

Evolving Images: modern Hong Kong printmaking at Sun Museum, Hong Kong

The group exhibition features 9 Hong Kong artists who bring a contemporary twist to printmaking.

The exhibition draws attention to the medium of printmaking, which is neglected in Hong Kong in favour of ink painting and installation art amidst the current art scene. *Art Radar* finds out more about the work of the artists on show.



Lam Tung Pang, 'Two Sides of One Body (1)', 2016, charcoal on handmade paper and wooden panel, 45 x 74 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

"Evolving Images: Modern Hong Kong Printmaking" runs from 24 March to 10 June 2017 at Sun Museum, Hong Kong, and is funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. A series of talks are held, moderated by Yeung Chun Tong, the Director of Sun Museum. The 12,500-square feet non-profit institution was established by Simon Suen Foundation.

Traditional printmaking is the amalgam of drawing, engraving and printing. Instead of using a paintbrush to paint, a knife is used for carving the desired composition. The nine Hong Kong artists included in the show are Wan Lai Kuen Annie, Lam Tung Pang, Chow Chun Fai, Ling Chin Tang Parry, Kurt Chan Yuk Keung, Wong Lai Yan Cam, Lo Kwan Chi, Chung Tai Fu and Tse Yim On. "Plate", "printing" and "reproduction" are prevailing ideas central to their work in this show. Since some artists in the show specialise in other media, such as ceramics and oil painting, hence, their experimental and contemporary approaches to the medium of printmaking bring a fresh perspective.



Wan Lai Kuen, Annie, 'Sediments of Triviality', 2015, ceramics, various dimensions. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

Commenting on the show at Sun Museum and speaking to *Art Radar*, Director Mr Yeung Chun Tong, remarks: *Technically challenging and short of market, with installation art and ink painting ruling the contemporary art scene, only few artists carrying on with printmaking in Hong Kong. In recent years, this exhibition is one of the very few print exhibitions in Hong Kong. Emancipated from the confines of the function of reproduction, the prints in a variety of formats and mediums present an unprecedented and delightful viewing experience to the audience*

Art Radar takes a look at the unique production process of the nine Hong Kong artists and speaks to each of them to find out more about their work.



Wan Lai Kuen, Annie, 'Lost in Daily Life (3)', 2017, relief print, paper, 56 x 76 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

1. Annie Wan Lai Kuen

Annie Wan Lai Kuen (b. 1961) is a contemporary ceramic artist. Ceramic moulding is the key technique that she employs in her work to replicate everyday objects with clay. Similarly, for this show, she first uses clay to emboss the object to form a plate, and then impresses the clay plate onto paper to create her prints. Speaking about her approach to printmaking through moulding and reproduction, the artist says:

The moulding retains the function of 'remembering' or recording a memory in its shape. I take my subject matter everyday objects and transform them into beautiful objects injected with meaning. The ceramic moulds function in some way like a photograph, but unlike a photography, which only reproduces a two-dimensional image of the original, the mould has the material quality. It also leaves a blank space for emotion and imagination.

Her works have been included in collections locally and internationally, such as at the Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong; New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum, Taiwan; and Burger Collection, Switzerland.



Lam Tung Pang, 'Land Escape (23)', 2013, acrylics and charcoal on plywood, 110 x 100 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

2. Lam Tung Pang

Lam Tung Pang (b. 1978) is a painter. As one of the founding members of the Fotanian art movement in Hong Kong, he paints in the style of contemporary Chinese landscapes. In this show, he compares the image "directly drawn" with that of "indirectly printed", examining the intimate relationship between the plate and image imprinted.

Speaking about his process, the artist says:

I do not really do printmaking at any stage of my practice. I start as a painter. What makes me interested in printmaking is the indirect methods of applying lines and colours. The method I used in this show is to transfer charcoal powder (or soft pastel) directly from one piece of paper to another. I also used the computer to trace the drawing I did to prepare for laser cutting. It's a combination of the traditional method with laser cut technology. What is important for me is to freely use both techniques. This time, I could see how the body and its mirror image formed one single work.

His works have been exhibited widely at Espace Louis Vuitton, Hong Kong; Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai; Klein Sun Gallery, New York; Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco, San Francisco; Chinese Arts

Centre, Manchester, UK; **Tate Modern**, London; Royal College of Art, London, and included in collections such as **M+ Museum**, Hong Kong; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; **K11 Art Foundation**, Shanghai; and Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, Germany.



Chow Chun Fai, 'Supper at Emmaus', 2014, photo installation, 142.4 x 177.8 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.



Chow Chun Fai, 2016, a self-portrait made with optical device on a metal plate coated with black anti-corrosion etching, 25.5 x 18 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

3. Chow Chun Fai

Chow Chun Fai (b.1980) is known for his paintings and photo installations, which reference stills from movies as a critique to the socio-political issues in Hong Kong. In this exhibition, his self-portrait etchings are created with the

use of optical devices with anti-corrosion coating in different colours and materials. It is based on his research into Rembrandt's self-portraits and he tries to retrace his process. The artist comments on the role of technology in his experimental approach:

Computer and the Internet are now widely used today. When I studied art I used to go to the library for researches. In this project, I have been doing research on how Rembrandt used secret optical devices for his self-portraits. Most of these self-portrait etchings were made in his younger age and I believe it is part of his experiment. Some historians believe he used fault and concave mirrors and lens or some other optical devices like "camera obscura" and "lucida". Technological development affects the process of art-making, but more importantly, it affected the concept of what art is. In terms of materials, currently I am using water-based etching ink, as opposed to the oil based ink I used when I was studying.

His works have been exhibited widely including at Saatchi Gallery, London; Liverpool Biennial; and at Asia Society, Hong Kong.



Ling Chin Tang Parry, 2016, woodblock print: vocabulary card, relief print, 60 x 150 cm, Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

4. Parry Ling Chin Tang

Parry Ling Chin Tang is a Hong Kong-based sculptor who explores the relationship between the natural world and the process of sculpting. In this show, he executes plates from artificial wood to create a group of woodblock prints.

The artist talks about the paradoxical nature of the material of the woodblock prints thus:

Wood block relief print is an example to indicate the relationship between our knowledge and natural world. Technical limitation is one of reasons why people developed the wood block relief prints earlier than the intaglio. In addition, wood is easier to get than the copper and metal. However, nowadays, materials which are artificially coated with wood pattern and colour are used in many ways, such as print tiles, chopstick and wall paper. These materials have nothing to do with nature. On the contrary, it may potentially damage the environment. In this show, the blocks used to create my prints are made of fake wood. The image of prints symbolises the knowledge of tree in our different learning stages, such as the vocabulary card, the Chinese painting study template of tree, and the cell of tree tissue. We do know a lot about trees, but we don't observe them closely. When carving the block, I have not only found the sensational difference between the wood and the fake wood, but also experience the alternative "wood carving" experience. Can we claim the prints produced by blocks of fake wood as "wood block print"? It is such a paradox.



Chan Yuk Keung Kurt, 'The First Chant of Diamond Sutra', 2016, 3D printing, polyamide, 30 x 57 cm, Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

5. Kurt Chan Yuk Keung

Kurt Chan Yuk Keung (b. 1959) is a board member of **Para Site** and Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong. His works have been shown internationally, including at the 51st **Venice Biennale** and the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial. Currently, he is a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Commenting on the evolution of printmaking techniques, he says:

I learnt printmaking when I was studying in the Chinese University back in the 80's. The techniques I learnt were quite material sensitive and labor intensive, while in the show I have tried the digital process of image processing and making. In the past, my attention was more on craftsmanship and now is more on concept and meaning making. I have adopted 3D printing method this time, because I wanted to bridge the latest printing technology with the oldest one, woodblock relief printing. For this show, I transformed the image of Diamond Sutra (Duan Huang version) which was regarded as one of the earliest printed matter into sound. Then, I turned the sound into 3D relief image through digital processing. The resulting work is simply a translation of the oldest text by the latest technology.

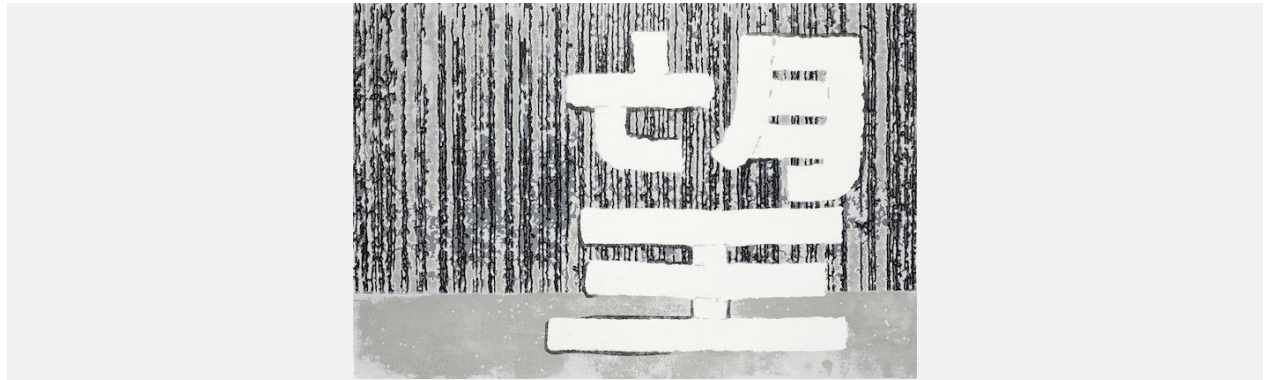


Wong Lai Yan, Cam, 'Risseldy, Rosseldy, Mow, Mow, Mow (1)', 2016, etching, archival paper, 30 x 30 cm each. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

6. Wong Lai Yan Cam

Wong Lai Yan Cam (b. 1983) reshapes the scene in which the birds attack people in the movie *The Birds* directed by Sir Alfred Hitchcock. Taking advantage of the repetition factor in printmaking to suspend the time of the scene, she invites audience to envisage the implication of constant repetition. Speaking about her works, she mentions: *Printmaking is a medium for me to tell my story. I start to experiment with it in a more technical way. Copper adds a delicate touch to my copper plate works in the show, whereas etching ink gives volume and shiny texture to paper.*

Her works have been shown locally and internationally, including at Gallery Exit, Hong Kong and Chinese Cultural Centre NSW, Sydney, Australia.



Lo Kwan Chi, 'Look, Relief print', 2016, printing ink and acrylic on rice paper, 56 x 84 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

7. Lo Kwan Chi

Lo Kwan Chi's works with ink, inspired by Hong Kong city streets. In this show, he takes printmaking as a medium to illustrate the road signs in Hong Kong that are often overlooked by people. By casting the audience's eye on the ordinary subjects, his art evokes their deeper appreciation of surroundings. He talks about printmaking as a medium:

Although printing is an ancient technology, it is evolving. When I studied printing course and became an artist at the beginning, my technique and procedure followed strictly as taught in academy. Since the operation of printing contains many steps and any minor mistake will result in failure, my focus was the details of control at that time in order to master, for me, this strange technology. One technique I used for these prints in this exhibition is laser cutting to prepare the board. It helps my previous creation of works with Chinese ink and water in some minor procedures. Taking into account the limitation of laser cutting and the process of relief printing, I chose the Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF), which is flat, with stable quality and available in large area, different from the general use of raw wood board or plastic sheet. These works are printed with printing oil colour but on Chinese rice paper, which relates to what I am familiar with when I produce my ink creation.



Chung Tai Fu, 'American Dream: Liberty', 2016, screen print, mineral pigment, 35 x 45 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

8. Chung Tai Fu

Chung Tai Fu (b. 1956) excels at printmaking and mineral pigment creation. He incorporates his recent techniques and knowledge in mineral pigment and gold leaf into his screen prints named after famous American sculptures. He talks about his works in the show:

I chose subject matter that are symbolic and transform them into complex concepts. In terms of material and technique, those in this show are different from what I usually use. I love the colours and layering of mineral pigment, as well as the elegance conveyed by gold leaf. However, it is difficult to apply them with the gravure technique that I normally use. Hence, I change it to silk-screen printing this time. I'm not completely satisfied with the result, especially with the way the mineral pigment is shown. Yet this experimental process contributes to two changes: I used to work in black and white, now it is colourful. Secondly, my works used to be about my inner feelings, now it is a reflection of the material world. The use of mineral pigment on screen print greatly increased the versatility in the printing process.



Tse Yim-On, 'Wonderful World (1974-2)', 2016, relief print, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sun Museum.

9. Tse Yim-On

Tse Yim-On (b. 1974) is a painter that believes in aura in craftsmanship. In order to retain the human touch in his works in this show, he uses the handmade approach in creating the print and the stencil mould. Speaking about the intersection between painting and printmaking, he remarks:

I always make use of the theories and techniques of printmaking to create my paintings, such as the theory of position-setting, color layers arrangement from silkscreen, and sometimes using stencil mould to reduce the effort. But such works painted with indirect painting methods can only be categorized as monoprint, as they cannot fulfill the printmaking definition, i.e. at least 80% similarity among editions. As a result, in this exhibition, I tried to construct the acrylic paintings with the method of block print and stencil, and carefully control the position-setting, and aimed to create the "at least 80%similarity among editions" paintings.

Valencia Tong
