KAF Beats

Elastic Sleep × Soft(a)ware
弹性睡眠 × 软·见

The attention of the art world converged on Shanghai last November as a series of consequential exhibitions unfolded in the city. In addition to major art fairs such as Shanghai Biennale and Art021, artists, curators and art enthusiasts from all over the world also witnessed three exhibitions presented by KAF — Guan Xiao: Elastic Sleep, Neil Beloufa: Soft(s)ware, and HACK SPACE.

Despite the distinctive approaches of the two artists, the solo exhibition of Chinese artist Guan Xiao and that of Polish-Algerian artist Neil Beloufa resonated with each other. The two produced sculptures and interactive installations with different media and moving images, in an attempt to subvert the boundary between the digital realm and the real world. While Guan deconstructed the world through digital communication technology, Beloufa, with a conception comprising video production, life and politics, challenged his viewers to search for an ideal lifestyle outside of the city, uninterred by technology and capitalism.

Guan Xiao: Elastic Sleep, curated by Katharine Stout, was jointly presented by KAF and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. KAF is committed to fostering young curators from China. Neil Beloufa: Soft(s)ware was specially curated by Victor Wang, who currently divides his time between London and Shanghai.

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KAF x Serpentine Galleries 蛇形画廊

HACK SPACE — a revolving exhibition co-presented by KAF and the Serpentine Galleries — debuted in Hong Kong last March and travelled to Shanghai in November, jointly curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Amira Gad from the Serpentine Galleries, this exhibition extended New Zealand artist Simon Denny’s solo exhibition Products for Organising at the galleries, presenting his art and at the same time outstanding works of 11 emerging artists from Greater China, namely asaia, Cao Fei, Cui Jie, Guo Xi, Hu Qiongtai, Irene Li, Li Liao, Liang Shao, Tan Hai, Xi Qin, and Zhai Liang.

The desire is to innovate courses through the veins of hackers: with a range of technologies and communication infrastructures, hackers attempt to open up a revolutionised world and resolve problems through the intrusion of the cyberspace. Simon Denny’s solo exhibition was based on the very concept of space intrusion. In HACK SPACE, participating artists applied the concept to the phenomenon of ‘shanzhai’ — the mass production of counterfeit products in China — and explored how people innovate in reality. Through juxtaposing the concept of innovation redefined in a variety of contexts and hacker culture, the show makes apparent the connections and distinctions between Chinese and Western cultures.

KAF Founder and Honorary Chairman Adrian Cheng, curator, and artists KAF 创办人及名誉主席郑志刚与一众艺术家和策展人

Installation view of HACK SPACE at chi K11 art museum

"HACK SPACE" in KAF's Serpentine Galleries exhibition, opened in March and March and November 2017 in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Amira Gaed, the exhibition features works by 11 emerging artists from Greater China, including asaia, Cao Fei, Cui Jie, Guo Xi, Hu Qiongtai, Irene Li, Li Liao, Liang Shao, Tan Hai, Xi Qin, and Zhai Liang. The exhibition aims to explore how people innovate in reality through the concept of innovation redefined in a variety of contexts and hacker culture, making apparent the connections and distinctions between Chinese and Western cultures.
A tree at Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate appeared in From 4am to 10pm. Everything’s Alright was about cyber friendship, youth, and everyday life. Exhibits of X + Y put together different media and devices. The Inferno reminded viewers the brightest ray of light flashes in the dark. 

Chinese artist Cheng Ran is never tired of playing with the language of film and unearthing mysteries about time and existence. With constant support from KAF, he made leaps and bounds last year — in March, his nine-hour film In Course of the Miraculous surprised everyone in Hong Kong with its interplay between the real and the fictitious; in July, he was selected by recommendation of KAF to be an artist-in-residency at the New Museum in New York. During his three-month stay, Cheng made 15 films that delve into the forgotten corners in the city — a cave in the outskirts, an abandoned psychiatric centre, a deserted wasteland, and so on. The cinematic compositions fuse the artist’s impression of New York with distant memories of the locals. Vignettes bowing over themes of solitude and quest eventually depict the quintessential experience that we can’t help questioning our existence in the world.

The residency culminated in Diary of a Madman, Cheng’s exhibition debut in the United States. Co-presented by KAF and the New Museum and curated by Massimiliano Gioni and Helga Christoffersen, the show borrowed its title from Lu Xun’s novella of the same name. While inspiring creative output, the artist-in-residence programme and exhibitions kicked off the partnership between KAF and the New Museum.

We all take many things in our lives for granted — seldom do we question the existence of social media, of the old trees in parks, and of the screens on buses and trains. Until the time when we have a moment to sit and ponder, we wonder if we know these things enough. There are also times when we believe that it is impossible to relate to memories that others recounts unless we have personally experienced them; yet their recollections touch our hearts. Such subtle disparities are exactly what the four exhibitions of As Far As Near addressed. The intricate relationship between man and the universe and the interpersonal relationships — which are neither distant nor close — are laid bare for viewers to scrutinise.

To artist AMA, feeling out those relationships is an epiphany, a moment when she came to terms with her past and present selves. In The Inferno, she paraded her spiritual journey of overcoming the pain that once agonised her. Artist duo Dirty Paper and curator Vivian Poon recorded the restless moments of youth in Everything’s Alright. Anecdotes illustrated from a third-person point of view created a sense of distance vital to anyone who would like to give their lives a good, hard look. Curated by Jeff Leung, X+Y Duo Solo Exhibitions of Philip Ho and Tang Wing Hong explored how technology limits one’s perception of the world through the artist’s works. From 4am to 10pm, curated by Ying Kow, showcased nature and the city in Frank Tang Sai Yin’s eyes and his imagination of light.

As Far As Near incubated practices of emerging artists and curators. It brought artists and the public together, inviting everyone to reflect upon her or his life through art.
The Tiger Returns to the Mountain
Chen Zhou, Life Imitation (video still), 2016, 1 hour 22 mins. Image courtesy of the Artist.

Chen Zhou, Life Imitation (影片截图), 2016, 1小时 22分。图片鸣谢艺术家。

KAF × New Museum 新美术馆
After Us 我们之后

Curated by David Chan Ho Yeung, Hong Kong-based artist Adrian Wong's solo exhibition The Tiger Returns to the Mountain takes a site-specific installation as its starting point: a ferocious crouching tiger evocative of the one once stood erect at the centre of Tiger Balm Garden, a historic complex built by the inventor of Tiger Balm ointment. Perched on a rock above the changing surroundings of the garden, the tiger was one of the few constants in the garden's history as it evolved from a private residence to Hong Kong's first commercial park and to what remains today a sprinkling of brightly coloured fragments stubbornly clinging to the cliffside.

The tiger is a nostalgic memento of days gone by, a Tantric signifier of spiritual power, an immanent threat, and a reminder of the failed cultural preservation efforts of a metropolis. A Chinese proverb warns that ‘a tiger released to the wild guarantees future calamity’. Through this exhibition, the once fearsome beast is given a voice and its ghost a new life. The result is the deconstruction of a former colony and its position as an international city, at once precarious and above all uncertain of itself.

With the rise of artificial intelligence, social web, and gaming, the process of adopting newly invented creatures is no longer unusual in popular culture and daily life. Immortal stand-ins for the self, for feelings and intelligence, and for values and beliefs have expanded our lives After Us looks at the original persona that are animating ones that amplify current social conditions and speculate on potential future states.

Shedding light on what it means to be humans today, After Us considers the threats brought about by new technologies and raises the spectre of a society that will replace our own. Featured artists layer virtual or imagined states onto the present through the use of surrogates, proxies, and avatars—which appear in works of sculpture, installation, photography, performance, video or in the form of augmented reality or virtual reality.

As the first major show that KAF and the New Museum co-present in China, the exhibition is ambitious to bring together an international group of artists and emerging artists from China, manifesting KAF’s role in promoting contemporary Chinese art and cultural exchange. It is curated by Lauren Cornell, Curator and Associate Director of Technology Initiatives of the New Museum, who is supported by Chinese curators Chen Baozhang, appointed by KAF as Assistant Curator.

K11 Art Foundation Pop-up Space, 8/F, Cocoa Tower, 33 Hang Li Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

Spring 2017
K11 Art Foundation / KAF Beats

Upcoming Exhibitions 展览预告

KAF × New Museum 新美术馆
After Us 我们之后

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Co-curators 联合策展人
Klaus BIESENBACH and Peter ELEY

Co-presenters 合办方
K11 ART FOUNDATION MoMA PS1

Exhibition Period 展期
21.3—30.4.2017

Open daily 天天开放 10am-6pm

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K11 Art Foundation 联合策展人

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In 2015, KAF and Palais de Tokyo, Paris jointly presented Inside China: L’Intérieur du Grand, a reviving exhibition for artists from China and France to exchange their ideas. Pursuing this successful cooperation, the two institutions are collaborating once again to organise a residency exchange programme, which kicked off by the end of 2016 and will last until 2017. French artist Julien Crépieux and Chinese artist Yu Ji have been invited to undertake residencies in Wuhan and Paris respectively and to participate in projects happening in the two cities. As the theme of the residency exchange is ‘community’, the two artists incorporate into their works the cultural traditions they experience in the neighborhoods. It is also hoped that the programme promotes artistic dialogue and expands creative outputs.

Julien Crépieux often transforms popular images, words, and music, piecing them together to form films or installations. Inspired by works of German romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin, he invited members of the local community to participate in the production of a film as he stayed in Wuhan in November and December. The film, set in Wuhan, documents the daily life of the community and serves as evidence of the cultural integration that took place during his stay. Yu Ji creates primarily sculptures and installations, but she also engages in performance art and video production. She has recently been focusing on exploring, through field studies, how bodies are disturbed by space. During her stay between January and July, Yu will collaborate with Palais de Tokyo, Paris and participate in a number of international performance projects. Stay tuned for her works!

Many artists are like nomads — they move from one place to another for work opportunities, though they are at the same time seeking to broaden their experience and network with other art professionals. Since its establishment in Wuhan in 2013, K11 Art Village has been holding regular artist-in-residence programmes, attracting a constant flow of artists from China and other countries to experience the cultural and artistic atmosphere of the city and to exchange ideas. Committed to fostering artistic talents, the village also grants artists-in-residency free access to its furnished studies and facilities so that they can turn their creative plans into action.

The art village holds the works of these artists in high esteem. Three exhibitions were held last year to showcase their endeavours: Post-Machines: The Imagination of HOLOS by Zheng Da and Lin Xin, Social Man — My Eye and Other Eyes by He Rui, and Black Hole by Li Daping. At the core of these exhibitions lay as well the interaction between the artists and community members. While their works attracted attention, the artists shared their creative insights with the public at the workshops they led.

The art village will be relocated to Guanggu, Wuhan midyear for a wider range of facilities and resources. Artists will, as always, be given free rein to execute their projects, and we will be proactively in connecting artists and art organisations inside and outside of China to bring forth opportunities for collaboration.

For more information, we refer you to KAF’s website or K11 Art Village’s official website.