

HONG KONG ARTS CENTRE

香港藝術中心

**Hong Kong
Art Centre
2014 Flagship
Exhibition**

Education Kit

Art available to all

Unseen existence

Dialogues with the
Environment in Contemporary Art

2014 **12.12**

2015 **01.15**

Whenever we have a discussion about environmental issues, what comes to our mind may be problems including global warming, uncontrolled deforestation in the Amazon rainforest and overexploitation of natural resources in developing countries. We often say that these happenings are closely linked to our lives, yet it seems difficult for us to find the exact association. Living life in the fast lane in the city, we may even have contributed to pollution and caused damage to the environment without noticing.

With the theme of “caring about the environment”, the exhibition Unseen Existence: Dialogues with the Environment in Contemporary Art has gathered twelve sets of artworks from all over the world. Through the exhibition, we are able to take a closer look at the place we are living in, and see how resources found in the daily-life environment such as sound, air, light and wind can be understood, discussed and utilized from a new perspective. The array of exhibited works make use of a wide range of medium, including oil painting, photography and installation. They would give you new insights through art as they reveal the delicate side of the environment, something you have not seen before.

(This education kit can be downloaded from the official website of the Hong Kong Arts Centre: www.hkac.org.hk)

How to use this Education Kit

This education kit is tailor-made for parents and children, teachers, primary and secondary school students, and anyone who is interested in exploring contemporary art. The education kit is divided into two sections:

Section I : Art Appreciation

We believe that imagination and interactive question-and-answering encourage observation and provoke thinking. In this section, we have suggested some guiding questions organized under different categories. They start from “observing the artwork”, followed by “direction of thinking”, and close with “discussion and imagination” about the theme of exhibition. You may explore the exhibition on your own with the help of this activity booklet. Alternatively, you can borrow the audio guide equipment for free and listen to the stories behind each work in the exhibition, using the exhibition guidebook as a reference.

Section II : Interactive Thinking

In this section, activities and questions are listed for the appreciation of each work of art, in an attempt to enrich visitors’ understanding of the artworks and exhibition theme with an interactive approach. We have highlighted the important points concerning the viewing of artworks, ranging from “visual elements”, “theme of artwork” to “way of presentation”, in order to bring to light the unique features of each work. You can take the education kit home and share your experience and feeling of this exhibition with your friends and family.

Section I : Art Appreciation

Every work of art in this exhibition has a story waiting for you to discover. Looking at the artworks, probably you will wonder where to start exploring. You may follow the suggested questions below when you begin to appreciate them and investigate the underlying message step by step.

About observation:

Let's start with the visual elements you can see. Take a closer look at the main features of the artwork. Describe the objects or figures you see.

- ① What kind of objects or figures do you see?
- ② How do the objects or figures appear? What are their characteristics? (for example, colour, shape, size, material texture, image and composition)
- ③ Which part of the artwork first caught your attention?
- ④ Is there any other information observable in the artwork? (for example, time, place, characters and activities)
- ⑤ In what manner or style does the artist present the objects or figures in the artwork?

About thinking:

Artists make use of objects, people, places, architecture and presentation method to bring up the message of their artworks. Organize your observation and the hints you found in the artworks, then go further by asking more questions.

- ① What are the people in the artwork doing? Why are they doing that?
- ② What are the consequences of their actions? Do the consequences carry important meaning to life or the society at present?
- ③ What are the uses of the objects you see? Why does the artist use those objects?
- ④ What are the effects when the objects are used? Why does the artist intend those effects?
- ⑤ How are the elements in the artworks linked to the theme of the exhibition?
- ⑥ How does the artist understand or respond to the environment they are in (natural environment/ city/ history/ society)?

About discussion and imagination:

When you look at an artwork, exercise your imagination and think about your personal experience or that related to the society. Share with your friends and family your feeling and the messages you received from the artworks and the exhibition.

- ① In your opinion, does the artist have an accurate and effective interpretation of the theme of the exhibition?
- ② What words come to your mind when you look at the artwork?
- ③ If you are going to respond to environmental issues, how would you express your opinion or make an artwork to elaborate it?
- ④ Try to be in touch with the interiority of the artist after understanding the background of him and his artwork. If you were him, would you create something similar to what he did?
- ⑤ Please look in retrospect and turn to your personal experience or experience of artistic creation. Have you ever used the objects or places found in the artwork as the theme of your own work? What does your art piece look like?

Session II : Interactive Thinking

You may try the interactive exercises and read the discussion questions below when looking at the artworks. Think about the relationship between the environment and you.

1. Sutthirat Supaparinya (Thailand)

#Electricity #Documentary video #Contending with the environment #Urban development



With a video camera, the artist recorded the operation and planned explosion at two extensive mines and a large dam in Thailand, in the hope of prompting reflection on the problems brought by overuse of energy resources as well as concern of the crisis of urbanization.

(1) In a day, which objects that you come across operate on electricity? List them all below.

(2) Can you tell the sources of the electricity for these objects?

2. Boris Mikhailov (Ukraine)

#Japan #Street photography #Urban development



Image courtesy the artist and ShugoArts

This Ukrainian artist, with his gaze as a foreigner and interest in street photography, truthfully presented the way people being marginalized by the public in the Japanese society.

(1) Are there any people or objects that catch your attention in the society you are living in? Try to describe them in brief.

(2) What kind of roles do they play in the society?

3. Yuko Mohri (Japan)

Abandoned objects #Reorganization of objects #Urban development



Image courtesy the artist and waitingroom

The artist transforms the goods we abandoned into new creations, showing the possibilities arising from blending discarded objects and the environment of the exhibition venue in an artistic manner. The previously invisible elements of nature around us are magnified and become conspicuous

(1) The three sets of artworks operate on several energy sources supplied in the exhibition venue. Can you identify them?

(2) If you were asked to reorganize the abandoned objects in the artwork or even add what you want, how would you rearrange them? Draw the picture in your mind below.

4. Maya Kramer (United States)

#Monochrome (black) #Coal #Analogy and imitation #Contending with the environment



Image courtesy the artist

The artist modelled on objects found in nature to make her artworks. After coming off from the mould, the three sets of works were covered in coal powder as a sign of the ecological crisis resulting from pollution caused by human. They demonstrate the different forms of struggle between human and nature.

(1) What does the “black” in the artwork remind you of?

(2) If you were the artist, what would you like to add in the artwork? Why?

5. Masaya Chiba (Japan)

#Reorganization of objects #Projection of sentiment #Natural environment



Image courtesy the artist and ShugoArts

The artist borrowed different objects to construct an imaginary world in his painting, which aims to challenge our conventional understanding of daily-life objects, and let the viewer contemplate the symbolic meanings and their importance to us.

(1) In Printing of a human body, the artist used different objects to represent different body parts. Are you able to identify the associations?

(2) Choose one of the artist’s works and pay attention to the positions of the objects. Tell a story about the “environment”.

6. Allora & Calzadilla (United States)

Elephant remains #Sound #Historical development #Natural environment



Image courtesy the artists and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

The artists used sounds to link the past and present. They invited a bass singer to sing with a low-pitched voice in front of animal specimens and elephant remains as an expression of an imagined way of communication between lives in nature.

(1) The bass singer imitates the sounds of an elephant. You and your friends may also want to try making sounds of a low frequency. Who can produce sounds with the lowest pitch?

(2) In the space below, express the sounds generated by the bass singer in a drawing.

7. Nobuyoshi Araki (Japan)

#Monochrome #Projection of sentiment #Natural environment



Image courtesy the artist and Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo

Well-known Japan contemporary photographer, Mr Nobuyoshi Araki said before, “After my wife passed away, I took many black and white photographs of the sky. Even now, when I look up at the sky, I still feel like it is monochrome. It suppresses me and makes me feel sad – since monochrome is often used to represent death.”

(1) How do you feel today? If you are to use one colour to sum up your mood today, which colour would it be?

(2) Draw your own sky in the space below.

8. Yao Jui-Chung (Taipei)

#Ruin #Photo documentary #Historical development #Space and environment



Image courtesy the artist and Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei and Beijing

The artist employed photo documentary to show the buildings deserted for various reasons, so as to provoke thinking about the values of man-made structures and the history of civilizations.

(1) Describe an abandoned building or structure that has a special meaning to you.

(2) What makes you remember that place or building? Does it share any similarities with the structures in the artwork? Share your story with your friends.

9. Wang Fu-Jui (Taipei)

#Light bulb #Sound #Analogy and imitation #Contending with the environment



Image courtesy the artist and Project Fulfill Art Space

The artist designed a special machinery to reproduce sounds found in nature. The audience can recollect their experience in the natural environment and contemplate on the struggle between nature and the city.

(1) Close your eyes. Listen to the sounds coming from the artwork. Where have you heard these sounds?

(2) Do the sounds remind you of anything? Draw what appears in your mind.

10. Jiang Zhi (China)

#Flower #Flame #Analogy and imitation #Projection of sentiment

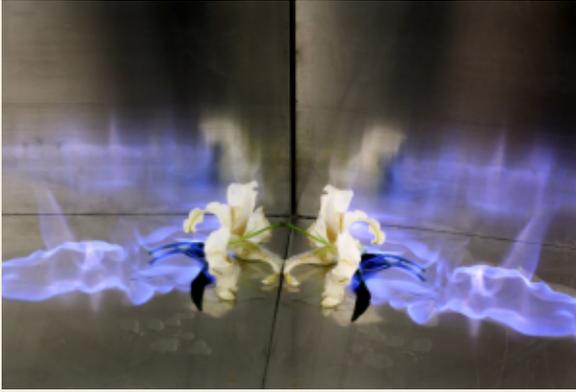


Image courtesy the artist

The flowers are engulfed in flames. In the next moment they would become ashes, but this process seems to manifest sublime aestheticism. Sentiments are projected onto the watercolour paintings.

The artist expressed his thoughts and imaginations regarding “life”, “death” and “time” using a variety of visual stimuli.

(1) Think about this. Do you prefer life to be “short but brilliant” or “long and stable”?

11. Nadim Abbas (Hong Kong)

#Building #Vacuum cleaner #Analogy and imitation #Space and environment



Image courtesy the artist

The artist made an analogy between a vacuum cleaner amidst obstacles and the crowd surrounded by high-rise buildings. This is to allow reflection on the role and state of people in the city. The wandering cleaner untiringly seeks its way around obstacles to proceed, as if trying to break our established pattern of thinking and behaviors.

(1) Can you list the similarities and differences in behaviors between you and the vacuum cleaner exhibited?

12. Ang Song Ming (Singapore)

#Sound #City exploration #Space and environment



Documentation of a previous rendition of Silent Walk, presented by Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2014. Photos by Olivia Kwok

The photos recorded the previous mass events held by the artist with the theme of “feeling the city”. The events guided participants to explore the environment using senses other than sight, so that they could understand the city from different angles.

(1) People in the photos are walking slowly on the street. Apart from using their sight to understand the city, by what means are they perceiving the environment they are in?

(2) After leaving the exhibition venue, you may stand near the entrance of the Hong Kong Arts Centre and feel the dynamics of city using all your five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch). Record what you perceive and how you feel.

Review

Looking back at all the artworks in the exhibition, do you find any common features or contrasting elements among them? Check out the following list. Perhaps it would give you some ideas and insights.

About Environment & Development

Contending with the environment

1. Sutthirat Supaparinya
4. Maya Kramer
9. Wang Fu-Jui

Natural environment

5. Masaya Chiba
6. Allora & Calzadilla
7. Nobuyoshi Araki

Space and environment

8. Yao Jui-Chung
11. Nadim Abbas
12. Ang Song Ming

Urban development

1. Sutthirat Supaparinya
2. Boris Mikhailov
3. Yuko Mohri

Historical development

6. Allora & Calzadilla
8. Yao Jui-Chung

About Ways of Representation

Reorganization of objects

3. Yuko Mohri
5. Masaya Chiba

Analogy and imitation

4. Maya Kramer
9. Wang Fu-Jui
10. Jiang Zhi
11. Nadim Abbas

Projection of sentiment

5. Masaya Chiba
7. Nobuyoshi Araki
10. Jiang Zhi

Monochrome

4. Maya Kramer
7. Nobuyoshi Araki

About Artwork Medium

Documentary video

1. Sutthirat Supaparinya

Street photography

2. Boris Mikhailov

Photo documentary

8. Yao Jui-Chung

Sound

6. Allora & Calzadilla
9. Wang Fu-Jui
12. Ang Song Ming

We hope that, after looking at all the artworks, you will have a new perspective of understanding the natural environment and urban development. If you felt touched, or some inspirations flashed in your mind during your visit, you are most welcome to share with us or with your friends and family. Bring them to the exhibition and let them have the chance to see what you saw.

About Education Kit

Art Available To All (AATA) is an education programme in association with Hong Kong Arts Centre annual flagship exhibition. To offer visitors an art appreciation and learning platform, the programme provides a free audio guided tour service, art appreciation workshops as well as this education kit, which encourage public to think deeply in our exhibition theme and provoke imagination in our daily life.

Presenter



Sponsor

The FRIENDS of the Hong Kong Arts Centre

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