

New Art Space

Joanna Lee

245 Hong Kong exhibition venues were in the record of *Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2014*, while the tally was 253 in 2015. The funding source of new art space varies, yet, as art critic Leung Po-shan Anthony pointed out, “(whether the new art space is a result of) the good-will of small-scale operations or corporations’ transition strategies, what is for sure is that the market has expanded, or ‘the pie is getting bigger’.”¹ A characteristic of the new art space opened in 2015 is their being artists’ initiative and non-government-funded. Hong Kong artists are making an effort to explore the third option for displaying, clustering and creation space besides those commercially- and publicly-funded.

Connecting Space Hong Kong

Key personnel: Nuria Kreamer

Size of space: Approximately 2000 square feet (195 square meters)

Address: G/F, Wah Kin Mansion, 18 – 20 Fort Street, North Point

Opening hours: 11am – 7pm (Mon – Fri). Opening hours vary on weekends

Date of opening: May 2014

Connecting Space Hong Kong is a young transdisciplinary arts space initiated by the Zurich University of the Arts. Connecting Space is dedicated in the exploration of the perspectives and opportunities for mutual exchange between Europe and Asia on the level of concrete cultural practices, at the same time considering the future of arts universities in the globalized twenty-first

¹ Leung Po-shan Anthony. “We don’t want government subsidies – Hong Kong Art Space 2.0.” <http://magazine.chinatimes.com/cn/artco/20150911001792-300601>, Sept 11, 2015. Accessed on April 15, 2016. (in Chinese).



century. Emphasizing firmly on the tri-factor of collaboration, research and education, Connecting Space is a melting pot where research is applied, theories are tested, teaching is taken outside of the classroom, skills are honed, and practice is perfected. At Connecting Space, we welcome stable cooperation and firmly establish curricular elements with distinct thematic focuses.

Floating Projects

Key personnel: Lai Chiu-han Linda, Wong Chun-hoi, Lai Wai-leung

Size of space: 1800 square feet

Address: Room D, 8/F, Kwai Bo Industrial Building, No.40 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang

Opening hours: 12-8pm, Tuesdays to Sundays

Date of opening: June 29, 2015

Floating Projects, Survival Re-envisioned: spatial occupation, re-producing social relations and the economy of contribution

Beginning as a project to protect and advance personal dreams in artistic pursuits, the Floating Projects Collective (FPC, 2010) has evolved from a group of four into a collective with twenty additional members in 2015, and its activities renamed Floating Projects (FP, literally “occupation point”). FP takes on a spatial turn by occupying an 1800-square-foot industrial unit in a fading industrial district, Wong Chuk Hang (WCH), on the southern part of Hong Kong Island, where the increase of disused and vacant flats forces their owners to open up to atypical manufacturing usage. The spatial turn has fueled our imagination and soon evolves into a series of experiments around a central question: what can we artists do with an empty unit in an industrial building with institutionally and physically defined constraints? How does what we do connect to the premise that art is by definition a form of radical thinking, thus an indispensable force in nourishing our humanness? At the point when FP inserted itself into WCH, the district was already the home for several commercial galleries in addition to two new boutique hotels on top of various independent art spaces and artist’s studios. The rent FP is now paying could have been 30% less a year earlier. The question of art is the question of space in a milieu when art and design are heavily appropriated to be the supporting pillars of what is known as “creative economy,” an aggressive agent for gentrification, the flip side of which reads the problematic transformation of urban surfaces.

Plate 1 (top),
Plate 2 (middle),
Plates 3,4 (bottom)

"Connecting Space
Hong Kong."

Photo courtesy of
Connecting Space
Hong Kong.

FP is not only an experiment, but it seeks to be experimental, in the sense that it strives to re-open up many known normal artistic practices to assert that questions of art must be understood also as those of non-artistic nature. Issues of how to keep making art, and of how to scramble for resources to sustain survival, become a new series of questions. Can artists working with different artistic

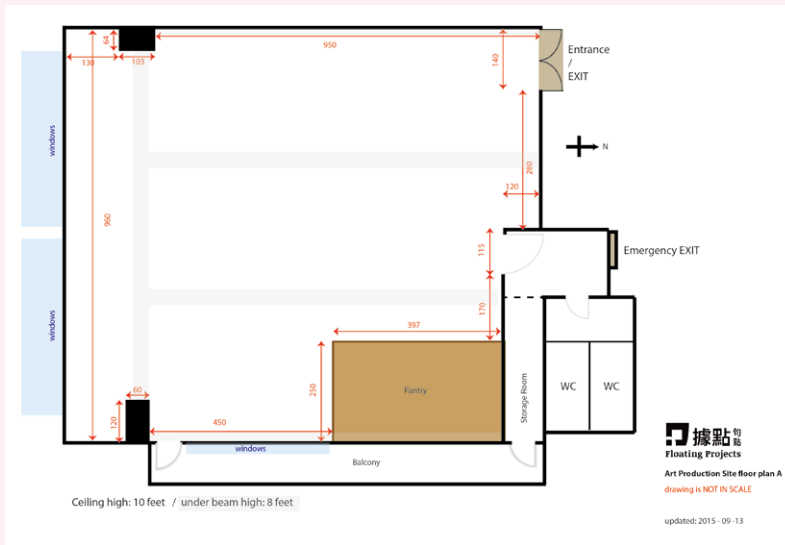


Plate 5 (top)
“Floating Projects”
floorplan. Photo courtesy
of Floating Projects.

Plate 6 (middle)
The “WCH Assemblage.”
Photo courtesy of Floating
Projects.

Plate 7 (bottom)
The “Micro Narrative
Expanding.” Photo
courtesy of Floating
Projects.

media work together, and how about artists of different generations and expertise training? Who is the artist – only those who received formal studio art education in an art school? Are there modes to publish and share art other than the white cube model? How does a collective accommodate individual aspirations and desires? What possible modes of survival and sustainability are there beyond the commercial versus charity support binary structure?

Rooted in Critical Theory concerns, FP's production of space (Henri Lefebvre) is considered the impetus for the reproduction of social relations. FP asks: how do we sustain the progressive posture of art, preserve art's non-conforming and implicitly anti-establishment character in the age of gentrification, when art increasingly becomes a decoration, or a kind of added value? These questions all point to the need to re-imagine and re-invent a different sort of creative economy, called "the space of creativity." (Hui Yuk, DOXA) At this point, FP is answering to the demand of a relevant model – one that (re-)generates singularity (of the individuals) and promotes new collectivity, or the enactment of co-individuation. (Gilbert Simondon, Bernard Stiegler) What does it mean to be an artist in a hyper-capitalist digital age in which our feelings and temporal being are the main targets of moderation and control through broad-scale commodification of art and design (Georg Lukács, Stiegler) in the name of urban progress through gentrification (Hui)? As many government-initiated local projects highlight heritage re-enlivening and/or are implicitly imbued with a social work concern or rhetoric, what does FP as a collective conceive to be the new relations between the politics of art, de-proletarianization (the regaining of one's place in knowing and in producing new knowledge), and the practice of love and care?

Plates 8 (top)
and 9 (bottom)

"Floating Projects." Photo
courtesy of Floating
Projects.



In the short period of seven months, a few signature event series have emerged to be place-holders of individual desires and the practice of care for others (Stiegler, Alain Badiou). Step by step by trial and error, we are reaching our goals through a few emergent signature activities. The "WCH Assemblage" (Wong Chuk Hang Assemblage) series is our regular gleaning and re-purposing of

dumped material to form object-based art installation and object performance. “Work-in-progress Inspection” allows members to produce art, to stage and publish their works, to turn work processes into a necessary part of art pieces to be studied. “Spatial Pressure Calibration” connects with “WCH Assemblage” to turn the installed works into a stage of playful objects, integrated with improvised sound-making and semi-choreographed performances. “Floating Teatime” is our on-line writing platform, where writing connects what’s artistic to other modes of enquiry, bridging the personal and the collective. With the open framework of “Floating Events,” we promote all members to keep our doors always open with tasks, events and moments of exchange growing out of their own talents and specialties, from exhibiting their works, conducting curatorial experiments, to running working series and discussion groups, all occurring on an open-to-all indoor production site furnished with a charity café with a free wi-fi reading environment. With this last component, we encourage person-to-person conversations and the importance of taking time to read. We have been growing a library and digital archive to promote the culture of documentation – as many of us are media artists. In a few months, we have already collected over 100 pieces of videography by local young artists.

FP is not just an organization, but itself an art project that interrogates questions of space and being. Re-orientation of art is central to the re-orientation of everyday life, which must begin with spatial re-orientation.

<http://floatingprojectscollective.net/>

https://www.facebook.com/floatingprojects/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

The Mills

Key personnel: Angelika Li

Address: Pre-opening programs will pop up in different parts of Hong Kong. The Mills at 41-47 Pak Tin Par Street, Tsuen Wan, opens in 2018

Date of opening: Mill6 Foundation started its operation in June 2015

Mill6 Foundation is an art and cultural institution, a registered charitable organization under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance in Hong Kong. Established in 2015 and as part of The Mills heritage conservation project, the space is expected to complete in 2018, spanning no less than 30,000 square feet.

As an art and cultural institution centered on textile arts in Hong Kong, Mill6 Foundation curates a series of programs consisting of: Permanent Collection, Exhibition, Community Engagement, Learning Program, Artist-in-Residence Program, Heritage and Public Art, to foster independent creative practice, as well as to explore new meanings and experience of textile arts and techstyle

Plate 10

“The Mills.” Photo
courtesy of MILL6
Foundation.



innovation with local communities. The non-profit institution is committed to preserving the essence of local culture and heritage, conserving the valued stories of the textile industry, and driving a continuous dialogue between Hong Kong and international creators. Our exhibitions and activities provide a way to “look out” to the outside world for local creative and communities, and a way to “look in” for international creative and communities to learn about Hong Kong.

No. 1 Sharp Street West, A3

Key personnel: Yeung Yang (with assistance from Rachel Wong and all participating artists)

Size of space: Approximately 30 square feet

Address: Shop A3, No. 1 Sharp Street West, Causeway Bay

Opening hours: N/A (varies according to each project)

Date of official opening: N/A (conversations with artists inaugurate the “opening” of the space from elsewhere, hence July 5, 2015)

Here is the story.

Between a meeting and the dentist’s appointment one day, I walked past Shop A3, #1 Sharp Street West.

(...)

Many property advertisements were posted on the ceiling-to-floor panes, which served simultaneously as doors, windows, and walls, hence openings, closings, and borders. A shift of



Plate 11 (left),
Plate 12 (right)
“Pretend that I live in
here” by Ng Ka-chun
(aka Ah Hei). Photo
courtesy of Yeung Yang.

attention shows the small space at once bulging out from the building onto which it leans and at the same time, an indentation of the street. The place presents a certain sense of unsettling restlessness, for carrying the potential of distracting whatever that is going on in the streets, and for pointing all the way to the end of the alley, in an increasing degree of darkness.

(...)

Shop A3 does not have a name. It has an address, which will carry and situate a name when something around and of art arises, planned or unplanned.

Shop A3 is not interested in a curated program efficiently delivered. It is interested in making as an exploratory process for all who are involved. There will be results of the process, but they are not bound by any form of presentation, nor would the production of the results override the need for fast service, for as long as it takes. This is because Shop A3 is interested in the way artists ask questions, the way they approach them and open themselves up for their challenges. I am interested in what happens when my ideas come together with others’.

Shop A3 does not opt for “anything-goes.” It opts rather for a certain kind of courage of art to be on the street, while sustaining the enjoyment of a much-needed solitude. It opts for the intention via any artistic gesture to bring something to a pause, something to challenge, to wonder, to ponder for those who care to or happen to notice. It opts for a kind of freedom that is constrained

Plate 13 (left)

Plate 14 (top right),

Plate 15 (bottom right)

“Reality” by Lee Chun-fung, Dominique Lämml, and Yeung Yang. Photo courtesy of Yeung Yang.



by what it already is, but also what it could un-plan, unlearn, undo, and unfold. All these are to take place from the street, on the street. I want to try to be exposed, so that I am closer to understanding how artists are exposed.

Other information: Financial support for artists from Yeung Yang and occasionally, from other patrons including neighbor Art and Culture Outreach (ACO) in Foo Tak Building
<http://www.awalkwitha3.com>

StarProjects

Key personnel: Star Art Foundation

Size of space: Approximately 8000 square feet

Address: 3/E, Koon Wah Building, 2-4 Yuen Shun Circuit, Yuen Chau Kok, Shatin

Date of official opening: 2015

Things that can Happen

Key personnel: Chantal Wong (Co-founder), Lee Kit (Co-founder), Mary Lee

Size of space: Approximately 800 square feet

Address: 1/F, 98 Apliu Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Opening hours: 1-8pm, Thursdays to Sundays

Date of opening: Sep 5, 2015

Recent political developments in Hong Kong have triggered a spirit of political and civil urgency amongst the city's population. These resistance movements are not only shifting the socio-political landscape but has also roused a creative awakening amongst the people of Hong Kong and inspired a profound re-imagination of the city and its citizens. It is vital at this juncture to provide platforms that continue nurturing this sense of curiosity, especially in a city where imagination and experimentation continue to find little structural support.

By opening up the creative processes taken by artists both locally and internationally, "Things" aims to support the furthering of such discussions and aesthetic experiments in Hong Kong while connecting them to wider conversations.

<http://www.thingsthatcanhappen.hk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/thingsthatcanhappen/>



Plate 16

"Things that can Happen." Photo courtesy of Things that can Happen.



Plates 17-20

“Things that can Happen.” Photo courtesy of Things that can Happen.



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Plates 21-24

“Things that can Happen.” Photo courtesy of Things that can Happen.

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