

HOMELAND IN TRANSIT

R A N D O M

D I A R I E S

Tashi Brauen

Oscar Chan Yik Long

Leung Chi Wo

Hedy Leung

Lo Lai Lai Natalie

Andreas Marti

Angela Su

Wai Pong Yu

curated by Angelika Li



PF25 cultural projects May - June 2023 Programme
Exhibition, Performance, ZURICH

Random Diaries

Tashi Brauen
Oscar Chan Yik Long
Leung Chi Wo
Hedy Leung
Lo Lai Lai Natalie
Andreas Marti
Angela Su
Wai Pong Yu
curated by Angelika Li
as part of the 'Homeland in Transit' exhibition series
co-presented by Meow Kong and PF25 cultural projects

Vernissage: Saturday, 13 May 14-20h

Art week event: Saturday, 10 June 18-21.30h

Performance: Sogetsu Ikebana by Hedy Leung at 19-19.30h

Exhibition: 16 May - 18 June, Tue - Sat, Sun 11 & 18, 11-19h

Venue: Meow Kong, St Jakobstrasse 41, 8004 Zurich +41 79 264 90 00

[Click to Press Folder](#) | **Press Enquiries:** connect@PF25.org +41 76 781 76 78

About the exhibition

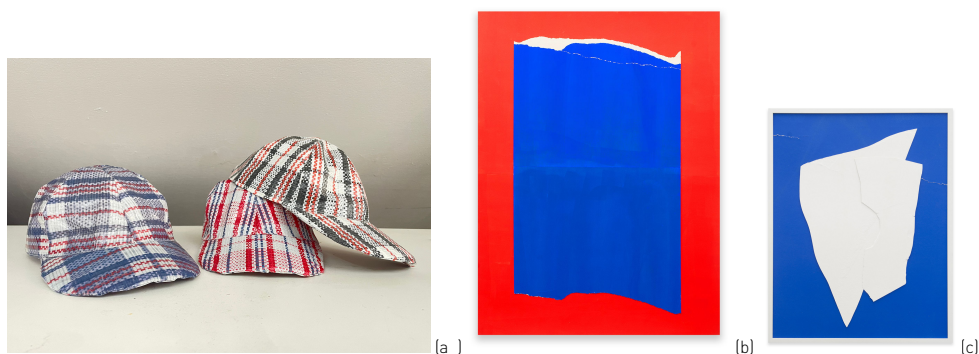
Meow Kong and PF25 cultural projects are delighted to present 'Random Diaries,' the first chapter of the 'Homeland in Transit' exhibition series to be showcased in Zurich. Opening from 13th May to 18th June 2023, this chapter features recent works created from 2019 to the present by eight Hong Kong and Swiss artists: Tashi Brauen, Oscar Chan Yik Long, Leung Chi Wo, Hedy Leung, Lo Lai Lai Natalie, Andreas Marti, Angela Su and Wai Pong Yu, curated by Angelika Li.

Interweaving a diverse range of mediums, 'Random Diaries' unveils the artists' kaleidoscope of memories, emotions and consciousness, reflecting their 'mind's eye' observations of the environs in constant states of flux. Amid the current global instability, this exhibition chapter highlights the concept of collective and individual memories, the notion of transience and resilience, and evokes a sense of chance and risk-taking. It leaves us wondering: where will these transformations lead us?

Random Diaries 2019 – 2023
 Angelika Li, Spring 2023

The shared interests and mission to promote Hong Kong and its cultures have brought Meow Kong and PF25 together. When one thinks of a symbol of Hong Kong, perhaps the Lion Rock Hill may pop up instantly and the next icon may be the 'Red-White-Blue' carrier bag. Echoing the sentimental significance of the Lion Rock, the Red-White-Blue represents the spirit of Hong Kong as a once industrious city built by hard-working people with the 'can-do' attitude. The bag, like a vessel, embodies the colonial history of the city and the DNA of the social fabric that is always under construction.

Originating in Hong Kong and brought to popularity through its use in the construction industry, the striped polyethylene laundry bag eventually became a carrier bag, often used to transport food and necessities from Hong Kong to mainland China in the 1970s and 1980s. The Red-White-Blue are particularly suitable to the needs of migrants because they are cheap and readily available. From its origins in Hong Kong to its global spread, the Red-White-Blue has evolved and taken on new meanings and identities with different names around the world, echoing the 'Lion Rock Spirit'¹ of resilience and adaptability. In the research of scholar Wessie Ling, it is known as the 'Chinatown tote' in the United States, 'Guyanese Samsonite' in Trinidad, 'Türkenkoffer' in Germany which translates as the 'Turkish suitcase', 'Bangladeshi bag' in the United Kingdom, 'Zimbabwe bag' in South Africa, 'Rainbow bag' in Thailand, and 'Ghana must go bag' in Nigeria and Ghana².



By chance and happenstance, the curator vividly remembers seeing works that incorporate the Red-White-Blue combination, which sparks a dialogue on expanding the imagination of this symbolic icon in the context of this exhibition. Among these works are **Andreas Marti's** caps made from the Red-White-Blue fabric, entitled 'The Forecast is Gloomy, But Not Yet Confirmed' (2020) (a). The title effectively prompts us to ponder on the uncertainty and unpredictability of events around us, especially during the global pandemic time. On an optimistic note, the waterproof fabric provides a degree of protection against poor weather conditions, as well as a tongue-in-cheek reminder of the old adage

¹ The Lion Rock spirit, also known as the spirit of Hong Kong, originated from the TV series "Below the Lion Rock" and its theme song. It portrayed how Hongkongers battled with numerous hardships and improved their lives in a myriad of ways through unity, hard work, and resilience in the 1960s and 1970s – a difficult yet dynamic era for the city, during which most residents lived in the shadow of the Kowloon peak. Therefore, Lion Rock has been widely seen as a representation of Hongkongers' indomitable spirit.' by Flora Yan, HKFP dated 1.4.2020

The core values of the 'Lion Rock Spirit' have evolved from the socio-economic struggles from the 1970s to the socio-political aspirations of Hong Kong people for real democracy, social equality and justice in recent years.

<https://hongkongfp.com/2019/08/29/hong-kongs-pro-democracy-human-chain-redefined-lion-rock-spirit/> cited on 3 May 2023

² Ling, Wessie. / A Bag of Remembrance : A Cultural Biography of Red-White-Blue, from Hong Kong to Louis Vuitton. European Fashion: The Creation of a Global Industry. editor / Regina Lee Blaszczyk ; Véronique Pouillard. Manchester, UK : Manchester University Press, 2018. pp. 283-301

'hope for the best, prepare for the worst.' After all, has the global climate become more stable in 2023?

Speaking of stability, Swiss-Tibetan artist **Tashi Brauen** has a keen focus on materiality and its physical characteristics, particularly in paper. During the pandemic, Brauen created collages with his existing works on paper, exploring the material's hard-to-control, unstable nature. He used a cutter in a single stroke of movement to create a line that developed into cracks on the surface, occupying a liminal space between a line and no line. As seen in his two experimental paintings 'Cracks' (2020) (b) and 'Figuration a' (2022) (c), the older works were transformed into new shapes, taking on three-dimensional relief forms. The colours Red-White-Blue are intuitively selected by the artist and applied directly from acrylic tubes, without manipulation or reference to colour codes. Brauen tests the physicality of paper as a medium and invites viewers to contemplate chance-taking and the interplay between stability and instability in the creative process.



(d)

(e)

Taking inspiration from other works in this exhibition and primarily based on her recent migration journey from Hong Kong to London, **Hedy Leung** has created a group of vessels entitled '202200080026' (2023) (d), which embody diasporic sentiments. Adapted from the title format used in both her visual ikebana diary and personal journal, the artwork is aptly named as a record of her move from her homeland to a new destination.

The hand-built vessels are constructed - and protected - using packing materials including the sheer papers Hedy received from a logistics company as the first layer, while newsprint wrapping papers form the second layer. The final layer is strengthened with newspapers collected from an ikebana shop where she ordered materials from Japan. The artist then dyed the newspapers in the iconic colours of the Red-White-Blue bag to further imbue the artwork with the spirit of the journey. The packing materials are transformed into vessels of memories documenting her personal and emotional journeys.

In the Sogetsu Ikebana performance as part of the exhibition, Hedy interacts with the vessels and invites the audience to reflect on the essence of ikebana, which is to live in the moment. The vessels also serve as a reminder to cherish and appreciate the precious items and memories that we carry with us. Each layer of protection used in the construction of the vessels represents the care and importance given to those items that are most precious.

Resonating with the rhizomatic forms of Hedy's sculptures, **Wai Pong Yu's** ongoing series 'A Moment

of Truth' (2011-) (e) encompasses the notions of cosmos, time, and nature through the use of juxtapositions and metaphysical forms. With fragments of nature and varying perspectives dynamically balanced between harmony and discord, Wai explores the polarity of life, contemplating on the interplay of these opposing forces. Whether depicting landscapes, creatures, anatomical parts, unexplored territories, or mindscapes, his works are testaments to his meticulous use of dots, lines, and spaces, which create compositions as outlets for his emotions. They reflect the metamorphosis of the inner self while also sensuously evoking the fragility of skin tattoos etched by a ballpoint pen on paper. What memories do they contain? Without a specific perspective for viewing, one can wander along the lines as representations of the creative process, perhaps even tracing the subtle expression of the artist's emotions.



(f)

Hong Kong artist **Oscar Chan Yik Long** has relocated to Helsinki in recent years. During the pandemic time, he revisited one of the most celebrated Hong Kong film directors Wong Kar Wai's works and found immense inspiration in his unique visual language, and also the chain-smoker characters in most of his films. This sparks the idea for his 'Smoking is the only way to resolve it' (2022) ink on canvas series. These works are not simply still images or direct depictions of Wong's scenes, but instead are a mixture of Chan's personal emotions, memories, and reflections on the selected scenes, prompting dialogues with and, at the same time, between Wong Kar Wai's characters, as suggested in his poetic titles 'Does it count as being socialised if I communicate with myself?' or 'Let's see how long we can stay silent' (f).

Like in the time capsule Wong Kar Wai created in his films, the breaths of smoke inhaled and exhaled lingering in Chan's work release a train of sentiments, memories, smells, emotions and stories, if not dramas, of Hong Kong. Chan explores smoking as a ritual for expressing inner fears, hopes, or desires, despite not being a smoker himself. He sees the act of smoking as a wish-making ritual, which may also be viewed as a form of meditation since it involves conscious breathing that can lead to self-reflection. He could not help noticing the sudden influx of people leaving Hong Kong which accentuates the concept of aerification in his work, as the smoke and ash from cigarettes resemble seeds carried by the wind and spread.

In the screening room of this exhibition, moving images are showcased, including 'My Random Diary' (2020) (g) by Hong Kong artist **Leung Chi Wo**. In this work, Leung investigates the difference between collective and individual memory. The concept of this exhibition chapter is inspired by the ideas expressed in this work.

In Leung's practice, he often draws from references and archives, especially newspaper archives with history as a subject matter. He seeks to capture the temperature and atmosphere of past scenes, and

most of his works act as a tracker in the city, tracing the threads of history and memory. 'My Random Diary' is a notable example of this, which juxtaposes adapted diary entries of unrelated events from various news archives with photos taken during the artist's site visits to locations of covered violent events. The diary entries begin with the bombing at the Hilton Hotel on Garden Road on August 22, 1967, and continue with news covering the death of journalist Lam Bun by arson, and beyond. The randomness of the entries is not solely due to the artist's chance encounters with scenes of violence but also the inclusion of celebratory events that happened on the same day exactly fifty years ago. The resulting diary creates a vivid and almost schizophrenic record of the city's anxiety and intensity.

It is worth noting that in 2023, Hong Kong ranks 140th out of 180 regions on the international RSF press freedom index. This alarming news hints the high degree of anxiety and intensity which is spreading across the city that once enjoyed the freedom of expression, speech and press. One might question whether this is changing the way history is constructed in Hong Kong.³



[g]



[h]

The level of emotion is intense in **Lo Lai Lai Natalie's** 'Cold Fire' (2019-2020) (h). One might be fascinated by the mysterious beings rippling through the sensuous shapes formed by smoke, clouds, or water. In the next scene, the viewer is brought onto a plane with safety cards and a window view of clouds, eavesdropping on conversations about a mixture of fear of plane crashes, life, and death:

'Cut off her relationship with the iron bird.'

'Floating on the ocean with her unknown companions towards an unknown future.'

'Do you know where we are heading?'

'No, I don't. I never do.'

'It seemed calm looking from thousands of feet from above.'

'Only because we could not see the thriving, indomitable bacteria.'

The first musical piece appearing in this work, 'Vallée d'Obermann' by Franz Liszt (1811-1886), cultivates another layer of narrative. This melancholic theme was composed during his journey across the Swiss Alps in 1835, along literary sources including Étienne Pivert de Senancour's novel 'Obermann', with notions of solitary despair, overcoming hopelessness, human existence, and the immensity of suffering in this world. Is it a coincidence that this musical piece was chosen for the work, or does it reflect the artist's personal memories and experiences? The haunting melody adds a layer of contemplation and emotional depth to the visual images.

³ <https://hongkongfp.com/2023/05/03/just-in-hong-kong-ranks-140th-on-2023-intl-press-freedom-index-below-colombia-cameroon/> by Candice Chau, 3 May 2023, Hong Kong Free Press (cited on 3 May, 2023)

Through the fermentation process to the revelation of the mysterious being – i.e. the fire used for fermentation – the cold fire represents the resilience and solidarity of people, yet by no surprise, people do get hurt from it. The artwork is a reflection on the human experience, including the fragility and strength of life, and the complexity of emotions that come with it. Lo Lai Lai Natalie's 'Cold Fire' invites the viewer to engage with these themes, to contemplate the mysteries of life, and to find meaning in the moments of uncertainty.



(i)

Angela Su's video work 'This is not a game' (2020) (i), leads us to the final work of the exhibition, exploring the interrelation between human consciousness and technology by interweaving fictions and historical facts from film footage and games from different eras to construct a speculative dimension that may very well be truth, reality, or post-truth. The 11-minute video compresses various historical points into a game-like interface in which Su invites viewers to question the boundaries between reality and simulation.

The video takes us through various pivotal historical moments, starting from the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian uprising against Russian occupation in 'The Chess Player' (1917)⁴, followed by 'Chess Fever' (1925)⁵ showing real chess tournaments from Moscow. The game of chess was used as a political tool for training and preparing for war, and also as a way to demonstrate the countries' intellectual prowess and superiority over the other, as demonstrated in the iconic 1942 chess championship between U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. where Boris Spassky played against Bobby Fischer. The inclusion of films 'WarGames' (1983) and 'Project X' (1987) suggests that these themes of war and competition involving technology intensified during the Cold War era.

Jumping through time, the artist cuts to 'Heung Shing Online'⁶ (HS), which launched in Hong Kong in 2019 during the Anti-ELAB movement. HS is not a conventional game but an informative strategy guide for the protest, with the terminology and organisation of information resembling that of a video game. At the same time, scenes from the infamous 1995 'Hong Kong 97'⁷ game cohesively edited into the

⁴ The silent film 'The Chess Player' (1917) was directed by Raymond Bernard, adapted from Henry Dupuy-Mazuel (1885-1962)'s novel in which an Austrian inventor named Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen conceals a Polish patriot Boleslas Vorowshi in his mechanical chess-playing machine known as the Automaton or The Turk to save him, but the Empress Catherine the Great orders the machine to be brought to her in Saint Petersburg. The film showcases the strategic similarities between wartime and gaming tactics.

⁵ 'Chess Fever' (1925) was directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin and Nikolai Shpikovsky.

⁶ <https://www.scmp.com/culture/arts-entertainment/article/2129690/developer-worlds-worst-video-game-hong-kong-1997-ends> by Pavan Shamdasani, 20.1.2018 [cited 6.5.2023].

Game site: <https://www.retrogames.cc/snes-games/hong-kong-97-hong-kong.html>

⁷ 'Hong Kong 97', developed by Yoshihisa Kurosawa in 1995, is a shooting game with the pretext of Hong Kong becoming a dangerous place filled with violence when the sovereignty changed hands in 1997. Maoist propaganda and Deng Xiaoping's portraits intermittently



video establish the link of the perceptions, if not scepticism, on Hong Kong's stability now and then - a place which is always in transit.

The video ends with a glimpse into the future, imagining the 2029 release of 'BiTMP' (Bioport Training and Mentoring Programme), a wargame simulation using bioport technology and artificial intelligence designed for rebels and revolutionaries. This raises the question of whether this technological phenomenon is a potential future development or if the future is already here.

The European premiere of 'This is not a game' took place in Basel/Münchenstein in May 2022 which inevitably prompted reflection on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which unfortunately remains unresolved at the time of this exhibition. The video underscores how humans have been manipulated as political tools by authorities. With advancements in technology and information distribution, the notion of a game extends beyond the realm of warfare and into political resistance and social movements. It invites us to reconsider the concept of 'game' and its multifaceted nature in our society today.

In the Gallery:

Tashi Brauen (Works on paper: Cracks, 2020 & Figuration a, 2022, acrylic paint on cardboard on paper)

Oscar Chan Yik Long (Ink on canvas: Smoking as Summoning series, 2022 + Ink on Paper: Melted Stars series, 2022)

Hedy Leung (Sogetsu Ikebana Installation: 202200080026, mixed media, 2023)

Andreas Marti (Wearable Objects: The Forecast is Gloomy, But Not Yet Confirmed, 2020, laundry bag fabric)

Wai Pong Yu (Ink on paper: Moments of Truth, 2019)

In the Screening Room:

Leung Chi Wo (Video: My Random Diary, 2020)

Lo Lai Lai Natalie (Video: Cold Fire, 2019-2020)

Angela Su (Video: This is not a game, 2021)

To the artists' biographies.

To the list of work.

To the project site.

Random Diaries

16.5 – 18.6.2023, Meow Kong Store, Zurich, Switzerland.

A part of the 'Homeland in Transit' exhibition series.

All images courtesy of the artists.

All rights reserved. © 2023 the artists, the authors, PF25 cultural projects.

occupy the backdrops of the game, with the first two lines of the song 'Love Beijing Tiananmen' looped whilst the main character tries to save Hong Kong.



About Homeland in Transit

www.onkili.com info@onkili.com

Conceptualised by Hong Kong curator Angelika Li between Basel and her hometown in 2018, the exhibition series 'Homeland in Transit' was debuted on 7 June 2019 in Basel, and has since been presented in various chapters including Basel 2020-2023, Berlin 2020-2021, Murrhardt 2021, Zollikon 2022, and Hong Kong, Ishigaki, Zurich, and Freiburg in 2023. The series channels narratives and imaginations of 'homeland' from Hong Kong perspectives, exploring themes such as boundaries, roots, diaspora, cultural identity, colonial ideologies, and displacement, and interweaving them with experiences and voices from other parts of the world. The word 'homeland' evokes a physical and permanent form on the surface, yet when we dive a little deeper into our memories and emotions, the word urges us to reflect on its complex and shifting nature.

About Meow Kong

Meow Kong, St Jakobstrasse 41, 8004 Zurich www.meowkong.com contacts@meowkong.com

A space to introduce Hong Kong culture to Switzerland by means of informative exhibitions, workshops, and more.

About PF25 cultural projects

Pfeffergässlein 25, 4051 Basel, Switzerland www.PF25.org connect@PF25.org

PF25 cultural projects is a Basel-based non-profit organisation which aims to build mutual understanding, to develop an intercultural network and to generate creative energies between Hong Kong and Basel - extending to other regions in Switzerland. Our cultural exchange and research approach is on-the-ground and about daily life, observed and engaged through a wide range of activities. We bring people together in workshops, talks, screenings, exhibitions, field trips, interviews, pop-ups, publications and more. This allows PF25 to foster dialogues and deepen understanding between the two city-regions, welcoming diverse stories and wide perspectives across generations. We strive to discover connections through reflections, to expand our spectrum of imagination and to explore possibilities of living for the future.

PF25 cultural projects May - June 2023 Programme

Exhibition, Community Project, Residency, BASEL

We stay up late to behold the beauty of the stars

A solo exhibition of Bouie Choi, curated by Angelika Li

Stories Exchange Community Project

Wednesday 31 May 18-20h, 19h: Artist sharing session, Nonnenweg 45, 4055 Basel

Exhibition Vernissage

Tuesday 13 June 18-21h, Pfeffergässlein 25, 4051 Basel (Entrance at Nadelberg 33)

Registration for the above events: celine@PF25.org

Viewing by appointment only until 30 June

connect@PF25.org