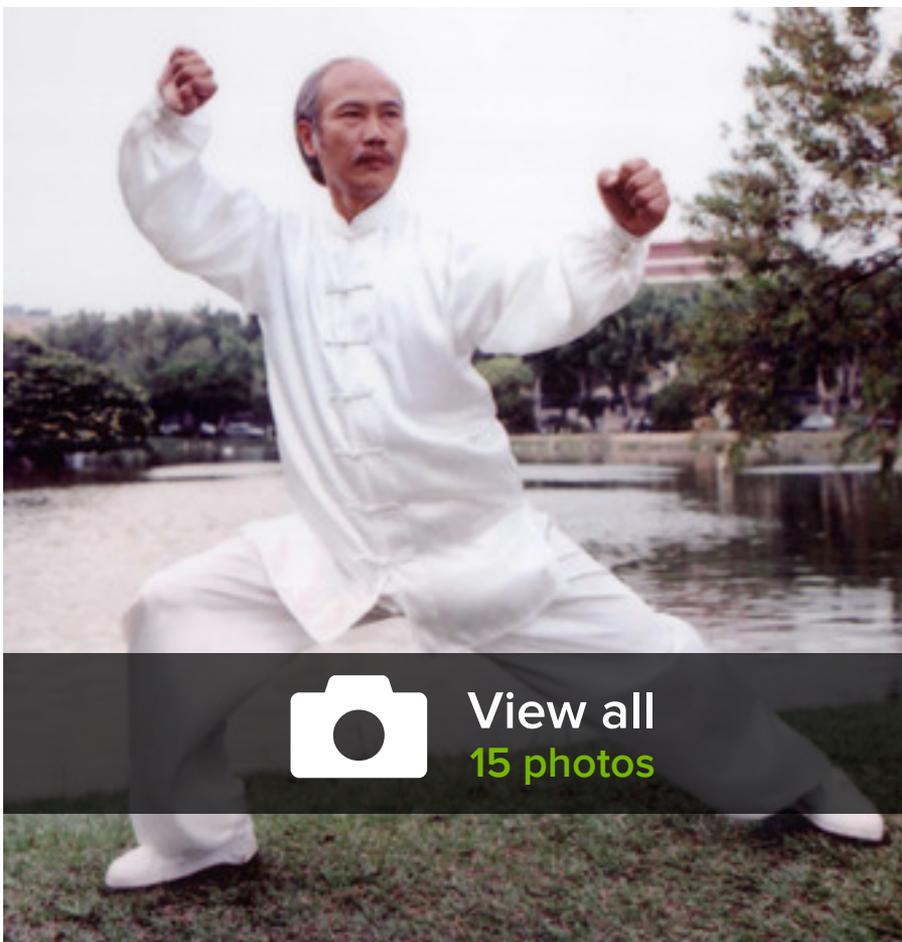


Chen Wangting and Hsieh Tong-liang

October 27, 2012

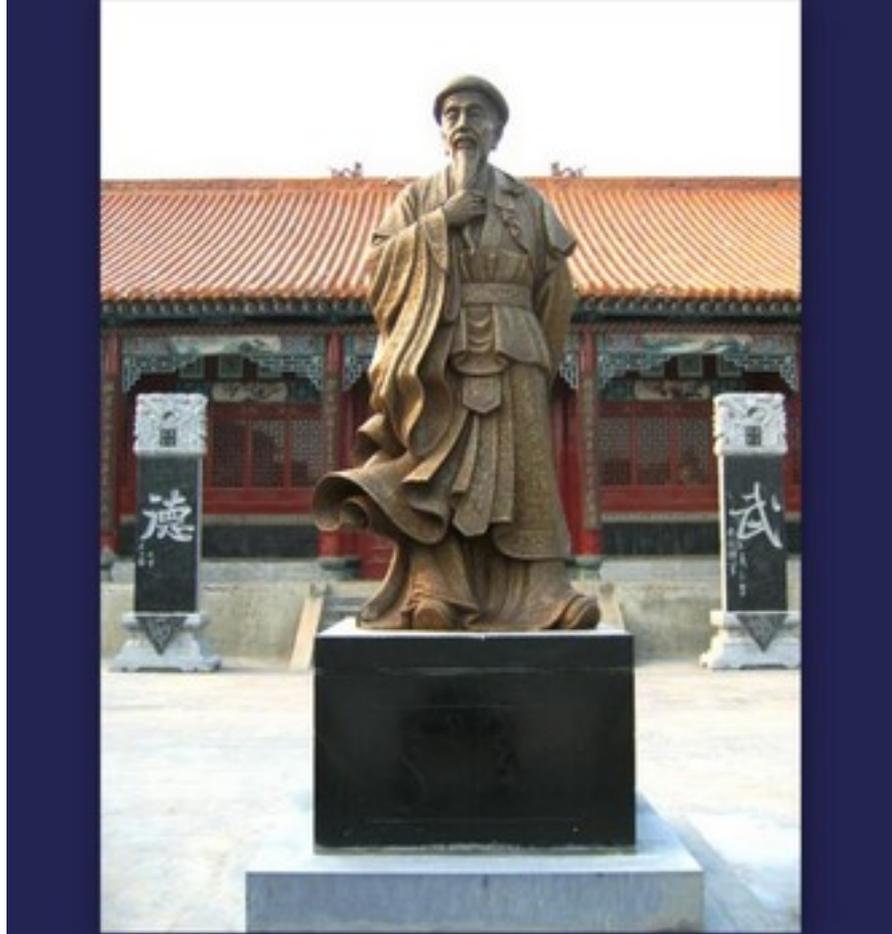
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Based on Cui Chun Dong's *Chenjiagou*, [Chen Wangting](#) was born in 1600 and lived through the chaos and turmoil of [Ming Dynasty](#) (1368–1644) during its corruptive and collapsing years. General Chen wanted to devote his superb martial art skills and military strategy to save the nation but only met with obstacles and adversity. He retired to his hometown Chenjiagou (the Chen Village) exhausted mentally and physically when the dynasty was on the brink of a total defeat by rebels. Through reading ancient Chinese classics of [Yi Jing](#) (*Book of Changes*), Chinese medical books like [the Huangting Jing](#) and [Huangdi Neijing](#) and other classics, Chen had epiphany and his health was revived through [martial arts](#) practice. He then fused his martial arts knowledge, Yin/Yang theory and meridian system and created [Tai Chi Quan](#).



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Hsieh Tong-liang



Hsieh Tong-liang

Today tens of millions people around the world are benefiting from Chen's ingenuity by practicing Tai Chi. Hundreds of thousands if not millions have paid homage and make a trip to Chenjiagou. The most important landmark they visit is the statue of Chen Wangting sitting in the courtyard of Chen family old home. It was said that Chen was tall and slender but his exact height was unknown. His statue is two and a half meters tall or 8'2". [Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang](#) and the Chen family understood the statue would be a focal point for tourists and visiting practitioners and that they must commission the best sculptor for the task.

It turned out it wasn't too difficult to find an artist for this significant piece of art. [Sculpture Master Hsieh Tong-Liang](#) of Taiwan is a famous sculptor. This award-winning artist has been appointed by the government, museums, parks and temples to make sculptures of the founding father of modern China [Dr. Sun Yat Sen](#), Generalissimo and long-time (1931-1975) leader of Nationalist China [Jiang Kai Shek](#), historical heroes and Buddhas due to his mastery in sculpture. Many of Hsieh's masterpieces are collections and on permanent display in museums. He has been invited to major national and international exhibitions, interviewed by media, and reviewed favorably by art critiques. He also teaches at the colleges on sculpturing.

The challenge of making the statue of Chen Wangting versus Dr. Sun Yat Sen is that there are huge archives of Dr. Sun with photos and even movie footage as reference while there is little info about Chen Wangting's appearance except a couple of simple drawings. However, it wasn't arduous for Master Hsieh to sketch out how Chen Wangting statue should look. The reason is that Master Hsieh is a long-time Tai Chi practitioner and immersed in the history, philosophy and art of Tai Chi Quan.

Hsieh started his Tai Chi journey in 1986. First he learned Ninety-Nine (Jiu-Jiu) Tai Chi and Yang Style Tai Chi. Later he followed Chen Style Tai Chi **Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei** and became an indoor disciple of the latter in 1995. He founded Li Yuan Tai Chi Association and Taiwan Chen Style Tai Chi Association and has trained hundreds the art of Tai Chi and many of his students became Tai Chi champions in Taiwan national and international tournaments. He fully appreciates the art of Tai Chi. He considers Tai Chi as moving sculptures and the Yin/Yang concept of Tai Chi serves as muse for his artistic creation. According to him, the design of the Chen Wangting statue came effortlessly. It took him two months to create the mold and another two months to turn it into a bronze statue. The sculpture was shipped to Chenjiagou and erected in 2007. Even though Chen Wangting's statue is just a standing pose and not in any Tai Chi movement, the statue conveys Jin (energy), Qi (life force), Shen (spirit) and gentleness.

In the world of martial arts, Hsieh Tong-Liang is considered a master as well. Besides Tai Chi, he has also learned few hard style martial art forms. Altogether, he has learned about 60 different forms in bare-hands, weapons and push hands. He practices all of them on a regular base and rotates the forms he practices daily. Each day, he teaches for free for one hour and practices for another hour.

Similar to his Tai Chi practice, his sculpture creations are in multitudes. In addition to bronze and mud, he was instrumental in developing a method to utilize fiber glass (FRP) for sculpturing. In recent years, Master Hsieh employs stainless steel to express certain characteristics. He boldly applies wires that are used to build the framework of sculpture as a new medium.

What is even more amazing is that his creations are not limited to one style or one school. Master Hsieh is a prolific and diverse sculptor. His creation traverses from the classic sculptures to the contemporary artworks. Besides realistic sculptures like Chen Wangting standing and Chen Xiaowang and Chen Zhenglei's Single Whip posing, he stretched the characters to make strong statements in his Metamorphosis Series, simplified the figures and made them almost flat in his Empty Series and adventurously combined two-dimensional engraving with blocks and cylinders to produce three-dimension illusions. In recent years, he tends to design more abstract art pieces. His Mountain/Water Series represents harmony with nature reminiscent of Tai Chi. You can feel his energy or Qi flowing in those stationary structures. He designed and built sculptures from 7 inches to 18 feet tall. He tells stories of everyday people through his artwork. He illustrates the moral character of legendary figures. It does not matter whether the artwork is about a loving couple, a beggar, reincarnation, love, earthquake survivors, a dancing duo, an eagle or Confucius you can sense the humanitarian side of Master Hsieh. To Master Hsieh, he just utilizes sculptures to express solid/emptiness, moving/quietness, hardness/softness and emotions of people and environment. You can see photos of his collections via the link <http://www.tongliang.idv.tw/products/index.htm> .

Note: In case you are interested in a Chen Wangting sculpture, Master Hsieh has made two other sizes of the same design: 3'3" and 1'7" in both bronze and fiber glass. You can contact Diane Hsieh at sweet.mei@msa.hinet.net for details.

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Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner