

IRIS Graduate Summer Research Grant Report 2025

With the generous support of the IRIS Graduate Summer Fieldwork Award, I conducted sustained field-based archival and institutional research in Taiwan between June 9 and August 17, 2025. This research was designed to advance my dissertation project on the work of Taiwanese artist Chen Chieh-jen by situating his practice within the historical conditions of Taiwan's post-industrial transformation. In particular, my fieldwork focused on the intersection of labor history, women's worker movements, and mediated forms of historical memory—contexts that are central to understanding the aesthetic and political stakes of Chen's video practice. The field research directly informs my dissertation proposal and has already materialized into a substantial research paper that will serve as a core component of my dissertation proposal defense.

My summer research was primarily based in Taipei, with shorter field visits to Taipei and Hsinchu (Beipu), allowing me to engage with both central and regional perspectives on Taiwan's colonial, industrial, and post-industrial histories. During this period, I consulted a range of archival collections, museums, and university libraries, including those at National Taiwan University (NTU), National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), the Taiwan Film and Audiovisual Institute (TFAI), and the National Palace Museum. These institutions provided access to archival materials and institutional documentation essential for grounding my analysis of Chen Chieh-jen's work in the specific social, political, and historical conditions of Taiwan.

A central focus of my archival research was the historical background to Chen Chieh-jen's 2003 video installation *Factory*, which I have selected as the conceptual and methodological fulcrum of my dissertation project. At university archives and libraries, I reviewed photographs, media documentation, newspaper reports, and institutional publications related

to women-led labor protests in Taiwan from the mid-1990s through the early 2000s. These protests—particularly those involving women factory workers in urban and industrial centers such as Taipei—form a crucial historical backdrop to *Factory* and to Chen’s sustained engagement with deindustrialization, labor precarity, and historical testimony. Consulting these materials allowed me to trace how lived experiences of labor struggle and social displacement are mediated, remembered, and reconfigured within contemporary video art and continues to play and shape the popular memory of Taiwanese people through songs and artworks.

The archival materials I surveyed ranged from government reports and policy documentation to newspaper coverage spanning the 1950s through the 1990s, as well as later media records addressing industrial restructuring and labor unrest in the late twentieth century. Together, these sources enabled me to situate the events referenced in *Factory* within a longer historical arc of post-1949 Taiwan, including shifts in state policy, industrial organization, and urban life. Rather than treating Chen Chieh-jen’s work as an isolated artistic response, this archival grounding allowed me to analyze it as a historically embedded practice that engages critically with the temporal disjunctions produced by modernization and economic transition. In addition to archival research, I attended performances by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre as part of a broader engagement with Taiwan’s contemporary performing arts landscape. Observing these performances allowed me to study embodied practices, aesthetic temporality, and modes of spectatorship that resonate with my broader interest in mediation and empathy across visual and performative forms. Performance programs and institutional materials were documented as part of my research notes.

Throughout my fieldwork, I engaged in research consultations with archivists, curators, and faculty members at National Taiwan University and National Taiwan Normal University. These conversations were instrumental in clarifying archival pathways, historiographic

debates, and methodological approaches relevant to my project. Faculty and curatorial feedback helped refine my theoretical framework, particularly with respect to questions of temporality, mediation, and empathy, and guided me toward secondary literature and archival collections that will be central to future stages of my dissertation research. These scholarly exchanges also contributed to shaping the conceptual vocabulary through which I approach Chen Chieh-jen's work as a form of politically engaged visual practice.

A key outcome of this IRIS-supported fieldwork is the completion of a major research paper titled "*The Politics of Temporal Mediation and the Aesthetics of Empathy in Chen Chieh-jen's Factory.*" The archival orientation, institutional research, and scholarly consultations undertaken in Taiwan were essential to the development of this paper's central arguments. In particular, the fieldwork enabled me to articulate how *Factory* mobilizes durational aesthetics and mediated temporal structures to generate forms of empathy that resist both spectacle and immediacy. This paper represents a concrete scholarly product emerging directly from my summer research and will serve as a foundational chapter for my dissertation proposal. It will also play a central role in my forthcoming dissertation proposal defense, where it anchors the broader theoretical and methodological direction of the project.