – January 10, 2005.***

Initiated by Cai Guo-Qiang in 2000, *BMoCA* is a public exhibition and the latest in the artist's series, *Everything is Museum*, in which contemporary art and culture meet in local communities. Previous projects in the series include *DMoCA (Dragon Museum of Contemporary Art)*, 2000, Niigata, Japan and *UMoCA (Under Museum of Contemporary Art)*, 2001, a work sited under a bridge in Colle Val d'Elsa, Italy.

Cai Guo-Qiang conceived *BMoCA* as a museum of satellite exhibitions from which a handful of artists' works would be selected for permanent installation to, over years of periodic exhibitions, form site-specific "galleries" for continual international artistic innovation. Approximately sixty derelict military facilities on Kinmen were chosen for this tripartite premier exhibition, which will use eighteen sites as hosts for site-specific installations by *BMoCA* artists; one third of the sites will remain as they are as witness to the island's unique and fractious history; and one third will be transformed into venues for local exhibitions, concerts and other public programs such as a concurrent suite of eighteen exhibitions by Kinmen school children.

- **The transformation of Kinmen defense facilities will stimulate cultural, social, and economic development for the community and generate tourism.**
- **Through *BMoCA*'s permanent installations, contemporary artistic visions will offer the island a new cultural heritage upon which to build.**
- ***BMoCA* will engage the community in dialogue surrounding the creative process by directly involving the local schools.**
- ***BMoCA* will promote regional cooperation through the unprecedented collaboration of Taiwanese and Chinese artists.**

Like many established biennials in recent decades, including the *Venice Biennale*, the *Gwangju Biennial*, the *São Paulo Biennial* and others, *BMoCA* will create critical forums for dialogue spanning artistic disciplines, borders, ethnicities, history and political convictions. *BMoCA* will be unique, however, in its emphasis on a better life for the people of Kinmen. In the words of Lee Chu-feng, *BMoCA* will "Let both banks [of the Taiwan/China Strait] know Kinmen and let Kinmen enter the world arena."

SITES:

Nanshan Fortification and Tashan Battery: Artists' installations will be concentrated in two areas: on the northwest and southwest ends of the island in the Nanshan Fortification and Tashan Battery. Bunkers will primarily house performance and installations; arsenals will feature video art, and former military classrooms will host painting. Present conditions of the installation sites will be kept as they are wherever possible.

Guningtou Cihu Great Bunker: Surrounded by a moat and minefields, the Guningtou Cihu Great Bunker overlooks the mainland city of Xiamen and will host large-scale installations indoors, on the rooftop and on the surrounding landmine-free beaches, where more than ten thousand lives were lost.

Changliao Rezoning District: A series of sites and bunkers will each be given to an elementary school in Kinmen, where students will be asked to propose ideas for exhibitions. One proposal from each of the 18 participating schools will be selected to produce and exhibit for the duration of *BMoCA*. Involving the local children in *BMoCA* will engage them in discussions—many for the first time—on war, peace and cultural heritage. The Kinmen children will also have the opportunity to learn about the creative process of contemporary art from some of the region's most acclaimed artists.

***BMOCA* SUPPORTERS:**

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Ministry of Transportation and Communications, Council for Cultural Affairs
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Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art