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TransFusion

Pao Galleries
Hong Kong Arts Centre
Hong Kong, China
28 June - 9 July 1996



Fusion

New Gallery
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki
Auckland, New Zealand
18 October - 8 December 1996



RESEARCH LIBRARY
AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

[fusion]

Foreword

Chris Saines 2

This Floating Life

Richard Dale 3

Not Just Chinese

Oscar Ho 9

White Perils/Yellow Devils

Ien Ang 13

Artists Pages

Chan Yuk Keung 16

Luise Fong 17

Denise Kum 18

Anthony Leung Po Shan 19

Wong Shun Kit 20

Yuk King Tan 21

List of Works 22

Biographies 23

F O R E W O R D

Fusion: the Hong Kong/Auckland Artist Exchange represented a significant point of departure for the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki. I am delighted that this publication both records that moment in our history and places it in the wider context of the exhibition as it was also presented at our partner institution, the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

Fusion marks the Gallery's first major commitment to and direct engagement with the contemporary art of the Asia region. In so doing, it signals a distinct cultural shift in programming. That shift will progress through future exhibitions and projects that both reveal and investigate the rapidly growing dialogue between our two regions.

Fusion highlights those issues of convergence and difference which help to delineate cultural relationships. Trade, tourism and immigration are all bringing Asia into our part of the world. As more of us are exposed to the unique histories and cultural diversity which make up the region which borders our own, that region is remaking us through the influence and confluence of new imperatives.

While there is no doubt that the ebb and flow of cultural convergence occurs across shifting ground, projects such as *Fusion* give us an increasingly stronger foothold from which cultural hybridity and connectedness can be articulated. The many languages of contemporary visual art are a litmus of our changing lives and cultural conditions as we engage with Asia and Asia with us.

Seen together, the works in *Fusion* can serve to diminish real and imagined boundaries and cause us

to look more critically at ourselves. Separately, each contributes to a wider dialogue about cultural origins and futures, and in so doing, persuasively encourages and challenges us to do the same.

I want to thank the artists who have participated in this exchange, and to acknowledge the outstanding work of the exhibition curators. Richard Dale initiated the project and has seen it through to fruition in the two exhibitions and this important publication, ably assisted by the project coordinator, Gilbert Wong. Oscar Ho, Director, Hong Kong Arts Centre, carried out curatorial work in Hong Kong and hosted the first exhibition. The Gallery is grateful to them all.

Fusion has been sponsored by Creative New Zealand, Air New Zealand, Hyatt Regency, Auckland and the Asia 2000 Foundation of New Zealand. Their support has been critical to the success of this landmark project.

Chris Saines *Director*

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

TOP

longing for the other (double bed)

Yuk King Tan, New Gallery

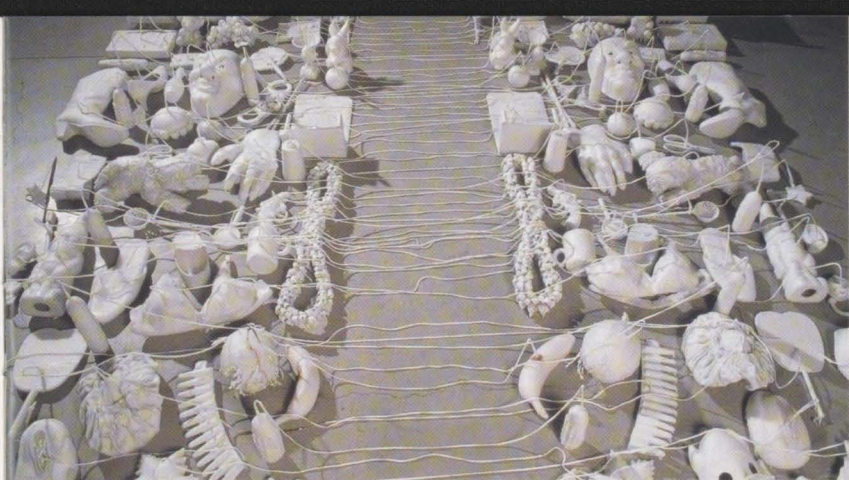
CENTRE

Rich

Denise Kum, Hong Kong Arts Centre

BOTTOM

Ultra Luise Fong



THIS FLOATING LIFE :
DIFFERENCE AND CONNECTION

As far as I know there have only been two feature films made in this part of the world concerning Chinese living in Australasia. One is the New Zealand feature directed by Leon Narbey, *Illustrious Energy*, an historical treatment of goldminers at the turn of the century. The other is Clara Law's 1996 feature, *Floating Life*, which stands out as a notable achievement for its timeliness and for its exploration of some of the complexities that recent Chinese migrants encounter. In it the family, part of the pre-handover Hong Kong exodus, have come to live in Sydney. They wander defensively through wide, empty suburban streets, their protective black sunglasses worn as a symbol for the separation and disorientation they feel in this new land. Treated with humour and compassion by Law, a Hong Kong film-maker who herself has recently migrated to Australia, the various family members encounter other Chinese whose families have made the move perhaps generations beforehand. The encounters highlight another level of disorientation, yet – despite quite striking cultural differences – significant connections are also made between these Chinese now living outside of the Asian region.

When I saw the film this year I thought of how difference and connection also characterise the work in the *Fusion* exhibitions. The three New Zealand artists in the exchange similarly reflect the spread of the Chinese diaspora, one having been born in New Zealand, the other two coming here at an early age from Malaysia and Australia, respectively. While the six artists in *Fusion* have Chinese ethnicity in

common, for the New Zealanders, the exchange meant being able to work and exhibit for the first time in a city, Hong Kong, in which Chinese culture is dominant rather than marginal, as is the case in Auckland. This became only one point of reference, however, in the work they produced there.

My first visit to Hong Kong was in 1993 and coincided with *Art & Space*, an exhibition at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. The work I saw – a range of installation and assemblage – impressed me enough to want to study it further. My interest was sparked even earlier by reports of a major survey exhibition of contemporary art from China, called *Post-1989*, and which was also launched in Hong Kong.¹ Interest by the West in contemporary artists from this area has continued to grow. Artists from China are now included in most international art events in a fairly feverish season of exchanges and participation. Hong Kong, however, has been slightly less acknowledged on the global platform, as Oscar Ho bemoans in his essay. Our project, *Fusion: the Hong Kong/Auckland Artist Exchange*, while modest in its ambitions, was an attempt to create links and develop a dialogue on our own terms within the Pacific region.

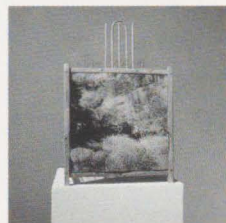
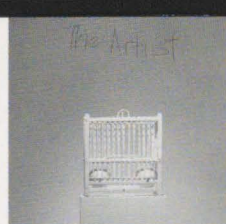
The exchange began when I contacted Oscar at the end of 1995 and it started proper with our arrival in Hong Kong in June 1996 for the first stage. Yuk King Tan, Denise Kum and I arrived a week before Luise Fong. Though Fong had started her paintings in Melbourne before her arrival, she completed them in Hong Kong in the week leading up to the exhibition.

During this time we met the three Hong Kong artists with whom we were to collaborate: the assemblage sculptor Chan Yuk Keung, installation artist and painter Wong Shun Kit and the female performance and installation artist Anthony Leung Po Shan.

We spent the initial days walking around the lower parts of the city on Hong Kong Island, through Wanchai and its back streets, where our hotel was located close to the Hong Kong Arts Centre, and then extending our explorations further afield as we familiarised ourselves with the city. The outcome of this exploration, which counted as research for Tan and Kum, was two installations – sprung from their intensely personal experience of the city – included in the first exhibition of the exchange called *TransFusion* held three weeks later at the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

Yuk King Tan exhibited *The Human Condition*, an installation based around cuboid cane bird cages acquired from the street markets. Each cage stood on its own plinth, accompanied by pillow, text and electronic chirping crickets. The installation of nine of these units brought together sound, smell, lighting, and the re-siting of familiar objects such as darts, cigarette butts and beads into an ordered display. Titles such as *The Shopper*, *The Glamour*, *The Star*, playfully alluded to the characters or types into which each cage was transformed, as in music one might produce a theme and variations.

Singular in intent, the whole maintained a fragmentary feel with all its acquisitions and seemed to make of the artist a modern day flaneur, scouring



the markets and alleys of the city for her collection. But Tan is not the flaneur of Baudelaire and the Hong Kong streets are not the arcades of Paris. Instead the work needed to be considered from its own perspective: another culture being interpreted from a different range of experiences. In Tan's art there is always the question of how possible it is to speak of the personal when identity itself is so fragmented, a composite of more than one tradition or influence, race or culture.

Kum's installation, *Rich*, can also be seen as an outsider's response, in this instance, to the rampant materialism of Hong Kong.

Kum's work brought together everyday materials of the city's inhabitants – restaurant lighting grids, lettering material, wall panels – in an architectural installation that played off the language of minimalist sculpture to activate the dynamics of the city. She used brilliant lighting and highly reflective surfaces to add a sense of glamour and drive, to indicate a mode of being founded on the desire to succeed.

While maintaining a dynamism within its own aesthetic of geometry and abstraction, the installation also contained other notions, such as those of gaming. In Chinese, the ideogram for 'rich' has numerous meanings including its common use as a call in mahjong. A grid on the floor recalled a chess board; its mirrored tiles a disco floor. Further social referents were appended to three security apartment doors hinged to form a screen. On the floor, inverted mahjong blocks brought these elements together and

reinforced the idea that below the glitter and surface were in place codes of acquisition, achievement, competition and compulsion. *Rich*, then, is the appearance and substance of one of the largest and most successful capitalist cities.

The appearance of abstraction was common to all of the works in the project. A continual concern in Fong's painting, she can take the opportunity to explore her Chinese side, within abstraction's debatably neutral language. Black Chinese ink was used in the multiple work, *Ultra*. A stellar-like configuration in its central canvas recalled a chrysanthemum, the flower of ritual in Chinese culture. Around this central rectangle were positioned oval and circular canvases that synthesised elements of the other paintings in the series. In them one could see strands of cell structures, beads, the chrysanthemum motif, stellar and other astronomical references.

When these paintings appeared in the Hong Kong context they acquired other levels of meaning, whereby a point of contact with the city could be construed with each painting. Each of the large rectangular canvases was devoted to a single colour: red and blue recalled the colours of the former British colonial power, while the grey of the diptych *Search* evoked the city at night. The three tondos entitled *Central* had the same name as the Hong Kong metro station.

The viewer had a shifting relationship to these paintings. The first point of entry to each painting was at its centre, out of which radiated clear designs

OPPOSITE PAGE

The Human Condition, detail

Yuk King Tan,

Hong Kong Arts Centre

FROM TOP

The Artist

The Big Sleep

The Dream

The Fuck-up

The Glamour

The Pointless



of line and circle, which reached endpoints or continued into new directions.

Light was played with by catching varnished circles that were applied as a final layer to the paintings when at the Hong Kong gallery. Beneath this transparency were the linear patterns and below these were washes, drips, colours and scrapings, creating a multi-layered level of movement for the viewer to come in and out of.

The Hong Kong exhibition was reconfigured in Auckland four months later at the New Gallery of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki with the modified title *Fusion*, the eventual title of the exchange project. All six artists met again here. Tan, Wong and Leung produced new work and Chan included *Hegel's Holiday*, which had not been seen previously.

Auckland meant a new context for the exhibition. The home city for the three New Zealand artists, it has experienced a significant cultural and demographic change recently through an increase in migration to New Zealand from Asia, primarily from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. This influx has had a marked impact on the city, not the least of which was a racial backlash from a section of the established population.² As in Hong Kong, the relationship between Chinese culture and British culture in New Zealand has not been an easy one. Some of what *Fusion* was aiming to achieve for those of us involved in the project at this stage was to

represent in symbol and in actuality a healthy and sympathetic integration into the city through the exhibition, as suggested by its title.

For this exhibition, Tan's new work, *longing for the other (double bed)*, incorporated a few of the articles from *The Human Condition* as well as a collection of some 60 personal objects, including toys (for adults and for children) and garments, all painted white and covered in wax. While personalised, they also had a ritualistic potency, partly through the coverage in wax associated with Chinese religious rituals where the presentation of transformed objects is used to secure favour or mercy; and partly by their presentation on the floor in the form of two rectangles linked by candle wicks.

Each object appeared twice, so that the two rectangles were a double and a reflection of each other – the same but different – in which masquerade and multiple identities were indicated. Yet as a collection that might indicate the qualities of its owner, it denied easy solutions to categorise and label any suggested identity as either Chinese, White or Other. Rather these objects, in being evened out by their whiteness, resided both inside and outside of any clear cultural framework.

Still, race, or specifically being Chinese, was a question that *Fusion* brought up emphatically and to which the work responded, albeit in a critical framework. The works of these artists are a challenge to orthodoxy and to notions that would prescribe what a 'Chinese' artist is or indeed what a 'New Zealand' artist is, as Oscar and Ien Ang both discuss

THIS PAGE
longing for the other
(double bed) detail
Yuk King Tan, New Gallery

OPPOSITE
Central 1, 2, 3

Luise Fong, Hong Kong Arts Centre

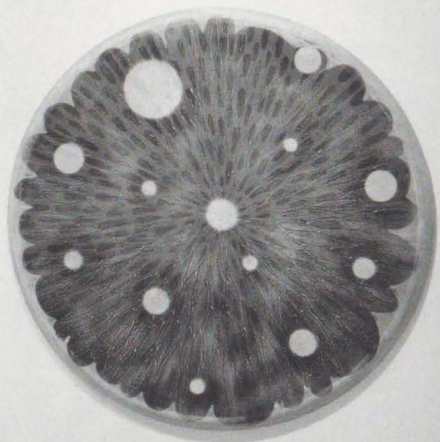
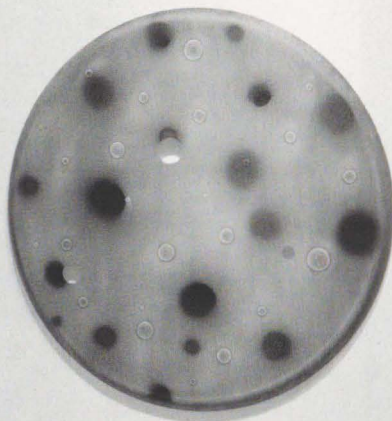
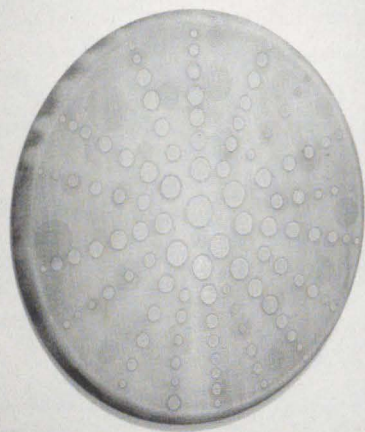
in their essays. Such categories have more to do with journalistic convenience than giving any fuller understanding of the artists' concerns. Indeed, the refusal to make fixed determinations about their identity as perceived in the work is important in coming to terms with the multiplicity of the art in *Fusion*.

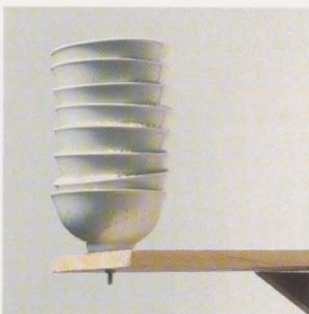
The project was thus important in shifting the discussion in New Zealand to these issues. Also travelling to Hong Kong was a valuable reference point for the three New Zealand artists, enabling them to look at origins and to work in a city for the first time that is predominantly Chinese. Finally, *Fusion* has helped to establish artistic links between

Hong Kong and Auckland at a time of uncertainty given Hong Kong's new status within the People's Republic.

1. The exhibition included paintings, installation, print-making, performance art, conceptual work and some photography and had a political referent to Tiananmen Square which was never far from the surface. By no coincidence as I was to learn later, Oscar Ho was central to realising both these exhibitions.
2. The Fourth Labour Government initiated this rather mercantile and self-interested migration policy. Much is yet to be written about the sociological impact of this policy (and its results) which has been continued by the Bolger Government.

Richard Dale





Without the significance of the year 1997, for us Hong Kong would not be in the headlines. Most outside our region would probably define Hong Kong as the small former British colony which reverted to Chinese rule in 1997 and where people make money like crazy. Very few people would know, or even care about the art in Hong Kong.

For the people of Hong Kong, New Zealand is equally mythic. The prevalent impressions are of remoteness, sheep and dairy products. Personally, I was fascinated by the sense of remoteness New Zealand had held for me before my visit.

It was only when immigration became an important issue that Hong Kong began to form a more concrete image of New Zealand.

Even so, cultural dialogue between Hong Kong and New Zealand is rare and unusual. The only outstanding curatorial tie is a negative: neither country is often highlighted in the international cultural arena.

When Richard Dale approached me with the project I wondered how we could draw the two places together into a curated exhibition.

When the list of proposed artists arrived, I was puzzled by the fact that their names suggested they were of Chinese origin. After much discussion, I was convinced that the three artists were selected because they were excellent New Zealand artists who happened to have a Chinese origin, and that this quality would give a new dimension to the exchange project.

It is dangerous to assume that when three Chinese New Zealanders and three Hong Kong Chinese exhibit together that their work will naturally have something to do with 'Chineseness'. Certainly, artists are affected by their cultural roots as much as by their environment. It is natural that these artists would utilise some of the culturally distinctive objects and images for their art.

The work by Yuk King Tan and Denise Kum certainly shows how skillful they are in incorporating 'Chinese' elements in their art.

Interestingly, the 'Chineseness' as reflected in these New Zealand Chinese artists' work looks foreign to the Hong Kong people: the Chinese fast-food stand, the fire crackers (which are banned in Hong Kong) and other Chinese decoration is not part of the daily experience in a city that consists mainly of Chinese people and which became definitely 'Chinese' after July 1, 1997.

For the Hong Kong artists, the issue of 'being Chinese' is even more complicated. In the work of the three Hong Kong artists, there is no strong, intended discussion on the issue of 'Chineseness'. In fact, they represent the various compositions of the new generation of the Hong Kong population characterised by diversity and pluralism.

The three Hong Kong artists can be said to represent three different aspects of the younger generation of the Hong Kong people. Chan Yuk Keung is typical of the generation of artists who went overseas to study art during the early eighties. Following the economic growth of the seventies,

OPPOSITE PAGE

UPPER LEFT

**Three Types of
Concept About Tree**
Wong Shun Kit,
Hong Kong Arts Centre

LOWER LEFT

The Death of Ms Ling
Anthony Leung Po Shan,
Hong Kong Arts Centre

RIGHT

Trees of Wishes
(insert: details)
Chan Yuk Keung

for the first time there was a relatively large number of young people who could afford to study art instead of engineering or commerce overseas.

Their return to Hong Kong in the eighties contributed significantly to the development of contemporary art in Hong Kong. Unlike the older generation of Hong Kong artists who carry a strong cultural tie with China, these artists are characterised by the international style of their work and their emphasis on individual expression rather than trying to extend and revitalise the Chinese tradition.

With a typical Hong Kong spirit, they will utilise anything, Chinese or Western, for their art as long as they find it meaningful. The world is a cultural pool to dip into. Chan is one of the outstanding examples within this generation: individualistic, stylistically international and technically refined. In recent years, however, an increased use of local material in his work can be seen.

Wong Shun Kit represents another aspect of Hong Kong art. Raised and trained in Shanghai, Wong was among the first group of artists who got in touch with Western modern art during the late seventies when China was gradually opening up to the world. During the early eighties he moved to Hong Kong and began an active artistic life. As a child of the Cultural Revolution, one of the most political periods in human history, Wong's work does not shy away from politics. Most Hong Kong artists, like everyone else who live in a colonised city, rarely talk about politics. Despite the dramatic changes facing Hong Kong, serious artistic discussion on politics is

disproportionally rare. Wong is one of the few who is not shy about making political comments. He helped to form a group called the Hong Kong Young Artists Association. The organisation has frequently staged exhibitions relating to the issue of Hong Kong's return to China and the subsequent political impact.

Stylistically, Wong adopts a fairly international language, although he has a strong background of academic training. The 'Chinese element' – generally political images relating to China or Hong Kong – are occasionally used. Although Wong's work has not always focused on politics, his recent work is undoubtedly more political.

It is interesting to compare Chan with Wong, who are both skillful in their technical presentation, although Chan tends to be more delicate and more intimate while Wong is bold and ambitious. Chan insists on art as art and as a personal expression. If there is a political dimension, it should be something coming out naturally, as a side product of the art work. Wong's work demonstrates specific intentions to make political commentary. The differences reflect their backgrounds: Chan grew up in an international 'Western' city, Wong in a country where politics affects every aspect of life.

Anthony Leung Po Shan, a student of Chan, is from a much younger generation, which is becoming increasingly important for the emerging Hong Kong arts world.

From her school days, she has been involved with experimental theatre. Her work frequently combines art installation and performance.

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP

Tsao

Anthony Leung Po Shan,
New Gallery

CENTRE

Homage to Magritte's

'Hegels Holiday'

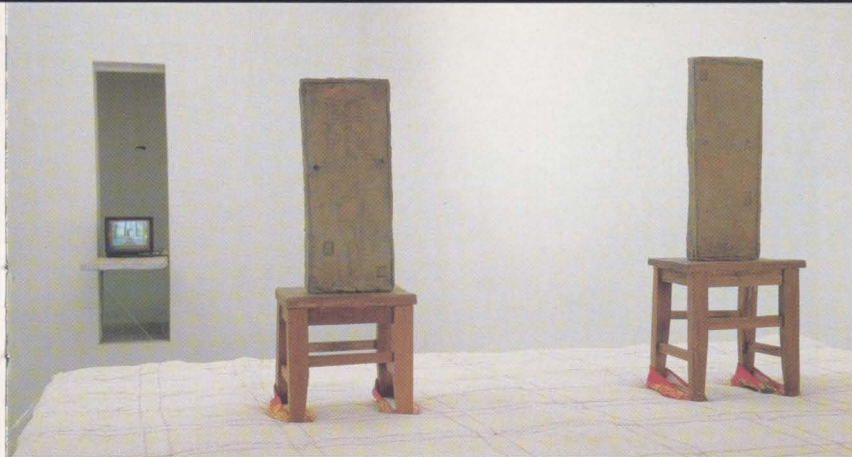
(detail right)

Chan Yuk Keung
New Gallery

BOTTOM

Energy

Wong Shun Kit
New Gallery



Questioning the traditional Chinese values, especially topics relating to the role of women and family and the taboo of sex, Leung addresses these issues without being overly serious. She uses local materials that appear with a touch of nostalgia, albeit unconsciously. The heavy cotton Chinese blankets, for example, which covered the floor of her *Fusion* installations are a material that mainly exists in the past for us. So, in the context of the space they provide a feeling of domestic warmth and a sense of tradition, a familiar background for most of Leung's work.



It is precisely within this warm family setting that we see the disruption. Utilising quiet and intimate language, Leung's work is subtly provocative and subversive.

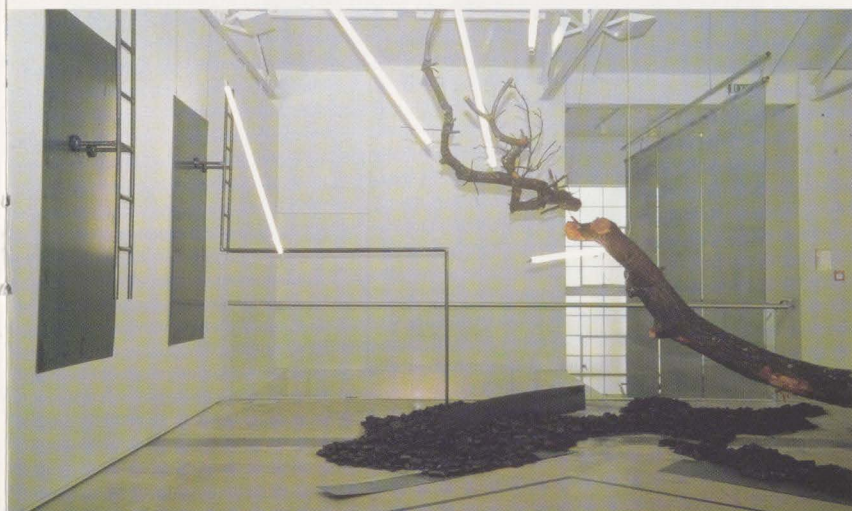
The three Hong Kong artists represent very different aspects of Hong Kong art.

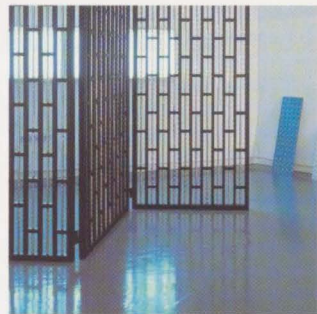
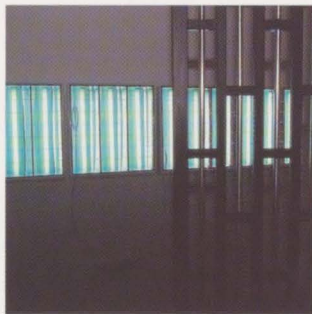
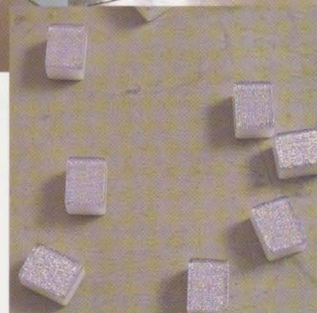
Showing their work with three Chinese New Zealanders might misleadingly bring us to a focus on the 'Chineseness' of these artists.

Naturally, one is affected by his or her own cultural heritage, and one tends to draw inspirations from this heritage as an important resource. In a modern society, however, cultural boundaries can no longer be clearly defined, and these artists demonstrate the complexity of their creative backgrounds.

As Hong Kong is now part of China, and with a strong sense of Chinese nationalism everywhere, this complexity of 'cultural composition' of each and every individual must be fully acknowledged.

Oscar Ho





Since Marco Polo returned home from his famous visit to the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom, 'China' has been a powerful symbol for the absolute otherness of the Orient, a strange and distant world both feared and desired. Western mythologies of 'China' are expressed either in a passion for the oriental exotic – as in the eighteenth century appetite for chinoiserie among the European bourgeoisie – or in a passionate demonisation of the Chinese, as in the tenacious and senseless fear of the 'yellow peril'.

Traces of this classic orientalist sentiment remain both persistent and pervasive in Western societies, from which New Zealand and Australia are far from free, and the mythic and fetishised 'China' they construct have an inescapable, and inescapably constraining, impact on the way in which actual Chinese people – who started to enter the new worlds in search for a new living in the nineteenth century, first as sojourners and later as settlers – were received and treated.

To this day, experience with orientalism in action is a profound influence on the sense of identity of those of us who are categorised as 'Chinese', either by 'race' or ethnicity.

William Yang, an Australian photographer of Chinese descent whose great-grandparents migrated from China to Australia more than a century ago, remembers how, when he was six years old, somebody yelled at him: 'Ching Chong Chinaman!'

At home, he asked his mother: 'Mum, I am not Chinese, am I?'

After a pause, she answered him in a severe tone: 'Yes, you are.'

And to add insult to injury, his older brother adjoined: 'And you'd better get used to it!'

This incident must resonate with many who share Yang's minority experience.

When young, I frequently cursed my own Chineseness, wishing that I could erase its all too visible traces from the surface of my body – the corporeal signifiers of 'slanted eyes' and 'yellow skin' which inescapably condemn one to permanent foreigner status in predominantly white, Western societies.

No matter how assimilated in terms of behaviour and way of life, one will never be protected from the painful, offensive incitation that one must 'go home'. Being Chinese in a white society means not to belong, inhabiting an identity one has 'to get used to'.

But things change, because the world changes. A new, if limited, desirability is projected onto 'Asia' as the Antipodes, previously the white supremacist outposts of Europe, find themselves geopolitically relocated gradually but surely to the margins of an increasingly wealthy and powerful AsiaPacific region. Reluctantly or not, both New Zealand and Australia are now increasingly looking to Asia and Asians as their lifeblood to a secure economic future, if not their cultural destiny.

Business migrants from Hong Kong, in particular, are pulled in through special immigration schemes designed to inject large sums of money into the national economy. Universities increasingly derive their income from fees paid by students from Singapore, Malaysia, China, or Hong Kong.

OPPOSITE PAGE

UPPER LEFT

The Human Condition
Yuk King Tan
Hong Kong Arts Centre

LOWER LEFT

Stream, detail
Luise Fong

RIGHT

Rich (insert: details)
Denise Kum
Hong Kong Arts Centre

Schools have begun to teach children Mandarin or Japanese to imbue them with the necessary linguistic skills for the conduct of global economic transactions next century. And both Australia and New Zealand are forcefully advertising themselves as attractive tourist destinations for rich East and Southeast Asians.

In this context, racist provocations that the country is 'swamped by Asians', still more than occasionally heard in both countries, signal trouble. Today, anti-Asian racism becomes undesirable not so much because it is morally reprehensible, but because it is economically damaging: more worry is expressed about how it will hurt trade with Asia than how it causes pain among those who are the object of racial abuse. Billions of dollars are at stake.

After all, the pundits say next century will be Asia's. If New Zealand and Australia want to escape an ailing future as 'the white trash of Asia', they'd better embrace it: 'The tide has turned and we have no choice but to follow the rest of the Western world into Asian markets'.

The predicament of Chinese identity today needs to be cast within these changing global power relations between 'Asia' and the 'West'. Forecasters say that, by 2020, the unimaginable will have become reality: China will be the biggest economy in the world. Does this mean that the Middle Kingdom will regain its old, cherished status as the centre of the world? There is no doubt that dreams of a new Yellow Empire still linger in the new nationalism in China: a Chinese ethnocentrism fuelled by an obsession with the unfulfilled greatness of Chinese civilisation.

The other day I had a ride through Sydney with a mainland Chinese taxi driver. He was one of the students who opted to stay in Australia after the Tiananmen Square events in 1989.

He wasn't worried about the racism he encounters Down Under. 'Prejudice is everywhere,' he said. 'Besides, Australia can't turn its back on Asia now. And in a few decades China will be a great country.' So for this man the abject fate of marginalisation, victimisation, and being at the receiving end of racial prejudice is countered by a strong sense of Chinese self-sufficiency, and a confidence that the foreign devil's racism will ultimately be its own worst enemy, its own white peril.

Chineseness, for him, no matter how degraded in the world today, will be the passport to global wealth, power and prestige tomorrow, the model for which is not the People's Republic of China, but the newly wealthy, powerful and confident Neo-Confucian world of 'Greater China'.

In the new world (dis)order, the rise to global prominence of Greater China adds a new dimension to the changing meanings of Chinese identity. While the mainlander may make a claim to be the most authentic Chinese, the Hong Konger (or Taiwanese or Singaporean Chinese) may in the discourse of cultural hierarchy claim to represent the most advanced mode of Chineseness. Hong Kong, for one, embodies a Chinese modernity which aspires not only to rival, but to supersede Western modernity in terms of material prosperity and technological sophistication.

No doubt the taxi driver had Hong Kong in mind



when he conjured up China's road to greatness in the coming century. Ironically, whether China will indeed become like Hong Kong or, on the contrary, the other way around is a matter of much uncertainty and anguish. With the Crown Colony subsumed under the authority of the Chinese communist government – whose claims to represent the only legitimate Chinese identity are only too well-known – Hong Kong's very identification as Chinese has become a political as well as a cultural issue. In the ensuing fallout the conditions under which Hong Kong is prepared to identify itself as having a Chinese identity may continue to be the object of intense contest.

For the mainland Chinese taxi driver, Chineseness is not something he has 'to get used to'. His cultural authenticity would never be a problem (except perhaps in China itself, where his defection could be held against him). The Hong Kong Chinese, on the other hand, while steeped in Cantonese versions of Chinese culture, may relate much more problematically to Chineseness, and if anything, may feel compelled for political reasons not to identify with it, especially if its delineation is directed by the imperatives of Mandarin-speaking Beijing.

In the face of these historical transfusions of Chinese identity, we in Australasia play a marginal role. Thus my own claim to a Chinese identity cannot but be a precarious one, and is easily disproven. Typically, the taxi driver wanted to know where I was from: 'You are Chinese, aren't you?'

As always, I had to say that while I have a Chinese background, I don't speak a word of Chinese.

In Sinocentric logic, I am a descendant of the Yellow Emperor who has gone too far astray and has been hopelessly decultured in the process.

So I share with New Zealanders and Australians of Chinese descent, including William Yang and the New Zealand artists of the *Fusion* exchange, an ambivalent position of neither/nor. On the one hand being Chinese is an identity which we, living in the West, had 'to get used to'; on the other hand it is an identity easily thrown into doubt when confronted with a Chinese essentialism which finds our Chineseness wanting.

We are, in Professor Wang Gungwu's words, 'too Western to be comfortably Chinese and yet too Chinese to accept conditions where Chineseness is being penalised'.

For many of us, the continual effort to turn this neither/nor into a more positive both/and is the source of our anxiety, as well as our creativity. In the complex time/space configuration on the brink of the new millennium, it is an effort to carve out a space for our complicated and layered hybrid identities – between the economic opportunism of the West and the hegemonic aspirations of Greater China, between the 'white peril' and the 'yellow devil'.

Ien Ang



THIS PAGE
Bubble News
Chan Yuk Keung
Hong Kong Arts Centre

ABOVE LEFT
detail

CHAN YUK KEUNG

The art of Tapies and Magritte has always fascinated me. Although they appear to be two extremes - one abstract, one representational - their work is not entirely dissimilar.

Tapies' abstraction always emits a kind of delicious myth which leads to representational imagery.

Magritte's work, with juxtaposed objects drawn from different contexts, results in a sudden void of meaning.

The moments in which meaning takes shape and in which meaning is destroyed may fall in the same path. Tapies and Magritte do meet, despite the opposite directions of their paths.

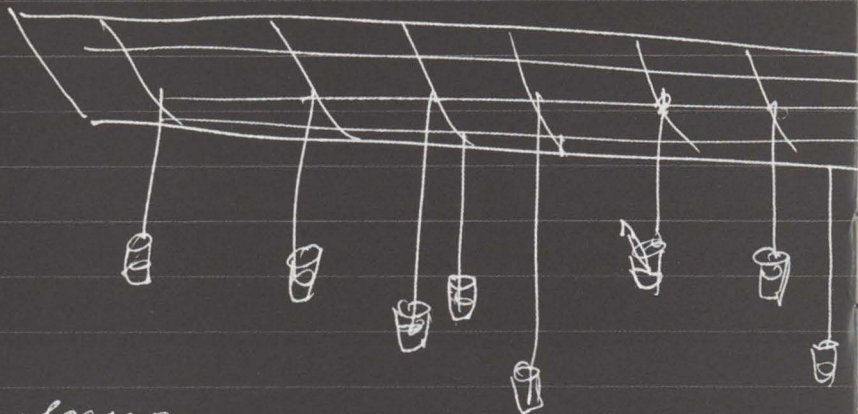
What I strive for in art are those moments which, I believe, can be poetry.

The other element which concerns me is architecture.

Gravity provides the ultimate reason to build and at the same time justifies the formal architectural elements from which my work takes shape. The game of form and function commences again. These functional manipulations, however, serve only a non-functional purpose that, again, strives to be poetry.

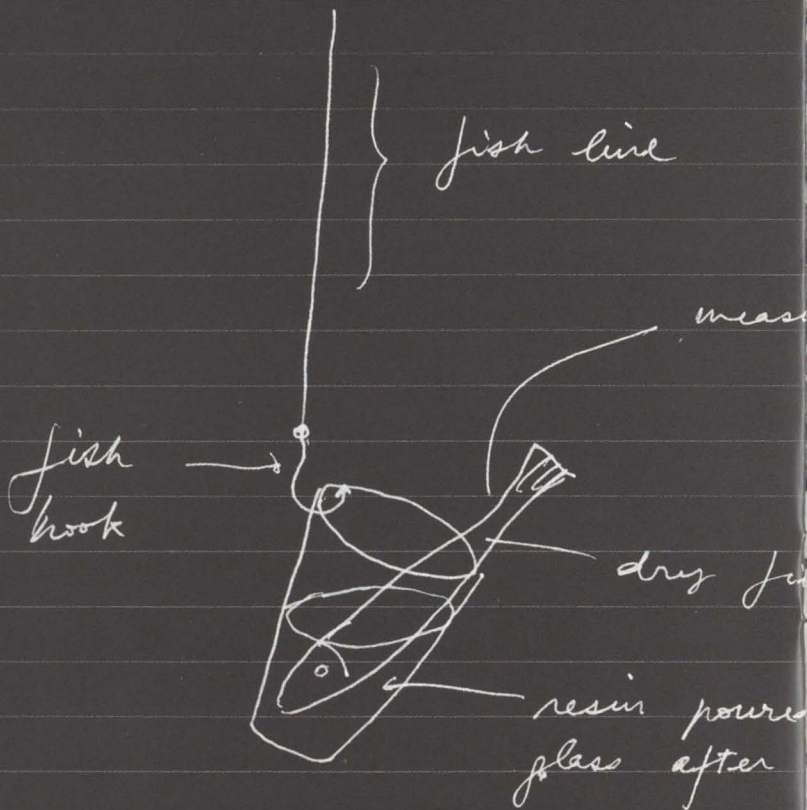
The combination of objects not only constitutes meaning associated between their interaction, but is also inseparably linked with each single object itself. Therefore when artists combine symbols, they never counter their logical relationships, nor do they make them illogical intentionally. The only way to explain the relationship between objects lies in their visual relationship.

New materials often bring about new problems and new sentiments. Art is thus no longer intangible, it is always fresh and full of new discoveries.



glasses

hanging randomly with different



L U I S E F O N G

1. The artist aged one month with her Chinese grandmother. Father's family home, Trig Hill, Sabah, Malaysia.
2. The artist aged four with 'Pa Parker' riding Captain Starlight. Mother's family farm, Waitatuna, Waikato, New Zealand.
3. The artist aged nine in the family garden, Mt Eden, Auckland, New Zealand



D E N I S E K U M

Auckland Chinese Sports Club float for the Auckland
Carnival at Western Springs, Auckland, 1951.
Float designed by my grandfather, Charles Chan.



樟腦味的早晨起來讀了一封信

信在我手裡長出了花
蝴蝶
或者是一支煙

一生的事
長久長久
縱使流星飛過如陣雨
也從沒有許願……

……從沒有許願
在張着紅傘旋落的天使間
在長長的一生
在思憶裡……

有一些東西久久的停在沉默的角落
影子在微笑，肩上的汗仍舊夾着
恍惚的香，燻暖……

ANTHONY LEUNG PO SHAN

I am not a philosopher, nor an illustrator. I am an artist. As a very young artist, it is too early to say what the characteristics of my art are.

All I know is that within me are the complex qualities that make me want to use art as expression.

◆ 小西

Both being a woman - a Chinese woman in Hong Kong - and an artist creates two heavy burdens. Release for me comes through negation, dislocation and ambiguity in my play with cultural symbols. For me, making art and choosing to be an artist is a lifelong therapy for the self.

Sometimes this extends to my daily life, where I subvert what I can.

The image of myself in the performance piece Death of Ms Ling is of a very short-haired, boyish girl in a traditional woman's dress using a hammer to smash kilograms of tomatoes on the bed. It is a double negation: of the audience's expectation and fantasy of 'woman' (and the fantasy of a Chinese woman); and of the notion of the 'bed' - with its elements of fantasy, as well.

I have my doubts as to whether or not artists should speak about their own interpretation of their work. They should make a statement, but artists are rarely philosophers. They aren't here to solve everybody's problems. I work in an instinctive way.

What else can I say?

W O N G S H U N K I T

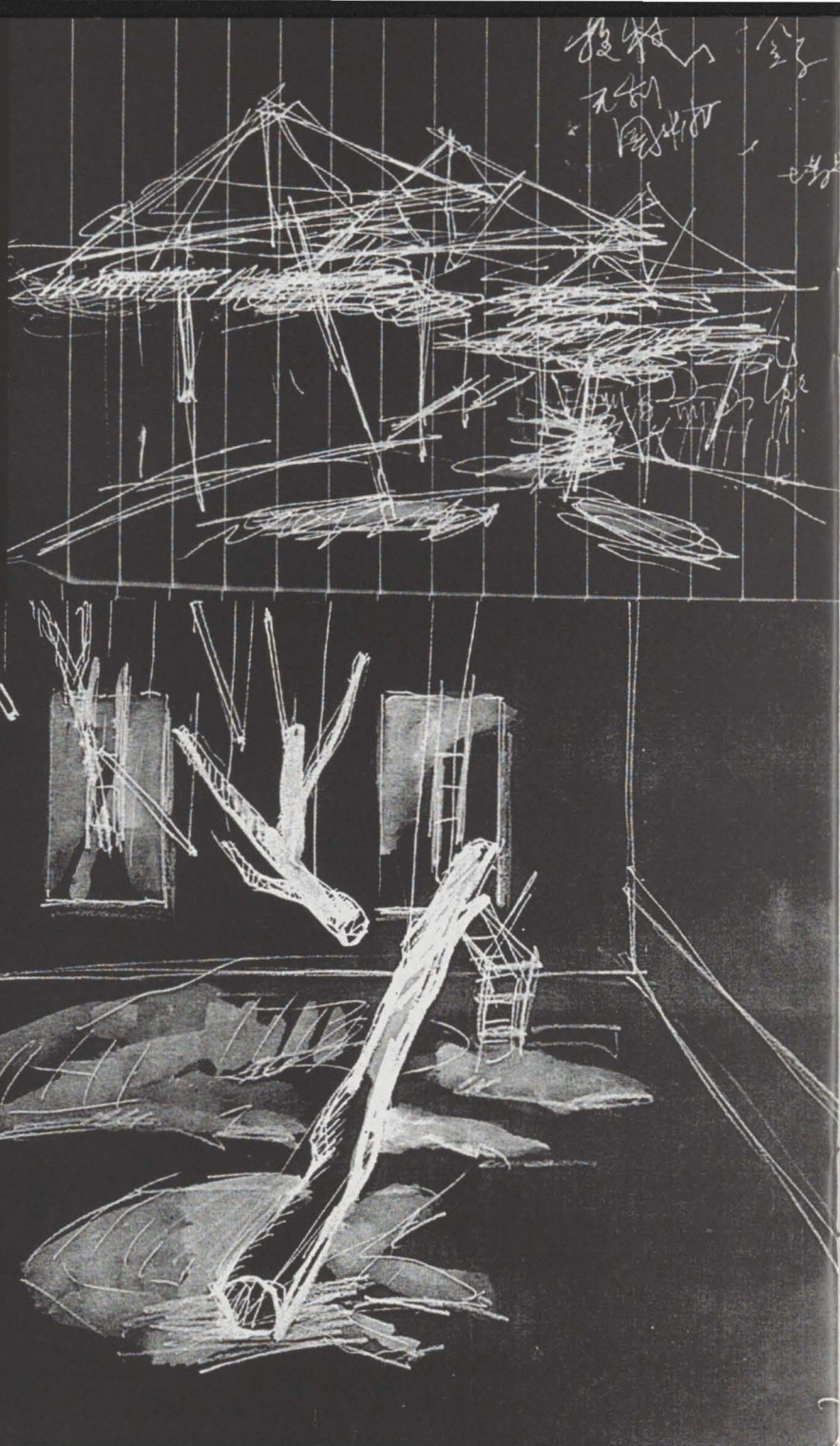
Three Concepts about Tree

I am trying to create a space of contradiction.
On the one side, the concepts of the ancient philosopher
Zhuang Zi are juxtaposed with contemporary concepts as
a means to interpret nature.

On the other side, traditional painting is in
a dialectical relationship to contemporary practices
in my use of multi-media.

Energy

Energy is an expression of a powerful life-energy which
represents the future of Hong Kong.



LINGING FOR THE OTHER DOUBLE BED INTERSECTION

RE : GWYNETH PORTER "THE EAST IS A CAREER", OSCAR NO "THE FAX", BARBARA CAPLAND "KNEEL FOR MERCY", TRAVELPLAN "ASIA HOLIDAYS" 1997

"This could be put in the South Pacific, so to speak - but also - lower grade Oriental were the subject or by the past. You can dateline from another ourselves." "His search guided by an acute, absence. From the East, towards the East as geographical East, years get to via the Festival, I guess I like the artistic quality us, and I will respect between East and West Asiatic Turkish domin

... possible from living - living in its ruins by British imperialists. It is hard to know if we are (us) by crossing the horizon - it is not a million years ago. You might in a million years not need to compromise would affect you more secured this vital route and's influence in it's "the East is a career."

YUK KING TAN

C A T A L O G U E O F W O R K S

- TF appeared in TransFusion at the Hong Kong Arts Centre
F appeared in Fusion at the New Gallery, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki
TF, F appeared in both exhibitions
All works 1996

Chan Yuk Keung

Bubble News

Newspapers, wood, detergent, water,
plastic and metal piping, pump, light.
152mm x 254mm x 260mm. TF, F

Trees of Wishes

Wood, glass, coins, rice, ceramic bowls,
farming calendars, turtle shell, mirror,
walking stick.

534mm x 195mm x 41mm. TF, F

Homage to Magritte's 'Hegel's Holiday'

Dried fish, resin, glasses, fish hooks,
fishing line, umbrellas, buoys. F
Courtesy of the artist.

Luise Fong

Ultra

Painting on canvas, oil, chinese ink, varnish.
310mm x 210mm. TF, F

Search

Painting on canvas, oil, chinese ink, varnish.
396mm x 122mm. TF, F

Stream

Painting on canvas, oil, chinese ink, varnish.
121mm x 198mm. TF, F

Central 1, Central 2, Central 3

Three paintings on canvas, oil, chinese ink,
varnish.

Each tondo is 82mm x 82mm. TF

Anti-gravity

Three paintings on canvas, oil, chinese ink,
varnish.

88mm x 41mm. TF

Courtesy of Anna Bibby Gallery
and the artist.

Denise Kum

Rich

Light panels, mild steel, stainless steel,
light bulbs, electrical wiring, acrylic foil,
acrylic, sheet, mirror tiles, mahjong blocks.
Dimensions variable. TF, F
Courtesy of Sue Crockford and the artist.

Anthony Leung Po Shan

The Death of Ms Ling

Performance at the Hong Kong Arts Centre.
chinese cotton blankets, wooden stools,
iron bed, piano, gauze, tomatoes, pigment,
camphor, monitor and video. TF, F
For the production of the video the artist
wishes to thank Ellen Yeu and Mark Chan.

Tsao (I)

Wooden stools, ceramic tablets, slippers,
chinese cotton blankets.

217mm x 71mm x 74mm. TF, F

Tsao (II)

Installation: chinese cotton blankets,
wood, red cord, pigment, slippers,
camphor, lighting.

Dimensions variable. F

Courtesy of the artist.

A video recording of the performance, 'Death of Ms Ling', in TransFusion at the Hong Kong Arts Centre was included in Fusion with her installation at the New Gallery, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

Leung wishes to thank Sum Long Tin, Gretchen So, Ng Chi Kwan and all friends who helped to make the installation a success.

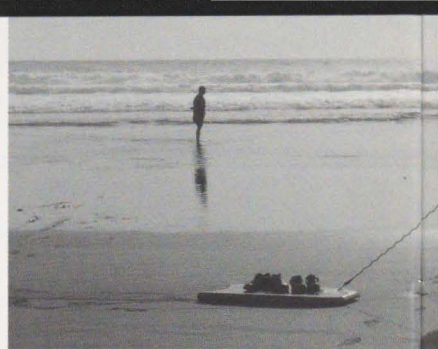
LEFT TO RIGHT

Anthony Leung Po Shan,

Wong Shun Kit,

Oscar Ho, at Karekare,

New Zealand, 19 October 1996.



Yuk King Tan

The Human Condition

Wooden plinths, bird cages, cricket boxes,
pillows, tiger balm, lighting, pearlescent
beads, graphite, found objects. TF
Each unit measures 35mm x 163mm x 137mm
longing for the other (double bed)
142 found objects, white paint, wax, wicks. F
Courtesy of the artist.

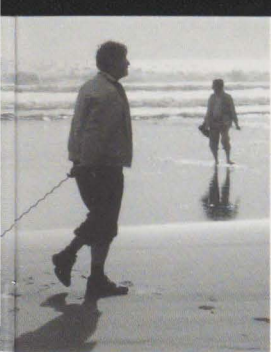
Wong Shun Kit

Three Types of Concept about Tree

Found charred tree, steel, computer,
monitor, concrete blocks.
Dimensions variable. TF

Energy

Pine tree, fluorescent lighting tubes,
charcoal, plastic, steel sheets, steel ladders
and steel cables, monitor and video.
Dimensions variable. F
Courtesy of the artist.



B I O G R A P H I E S

Chan Yuk Keung was born in Hong Kong in 1959 and graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at The Chinese University of Hong Kong at which he is now a lecturer. Humour pervades Chan's sculpture and installations. Disparate found objects are built around architectural frames and references, commenting on received notions of culture.

Luise Fong was born in Sandakan, Malaysia in 1964. She graduated from the University of Auckland School of Fine Arts in 1989 and has since exhibited extensively throughout New Zealand and in Australia, Germany and Hong Kong. She has lived and worked in Melbourne for the last two years.

Fong is best known as an abstract painter and has included installation, sculpture and photography in her practice. Chinese heritage is one of a number of layers in her work which includes a critique of the traditions with which she engages.

Denise Kum was born in Auckland in 1968. She graduated from the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. She has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1990. Kum explores the language of minimalism in her installations and sculptures that blend the ancient and the modern, the sensory and the metaphorical utilising materials from foodstuffs to chemical by-products.

Anthony Leung Po Shan was born in Hong Kong in 1972 and graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1996. Leung's performances and installations are harmonious and subversive and at the same time confrontational and contemplative. She uses common and traditional domestic materials to expand on a critical feminist discourse.

Yuk King Tan was born in Townsville, Australia, in 1971 and is a graduate of the University of Auckland School of Fine Arts. Tan's installations, wall works and sculptures have been characterised by the use of very distinctive material – such as red tassel thread, wax and fireworks. They transform commonplace objects and imagery to explore the aesthetics of display and ritual.

Wong Shun Kit was born in Shanghai, China, in 1953 and received initial training at the Shanghai Academy of Performing Arts. He immigrated to Hong Kong in 1983. In 1996 he was named Hong Kong Artist of the Year. Wong draws on historical references and the symbols of power structures to discuss collective and subjective freedom and traditions in his installations, which are open and fragmented in character. He is also known as a painter.

Oscar Ho Hing Kay was born in Hong Kong in 1956. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan and received an MFA from the University of California at Davis, USA. Ho has been Director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre since 1988.

Richard Dale was born in Auckland in 1956. He graduated from the University of Auckland with a degree in Art History. He has been actively involved in contemporary art in New Zealand as an independent writer and curator since 1990.

Ien Ang was born in Surabaya, Indonesia in 1954. She graduated from the University of Amsterdam in 1977, receiving her doctorate in 1990. She is the author of *Desperately Seeking the Audience* and *Living Room Wars: Rethinking the Media for a Postmodern World*. She is Professor of Cultural Studies Designate at the University of Western Sydney.



f u s i o n H O N G K O N G / A U C K L A N D A R T I S T E X C H A N G E 1 9 9 6

NEW ZEALAND ARTISTS Luise Fong, Denise Kum, Yuk King Tan

HONG KONG ARTISTS Chan Yuk Keung, Anthony Leung Po Shan, Wong Shun Kit

CURATORS Richard Dale, New Zealand; Oscar Ho, Hong Kong

PROJECT MANAGER Gilbert Wong

EXHIBITIONS **TransFusion** Pao Galleries, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, 28 June - 9 July 1996

Fusion New Gallery, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland, 18 October - 8 December 1996

EXHIBITION SPONSORED BY Creative New Zealand Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, Air New Zealand, Asia 2000, Hyatt Regency

A Fusion Production. Published 1997 Auckland

with the support of Asia 2000

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ISBN 0-473-04925-2

EDITOR Richard Dale

DESIGNER Meg Liptrot

PRODUCTION Paradigm, Auckland

PHOTOGRAPHY Auckland Installation - Jennifer French

Hong Kong Installation - Hong Kong Arts Centre



The artists and curators would personally like to thank Carl Worker, Consul-General of New Zealand in Hong Kong, Alexa Johnston at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki and Gretchen So at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Priscilla Pitts and Allan Smith for their initial support of the project, Stephen McGlashan and Chris Fitzpatrick for their untiring assistance in Hong Kong. We are grateful to Manying Ip, Xanthe Jujnovich, Helene Wong and Gilbert Wong for their participation in the Fusion forum held at the New Gallery, Auckland, on 8 October 1996.

