

Transmigration: From Single to Multiple Screens Retrospective Show by Hung Keung

Press Release

This May, Schoeni Art Gallery will present the first retrospective exhibition of Hung Keung in conjunction with his solo representation of the gallery at Art Basel Hong Kong. The show will feature five of the artist's most acclaimed short video works between 1997 and 2007, including award-winning *I Love My Country's Sky* (1997–2013), *Transmigration* (1998–2013), *CD ROM: Human Being and Moving Images* (2000), *Upstairs/ Downstairs: Stories of Human Activities Told in the 1,440 Minutes of a 24-Hour Stretch* (2005–2012) and *Eating Noodle* (2007–2013). This exhibition will provide an overview of his artistic progression over the decade, as well as the inspiration and conception behind each of the works. All works (with the exception of *CD ROM: Human Being and Moving Images*) has been reworked by Hung Keung and will be presented in a new HD Digital version for the purpose of this exhibition.

Back in the days of cassette tapes and video tape recorders in the late 1990s, Hung Keung moved to London to study in Film and Video at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. The cultural experience was a source of inspiration for many video works he created in those formative years. In particular, the artist was dazzled by the openly gay scenes in London and intrigued by the openness in British society towards homosexuality. This discovery led to a recurring homosexual theme in his early video works, one of which being the award-winning *I Love My Country's Sky* (1997–2013). The work was also inspired by the handover of Hong Kong, as Hung Keung observed the process only through reading newspapers in Chinatown and limited communications from friends and family back home. The geographic distance from home had allowed the artist to react more objectively, yet as a Hong Kongese he was naturally conscious of and drawn to the unfolding of events. His perspective was, therefore by circumstances, unique from other local Hong Kong artists. Later in Hung Keung's career he discovered and experimented with interactive video in a project known as *CD ROM: Human Being and Moving Images* (2000), he packaged editions of the finished work and sold them to the general public at an affordable price of HK\$ 200. His concept was ahead of his time for the general public, but did however garner him awards overseas. *CD ROM: Human Being and Moving Images* is undeniably a milestone for the artist's career as it set him on the path to his most recent creations, such as the interactive video installation, *Dao x Microcosmic Play and Appreciation* (2013), which the gallery will present in conjunction with his retrospective exhibition at Art Basel Hong Kong 2013. This work is the marriage of two of the most complex interactive media projects Hung Keung has developed in the past decade *Dao Gives Birth to One* (2009–2012) and *Microcosmic Play & Appreciation* (2013). The former investigates how the 'Yellow Box'¹ concept of *wan shang* (玩赏, 'play-appreciation') and the Dao's cyclical sense of time and space can be realised through digital art. The latter is a reinterpretation of the idea of *san yuan*² (三远, 'three distances') through enriching the viewing experience from two-dimensional to four-dimensional.

As part of the Art Basel VIP programme and Hung Keung's retrospective exhibition, the artist will conduct workshop entitled *The Making of Digital Calligraphy – Flip and Fly* at two occasions. This workshop offers a unique opportunity for participants to explore Chinese character writing with the artist and create their own animated characters. No longer only appreciating the artist's works as part of the passive audience, participants will take on an active role in the making of the work with their creativity and individual perspectives. Finished works will form the backbone of Hung Keung's future installation, *Dao Gives Birth to One Project*, which participants will be invited to view few weeks after the event (either at the gallery or virtually on web).

¹ "Yellow Box" is a project initiated by the Research Centre of Visual Culture in China Academy of Art. Its purpose is to investigate issues about contemporary art, creativity and culture of connoisseurship in response to the modern "white cube".

http://www.art218.com/projects/a_yellow_box_in_qingpu/index_e.html (English);

http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/21c/issue/articles/098_0611003.pdf (Chinese)

² A viewing concept that underlies the composition of traditional Chinese landscape paintings ('San Shui Hui', 山水画) San yuan advocates viewing an object in three different perspectives to illustrate the height, width and depth of the object.

About Hung Keung

Hung Keung was born in 1970 in Kunming, Yunnan province, China and moved to Hong Kong at the age of three. He studied in the Swire School of Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (1990–1992); Chinese University of Hong Kong (1992–1995) and Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London, United Kingdom (1996–1998) with a MA in Film and Video; visiting scholar at the Center for Art and Media (ZKM), Karlsruhe, Germany (2001–2002). Hung Keung is currently an Assistant Professor of Hong Kong Polytechnic University and a PhD candidate of the Planetary Collegium, Zurich University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland. Hung Keung is a fellow of the Asian Cultural Council and a non-board member of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority consultation panel. Before venturing into new media art, Hung Keung produced numerous award-winning video and interactive art works between the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2005, Hung Keung founded innov + media lab (imhk lab), which focuses on new media art and design research in relation to Chinese philosophy and interactivity. He is the recipient of the *Prize of Excellence* at the Hong Kong Arts Biennial (2001) and *Achievement Award* as part of the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Biennial Awards (2009–2010).

About The Artworks

The first 3 minutes of *I Love My Country's Sky* (1997–2013) features a Tibetan monk kissing in front of the camera, his kisses are deliberately reversed, his expression of love is timid but with joy. After the Tibetan's appearance shows the artist himself and other multi-nationalist protagonists expressing their love for a particular person or object. The Chinese revolutionary song that plays in the entirety of the work hints on the inspiration behind. During the artist's time in London between 1996 and 1998, it became his habit to browse through Hong Kong newspapers in Chinatown. It was also then he closely followed news on the handover of Hong Kong and observed the change of its public sentiments towards the handover. From hysteria and panic in 1996 to excitement and a surge of pride in being part of China again one year later, it led Hung Keung to wonder how genuine the love Hong Kong people had for China. This work was awarded Selected Works by Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards (1997); the *Best of EMAP* at the European Media Art Festival (1998) and the *Best Short Ambient Video Award* at the BBC British Film Festival (1998).

Transmigration (1998–2013) tells a story of an alternating state of illusion and reality, exploring on the subjects of out-of-body experience and déjà-vu, in which the spirit of a middle-aged woman (his mother) leaves her body and wanders around the neighbourhood. Hung Keung interviewed six Chinese old ladies in the English suburbs about their recurring dreams and recordings of these interviews are deployed as the narrative voice in the actual work. A personal project, *Transmigration* was inspired by the artist's desire to provide a recreational space for his hard-working mother. This explains the artist's choices in having his mother to take on the leading role in this work and most of the scenes were filmed around her apartment's neighbourhood. By definition, *transmigration* is the passage of a soul after death into another body. Yet in this work the protagonist's soul did not enter into another body, her spirit did temporarily leave her body, but eventually returned. This work garnered the *Gold Award* in the Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards (1998) and collected by the Hong Kong Film Archive.

Based on films shot by a four-way camera incorporating with interactive technology, *CD ROM: Human Being and Moving Images* (2000) explores the limitations of human perceptions and whether digital technology can help humans to move beyond these limitations. This project is an experiment on interactive art and laid foundations to Hung Keung's later interactive works. This work earned *Special Mention* at E-phos the 3rd International Festival of Film & New Media, Athens, Greece (2001) and *Special Award for New Media* in the Split Festival (2002). It was collected by The Hong Kong Museum of Arts.

Upstairs/ Downstairs: Stories of Human Activities Told in the 1,440 Minutes of a 24-Hour Stretch (2005–2012) shows digital images of a modern looking young woman roaming around Hong Kong in different identities (represented by her change of outfits). This work was inspired by the new rise of an "upstairs culture" in Hong Kong, as soaring rents has pushed businesses up (eateries, cafes, boutiques) into commercial buildings. Other subjects such as multiple identities, biculturalism, presentation of time and space are also discussed in this work. *Upstairs/ Downstairs* was shortlisted for the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Award in 2012.



Eating Noodle (2007–2013) is a video performance that solely focuses on two young Asian men eating noodles. This work imitates the physiological cycle of a human body, notably the incessant rotation of body input (eating noodles) and output (growing hair). Through film techniques such as fast forwarding and looping, Hung Keung cleverly plays with the illusion of time to make the physiological cycle a both visually stimulating and dynamic process to observe. Shot in 1997 when film-cutting techniques such as real time editing and real time images transmission were still unavailable, Hung Keung waited till a decade later for these techniques to mature to complete the digital video work. Similar to *CD ROM: Human Being and Moving Images*, *Eating Noodles* was also shot by four-way camera (2 digital cameras and 2 super 8 film cameras). Footage shot by the 2 super 8 film cameras were not included in the 2007 version, and are still being edited as part of an ongoing project.

Schoeni Art Gallery Upcoming Events

Transmigration: From Single to Multiple Screens

Exhibition opening: Tuesday, 21st May 2013, 18.30 – 20.30
Exhibition continues: Wednesday, 22nd May – Saturday, 22nd June 2013
Venue: Schoeni Project Space, 8 Chancery Lane, Central, Hong Kong
Contact: gallery@schoeni.com.hk

Art Basel Hong Kong 2013, Booth 3D16

Opening dates and times:
Thursday, 23rd May 2013, 12.00 – 19.00
Friday, 24th May 2013, 12.00 – 19.00
Saturday, 25th May 2013, 12.00 – 19.00
Sunday, 26th May 2013, 12.00 – 17.00

Venue: Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wanchai, Hong Kong

Artist Workshop: The Making of Digital Calligraphy – Flip and Fly

Date: Thursday, 23rd May 2013
Time: 10.30 – 12.30
Venue: Schoeni Project Space, 8 Chancery Lane, Central, Hong Kong
Access: By Invitation Only
Contact: gallery@schoeni.com.hk
Capacity: 20

Date: Sunday, 26th May 2013
Time: 11.00 – 13.00
Venue: Art Basel Hong Kong 2013, Booth 3D16, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong
Access: Open to public, RSVP only
Contact: gallery@schoeni.com.hk
Capacity: 20

For press enquires, please contact Vince Chan at prmarketing@schoeni.com.hk or (852) 2542 3143.