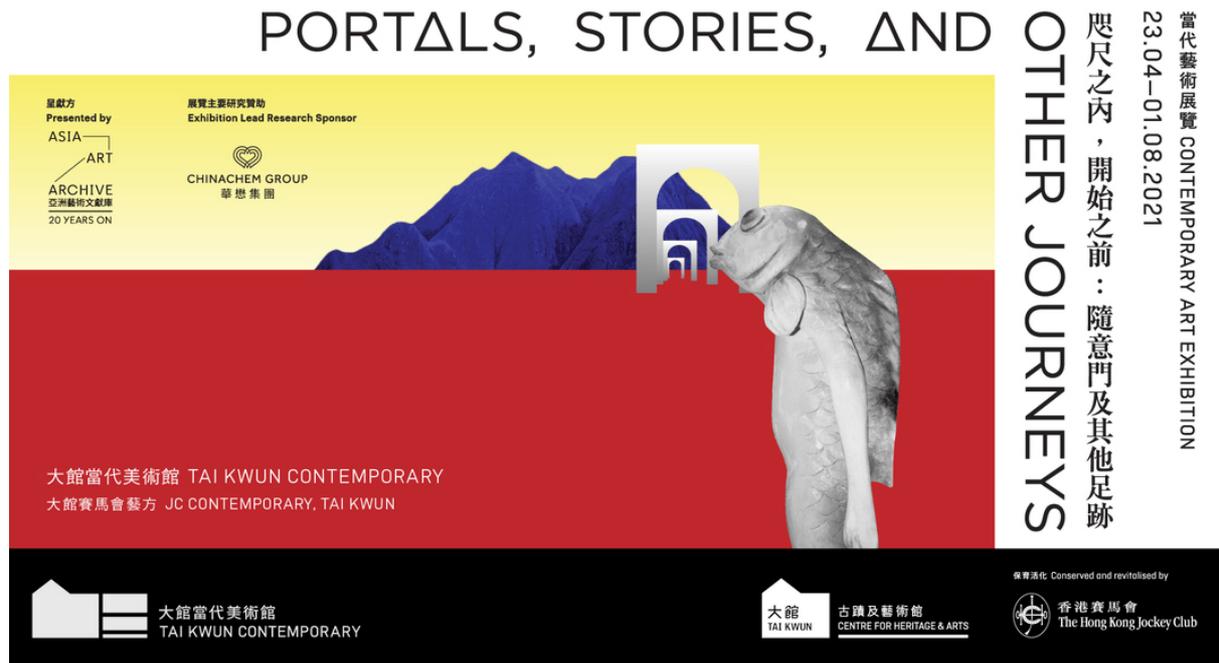


TAI KWUN CONTEMPORARY SHOWCASES *PORTALS, STORIES, AND OTHER JOURNEYS*

Stemming from the research of Ha Bik Chuen's archive by Asia Art Archive, with five new commissioned works

Hong Kong, 21 April 2021, Wednesday



Tai Kwun Contemporary is pleased to announce a new group exhibition, *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys*, on view from 23 April to 1 August 2021 at the art galleries in Tai Kwun. Presented by Asia Art Archive (AAA) and curated by Michelle Wong, *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* takes the extensive personal archive of the late Hong Kong artist Ha Bik Chuen (1925–2009) as a starting point, exploring what this archive does in contributing to today's art history and discourse and additionally inviting contemporary artists to respond to Ha's archival and art practice with new commissions. The exhibition thus allows more complex narratives about Hong Kong's art ecology to emerge and reveals parts of Hong Kong's cultural world that are not always visible.

The starting point of *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* is the late sculptor and printmaker, Ha Bik Chuen, who left behind a vast personal archive—his “thinking studio”—of visual materials such as negatives, contact sheets, photo albums, as well as illustrated magazines and book collages. His documentation of over 2,500 exhibitions over a thirty-year period certainly records a crucial part of Hong Kong's cultural and contemporary art history, and dispels the common misconception that Hong Kong does not have an art history.

Stemming from Ha's archive, *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* features a series of “sets”, a carefully composed assemblage of images, objects, and stories. Blurring the line between artwork and archives and placing them on the same plane, the “sets” work together to create

an environment where guests can experience portals into new surroundings and possibilities. Some “sets” are newly commissioned works, and present inquiries and interventions by artists. Other “sets” re-stage documents and historical objects in new contexts made possible by research into Ha’s archive. In a way, archives can be thought of as portals—gateways that lead us to places known or unknown, strange or commonplace. In this spirit, either through documented texts and objects or through new works, visitors are guided in this exhibition to explore our sense of scale, self, and history; juxtaposed together are different kinds of knowledge created through artistic, scholarly, and curatorial ways of engaging the archive.

The artworks on display for *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* take on a number of distinct forms, which includes a sofa with pre-stitched Tyvek and LED panel at its back that was designed to emulate an animal in primary colour fields. Other pieces on display include miniature collage landscapes which feature cut-outs of human figures, such as Ha on top of an art crate, flipbooks enlarged to human scale with seating furniture resembling those found inside the pages, sculptures, a series of screenings, and more.

Commissioned artists taking part in the exhibition with their own artistic responses to Ha’s archive include Walid Raad (Beirut/New York), Kwan Sheung Chi (Hong Kong), Lam Wing Sze (Hong Kong), and Raqs Media Collective, comprised of artists Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi and Shuddhabrata Sengupta (New Delhi). Additionally, Banu Cennetoğlu (Istanbul) proposes an artistic intervention—with talks and screenings, among others—that raises questions about the challenges and inadequacies of archives to recover and represent what is “lost”.

Tobias Berger, Head of Art at Tai Kwun commented, “Tai Kwun Contemporary is delighted to be partnering with Asia Art Archive in making this exhibition possible. *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* goes beyond the life archive of Ha Bik Chuen to invite Hong Kong and overseas contemporary artists to intervene with new works that allow us to imagine or reimagine the nature of narratives, memories, and archives. In this respect, we value this collaboration with such a stalwart of the local art scene, Asia Art Archive, which has for twenty years devoted much time, resource, and talent to art historical archiving, research, and interpretation. We hope visitors can gain a great understanding of a key chapter in the history of visual art in Hong Kong but more importantly gain a sense of how the past affects the present and indeed the future. This connection of the historical and the contemporary resonates of course very much with Tai Kwun, as a Centre of Heritage and Arts.”

Claire Hsu, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Asia Art Archive echoed, “As we mark our twentieth anniversary, we are exceptionally excited to be presenting *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* with and at Tai Kwun Contemporary. After 7 years of digitising and making accessible the vast holding of materials documenting Hong Kong’s cultural development from Ha Bik Chuen’s archive, we are delighted to be presenting an exhibition that probes, imagines and activates what is creatively possible from within an archive beyond the important work of research, scholarship and education. We are most grateful to the artists who have so thoughtfully responded to this invitation, and to Ha and his family for their generosity in sharing this life’s work with the community. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has made this exhibition possible, especially Tai Kwun and Exhibition Lead Research Sponsor Chinachem Group, and invite all to journey with us through the many portals the Ha Archive has opened up.”

Michelle Wong, curator of *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys*, added, “Through their own creative processes, the artists featured alongside Ha Bik Chuen in *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* have created mysterious portrayals of their own, allowing audiences to see the parallels of archives that are not commonly explored and respond to various facets of his archival and art practice. *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* offers an extraordinary opportunity for visitors to Tai Kwun to delve into the history of Hong Kong’s past through the often-overlooked visual materials and reckon with how contemporary artists see the city’s present and future.”

*Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* has given Tai Kwun the opportunity to celebrate Hong Kong’s rich cultural and artistic history, offering an expansive range of programming that is free to the public. At the same time, the exhibition marks a special moment for Asia Art Archive, constituting part of a highly anticipated programme that celebrates AAA’s twentieth anniversary.

### **Public Programmes**

Tai Kwun invites visitors from all walks of life to reimagine and refresh the understanding of art archives—through a series of talks, screenings, sharing sessions, and workshops for educators.

#### **[bewitched, bewildered, bothered](#)**

*bewitched, bewildered, bothered* is a three-day public programme and a publication that explore the politics of posthumous archives. Taking AAA’s temporary custodianship of the late Ha Bik Chuen’s personal archive as a starting point, this programme brings together artists and thinkers to discuss the challenges and inadequacies of archives to recover and represent what is “lost”. (15–17 June 2021)

#### **Talk | In Conversation: Banu Cennetoğlu, Michelle Wong, and Özge Ersoy**

The first session of the series presents a conversation about the methods, potentials, and impossibilities of working with posthumous archives over Zoom. We ask: is it possible to speak on behalf of the silent ones without occluding their agency? What is erased by the politics of representation? (15 June 2021, 8–9:30pm, online)

#### **Screening and Talk | The Proposal with Jill Magid**

The second session presents Jill Magid’s documentary titled *The Proposal* (2018, 83 min), followed by a conversation with the artist. In the film, Magid grapples with the contested legacy of the renowned Mexican architect Luis Barragán (1902–88). The following conversation with Jill Magid will focus on the ethical questions posed in her film around the legal restrictions of access to an artist’s legacy due to the corporate ownership of their work. It also looks at the ways this film investigates artistic legacy, ownership, national heritage, and repatriation. (16 June 2021, screening at JC Cube: 7–8:30pm, zoom talk: 8:30–9:30pm)

#### **Screening and Talk | Narcissister Organ Player with Paul B. Preciado**

The last session of the series features the screening of *Narcissister Organ Player* (2017, 92 min), followed by a conversation with philosopher, writer, and curator Paul B. Preciado. The

film is a hybrid of performance, documentary, and memoir based on Narcissister, an artist who challenges notions of race, sexuality, and body image. The following conversation with Paul B. Preciado responds to the film and draws on his writings at the intersection of social identities, gender codes, and “body archives”. (17 June 2021, screening at JC Cube: 7–8:30pm, zoom talk: 8:30–9:30pm)

Publication | *bewitched, bewildered, bothered* | Orpheus’ Dilemma

This publication features the English translation of “Orpheus’ Dilemma”, a chapter in the book *The Share of the Silent* (2015) by the literary critic Nurdan Gürbilek, which is a foundational reference for Banu Cennetoğlu’s artistic contribution to *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys*. Gürbilek asks: What does literature compensate for? How does the author question their authority to give voice to the dead? (Work in progress; stay tuned for more details)

[Connective Memories](#)

*Connective Memories* is the result of lyricist, scholar, and educator Chow Yiu Fai’s residency at Asia Art Archive in 2018 to 2019.

[Art After Hours: Collective Memories](#)

Co-presented by [Asia Art Archive’s Learning & Participation](#) and Tai Kwun Contemporary, this concert and sharing session is a live premiere of six original songs co-created by Sophy Wong and Chow Yiu Fai, inspired by six works surrounding the Ha Bik Chuen Archive from PageNEXT members. Against a backdrop of music and musical visualisations, they will talk about their experience at the residency project, the stories and themes they developed with the archive materials, and what “connection” means to them. (30 April 2021, 7:30–9pm, JC Cube)

Special Display

Viewers are offered glimpses at how lyricist Chow Yiu Fai and songwriter Sophy Wong work together to transform visual materials produced by six PageNEXT members. The display presents archival materials from the creative processes of these six PageNEXT member. They created various works—including modified and handmade books, paintings, video, animation, and digital images—based on their intimate encounters with materials from the Ha Bik Chuen Archive. Six music videos that stem from their collaboration will also be displayed. (11 May to 20 June 2021, Artists’ Book Library and Hi! & Seek, 2/F JC Contemporary)

**Education**

[Teacher’s Morning | Engaging Students in Contemporary Art Exhibitions](#)

Contemporary art exhibitions can sometimes appear mystifying—so how can educators help students develop meaningful connections with exhibitions and artworks?

Using *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* as a case study, independent curator and art critic Jeff Leung Chin Fung introduces educators to visual thinking methodologies—including an inquiry-based, student-centred facilitation method that promotes inclusive discussions,

encourages critical thinking, and fosters collective explorations of exhibitions and artworks. (22 May 2021, 10am–1:30pm)

### [Teachers Workshop | Collective Collage: Imagination and Interpretation by Lam Wing Sze](#)

Lam Wing Sze, a participating artist of *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys*, will walk through the process of creating her exhibited work, Thinking Studio. Lam will also guide participants through the artistic practice of making video collages, and help create a collective collage using mobile phones to capture participants' perceptions of place—in the process exploring how this practice might benefit students in their creative research. (22 May 2021, 2:30–4:30pm; 5 June 2021, 10am–12:30pm)

### **Visitor information**

*Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys* runs from 23 April 2021 to 1 August 2021, every Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 7pm at the art galleries in Tai Kwun (F Hall; entry through JC Contemporary). Free admission, with guided tours and related public programmes available. Along with *Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys*, visitors can visit *INK CITY*, a group exhibition that presents an expanded tradition of ink art, with works by artists inspired by the immediate encounters of contemporary life.

The entire Tai Kwun site is open to the public daily from 10am to 11pm, while JC Contemporary is open from 11am to 7pm daily.

Tai Kwun's social distancing measures are in compliance with the latest safety regulations. Visitors are required to wear surgical masks, undergo temperature screening, and either scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code or register personal particulars. Eating and drinking in public areas is temporarily prohibited. The frequency of cleaning is being stepped up for high contact surfaces throughout the day, and hand sanitiser stations are available throughout Tai Kwun.

Visit the Tai Kwun website for more details:

[https://www.taikwun.hk/en/visit/visiting\\_tai\\_kwun](https://www.taikwun.hk/en/visit/visiting_tai_kwun)

Programme details are subject to change; please refer to the Tai Kwun website for news and updates.

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### **Editor's notes:**

Please click [here](#) to download the exhibition guidebook and hi-res images with captions.

### **About [Tai Kwun — Centre for Heritage and Arts](#)**

Tai Kwun is Hong Kong's Centre for Heritage and Arts — a cultural destination for inspiration, stimulation and enjoyment. We aspire to offer the best heritage and arts experiences, and to cultivate knowledge and appreciation of contemporary art, performing arts and history in the community.

Tai Kwun invites all visitors on a journey of discovery that unites multiple genres of arts, heritage, culture and lifestyle in Hong Kong. Here, visitors will discover the rich heritage of the site through the thematic exhibitions and immersive public programmes that explore Hong Kong's history and culture, alongside a multitude of vibrant and inclusive contemporary art presentations and performing arts offerings all year round.

Opened in May 2018 and operating on a not-for-profit model, Tai Kwun is the fruition of a joint partnership between The Hong Kong Jockey Club and the Government of the HKSAR to conserve and revitalise the buildings of the historic Central Police Station compound, which represents one of the most significant revitalisation projects in Hong Kong. The site comprises three Declared Monuments of Hong Kong – the former Central Police Station, Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison – all have been meticulously conserved, with unfailing attention to authenticity. The site also includes two new buildings – JC Contemporary and JC Cube, by renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron – and several outdoor spaces – Parade Ground, Prison Yard and Laundry Steps – providing an exciting venue for the public programmes presented by Tai Kwun and its partners.

Tai Kwun, which means “big station” in Chinese, is the colloquial name used by Hong Kong people to refer to the former police headquarters and the surrounding compound. The name has been adopted as a reminder of the historical importance of this living heritage site.

In 2019, Tai Kwun received the Award of Excellence in the 2019 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. This is the highest honour of the prestigious Awards, which bestows an international recognition of the outstanding achievement in the conservation and revitalisation efforts of Tai Kwun.

Tai Kwun Contemporary is the not-for-profit visual art programme of Tai Kwun. Realising six to eight exhibitions a year and curatorially driven, Tai Kwun Contemporary showcases and commissions artists from Hong Kong and beyond, while offering an extensive range of public programming. With the aspiration to contribute to and transform the experience and understanding of contemporary art in Hong Kong, Tai Kwun Contemporary is devoted to inspiring the Hong Kong public with an inquisitive attitude and committed to offering a conducive platform for learning and experimentation.

For more information, please visit our website: <https://www.TaiKwun.hk>.

### **About [Asia Art Archive](#)**

Asia Art Archive is an independent non-profit organisation initiated in 2000 in response to the urgent need to document and make accessible the multiple recent histories of art in the region. With one of the most valuable collections of material on art freely available from its website and onsite library, AAA builds tools and communities to collectively expand knowledge through research, residency, and educational programmes. As AAA celebrates its twentieth anniversary, we are grateful for everyone's continued support in making a more generous art history possible.

For more information, please visit: [www.aaa.org.hk](http://www.aaa.org.hk)



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