

Joyce Ho, Poklong Anading, Filippo Sciascia,
Haiyang Wang, Mak Ying Tung 2

We Didn't Mean To Break It
(But It's Ok, We Can Fix It)

June 27 – September 14, 2019

(The gallery will be on annual leave August 1st-26th)

We Didn't Mean To Break It, (But It's Ok, We Can Fix It) gathers works by five artists living in Asia whose practices are oblique but incisive responses to the observations they make of their social, cultural, and/or political environments. Besides being relatively close, geographically (Asia at large), what essentially brings these works together is the faculty of these artists to boldly transform personal impressions into complex, yet visually exhilarating languages. Their work echoes contemporary universal truths, such as the effects of rampant urbanisation, the vanishing of local heritage, and our human propensity to respond to these via escapism and dream-like clichés. Each one of these artists creates images in response to their immediate surroundings in a range of mediums spanning from video, sculpture, installation, to object and painting. Their outputs are personal and meaningful to them, but they are also available to be invested by the audience for ultimately, these narratives, landscapes, and concerns, aren't so far away from our general human condition.

Joyce Ho (b. 1983) is an artist based in Taiwan (Taipei) with a background in theatre and scriptwriting. She typically doesn't use only one medium, rather choosing the appropriate form according to her initial concepts. She works in as varied disciplines as video, performance, sculpture, installation, and painting. One of the recurrent themes in her practice is the idea of slowing down, probably in reaction to the acceleration we feel in our contemporary lives. She creates ruptures in time, where she invites the audience to pause and follow simple instructions. By putting our attention on simple staged actions, either by watching or participating, we are invited to break our gaze and automated mechanisms. For example, in *Overexposed Memory* (2015) a two-minute video where Ho's performer alter-ego (she often works with the same performer for live and screened works) squeezes and bytes into pieces of vegetables and fruits. The accompanying soundtrack, at odds but also strangely in synch with the action on-screen, is reminiscent of plastic rustling, liquid simmering, and even stir-fry. This video exemplifies the process of deceleration through a seductive and time-based narrative. Its saturated colours and unsettling soundtrack trigger us to zoom-in on only one or two of our senses, with both pleasure and discomfort. Other works include her book covers series, where she paints over the covers of novels she has read. These become ornate hybrid personal objects, full of the relationship the artist developed with the contents, but also with the book-object itself. On show are one piece that comes from Ho reading Orson Welles's "1984", and another, "The Metamorphoses" by the Roman poet Ovid.

Another artist in the show who uses slowing down as a technique is **Poklong Anading** (b. 1975). Anading is a multi-disciplinary artist from the Philippines, based in Manila. He is a city flâneur who often walks for hours on end in Metropolitan Manila (an urban area that alone is

home to nearly 13 million people). Anading focuses on the physical marks and all the minutiae at play in the outdoor everyday life of this Southeast Asian metropolis. From his strolls he brings back (as if he went mushroom hunting) absurd and waste materials. Through patient and intuitive handling, he then processes them into forms-objects. One of the series he is best known for, is the mirrored stainless steel construction scaffoldings *Homage to Homage*. He creates these from real found objects, makeshift street scaffoldings, that Anading casts and covers with mirrored stainless steel. His vocabulary is somewhere in between him absorbing images and gestures from the streets, and him reflecting them back through the works. Beside the walks he sometimes uses his own body, looking through his fists, scaling his environment to a palatable human size. An example of shapes that echo his hands is found in his *Dragon Kite* series, a series of sculptural constructions made of charcoal and gold on wooden panels, of which one is on show here. The *Dragon Kite* pieces come from the materials used to cover and measure the scaffoldings before they are covered with the mirror finish. Anading often reuses and recycles materials, inspired by the Japanese golden joinery art of kintsugi, to which he gives his own interpretation. Anading's work regularly loops back to its own source, by revisiting the signals that inspired a piece in the first place, and integrating more of what he calls: "glitches in the system" that surround him in the streets.

Today there is a constant flux of images at our fingertips in addition to those from our surroundings. Representing reality and its shifts, while using imaging produced by new technologies, is one of the lines of work of **Filippo Sciascia** (b. 1972), an Italian artist based in Bali, Indonesia, since 1997. He describes himself as absorbing images constantly, like a sponge. His work integrates photography and found objects, sculptural and painted subjects, opposing contemporary and archaeological materials. Sciascia influences come from art history at large, from the Egyptians to Duchamp, and the Venetian to Cy Twombly. He carries an awareness of the classical composition and architectural canons and Renaissance's sophisticated finishes. But his work is nevertheless constantly contemporary, as new data and experiences enter his palette naturally. The connections he creates between images and objects happen overtime. Some of his works come together instantly, while others fall into place only years later. One such is on show: *Lumina Clorofilliana*, a hybrid sculpture consisting of a Balinese carved dragon head, made of volcanic lava stone and an industrial load-bearing post. The sculpture is believed to have come from a larger structure, a fountain canal or another type of drainage system. Conceptually, Sciascia references Western Middle Ages gargoyles, that were also used to ornate water drainage systems in Europe, at a time when engineering had to be ornamental as well as to functional. The post is used to support heavy-duty construction. Its assembly with the Balinese artefact grants him Baroque status. The piece creates tension between historical and industrial, the heavy and the light. In Bali, Sciascia found a natural catalyst to develop his own aesthetic and artistic research, in how Balinese tradition pays soft and dedicated attention to every detail of their environment, from a door carving to a wooden joint. Between the painterly and the technological, Sciascia assimilates tropical and Balinese visuals, often also exploring variations of light, from natural or technological source. His body of work includes sculptures, paintings, and installations with ready-made. Grounded in reality, it is yet touching upon the phantasmagoric.

Haiyang Wang (b. 1982) is a Chinese artist based in Beijing. He mostly works in painting, video, and animation, poking at his audience mischievously while subjecting himself to a dramatic and emotional creative process. In this exhibition he is presenting a series of formless homo-erotic skin-toned watercolours that reflect his grief on the recent destruction of the

village where his studio was in Beijing's outskirts. In the drawings, we can make out forms and bodies, poignantly merging and separating. Nakedness and vulnerability seem to be one of the potent messages beyond the skilled work of the brush. Accompanying this series is *The City of Dionysus* (2018), a comic dramatic video drawing from his childhood memories of a death tale that had much impact on him. It tells the story of an elderly woman whose dead body was discovered in her apartment only after it was decayed. The video interweaves sexual imagery and animation, as well as real shootings of the artist's studio demolition. Haiyang Wang's work often acknowledges the human instincts of life and death, and the cycling rhythms of desire. He uses blue walls as a personal signature to exhibit his works, a nod to art history and Yves Klein's blue perhaps. Most probably a way to control some of the context, in which his colourful investigations are shown, and to protect their fragile contents in their state of nearly abandonment. Wang has undergone several surgical procedures in the recent years, that had him lay in a hospital bed for months on end. While incapacitating, this experience brought more vividly subjects of the Eros and Thanatos into his practice, as well as strong consciousness about our human body, inhibitions, restrains, and impulses.

Mak Ying Tung 2 (b. 1989; the addition of the 2 next to her name is a Feng Shui recommendation for the year 2019. Feng Shui is a tradition in Hong Kong. People follow it rather naturally), is an artist born and raised in Hong Kong, who often works in installation, video, sculpture, and performative stunts. Her work draws from humour and sarcastic observations of everyday life, often directly inspired from her Hong Kong surroundings, anxiety about her future, and mundane observations (and apparently Feng Shui). She is known to divert common objects as a trickster would, while genuinely reaching to capture the emotional tensions that come from living our personal and professional lives in modern society. For this exhibition, she presents works that show her investigation into hyperreality. She describes it as: "the inability of our consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality", and ponders about the interest people have to escape via fabricated images. She applies dream-like landscape visuals of paradise beaches and sunsets on a shower curtain, a bathmat, and a towel. In this bathroom context she points at the irony of our human desire that pushes us to surround ourselves with these idealised landscapes, while we willingly ignore that they are forged ones. In our technologically advanced postmodern societies, Ying Tung gently mocks our habits and inconsistencies, and while doing so, the artist intends to make sense of her own existence.

Gathered in this Lisbon exhibition, these Asia-based artists reveal artistic attitudes that ready or not, comfortable or not, choose to thrive inside the cracks of life experiences. Through their own perceptions and thanks to the nuances of their geographical vantage points, they bring a diversity of artistic propositions that have a certain courage of personal opinions as common ground. The way they actively engage with their environment, their inner aesthetic interpretations, and life in general, are at once formally satisfying and emotionally inspiring.

I am grateful for the opportunity to bring these works together,

Cristina Sanchez-Kozyrev