

**Taiwan Lectures on Chinese Studies Invites  
Ru-shou Robert Chen to the University of Toronto  
to Give a Lecture on Taiwanese Film**

The National Central Library's Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) and University of Toronto recently co-hosted the fourth Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies of the year. The lecture took place at 2pm on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at the University of Toronto's Cheng Yu Ting East Asian Library. The director of National Chengchi University's Department of Radio and Television, Professor Ru-shou Robert Chen, delivered a lecture on "Taiwan Cinema and the Specter of Martial Law."

This was the first Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies to be held in Toronto. The event's co-sponsors, the University of Toronto, is home to one of a number of Taiwan Resource Centers for Chinese Studies (TRCCS) around the world; the Toronto TRCSS was established by the NCL in 2015. The lecture was moderated by the director of the University of Toronto's Cheng Yu Ting East Asian Library, Hana Kim. After some welcoming remarks by the University of Toronto Library's deputy chief librarian, Julia Hannaford, it was Toronto TECO's director-general Catherine Yung-mei Hsu's turn to give a speech. Early, before the beginning of the lecture, Ms. Jane Liao of the NCL screened a video in English specially produced for the Taiwan Lectures on Chinese Studies. Besides introducing Taiwan's Chinese Studies research resources, the video also described the achievements of the NCL's international collaborations and its establishment of TRCSS worldwide.

The lecturer on this occasion, Prof. Robert Chen, obtained his Ph.D. in film theory from the University of Southern California (USC), and currently heads the Department of Radio and Television at National Chengchi University. His main fields of research are Taiwanese cinema, film theory, the sociology of everyday life, cultural studies, and Walter Benjamin. Prof. Chen also co-edited *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity, State*

*of the Arts*, and published *Through a Screen, Darkly: One Hundred Years of Reflections on Taiwan Cinema*, which explores the historical development of Taiwanese cinema.

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lifting of martial law. Focusing on Taiwanese cinema and the end of martial law, Prof. Chen recounted the last half century of Taiwan cinema and its effect on the course of Taiwan's modernization and democratization. The end of martial law in 1987 was essentially an important milestone in this process. During the lecture, Prof. Chen screened clips from films such as "The Sandwich Man," "A City of Sadness," and "Super Citizen Ko." In the course of Taiwan's transformation from an autocracy to a democracy, Taiwanese films like these embodied a sense of just change. Prof. Chen argued that, as early as the early 1980s with the sudden rise of the New Taiwan Cinema movement, films began to question Taiwanese identity and challenge authoritarian rule in an artistic way. Via the silver screen, an audience with only scant knowledge of the 228 incident and the White Terror were exposed to all kinds of politically taboo subjects. Even before the ending of martial law in 1987, Taiwanese cinema had already begun to examine the injustices martial law had brought on society, while continuing to soothe the hurt it had caused.

At the end of the lecture, Prof. Bart Testa of the University of Toronto's Cinema Studies Institute was invited to discuss the topic with Prof. Chen and take questions from the audience. Besides attracting many faculty and students from the university, the also lecture drew a number of Taiwanese living overseas, many of whom had traveled a long distance to attend. The audience enthusiastically asked questions and responded to the discussion. The film clips screened by Prof. Chen and his commentary made the history of Taiwan's democratization easily understandable and more accessible. The following day, November 8, Prof. Chen attended "Taiwan Short Films: Screening and Discussion," an event jointly sponsored by the Cheng Yu Ting East Asian Library and Toronto TECO. The five Taiwanese short films screened were "Mother's Day," "Door," "Post Human," "The Lonely Time," and "The Snail School." Prof. Chen and Prof. Bart Testa commented on and discussed the films, introducing them to the foreign audience.



Prof. Ru-shou Robert Chen delivers a lecture at the University of Toronto



The lecture was enthusiastically attended



L to R: Alicia Wang, director, Toronto TECO; Hana Kim, director, University of Toronto Cheng Yu Ting East Asian Library; Julia Hannaford, Deputy Chief Librarian, University of Toronto Library; Prof Ru-shou Robert Chen; Catherine Yung-mei Hsu, director-general, Toronto TECO; Prof. Bart Testa; Jane Liao, editor, NCL