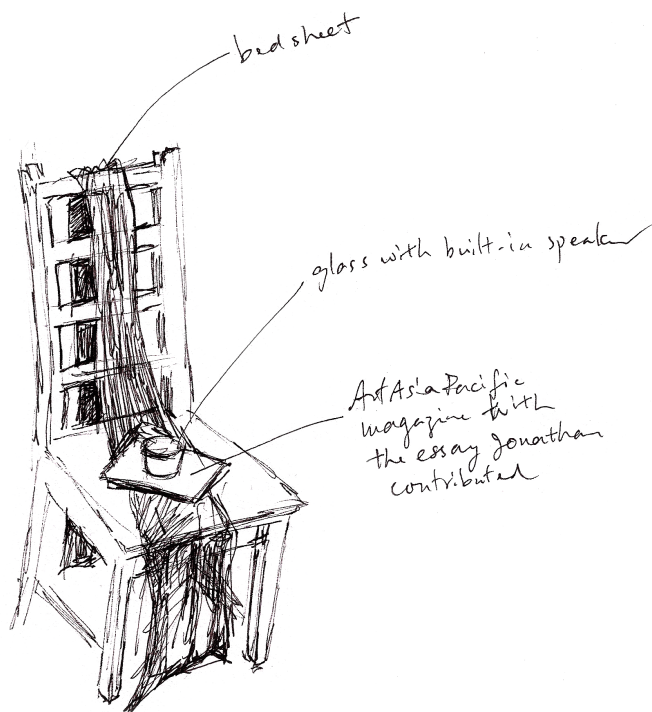


**leung
chi wo:
jonathan &
muragishi**



Jonathan - Kaustby - Knoppa - (glass)

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International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP)

Leung Chi Wo:
Jonathan & Muragishi

February 13 - March 15, 2013

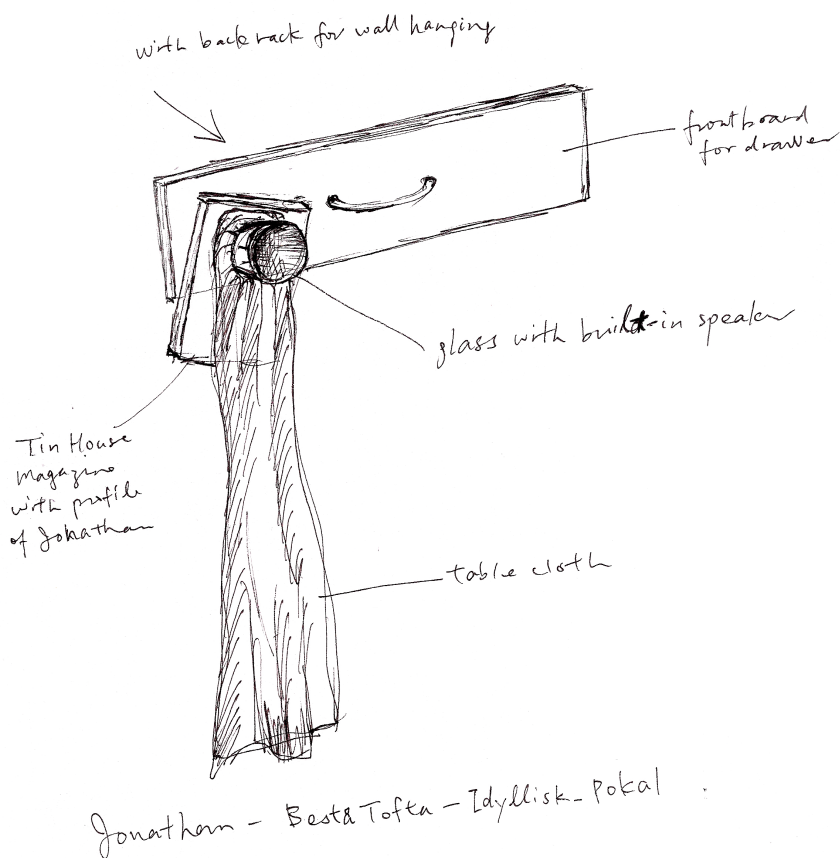
Foreward

This publication accompanies the exhibition Leung Chi Wo: *Jonathan & Muragishi*. Leung Chi Wo was the first resident at the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) from Hong Kong. His residency in 1999 was sponsored by the Asian Cultural Council (ACC), who has brought many remarkable artists and curators from Asia to ISCP in the past fifteen years.

ISCP has over 1,700 alumni from 60 countries and in 2012, we began an annual alum exhibition that offers a past ISCP resident the opportunity to present a solo exhibition in ISCP's Brooklyn gallery. This exhibition program aims to show work that has not previously been exhibited in New York City, furthering our mission to foster international exchange. Leung's ISCP exhibition re-articulates a project he began in 2011, and it is his first exhibition in New York City in over a decade. The included multi-layered works mine archives to tell the stories of a writer and artist who during their short lives worked in Hong Kong. Their voices are heard through speakers embedded into repurposed mass-produced furniture that reflects on the small-space living conditions in Hong Kong, which is also quite relevant to New York City.

I would like to thank Leung for kindly accepting our invitation to develop his project; June Yap for her precise catalog essay; Shinnie Kim, ISCP Programs Manager, who diligently organized all logistics for the exhibition and catalog; and Chelsea Haines, ISCP Fellow, who helped with initial research for the exhibition.

Kari Conte, Director of Programs and Exhibitions



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Jonathan & Muragishi (but Not Exactly)

June Yap

A photojournalist inadvertently captured while taking a shot himself, the heel of his trailing foot lifting as he leans in to document the arrest of a protestor. A Japanese housewife scratching her back innocently seized in the recording of a street scene for a publication about the Ota Ward region in the 1950s and 60s. In these two moments both figures do not notice their having been caught within the photographic frame. Their faces obscured, they would otherwise be footnotes in mass media history, if not for their reification in the series *He was lost yesterday and we found him today* (2010), a collaborative work by Leung Chi Wo and Sara Wong. The re-enactment and re-photographing of these nameless figures by Leung and Wong, provides us with a paradoxical discovery and acknowledgement, that leaves us still ignorant of these overlooked subjects, but that at least sensitizes us to our lack. The act of memory and its nature that recurs in Leung's practice — the process of its fading, the traces in recall, and the interminable search to grasp and retain experiences as they disappear into the past — are presented in poetic fragments within his works.

The production of art discourse and history, and the use of the archive as material for production in art, are entangled in contemporary practice, where the effect of discursive and historical production, of a linked network of images (and other sensory experiences), are disassembled and re-summoned to produce alternative aesthetics and to reveal secondary histories, while incorporating the present into a presumed future history. The archive however, in all its attempts at

¹ Archival image used in the newspaper article, "Return of the radicals," by Gary Cheung and Tanna Chong, *South China Morning Post*, January 10, 2010.

² Historical image in *1952-1967 Ota Ward*, [Tokyo: Santousya Publishing, 2008].

comprehensive inclusion, nevertheless is beset with omission, and the history that purports to inform the archive is often found wanting, either inadvertently or deliberately. For a series of site-specific installations commissioned by Public Art Hong Kong, Leung filtered a list of names of artists, culled from random exhibition catalogues and invitation cards found in the Hong Kong Arts Centre and other institutions, through an internet search to single out those who had rarely been heard of in the past decade. Armed with this whittled down list, he approached artists, curators and gallerists to piece together their knowledge and memories of these figures and their practices. The resulting installation is presented in video interviews and images of these recollected artists upon the facade of the cultural center, and is as much a recognition of these artists of the past, as it is a critique of institutional claims of the preservation of cultural production and memory. In many ways Leung's process of assembly of historical material with narrative, or narrative fragment, appears to assume the form of what Hal Foster described as 'archival art.' Such artworks, Foster suggests, are "as much preproduction as post-production: concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces (perhaps 'anarchival impulse' is the more appropriate phrase)... (and) often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects... that might offer points of departure again." The entangled concept of the archive and of history needs to be qualified in Leung's works. The subjects within Leung's 'archive' of exhibition materials (in the expanded notion that is the contemporary archive) are clearly of historical character, and to an extent his attempt at retrieval of the memories of the artistic community possibly contributes to a historical archive of these 'misplaced' artists. However, Leung's attempt is not a historiographic one. Leung hints at this in his title, hesitating

³ Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October*, no. 110, [Fall 2004]: 144.

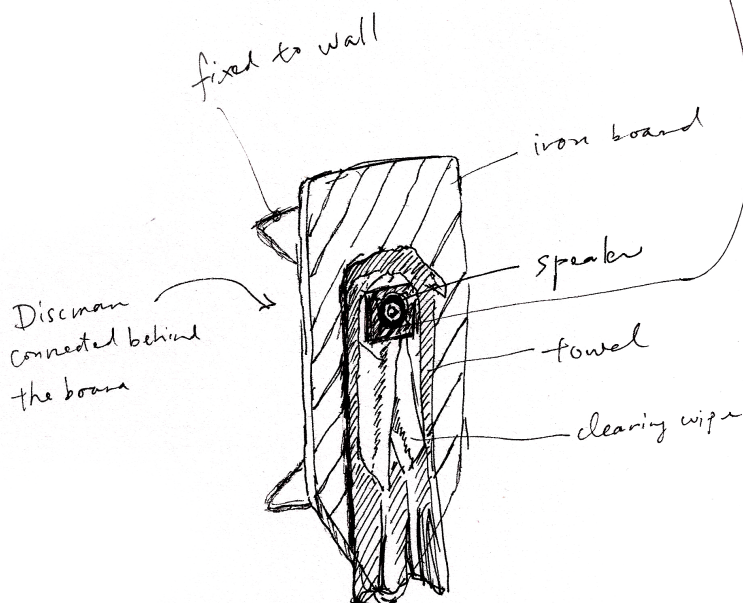
to ascribe certainty, repeating the phrase ‘but Not Exactly,’ though also as part his oblique critique in its failure to summon back these figures. Rather Leung’s subject is the historical subject itself, and a reflection upon the sublimated practice of historicization within contemporary art (and its art world).

In this instance, he turns our attention to two figures well-known to the art world: Jonathan Napack (1967-2007) and Hiroaki Muragishi 村岸宏昭 (1984-2006). Napack was a correspondent for The Art Newspaper and an official representative of Art Basel. While fluently cosmopolitan, Napack’s reputation in his final years was most recognized within the Asian art scene, in particular his familiarity of contemporary Chinese art and amongst its artists. Muragishi was a self-taught musician and artist, who produced experimental music and multi-media. He is vividly captured in Singaporean filmmaker Royston Tan’s short film, *Monkeylove*, dressed-up as a monkey searching for his heart that had been stolen by someone whom he had encountered by chance, and whom he only vaguely recalls. Both Napack and Muragishi passed away unexpectedly, and in Leung’s work they re-appear in a haunting aural presence. The 2013 installation, *Jonathan & Muragishi*, traces back to Leung’s earlier series entitled *Domestica Invisible*, that began in 2004 on domestic spaces, its title a play on the notion of sensual experience that is produced in the act of suggestion found in erotica. A photographic series with short narrative accompaniments about the adaptations one makes to one’s private space — such as in the customized use of objects and niches — provides intimate glimpses into the lives of others, that in turn reminds us of our own such idiosyncratic remodelling, producing a sense of titillating but uneasy self-consciousness and identification. At the

⁴ In three site-specific installations in the Hong Kong Arts Centre, *Untitled (Names to Recall Memory but Not Exactly/ Drawing from Memory but Not Exactly/ Words about Memories but Not Exactly*, 2012).

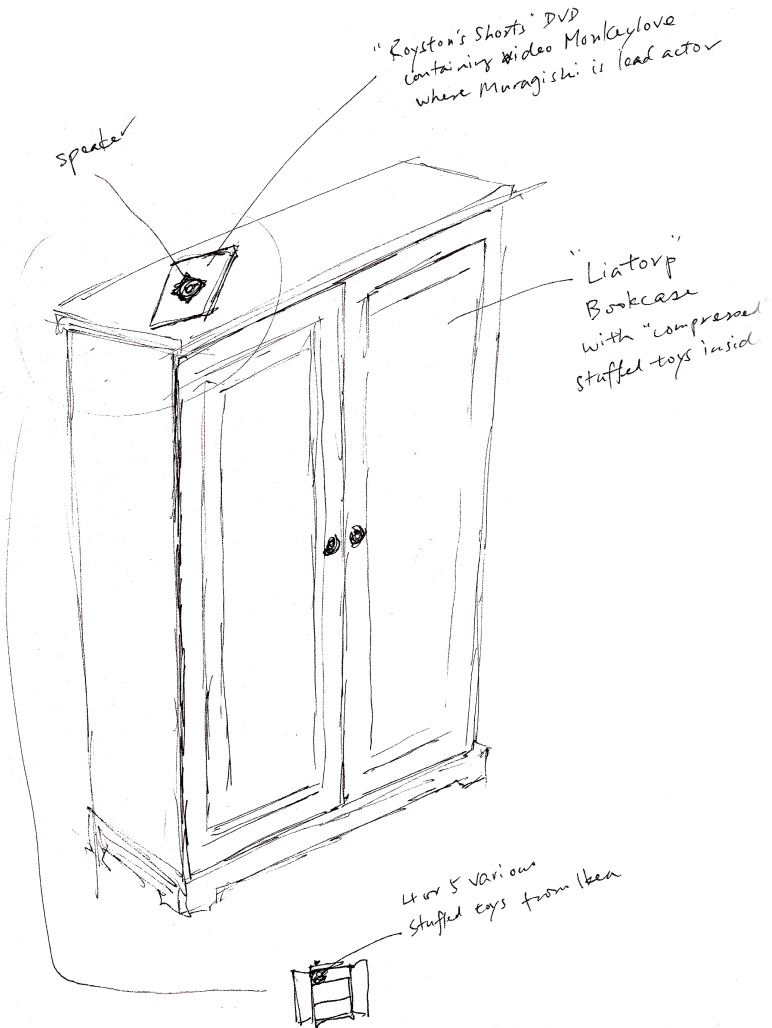
⁵ *Monkeylove* (2005), directed by Royston Tan, starring Royston Tan and Hiroaki Muragishi, Japanese with English subtitles, produced by Zhao Wei Films, in *Royston’s Shorts*, Asian Film Archive (2006).

CD with case "Gones"
that voice of Muragishi
was recorded



Muragishi - Jäll - Fräjen - Tekla

10/1/2013



12/10/1/2013

Sketch for Liatorp-Gosig Golden-Gosig Kanin-Gosig Vovven-Klappar-Vandring Hare-Muragishi, 2013, Pen on paper, 13 7/8 x 10 1/2 in.

same time, the series also demonstrates how such intimate spaces become infused with its inhabitant. Leung's use of IKEA furniture as installation material (and titles) appears double-edged, its ubiquity both critique and eliciting common identification, but also in its pliability through Leung's moulding by assembly, a certain uniqueness is actually wrought. In another work, *Plymouth* (2006), comprising of audio narratives also for the same series, Leung embeds speakers into commonly found tableware. Besides their domestic function and feature, Leung's use of these otherwise banal objects is of note, particularly in relation to Napack and Muragishi, in how these inanimate forms are then brought to life by the work's aural aspect. The voices of Napack and Muragishi describe their personal spaces, and in the process transform an apparently ordinary account of spatial relationship — in part due to their absence — into a triangulation of the individuals as subject. Supplementing these self-conscious accounts are their contributions to the art world, and points to the traces they have left behind — Napack's essay for *Art Asia Pacific* in 2007⁶ and his profile of Chinese writer Mian Mian in the magazine *Tin House*⁷, as well as the film by Tan starring Muragishi — an invocation of presence that the moribund photographic representation (our contemporary vanitas) would not achieve. Leung's use of sound in his interpretation of space emerges in earlier works related to the *Domestica Invisible* series. In *Open Home* (2007)⁸ — a sound installation of collated monologues of residents in Sapporo about their living spaces, and in *Depot of Disappearance* (2009)⁹ — about memories of the Viennese cultural center 'Depot' (1994-2001), it is not merely the aggregation of voices (the aural archive) that is significant, but its playback. Duration that the presentation of the oral narrative requires, introduces an aspect of time and its passing, that in layering a certain

⁶ Jonathan Napack, "Museum Fever Breaks Out in China," *Art Asia Pacific*, Issue No.56 [Nov/Dec 2007]: 56-57.

⁷ Jonathan Napack, "Cruel Cities: Interview with Mian Mian," *Tin House*, Vol. 1, No. 3 [Winter, 1999]:15-25.

⁸ Muragishi's voice in Tan's film is also sampled in the track *Missing* by Rennie Gomes in the album, *Fade to Black* (2006).

⁹ *Open Home* (2007) was presented at the private residence of Jaspar Lau Kin Wah, also known as *mMK* (mini-Museum von Kaspar), and also highlights Leung's deliberate use of site in his sound works.

poignancy, intensifies the narrative.

Leung's experiments with the aural presence of Napack and Muragishi began in 2011, with *Voices Lapsed* (2011), an installation of four armchairs with speakers embedded in their headrests. Viewers/listeners in this instance were brought into personal connection with the two figures whose voices would float unimpeded into their ears as they sat quite comfortably. With the added visual elements in this installation, the work may be read as commemorative of two individuals who have had significant impact in the cultural scene. Yet, unlike the earlier *Domestica Invisible* series, it is more than subjective memory and the act of recall that is evoked. In Foster's reflection on the archive, he suggests that archival art "proposes new orders of affective association," referring to relationships found in the assembly of archival elements, elaboration of the found, samplings, and associations among the "fragmentary and the fungible." While Leung's 'archival' practice is not quite about the associations that Foster alludes to, herein is a significant character of Leung's work and his practice. The fact is, Leung was neither personally close to Napack nor Muragishi. Their paths had crossed, their lives perhaps minutely changed in the process, and then they were gone. Brian Massumi describes 'affect' as 'intensity,' the rather elusive 'propriocepted viscosity,' being "a state of passional suspension" that occurs before response or conscious recognition. Affect, or the experience of this intensity, is essentially of incipience, and it is here that Leung's work operates. Undoubtedly in introducing Napack's and Muragishi's presence, one would either have the opportunity to 'know' or to remember them, an introduction that the act of 'archive' by object and sound facilitates. However it is the

¹⁰ Foster continues, "even as it also registers the difficult, at times absurdity of doing so." [Hal Foster, 2006]: 145.

¹¹ Ibid., 143-144.

¹² Massumi, Brian, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* [Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002]: 58-61.

¹³ Brian Massumi, "Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique*, No. 31, The Politics of Systems and Environments, Part II, [Autumn 1995]: 92.

combination of these two in a (literally) '*virtual*' and '*synaesthetic*' form of assembled object and voice, that the intensity of these absent individuals is produced and experienced.

Memory may be the beginning of Leung's works, but it is in the unconscious process inherent in experiencing, remembering as well as forgetting, that their persuasiveness lie. In his treatise on forgetting, Paul Ricoeur reminds us of the relationship between remembrance and forgetting. Describing the latter, he underlines the significance of the "passive persistence of first impressions (where) an event has struck us, touched us, affected us, and the affective mark remains in our mind." It is not the comprehensiveness aspired by the archival process of accumulation, that we begin to know and remember one another. Instead it is intensity of the moment: of the lift of a foot, the curl of an arm, the tone of a voice, and a turn of phrase — and these are the coy yet luminous traces that Leung presents to us.

¹⁴ Ibid., 96.

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer (trans.) [Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004], 427.

Leung Chi Wo (born 1968, Hong Kong) graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 2001, his site-specific project was exhibited in the first Hong Kong pavilion of the Venice Biennale. His recent exhibitions include the Busan Biennale (2006), Guangzhou Triennial (2008), *Lights Out* at Museu da Imagem e do Som, São Paulo (2008), *Depot of Disappearance* at quartier21/MuseumsQuartier, Vienna (2009) and *No Soul For Sale* at Tate Modern, London (2010). Leung Chi Wo co-founded Para/Site Art Space in 1996. He is currently an Assistant Professor of the School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong.

June Yap is an independent curator, previously Deputy Director and Curator of the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, and curator at the Singapore Art Museum. Selected curatorial projects include *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* as part of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative; *The Cloud of Unknowing* at the 54th Venice Biennale with artist Ho Tzu Nyen, Italy; the video programme *You and I, We've Never Been So Far Apart: Works from Asia* for VideoZone5 for the Center for Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv, Israel; *The Future of Exhibition: It Feels Like I've Been Here Before* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore; *Das Paradies ist Anderswo / Paradise is Elsewhere* at Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Germany; and *Bound for Glory* with artist Wong Hoy Cheong at the National University of Singapore Museum.

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Text: June Yap

Director of Programs and Exhibitions: Kari Conte

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International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP)

1040 Metropolitan Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11211

USA

T: +1 718 387 2900 | F: +1 718 387 2966

www.iscp-nyc.org

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