

Incidents of Travel, Hong Kong

Ho Sin Tung

In 2011, I made a video called *Folie à deux*, named after a psychological term describing “a condition in which symptoms of a mental disorder, such as the same delusional beliefs or ideas, occur simultaneously in two individuals who share a close relationship or association”. The video is a simple depiction of 17 people reading aloud from a passage from their favourite book with their back to the camera, at different indoor and outdoor locations chosen by each reader.

I know many people read, but only a few read books in a more personal way. The 17 people in *Folie à deux* were carefully selected as I sensed something “passionate” about them and their reading habits. Despite being a friend of the readers, I have never really discussed literature with them.

The places in which the readers chose to read are significant to each, and some locations I am unfamiliar with. However, through filming, listening to their reading, staring at their backs and spending some time with them before and after filming, stories and memories of the places are created. The video gets its name because, through reading, readers unwittingly unburden themselves - you can even see their fragility at that moment – and I am part of it.

I intend to re-visit each location and by revisiting, I hope to re-tell the stories of each reader and the books they chose. Most of the places included in the trip are actually art spaces and artists’ studio. But through their stories, each place becomes less general and more intimate.

List of locations that can still be visited and can be included in the trip:

1. The Commercial Press, Miramar Hotel Shopping Arcade, Tsim Sha Tsui

Reader: Eli, Lau Mei Yee

Book: “City of Sadness” by Ma Ka Fai

Eli has worked for many years as a book specialist at The Commercial Press, one of the oldest and biggest Hong Kong bookshops. I believe she is one of Hong Kong’s best writers. Apart from her well-known blog, her articles are widely read in newspapers and magazines, but she has never published a book, consequently she is comparatively unknown to the general public.

More than her writing, she is even more well known as a “reader”, specifically, as “Ma Ka Fai’s Reader”. She has followed Ma’s column since she was a teenager and although I had never talked to her before, I invited her to read a passage. She read aloud one of Ma’s old columns in The Commercial Press’ Mong Kong store, early in the morning before anyone had arrived for work. In the morning the shop is really quiet and deserted, a totally different scene compared to the afternoon.

2. Outside Hong Kong Arts Centre

Reader: Alice Ho

Book: "Cry, the Beloved Country" by Alan Paton

Alice has worked for the Goethe Institute in Hong Kong for many years. I first met her while exhibiting there. She is a very energetic person and full of stories, I had a really good time working with her.

The book has always reminded her of her father's death.

While reading, a nearby street musician – unexpectedly – played sad music.

3. ACO, Fuk Tak Building, Wan Chai

Reader: Li João Ye Chun

Book: "Slam Dunk" by Takehiko Inoue

The owner of the Fuk Tak Building in Wan Chai offers cheap rent to some Hong Kong artists. There is also an English bookshop called ACO on the first floor; not just a bookshop but also a multi-use space for meetings, screenings, and education.

João is a former work colleague whom I admire and is now studying for a PhD in Berlin. He is very left wing and intelligent, but never in an intimidating way. I expected him to read something very academic, but rather than choosing a writer like Kant or Hegel, he picked a Japanese comic book that he liked as a boy.

It's a comic book about basketball. He chose the last basketball match in the comic, and read aloud the count down of the match's final seconds: 2 seconds, 0.8 seconds, 0.1 seconds, 0 seconds...

He chose something from pop culture and found a philosophical aspect to it.

4. Nam San Wai, New Territories, Hong Kong

Reader: Wong Wai Yin

Book: "Thomas the Obscure" by Maurice Blanchot

Wong Wai Yin is a Hong Kong artist married to Kwan Sheung Chi, also an artist. They are well known for their collaborative work, including a long performance piece, "Everything Goes Wrong for the Poor Couple". Their work often references literature and they have a wonderful selection of books in their home bookshelf.

Wong Wai Yin brought me to Nam San Wai, a place I had never previously visited, and where they had their wedding photographs taken. There has been great discussion over the years about developing the wetland area of Nam San Wai - one of the most beautiful areas in Hong Kong attracting many film directors, "photographers" and their "models".

Near where we filmed Wong Wai Yin reading, another couple was also taking wedding photos. These things reoccur over and over again in the grassy fields!

5. “Qiáng” studio, Fotan

Reader: Au Hoi Lam

Book: “Little Reunion” by Eileen Chang

Au Hoi Lam is a very established painter in Hong Kong who is known for her delicate, intimate and pale paintings with carefully crafted layers. Her reading choice was also very “feminine” – a short text by Eileen Chang about a mother and child.

We did the filming in her studio, named “Qiáng”, meaning, “rose” in Cantonese.

The first line of the text: “She never wanted a child.”

A tagline is written on her painting on the wall: “Her life is a lie.”

Another tagline found in another painting: “Speak the truth.”

Her voice is very fragile and she required many retakes.

6. 818 studio, Fotan

Reader: Sushan Chan

Book: “How Blue Was My Village” by Yeung Hok Tak

Sushan Chan is one of the quietest people I know; yet she is one of the most socially engaged artists in Hong Kong. She participates in many protests against the government, and she paints and designs posters to spread her political ideas.

She was born and raised in Lam Tin, an area that has suffered from “overdevelopment”. The cityscape is rapidly changing - a comic artist recently did a book about Lam Tin – and which Sushan Chan has also been involved.

Her studio is always messy, yet cozy. She shares it with a former classmate who does sculpture, thus her books and desk are always covered with a thick layer of dust.

She has been collecting newspaper clipping for years. They are about the police, criminals, accidents – and other interesting events that slip out of our unattending eyes.

Realised on 29 January 2013 as part of Latitudes’ residency during *Moderation(s)*, a year-long collaboration in 2013 between Witte de With, Rotterdam, and Spring Workshop, Hong Kong. www.LTTDS.org/projects/moderations

Ho Sin Tung (1986, Hong Kong) graduated from the Fine Arts Department of Chinese University in Hong Kong. She is currently a full-time artist and has a studio located in Fotan, Hong Kong. Sin Tung’s recent work predominantly uses pencil, graphite and watercolour in combination with found and ready-made images – such as stickers, maps, charts, rubber-stamps and timelines. These are reinterpreted to narrate stories of places, relationships and periods of time often within a considered, objective historical setting.

Her most recent exhibitions include “Hong Kong Inter-vivos Film Festival” in Hanart TZ Gallery,

Hong Kong (2012), “You Are Running A Business Called None Of My Business” in Abu Dhabi Art Fair (2011), “Folie à deux” in Experimenta, Hong Kong (2011) and “Don’t Shoot the Messenger” in Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong (2010). She also participated in group shows like “Hong Kong Eye” in Saatchi Gallery, London (2012), “The 9th Shanghai Biennale” in the Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art (2012), “Octopus” in Hanina Contemporary, Tel Aviv, Israel (2011), “Urban Utopia : if and only if” in Goethe Institute, Hong Kong (2011), “Drawing Out Conversation : Taipei” in Nanhai Gallery, Taipei (2010).

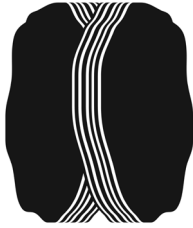


Fig.1
Moderation(s)