

Next Act: Contemporary Art from Hong Kong

May 8 to September 27, 2020

Fact Sheet



Curatorial Statement

In many cultures, the age of 30 often signifies a milestone for personal growth. According to the Confucian philosophy, while education and self-development is a lifelong journey to attain personal virtue, 30 represents a gateway of maturation where a person crystallizes his or her intellectual stance for the next 30 years of their life. Nowadays, turning 30 also signifies a person's maturity in adulthood – a personal turning point as we learn from our past, prepare ourselves in the present to move forward into a more promising future.

Coinciding with Asia Society Hong Kong Center's 30th anniversary in 2020, we also resonate with this sentiment through reflecting our work in art and culture alongside Hong Kong's social and historical development. As an educational organization that builds bridges between Asia and the rest of the world, we expand our focus to explore and present a sophisticated development in contemporary art that interweaves with theoretical knowledge.

Featuring research-based works by 10 local artists, *Next Act: Contemporary Art from Hong Kong* responds to the shared history and collective memories of Hong Kong. Throughout the creative process, each artist focuses on different research methodologies, including interviews, archival research, and field studies, as a starting point for their inspiration and thinking process. This process is translated into the final works that

come with strong visual impact, interactivity, and performative elements. We encourage visitors to engage with the works by opening their senses and imagination to delve into the past with new perspectives, savor the present, and contemplate what the future holds.

This exhibition brings together a collection of thoughtful works that highlight the artists' critical thinking and cross-disciplinary knowledge, including sociology, ethnography, music history, and visual cultures: Samson Young examines cross-cultural encounters and further questions the notions of cultural purity and authenticity through the genealogy of the well-known folk song *Molihua (Jasmine Flower)*; Christopher K. Ho reflects on the underside of nationalist spectacle and intentional manipulation of cultural discourse by assembling iconic images of American civil celebrations and the Olympic gymnast Mary Lou Retton; Zheng Mahler uses porcelain pieces and rare earth minerals exported from Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province to carefully examine the historical symmetries of Chinese and Western geopolitics and economic trade between the 18th century and the present.

Aside from the critical reflection of personal insight and socio-political landscapes, other artists looked at the emotional perceptions of collective memories: Leung Chi Wo explores our ambiguous relationship with historical events in a photography series by revisiting locations 50 years after violent events took place; Cici Wu's work reinterprets the personal idea of death and loss by tracing the unsolved disappearance case of Yu Man-hon in 2000 through film; Isaac Chong redefines the negative perception of failure by examining the feeling of helplessness in the bodily movement of falling as an attempt to encourage support for each other through powerlessness; Vivian Qin examines the authentic needs for survival and uncovers how people support each other during the critical times in her extensive research on doomsday preppers.

What's more, artists Sara Wong and Andrew Luk explore the heritage sites at ASHK to heighten our awareness of the present. While Wong develops a sensorial experience from personal stories related to the Lighting Passage located at the Miller Theater (Former Magazine B), Luk reproduces British Naval boundary stones – initially found along the outskirts of our site – in various materials to explore the diverse usage of architectural materials in relation to a habitat where humanity and nature converge.

By highlighting a critical dimension of these creative practices, *Next Act: Contemporary Art from Hong Kong* is dedicated to breaking down the mainstream assumptions generated by insufficient information and careless observation. The exhibition further aims to open up visitors' creative imagination of our "next act" as the possible future. Meanwhile, the exhibition also acts as an occasion to explore the limitless possibilities of our

arts and cultural programs and offerings at ASHK. Apart from presenting immersive learning experiences, we passionately continue to move forward and provide an inclusive platform that encourages collaboration across different disciplines.

About the Artworks

Chamber 1

Zheng Mahler



Mountains of Gold and Silver Are Not as Good as Mountains of Blue and Green

2020

Jingdezhen bisque porcelain vases, 3D holographic fans, 3D animation, sound

Dimensions variable

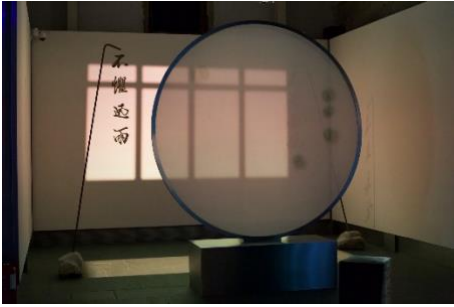
10'50"

In *Mountains of Gold and Silver Are Not as Good as Mountains of Blue and Green*, Zheng Mahler deals with automatons, rare earths minerals and trade wars, as a document for understanding the present by drawing historical symmetries between the geopolitics of the 18th century and the present.

In the 18th century these geopolitical and material flows intersected through kaolin, the secret ingredient of fine bone porcelain which mystified and eluded European traders. While in the 21st century similar desires circulate because of the scarcity of rare earth elements, mined from the very same vast quarries around Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province, like cerium [Ce], lanthanum [La], gadolinium [Gd], neodymium [Nd]+ used in both electronic and green tech industries. The contradiction between the development of “environmental technologies” and ecological impacts of the rare earth industries engender the artists’ radical rethinking of what “economy” could mean.

The work conjures a ghostly object-opera that morphs and sings through text-to-speech generators, strands of intersecting narratives within Zheng Mahler’s research through 3D technological or mineral objects generated by holographic fans as they devise clandestine strategies to escape current modes of “production-extraction” through speculative reorientations.

Vivian Qin



If Sunset Had a Voice (Doomsday Preparation Plan)

2020

Video projection, metal, concrete, fabric

If Sunset Had a Voice forms a part of Vivian Qin’s on-going doomsday preparation series, focusing on cross-cultural knowledge and stories related to the disaster preparation during uncertain time. The multimedia installation features a shadow play of the artist’s failed doomsday prepping attempts between ruins and her room staged in an artificial sunset. Real life and fantastical items are used as props in the narrative, such as pieces of glass that the artist collected during Typhoon Mangkhut from the Harbour Grand Kowloon Hotel and a pair of worn glasses left from a building as part of the Manhattan Project in New York. A set of metal characters, with the first two sentences—“Not losing to the rain, not losing to the wind “of Japanese writer Kenji Miyazawa’s poetry *Be not Defeated* by the Rain is swinging on the rebar coming out of the ruined concretes base. To the sunset the artist asked for the power and wisdom of how we keep each other alive.

Andrew Luk



Echo Chorus: scalability

2020

Charcoal, resin

Asia Society Hong Kong Center is located at the former Explosives Magazine of the old Victoria Barracks. During the 19th century, the site was then transferred to the Royal British Navy, and its surrounding area was auctioned by the colonial government for financial support.

More than just a physical site, Luk sees this heritage space as an elaborate system of interwoven stories and ideas that offers metaphorical meaning for its visitors. By reproducing boundary stones originally found in the periphery – used as boundary markers for the historic barracks – Luk questions the fundamental idea of boundaries in the tangible world. The



Echo Chorus: speculation

2020

Die cut vinyl sticker on copper

stones are recreated using different materials, including water, charcoal, and copper. Rather than experiencing time as we typically do, Luk invites viewers to experience time through these recreations.

Chronicle Compression is an on-going series created by Luk. In comparison to producing sculptures, Luk compresses large-scale architecture into aluminium sheets, retracing the original texture, detail, and tactility. Compressing space and time as if one is studying history through perceiving the contour and marks from heritage sites.



Echo Chorus: sustenance

2020

Saltlick



Chronicle Compression: Hunger and Resistance

2020

Handmade rubbings on aluminium, fiberglass, wood



Apparition Lattice of Reflexive Grappling

2020

Handmade rubbings on aluminium, fiberglass

Chamber 3

Isaac Chong Wai



Falling Carefully

2020

Metal, LED light

Please Hold the Handrail

2020

Stainless steel

Falling Carefully

2020

Silicon, polylactide, wood, resin, fabric,
shoes, human hair

Courtesy of Blindspot Gallery, Zilberman
Gallery and the artist

Help! Help? Help.


2016

Inkjet print (exhibition copy)


Courtesy of Burger Collection, Blindspot
Gallery and the artist


Isaac Chong Wai presents a body of work including sculpture, video, drawings and ready-made objects. In *Falling Carefully*, the action of falling is frozen volatility, duplicating the artist's body into different positions during a fall. Each position supports other positions within a structure that allows the sculptures to stay intact. Chong attempts to radically transform the feeling of powerlessness during a fall – a condition most of us believe we cannot escape the inevitability and impossibility – into an imaginary, collective and supportive foundation.

The philosopher John Locke once discussed the falling man above a crumbled bridge – the action of falling is involuntary. The man does not voluntarily fall, nor could the man avoid falling. The unintentional action of falling is no longer a self-autonomous movement dominated by our body and will. Resisting the automatism, Chong interrupted how we perceive the failure of standing. By questioning the unavoidable outcomes of falling, the work subverts the expected collapse attentively and considerably as the failure of falling.

<p>Samson Young</p>	
	<p>This work derives from Young’s extensive research into the famous folk song <i>Molihua (Jasmine Flower)</i>, as well as a fantastical account of a Togaku (Tang dynasty court music).</p> <p>Adopting artist Paul Carter’s understanding of “echoic mimicry,” Young uses the genealogy of <i>Molihua</i> as a case study about cross-cultural encounters. The version of the song we now understand to be synonymous with Chinese culture actually most closely resembles the version transcribed by English statesman John Barrow during his attachment to the first British embassy to China. Barrow’s tune and accompanying travelogue exploded in popularity across Europe, eventually making it back to its “native” land, before being reabsorbed into Chinese identity. With other cases of such encounters, including Kenny G’s influence on Hong Kong pop music and centuries-unchanged Japanese Togaku now used as one of few extant sources of Tang dynasty court music, Young considers what it means to hear with the ears of another and questions the notions of cultural purity and authenticity at large.</p>
<p><i>The World Falls Apart into Facts</i> 2019 2-channel video installation with sound</p> <p><i>The World Falls Apart into Facts</i> was performed by Geneva Fung, Samson Young, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong Chorus conducted by Leon Chu</p>	

Annex

<p>Leung Chi Wo</p>	
	<p>In 2017, Leung Chi Wo began working on <i>Date Series</i> by revisiting bombing locations during the 1967 riots in Hong Kong on the same date, exactly 50 years apart. From these locations, he turns the camera skyward and captures the sky with black and white film.</p> <p>Since then, Leung has further developed <i>Date Series</i> into an on-going project that examines the violent events on the old</p>
<p><i>Date Series</i> 2017 – 2020</p>	

<p>Archival inkjet print 52X82 cm, a set of 12</p>	<p>newspapers, ranging from bombing, domestic conflicts, sexual abuse to gang fights. The collection of these events has become a social diary with a personal touch when the artist was able to revisit the sites of violence.</p> <p>In naming the images, Leung chose civil and personal events that happened on the day of the crime, bringing to the forefront coexistences of ephemeral yet notable timelines referenced by the very same images. Through polysemy and polyphony, Leung systematizes the contemplation and conception of two kinds of parallel worlds: one temporally synchronous but spatially distant, another temporally distinct yet spatially unified.</p> <p>Based on the groundwork of text and photography, the series expands to video and spoken word.</p>
 <p><i>My Random Diary</i> 2020 Single-channeled video, 4K 18'</p>	<p><i>My Random Diary</i> is a juxtaposition of the adapted description as diary entries of unrelated events from various news archives and the photos taken during the site visits of the covered violent events. The randomness is attributed not only by the chances the artist made for his personal reflection from the scenes of violence, but also the celebratory events coincidentally occurred on the same day exactly 50 years ago.</p>
<p><i>50 Years</i> 2020 Audio track (English) 24'</p>	<p>Created as part of <i>My Random Diary</i>, <i>50 Years</i> uses audio and sound to explore the past by reconciling the difference between social and individual memories. Set against the urban landscape of Asia Society Hong Kong Center, <i>50 Years</i> acts as a guide as visitors make their way towards the exhibition gallery. This work</p>

also serves as a prelude and footnote to the entire *My Random Diary* series. (English voiceover by Hera Chan)

Lower Deck of Yasumoto Bridge

Christopher K. Ho



Always Stop Eating While You're Still a Little Hungry

2020

Brass, Magic Eyes, 3D print, window decal, steel, wood, audio

216x171.5x108.5 cm

530x1317.5 cm

Ho's two-part work *Always Stop Eating While You're Still a Little Hungry* consists of a miniature model theatre perched on the lower deck of the Yasumoto Bridge in conversation with a large-scale window decal visible across the ravine, on the exterior windows of the Jockey Club Hall.


The window decal features Mary Lou Retton – an iconic American gymnast who won an all-around gold during the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics which the USSR and China boycotted. The artist highlights Retton's ending pose, and captures the moment of her awaiting applause. With a strained smile and well-trained body gesture, she represented a nation while simultaneously revealing discipline and struggle as an individual.

The intricate, visually disorientated patterns printed on the brass miniature theatre refer to historical and contemporary American spectacles. The five primary images are derived from George Balanchine's ballet *Stars and Stripes*, performed during Nelson Rockefeller's inauguration as Governor of New York State, small-town Fourth of July parades, balloons from the U.S. Republican and Democratic National Conventions, eager spectators at the 1984 Olympics, and marches at Colonial Williamsburg, a historic American town preserved by John D. "Junior" and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

Ho deliberately implies various layers of decoy through his imagery. The work alludes to the underside of nationalist

	<p>spectacle which, like Magic Eyes and Mary Lou Retton’s figure, is at once euphoric and hysteric, yet celebratory and unsettling.</p>
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Lighting Passage

<p>Sara Wong</p>	
 <p><i>Windows for Inspection</i></p> <p>2020</p> <p>Casted phosphorescence, microphone, motion sensor, LED lighting and audio system</p>	<p><i>Window for Inspection</i> is a site-specific installation with reference to the heritage context of the Lighting Passage in the former explosive magazine (current Miller Theatre). This passage once allowed soldiers to check on the condition of explosives safely through small windows that open into the magazine.</p> <p>Wong works on tracing the negligible marks on the granite window still, left by the removal of the window frame and the soldiers in the form of cracks and holes, while creating a room of imagination, re-enacting the story behind through visual and audio elements. Suggesting alternative way of learning the history of an architecture based on human activities, looking into the notion of remembrance and presence.</p>

Screening Programme on the “Last Thursday of the Month”

Cici Wu



Unfinished Return of Yu Man Hon

2019

Video (16mm transfer to digital)

Courtesy of the artist and Empty Gallery

The *Unfinished Return of Yu Man-hon* focuses on Wu’s cultural imaginary and extensive research into the unaccountable disappearance of Yu Man-hon, a mentally disabled and an autistic boy who crossed the Hong Kong-Shenzhen border into the mainland and disappeared on August 24, 2000. His case remains unsolved to this day.

Yu’s disappearance occurred shortly after the 1997 handover in Hong Kong. His case lingers as a vivid memory for many locals - both as a prime example of the injustice inflicted on the people by the corrupted Hong Kong-Mainland legal system, and as a symbol of the gradual disappearance of the complexity of Hong Kong’s colonial memories. Yu’s disability caused him not to be able to memorize his name, family and home, and lose at the same time his capacity of speech. His anonymity opened up multiple identities: a child actor, a young boy sitting in McDonald’s, boys on the bus, people who left their hometown, nation, old film props, movie theater, lanterns, an alternative divine for the border.

The work follows an abstract narrative where Man-hon returns to the material world, retrieving lost memories of his disappearance in the process. The artist’s camera floats through the city’s myriad pedestrian spaces, lingering at certain familiar places to which Man-hon felt particular attachment – a swing set or favorite restaurant, a local supermarket or bus-depot, a ferry or market. The short film highlights the emotional fragility of our memory, attempts to challenge the familiar interpretation of Man-Hon as an embodiment of loss, and to perceive his image as an enlightened being rather than a ghost.

The screening, alongside the after-screening discussion, will take place at the Miller Theater as a part of the programs of “Last Thursday of the month.

Time: 19:00 – 20:00

Date: 25.06.2020/ 30.07.2020 /27.08.2020 /24.09.2020

Miller Theater (Former Magazine B)

Free Admission

Online Registration required

About The Exhibition

Exhibition Period

May 8 - September27, 2020

Location

Chantal Miller Gallery, Asia Society Hong Kong Center

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine

9 Justice Drive Admiralty, Hong Kong

Opening Hours

Tuesday - Sunday: 11am -6pm

Last Thursday of every month: 11am -8pm (28 May, 25 Jun, 30 Jul, 27 Aug and 24 Sep, 2020)

Closed on Mondays

Last admission 30 minutes before closing

Free admission