

A – Y: Of ‘British Chinese’ Art

susan pui san lok

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of East London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2004

CONTENTS

4	Acknowledgements	
5	Abstract	
6	Introduction	(False Starts)
 <i>Writing (In Practice)</i>		
13	A – Y	YBBAACYRWBWA? Asian Flew B(B)Cs et al (Looking ‘West’, or North) (... Looking ‘East’, or South East) Managing Diversity Playing the Other We Are Not What We Are
38	Take Outs	How to Wave Flags Inglorious Food Service Not Included Assimulations (sic)
55	Outtakes	Cutting In Acting Out Setting Up Making Of Martial Art
77	Translators' Notes	Interrupted Transmission Pidgin, Pigeon Chinglish Pinyin Engrish Home

Interval

95 Cinema Interval

Practice (In Writing)

100 Back Words

Trails

Undoing

Dealing

Siting, Sightless

Return

120 Conclusion (Of Sorts, and Sorties)

122 Bibliography

131 Appendices

A. 'Anthony Key,' *Empire and I*, exhibition catalogue (London: Terra Incognita, 1999)

B, 'Staging / Translating: Surname Viet Given Name Nam,' *Third Text*, no.46, Spring 1999

C. 'Trinh T. Minh-ha: Cinema Interval,' *parallax*, no.19, 2001

D. 'Inglorious Food,' *Anthony Key*, exhibition catalogue (Bristol: Eddie Chambers, 2002)

E. A – Y,' *Third Text*, no.62, March 2003

F. 'Cruel/Loving Bodies,' *Cruel/Loving Bodies*, exhibition catalogue (Shanghai: Duolun Museum of Modern Art, 2004)

170 List of Illustrations

175 Illustrations

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to my supervisors, Gillian Elinor and Sonia Boyce, for extending their support over the (unexpectedly many) years since I began my doctoral research with Aavaa, the African and Asian Visual Artists Archive, a research unit of the School of Architecture and the Visual Arts at the University of East London, for which I was fortunate to have been HEFCE-funded. I would also like to thank the numerous artists, friends and peers between Britain, Hong Kong, and elsewhere, whose conversations, provocations, correspondences and friendships in the last decade have been greatly valued. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my family, especially my parents, my partner Julian, and our daughter P.Y., whose im/patience, insights, distraction, and humour, have gently encouraged this project towards its temporary closure.

Abstract

A – Y: Of 'British Chinese' Art takes as a point of departure the work of Lesley Sanderson, and her positionings within and between dominant and marginalised 'Black,' 'British,' 'Chinese,' and 'Asian' curatorial and discursive frames during the 1980s and 1990s, to consider the politics and im/possibility of naming 'British-Chinese-ness.' 'Take Outs' goes on to examine the central narrative of Chinese immigrants in Britain invoked by Anthony Key, Yeu-Lai Mo, and Mayling To, who draw on the motifs and mythologies of the takeaway, and the significations of flags, to engage contemporary discourses around 'Britishness' and 'Chineseness', migration, hybridity, cultural commodification and assimilation. 'Outtakes' looks then at the tactical postures and gestures staged by Sanderson, Mo, Erika Tan and To across a range of works, which deconstruct and play on the consumption of exoticised bodies ^{and} in _^across orientalist visual imagery and narratives, from the anthropological to the comic, the culinary to the cinematic. Whereas much of this work is 'mute', chapter four, 'Translators' Notes,' begins with a multi-vocal, multi-screened sound and video installation by Tan, going on to consider the politics and poetics of speaking and translating, the conflation of linguistic competence with cultural and ethnic 'authenticity,' notions of diaspora and 'home,' and the inevitability of 'pidgin' languages and cultures. These essays seek to identify various historical and cultural contexts to inform the coincident and divergent aesthetic strategies and thematic concerns of a number of peer practices, among them my own, which is discussed in the final chapter, 'Back Words.' Attempting to locate myself and my writing/practice obliquely, by proxy, in proximity to others, I begin with the premise that our commonality is underpinned less by an indubitable, unwavering 'Chineseness' (or for that matter, 'Britishness'), than a desire to subvert such a notion: to assume instead its complex fabrications and ultimate instability.

Introduction (False Starts)

In October 1998, I was asked to speak at a seminar for no more than ten minutes on the subject – a question – of ‘A New Vocabulary for Chinese Arts?’¹ I wondered what I could say in such a short space of time that might begin to convey some of the complexity of the issues I believed to inhere in the question, provoked by the very terms of its formulation. Mindful also of the uncertain authority that might be vested simply in my being seated before an audience (contingent to the variable valorisations of artists’ and writers’ words), as well as the doubt that might accompany my as yet mute and unqualified ‘Chinese-ness’ (to be affirmed a demonstration of linguistic fluency and place of birth), I sought to undermine the former and nurture the latter. Thinking about the performativity of public speaking, and tactics towards the unsettling of designations and positionings (among them ‘Chinese’/‘non-Chinese’, artist/academic), I responded with the following text:

10 minutes / 600 seconds
3 parts: a beginning, again and again

ticked off:
small boxes, large head and limbs
will too tall, skin too thick – a tight squeeze;
too many and not enough names
need to borrow some fingers for pies
big boots for the doors, feet for boats
and your ears

tricks:
running rings around names like so many chairs, ready to occupy any
sometimes (by choice or otherwise) seemingly left with none
the invitation / demand to identify yourself
– a game of Statu(e)s: Knowing When To Appear Silent And Still.

turning holes on their sides

treading through, wearing down
or unravelling the weave of my skin
I could thread through and wear my inside out (an other layer)
my out-side on (around my neck)
show off my square-hole-beads
a trinket, charm – bound to become me?

skipping through the Identity parade
can't say I don't trip up
now and again, the charm-bind undone
(w)hole words that caught me / cut me up

¹ ‘A New Vocabulary for Chinese Arts?’ The Place, London, 3 October 1998; organised by the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, BCAA (British Chinese Artists’ Association) and BiMa Dance Company, as part of ‘Re: Orient,’ a season of contemporary dance hosted by The Place.

Introduction (False Starts)

now cut up by me

me my skin my thread and border – line
now an edge
now a blade

the real thing: an un-simple status, among hyphens
removed from beginnings and roots
(only ever imagined, always only a point, a stop-gap, a rest)

beginning again (yet another departure)
I am (for the sake of a label, an improper place)
a pain in the neck
not cut-out at all

all copy, all fake
made-up and worn by language, ill-fitting
dis-ownership, my dis-position

proposition:
the im/possibility of new words
to talk about, serve, on behalf of, for

this object
this catch-all umbrella
a dead weight in capitals
doubts, differences quashed
sitting un/comfortably, sweating

Chinese by degrees of tenuity
a finite entity, wing-less
resisting history, gravity

what of particulars?
how you / she / he plays in / off languages
citing and siting your stories with hers
with tongues, mine and his

not replacing, not looking for better
more accurate, adequate, proper
forget rules and rulers for fixing and measuring
but transform by un-naming
make strange, open up
let slip, slide off-balance
re-orient, and again

new vocal-ities
turn sideways and speak
with one foot in, one out
hover over the 'for' in the quest-proposition
and consider a pose

'for': pre-position
a before and not-yet location
inhale at this hyphen-threshold and ask
who speaks, where from and how?

Introduction (False Starts)

drop the 'r'
read backwards from 'for' to 'of'
swap still forms and shoe-horns
for processes, live-ness, flux

a square of light
desire and pleasure of meaning
translation, awkward movements of
learning to gain from the losses

this product – 'Chinese' – when will it expire?
a lower case 'c' to displace the fixed?
from 'pre-script' – to 'de-script'? with senses:
(*throw*) into motion, direction

becoming

The ideas, themes, images, and strategies that shape this brief paper also shape this thesis. I introduce it with a 'false start,' stalling for time, to point to a necessarily staggered – and disputable – 'beginning'; speaking in answer to a question in turn framed by an event whose name continues to resonate: 'Re: Orient' – the mythical subject at stake, a re-determining of location, position, direction, and tactics. Much of the writing that follows has been developed from such more or less poetic-essayistic responses to particular discussions and contexts of debate. I say this to foreground the concurrence of discursive frameworks to which this trajectory, 'A – Y', of so-called 'British Chinese' art, is necessarily contingent; and to emphasise (and warn) that these circuitous navigations – a tangle of routes, not roots – are not attempts to gain entry to a 'globalised' art historical "hierarchy of domains of knowledge and of positions" distinguished by ethnic flavour,² but depart and digress from contested fictions that exceed inventories and classifications, ventured as preambles through cultural, culinary, cinematic and linguistic landscapes at turns amorphous and seemingly immutable, provocations towards 'situated' dialogues and knowledges,³ rather than ruminations in a void.

That said, this project was initially conceived as an attempt to address what I perceived very much to be a void, a gap or gaps within dominant and marginalised narratives of contemporary art practices. In 1997, offered the opportunity to work with Aavaa, the African and Asian Visual Artists Archive housed at the University of East London, I looked immediately to the scant ephemera and occasional catalogue on work by contemporary 'Chinese' and (East) 'Asian' artists in the West, in part to confirm anticipated absences, while suspicious of the terms that marked them. As a young artist, writer, and second-generation British-born woman of Hong Kong-Chinese immigrants, with a partner whose dubious

² Donald Preziosi, 'Grasping the World: Conceptualizing Ethics After Aesthetics,' keynote paper presented at the conference, 'Globalising Art, Architecture and Design History?' Goodenough College, London, 19 September 2003, www.glaadh.ac.uk

³ "Situated knowledge is knowledge that surrenders its global pretensions, its reach being limited to its *loci* and conditions of emergence..." Preziosi, *ibid.*, referring to Wlad Godzich's 'Foreward' to Michel

Introduction (False Starts)

ethnicity might be abbreviated as 'English-Italian,' and a daughter for whom I already find myself checking boxes marked 'other,' my investments in notions of 'Chineseness,' 'Britishness,' and the issues around identity, history, culture, and language that habitually follow, are perhaps evident, even expected (distastefully and unfashionably perhaps, for some). The questions that motivated my research were: How to position, situate and locate myself or selves, to venture 'our' selves, if at all? When, how and by whom might a collective 'we' be designated, or indeed dissipated? As 'diversity fatigue' threatens to incapacitate as much as 'empower,' how to engage the 'expected' unexpectedly, to interrogate and enact 'difference' differently, in terms other than the celebratory, exotic or shocking? How to exercise – to employ, perform, trouble and pain – yet evade pre-empted labels, to avoid reduction to what might be called 'canned identity' – the pre-conceived images and soundtracks of genericised cultures and ethnicities playing varieties of seemingly innocuous, ubiquitous multicultural (mall-ti-cultural?) muzak?

My approach has been to attempt to locate myself and my practice obliquely, by proxy, in proximity to others; to identify relevant historical and cultural contexts informing the coincident and divergent aesthetic strategies and thematic concerns of a number of peer practices, whose projects coalesce and diverge at various proximities to, and distances from, my own, and each other's. Looking for ways of speaking, gesturing, staging and translating, that challenge perceived 'gaps' without necessarily occupying them, that complicate designations and discursive formulations as minor or marginal, I read their works (and mine) against a colour-by-numbers diversity in which segments of a wheel / pie / quilt await filling or fluffing with the appropriate cultural / ethnic 'stuff'. The choice of artists and works discussed – Anthony Key, Yeu-Lai Mo, Lesley Sanderson, Erika Tan, and Mayling To – is reflective of a moment of concurrent if limited visibility, at a particular historical juncture, a result of our collective complicities and resistances to certain curatorial 'canning' practices. Sanderson aside (my first and only 'sighting' of a so-called 'British Chinese' artist as an undergraduate art student), we were all involved in a number of 'Chinese' group exhibitions in the mid-1990s. Getting together to co-curate and participate in 'numbersix' (TS2K, London, 1998), an attempt to counterpoint 'ethnicity-led' shows, we proposed a commonality underpinned less by an indubitable, unwavering 'Chineseness' (or for that matter, 'Britishness'), than a desire to subvert such a notion: to assume instead its complex fabrications and ultimate instability.

The first chapter, 'A – Y', takes as a point of departure the work of Lesley Sanderson, and her shifting positionings within and between 'Black,' 'British,' 'Chinese,' and 'Asian' curatorial and discursive frames during the 1980s and 1990s, to consider the politics and im/possibility of naming 'British-Chinese-ness.' Chapter two, 'Take Outs,' looks at the dominant narrative of Chinese immigrants in Britain as evoked in works by Anthony Key, Yeu-Lai Mo, and Mayling

Introduction (False Starts)

To, whose sculptural objects and installations draw on the motifs and mythologies or mores and lores of the takeaway, and the recurring emblem of the flag, to engage contemporary discourses around 'Britishness' and 'Chineseness', migration, hybridity, cultural commodification and assimilation. From the consumption of exoticised culture via food to the consumption of exoticised bodies in art and film, 'Outtakes' looks at the tactical postures and gestures staged by Sanderson, Mo, Erika Tan and To across a range of works, to deconstruct and play on orientalist visual imagery and narratives from the anthropological to the comic, the culinary to the cinematic. Playing out fantasies of subjugation and transcendence, fictions of authentic, unified otherness are displaced by fictions of ambiguous, ambivalent subject-others. Whereas much of this work is 'mute', chapter four takes a multi-vocal, multi-screened sound and video installation by Tan as point of departure. 'Translators' Notes' contemplates the politics and poetics of speaking and translating, the conflation of linguistic competence with cultural and ethnic 'authenticity,' notions of diaspora and 'home,' and the possibility and inevitability of 'pidgin' languages and cultures.

These four chapters fall under the heading 'Writing (In Practice)'; the fifth, called 'Back Words', comes under another, 'Practice (In Writing).' Writing as an instrumental and experimental mode of discourse approached not from an authoritative 'outside' or 'on' the subject at hand, but, acknowledging and inscribing my oscillations, always already intimately if sometimes ambiguously imbricated, as an "Inappropriate Other/Same," inside out and "outside in."⁴ Writing not 'on' but 'in' – within – a wider practice, I locate myself 'too close', for some, to others (– 'But what are you really, an artist or writer? How do you get a distance? Where do your true affinities lie?') If 'in practice' lends a stress to the process and pragmatics of writing, not only engaged and immersed 'in' but also 'as' practice, it also suggests a certain amateurishness, a lack of expertise, which appeals to me as a suggestion of an unfinished project, and of a double-ness, a double positioning or duplicity pertaining as much to my cultural as to my professional authenticity. 'Practice (In Writing)' might refer to writing as a mode or strategy of creative practice; or to the translation of practice into writing; or to writing as the (faux) guarantee or validation of practice.

Practice-writing, writing-practice: push-pulling, up-and-down, in oblique figures-of-eight (each trying for the 'upper hand', the privileged position), a mutual, uneven pursuit, whose coupled momentum swings the one about the other: before, behind, ahead; as, to and after. Writing not in place of (explaining away), but located or happening nearby or around, always with, most disorientating when it skates in close. If the inversion of terms and shift of parentheses between the two highlights the continuities between discursive strands inhabiting ostensibly separate spaces, the continuum is implied by encircling, and interruption by, an 'Interval.' This hyphen/un-haven dwells on and delves into the intervals – cinematic, critical and poetic –

⁴ Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Outside In, Inside Out,' *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991) pp.65-78.

Introduction (False Starts)

across the filmic and theoretical practice of Trinh T. Minh-ha, whose work so elegantly and movingly examines and performs the predicaments and challenges of not-quite-same-not-quite-other-ness.⁵ Slow-chasing, retracing and unwinding fabled Chinas or Vietnamese tales, dispatching with legitimacy and authority via the diasporic folding of temporalities, spatialities and narratives, the thematics and tactics of Trinh's work begin to find echoes here; my "detour" looks askance at the possible "semblance of harmony" that might have settled on the surface of this narrative, at the further "out of place or 'out there'"⁶ cross-readings and writings yet be endeavoured, and the paradigmatic excursions of writing in/as/and practice, ventured by Trinh.

In between-inside making, I posit and shun my writing-text; less 'voice-over', than 'voice-under,' immersed, submerged. Voicing, writing-under, not underwriting, not guaranteeing nor authorising, 'Back Words' looks backwards and backward – shy, hesitant, a tentative, broken, Chinglish translation-in-progress, post-ambles that talk back, speak back, and to, the objects/encounters and pathways of my own practice, in which the verbal winds in, out and along – transcribed, translated, here written, there spoken, sung, scripted and echoed. Exploring the difficult and heightened, temporary and temporal, relation between the making of work and its grasping (or not) with words, and the intermittent play and placing of text across a disparate 'pidgin' practice at turns visual, spatial, filmic, sonic, poetic and performative – a tactical practice of mis/naming, dis/locating, de/territorialising, and translating – I seek 'distance' as neither aim nor possibility. Risking closure by words that cannot keep up, that go elsewhere, seeking different routes out, in and back, always close by, always already late – a translatative lag – I attempt nonetheless to bear in mind and bear out the "infinite relation" between word and image; and shoot for shadowy contents.⁷

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Beware of Wolf Intervals,' in Trinh, *Cinema Interval* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp.xi - xiv.

⁷ Ibid., p.xi.

Writing (In Practice)

A to Y (Entries for an Inventionry of Dented 'I's)¹

Y(B)B(AA)C(YRWBW/M)A---?

Why be a 'Y(B)B(AA)C(YRWBW/M)A---?' Somewhere inside or between, attempting to enter / disrupt / bypass partitioned terrains, we might (fail to) identify those subjects struggling or juggling, to differing degrees, with or against some such awkward, ill-tasting mouthful of a Name-In-Capitals (or no caps?) as, 'Young (Black) British (Anglo Asian) Chinese (Yellow Red White and Blue Wo/Man) Artist.' An over-sized kite-mark of identity² – a stamp of approval validating the object's attainment of often contradictory criteria, authenticating the goods as 'good' (be they physical bodies, or the intangible labours, desires, and fears invested / inflicted therein and upon), confirming fidelity to the label on the box. A kite, a mark – a precarious toy of skins spun and sewn, stretched and pinned to a light frame of words and cast into short-tempered cross-currents; a thing that flies, trailing fraudulent letters, sign, stain and scar of a dishonest person, signature-seal of a subject untrue.

What is this untidy (upper or lower case?) name / category of "unfinished identities",³ 'leaking' its subject(s) left, right and centre, up, down and under?⁴ A random sequence compelling endless shifts and expansions? Cut up into manageable pieces – easier to get one's mouth around, easier to swallow – we might be able to discern some of the more familiar variations along the often invisibly gendered, colour-coded themes of nationality and ethnicity: 'Young British Artist,' 'Black British,' 'Anglo Asian,' 'Chinese Woman Artist'. We could abbreviate it, but the immediate acronym – YB(BAA)C(YRWBW/M)A? – is somewhat dysfunctional, clearly as much a twister for the tongue as the expanded designation it might displace.

Not outside the parentheses but in-between, the words 'British' and 'Chinese' (or 'chinese' and 'british') – the focus of the question? What she's getting at? Losing and regaining focus,

¹ Shorter versions of this chapter appear in *Third Text*, no.62, March 2003, and David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom and Sonia Boyce eds., *Shades of Black* (London: inIVA; North Carolina: Duke UP, 2004, forthcoming).

² "Kitemark *n.* An official kite-shaped mark on goods approved by the British Standards Institution; kite *n.* 1 a toy consisting of a light framework with thin material stretched over it, flown in the wind at the end of a long string. 2. any of various soaring birds of prey... 3. *Brit. slang* an aeroplane. 4. *slang* a fraudulent cheque, bill, or receipt... 6 *slang* a letter or note, esp. one that is illicit or surreptitious. 7 (in *pl.*) the highest sail of a ship, set only in a light wind. 8. *Archaic* a dishonest person, a sharper; mark *n.* 1 a trace, sign, stain, scar, etc., on a surface, face, page, etc. 2... a written or printed symbol... b a numerical or alphabetical award denoting excellence, conduct, proficiency, etc... 3...a sign or indication of quality, character, feeling, etc.... 4 a a sign, seal, etc., used for distinction or identification. b a cross etc. made in place of a signature by an illiterate person 5 a a target, object, goal, etc..." Delia Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 9th edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

³ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) p.1.

⁴ "Despite our desperate, eternal attempts to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak." Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989) p.94.

there is no thing to *get* – no object or condition to understand, possess, obtain, or contract – only something to get *at*, to hint at and taunt. How might we criticise, undermine, bully and nag⁵ at 'British' and 'Chinese' as signifiers in tandem, near-newly wed? The idea of a focal point eludes, deludes. 'Pivoting this imaginary centre,'⁶ another perspective reveals the point to be a line, a wave, a vocal dis/chord – sounding and silencing the speaking (now major, now minor) of 'British' and 'Chinese.' Mindful of forgetting – I am for getting no *thing*, no fixed object / event, but for remembering my / your partiality, my / your imbrication in the making / unmaking of (claims to) knowledges; the specificity of experiences and *ligature* of histories, languages, generations and cultures;⁷ between speech and silence, the trajectory and possibility of their mutual un/translatability in transit / transition, risking erasure under all-naming no-names. Whether speaking (of) a protracted / protracting '(Black) British (Anglo Asian) Chinese (Yellow Red White and Blue Wo/Man)ness,' or a contracted / contracting 'British Chinese-ness,' what, in each practice or tactic of naming, is at stake?⁸

Some of us, sharing like motifs though not, perhaps, like motives, may appear to be searching for the same, but are in fact looking for same-ness – homogeneity, fixity and unity. How to counter the risk of reading / hearing '-ness' as *an essence*, its acronymic 'condensation' as 'distillation' – the subject 'purified' – even as the name-chain refuses it? If upper case letters suggest Proper Names and generic representative types, each standing alone in a sequence of seemingly steadfast and stalwart natural/ised Monoliths, what happens if we divest them of their Capital(s), unpack and lower their cases, displace Property with impropriety? Made variable, capricious, as adjectives that name only in part, transitorily, that modify and describe, that *transform* the subject, and situate her / him erratically, emphatically *in process* – to think / speak / read / imagine '(black) british (anglo asian) chinese (yellow red white and blue wo/man) ness,' or '(blue anglo black) chinese (white asian yellow) british (red wo/man) ness,' or 'british born south eastern northern southern bred london based hong kong chinese english broken cantonese-ness' – may allow us to refer not to the permanently essential, but to the make-shifting provisional.

⁵ "Within the trajectory I am following then, modernism serves as the symbolic order which encompasses and defines all the activities I am concerned with, and the concept of nagging and its repetitive nature can be perceived as an intervention that takes place in relation to linear concepts of progress which serve as modernism's most fundamental informing values... the nagging, plaintive voice with its circular and repetitive qualities serves in some way to interrupt or disrupt or even slightly agitate the surface of modernism's commanding direction..." Irit Rogoff, 'Tiny Anguishes: Reflections on Nagging, Scholastic Embarrassment, and Feminist Art History,' *Differences*, 1992 vol.4, no.3, pp.38-65.

⁶ Bettina Aptheker's expression, "to pivot the center," is cited in Elsa Barkley Brown, 'African-American Women's Quilting: A framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History,' *Signs*, 1989 vol.14, no.4.

⁷ I use this term in a discussion of Trinh T. Minh-ha's work in 'Staging / Translating: *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*,' *Third Text*, no. 46, Spring 1999, pp.61-72.

⁸ The premium placed on youth deserves further discussion, but unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this paper.

As pivotal, provisional terms contingent to history and geography, they must throw and be thrown into motion, in tandem, in continua with / as the subject at stake.⁹ Played tactically, in/appropriately, as oxymoronic acronyms with meanings borne not in nor on the skin but as sometime adornments, accessories to performance, or crimes of fraudulence / inauthenticity, these are words to bear or bare tentatively, in speech-marks, for they can hook like burrs, and kite-mark you. *Akron* (end) *onoma* (name)¹⁰ – (end)names not to end with, nor articulate with finality an object or purpose, but rather – for *akron* also carries the meaning ‘tip’ – to lean towards, hint at, a subject-becoming, beginning-again.

*

Asian Flew

A dense configuration of lines make tangible the delicate creases and soft folds of a pair of wide trousers; abruptly emptied of volume, they fall barely delineated towards sandal-clad feet. From the same point but in converse rhythm, the edge of a just-visible flowery sarong skirt hanging loosely over bared feet acquires a sudden richness of tone and texture. Rectangles of colour interrupt upper and lower planes, their patterns monochromatically echoed in the fabrics of the clothing. On the former, a cartoon-like stereotype of a moustachioed coloniser sporting dark glasses and pith helmet repeats, while the latter picks out several blooms in bright, flat colours.

Feet point to concepts of travel, journeying and movement across land.¹¹ Respectively bare and shod, they might hastily be read as oppositional signs of primitivism and civilisation, the ‘he’ in Lesley Sanderson’s *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990) [Figs.1,2] representing the progressive masculine subject of exoticised narratives of colonialism, the unacknowledged ‘she’ an embodiment of supposedly backward feminine territories, orientalist and colonised.¹² Simultaneously present and absent, these figures occupy different spaces, are literally split; can the one come into visibility only at the cost the other? If it is ‘he’ who has undertaken the ‘fabulous’ – extraordinary and fictionalised – journeys to the subtropical climes inferred by their mode of dress, what and where is her part in the stories and their telling? Already relegated to a past tense, this temporal lapse adds an ambiguity to their relationship. Separated and subdivided within the same frame, yet nevertheless sharing a plane, a posture, an attitude, they appear to collude in their anonymity; the two are not so easily polarised. To what tall tales, what undisclosed, unreconciled narratives, fabulous and sedate, are we in turn invited, intruding upon or denied?

⁹ ‘*adjicere* *adject* – throw to, add, attribute...’ Thompson, ed. op.cit.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jane Beckett, ‘Displacements,’ in *These Colours Run* exhibition catalogue (Wrexham Library Arts Centre, 1994), p.14.

¹² Lesley Sanderson, *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990), pencil and acrylic on paper.

Between the “bold omissions and minute depictions” are mere hints of / at uncertain histories.¹³ Despite the intimacy – we are sat like children before adult feet – incommensurable distances prevail; proximity does not bring with it the truths and identities of strangers. Who is speaking? Who is spoken or spoken to? How to listen to and translate these silences? Scant biographical details gesture towards a narrative of identity as a deceptively straightforward unified and dualistic equation – ‘Malaysian-British’, ‘Chinese-English.’ However, simple consideration of the mere ordering of these terms (which should come first?) stirs questions of origins, ‘home’ and belonging into an unsteady brew of identities, nationalities and ethnicities. How do the untold stories of travel and migration of *He Took Fabulous Trips* relate to the axes of difference that constitute the artist’s brief biography and the narratives by which her work has been framed? How might they be negotiated in relation to shifting critical and curatorial frameworks that seek identification with the ‘Black Art’ of a dis/assembled eighties,¹⁴ the so-called ‘British Chinese’ art that began to emerge in the nineties, and the variable intersection of alternately dominant and marginalised ‘British’, feminist, and postcolonial agenda?

‘Black’ / ‘British’ / ‘Chinese’ – in print, at least, the terms alternate neatly, fairly and squarely between forward-slash swing-doors, though of course the meanings, histories, cultures and geographies evoked and disputed are not by any means even or discrete. In the 1980s, Sanderson’s inclusion in a number of so-called ‘Black Art’ shows in Britain,¹⁵ is suggestive of the historical strategic mobilisation of ‘Black,’ to cite Stuart Hall, “as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain” and of “provid[ing] the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities.”¹⁶ The confrontational stance and use of the artist’s own image in early pieces by Sanderson such as *Self-Portrait as a Chinky* (1984) [Fig.3] and *Fuck the British Movement* (1984),¹⁷ [Fig.4] are indicative of her strategic alignment, resistance and politicised artistic reflexivity as, in her own perception, “the only Chinese artist showing within the Black art movement.”¹⁸

¹³ Trinh T. Minh-ha, ‘Bold Omissions and Minute Depictions,’ in Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) pp.155 - 166.

¹⁴ A reference to the conference at which an early version of this chapter was presented. ‘Shades of Black: Assembling the Eighties,’ 19-22 April, 2001, Duke University, North Carolina, organised by Aavaa (the African and Asian Visual Artists Archive), University of East London.

¹⁵ Sanderson featured in ‘Black Art: Plotting the Course,’ 1988, Oldham Art Gallery and touring; ‘Fourx4,’ 1991, Harris Museum, Preston; and ‘History and Identity: Seven Painters’ (1991), Norwich Gallery and touring.

¹⁶ Stuart Hall, ‘New Ethnicities,’ in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), pp.441-449.

¹⁷ Lesley Sanderson, *Self-Portrait as a Chinky* (1984), oil on paper, and *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), pencil on paper.

¹⁸ “... the Chinese were placed in or on the margins of representation and were rarely the authors of their own representation. In Britain in the eighties, it was no coincidence that I started using the self-image at the same time that other young artists of colour were doing the same. The personal was seen as political and taking authorship of one’s own image seemed to me to be a quiet but powerful act capable of subtly subverting the patriarchal Western canon.” Lesley Sanderson, ‘Always At Odds – An

Fuck the British Movement, which simultaneously defaces the artist's image and that of the National Front, directly implicates the artist as an ambiguously aligned 'Black' / 'British' / 'Chinese' subject / other: British by education and nationality; English by name, northern English by accent; Chinese in appearance and, in part, ethnicity; Black (and feminist) in politics.¹⁹ Adopting a nationalist symbol yet poised confrontationally in anti-fascist defiance, Sanderson's androgynous look and impassive alliance with African and Asian communities targeted by violent, racist nationalists, are simultaneously at odds with the racial and sexualised stereotype of self-effacing, submissive Chinese. Complying neither with an historically exoticised orientalist femininity, nor with the post-Cold War image of an apolitical, assimilated "model minority" (if anything, invoking its fictional flipside – that of the devious, treacherous, perpetually alien descendant, out to overthrow the West), Sanderson resolutely obfuscates national, political, ethnic and gender identifications. Across a body of work that utilises meticulously rendered, naturalistic drawing techniques in the figural tradition of the Western academy, Sanderson's appropriation of national, cultural, racialised and gendered symbols and gestures, and progressively collaborative practice with the artist Neil Conroy under the name Conroy/Sanderson, consistently underscores the politics and contradictions of multiple, ambiguous, feminist, post/colonial, native, touristic, hybrid, diasporic gazes and positionings.

The oscillating subject positions and political frames by which Sanderson has been interpellated over the last two decades repeatedly demonstrate the instability of terms and identifications. From 'Black' to 'British,' '(Black) feminist' and 'Asian,' to 'Chinese,' each distinction proves at turns empowering and problematic, inclusive and exclusive, their meanings and constituencies continually contested. At the beginning of the nineties, Sanderson was selected for 'The British Art Show 3' (1990), a national touring showcase, and towards the end of the same decade, 'Transforming the Crown' (1997-8), a U.S. originated exhibition of "African, Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain."²⁰ Her inclusion in the former is indicative both of the impact of the Black arts movement on the British art scene, and, arguably, of its subsumption by the dominant discourse, as well as the tactical identifications of individual artists.²¹ By contrast, 'Transforming the Crown' proffered not a mere geographical

Evolving Response,' paper presented at the conference, 'Contemporary Chinese Art in the International Arena,' British Museum, 18-20 April, 2002, organised in collaboration with the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester.

¹⁹ "I am half Chinese but, in name I seem to be British; I look quite Chinese but sound very English; my mother is Chinese, but I speak Malay; I was born and brought up in Malaysia where my parents still live, and yet, in Malaysia I am continually asked where I come from; I was educated and now live in Britain where I am also asked where I come from." Sanderson, *ibid*.

²⁰ 'The British Art Show 3,' McClellan Galleries, Glasgow and touring, 24 January – 12 August, 1990; 'Transforming the Crown: African, Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain 1966-1996,' Caribbean Cultural Center, New York, 10 October 1996 – 2 February 1997; The Bronx Museum and Studio Museum, New York, March 1998.

²¹ In artist and curator Rasheed Araeen's 'Postscript' to 'The Other Story,' an exhibition of artists of African and Asian descent at the Hayward Gallery, London, 1989, Araeen writes, '[Anish] Kapoor, [Shirazeh] Houshiary and [Dhruva] Mistry, as well as Kim Lim and Veronica Ryan, were in fact

scoping of current aesthetic practice, but a historical perspective on politically charged contemporary work, from a certain cultural, geographical – and linguistic – distance. The effacement or displacement of 'black' in this latter context foregrounds by subtle omission the fluctuating terms that may alternately homogenise and differentiate groups and communities. As Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer have affirmed, the category 'black' was, in a particular historical moment, "re-articulated... as a political term of identification among diverse minority communities of Asian, African and Caribbean origin, rather than as a biological or racial category."²² Paul Gilroy has similarly and influentially proposed the precarious doubling of 'black' in its politicised and racialised usage to invoke the "commonality" of "people... of African, Caribbean or Asian descent," referenced by the same "central, irreducible sign of their common racial subordination."²³ Yet 'black', as a politicised position, a sign not of essential race but of and against racial subordination, nonetheless submits continually to an understanding and recognition of its (literal) face value.

'Chinese',^{has} often been positioned as the "unspoken and invisible 'other'" of 'Black' as well as 'White' cultural and aesthetic discourses.²⁴ The narratives implicitly or explicitly privileged by discourses around British 'Black Art'²⁵ are indicated by the relative lack of debate around the term 'Asian,' a reflection of the comparative impact of migration (in terms of numbers) as part

invited to participate but they declined. I understand their fears, and sympathize with their positions. But the success of these artists does not vindicate the establishment or invalidate my argument. Can we separate the success of some of the above artists from the anti-racist struggle waged particularly against the art establishment in the 70s? Instead of a serious debate within the dominant discourse, we now have new categories – 'black art', 'ethnic art', and phoney pluralism to confuse the issue." Rasheed Araeen, 'Postscript', in Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain* (London: South Bank Centre, 1989) pp.105-6. Other artists represented in 'The British Art Show 3' included Black Audio Film Collective, Sonia Boyce, Vong Phaophanit, Veronica Ryan and Shafique Uddin. 'The British Art Show 4' (1996) included work by Perminder Kaur, Steve McQueen and Chris Ofili. 'The British Art Show 5' (2001) featured Runa Islam, Donald Rodney, and Amikam Toren.

²² Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, 'De Margin and De Centre,' first printed as the 'Introduction' to *Screen* vol. 29, no.4 (1988), pp.2-10, and reprinted in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) pp.450-464.

²³ Paul Gilroy, 'The Black Atlantic as Counterculture of Modernity,' in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* ((London: Verso, 1993) pp.1-40.

²⁴ I elaborate here on Stuart Hall characterisation of 1980s Black art as "a critique of the way blacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible 'other' of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses." Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' in Kobena Mercer ed., *ICA Documents 7: Black Film, British Cinema* (London: ICA, 1989), reprinted in Morley and Chen eds., *op.cit.* pp.441-449, p.441. Theoretical discourses too; at a day conference organised by the Asia Pacific Cultural Studies Forum, a postgraduate student body at Goldsmiths College, University of London, June 1999. On the theme of 'Dislocating the West,' speakers were invited to consider among other things the relation between Cultural Studies and Asian Studies. When a delegate, mainland Chinese-born and New York-based curator Jie Lu, questioned the omission of a Chinese representative on any of the panels, or any reference to China in the discussions, his complaint was dismissed with the assertion that 'China was not in Asia.' Elsewhere, Rachel Garfield notes the "levelling of ethnicities" by "Black"/ "White" dichotomies (again defining "Black" as a subject of African descent) in her discussion of Jewish identities and positionings in 'Ali G: Just Who Does He Think He Is?' *Third Text* 54, Spring 2001, pp.63-70.

²⁵ The rise of so-called 'Asian Cool' in nineties Britain and the hierarchisation of migrant or 'hybrid' subjects in diaspora is discussed by Ali Nobil Ahmad in 'Whose Underground? Asian Cool and the Poverty of 'hybridity,' *Third Text*, no.54, Spring, 2001, pp. 71-84.

of the legacies of British colonialism in India, and, to a lesser degree, the 'Far East', as well as the subsequent concentration or dispersal of migrant populations. The inclusion or preclusion of 'Asian' under or from 'Black' in a transatlantic context significantly complicates attempts to think through the historical, cultural and political alliances and differences within and between 'Black', 'British', and 'Chinese.' In Britain, 'Asian' is usually taken to mean people from the Indian subcontinent; a geographical distinction is made between 'South' and 'South East' Asias, where, as Hall distinguishes, geography as opposed to 'race' designates ethnicity as a notion that recognises "that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position."²⁶ Where, incidentally, might we find Asias 'North' and 'West'? Where do 'Near' and 'Far' coincide? In a North American context, 'Asian' invokes a much broader ethnic spectrum, operating politically to include peoples from 'Central,' 'East,' 'South East' and 'South Asia,' as well as the Pacific Islands; it also worth noting that 'Asian,' in a pan-Pacific context, embraces Australia, the furthest outpost of 'the West'.

Mercer and Julien have pointed to political analogies between the uses of 'black' and 'people of color' in the U.K. and U.S.,²⁷ invoked in binary opposition to 'white,' effectively ascribing a unifying agency to marginalised and disempowered subjects whilst paradoxically maintaining dualistic designations – their ultimate untenability increasingly argued in critical analyses and deconstructions of 'white ethnicity', 'Englishness' and 'Britishness,' as well as 'blackness'. Yet it is worth noting that those who might come into visibility under the one risk invisibility under the other – Sanderson's otherness, for example, might be simultaneously subsumed under 'black' but not 'Asian' in the U.K., and distinguished by contrast – not unproblematically – as 'Chinese', but also 'Asian', hence 'of color' in the U.S., alongside, rather than as 'black.' The triangulation of Sanderson's alternate framings – citings and sitings – as 'Black' / 'British' / 'Chinese' works to complicate the dualistic narratives invoked by the conjunction 'British Chinese,' suggesting a complex alignment of different histories of migration bound up with slave and indentured labour, U.S. expansionist and British imperialist aggressions. However, the variable in/visibility of 'Chinese' in relation to the term 'Asian' between, for example, 'British Asian' and 'Asian American,' necessarily points to a further discursive frame, that relocates relatively recent narratives of Chinese immigrant experience within wider historical, diasporic narratives of Chinese migration.

²⁶ "The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual... What is involved is the splitting of the notion of ethnicity between, on the one hand the dominant notion which connects it to nation and 'race' and on the other hand... a recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position..." Hall, op.cit. pp.446-7.

²⁷ "In both instances, such terms have engendered intense semantic ambiguity and ideological anxiety as the racial mythology of colour is put under erasure, cancelled out but still legible, in a deconstructive logic that depends on the same system of metaphorical equivalences and differences." Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer in Morley and Chen, eds., op.cit., p.462 n.16.

B(B)Cs et al (Looking 'West', or North)

While 'BBC,' in Britain, is more likely to be taken to refer to the British Broadcasting Corporation (accessed globally via the 'BBC World Service,' its early incarnation as the 'Empire Service' a radio-transmitted reminder of its former imperial reach), than as an acronym for 'Black British Chinese,' it is often understood among Hong Kong and diasporic Chinese to denote 'British-born Chinese,' as 'ABC' is to 'American-born Chinese,' or 'CBC' is to 'Canadian-born.' If the Chinese government-approved category of 'Chinese overseas' encouraged displaced first-generation migrant subjects to remain loyal to their Chinese homeland,²⁸ the prevailing colloquial slang for subsequent generations, of 'ABCs,' 'BBCs,' and 'CBCs,' stresses geographic disparity and variability, with 'Chinese' nevertheless implied as an axis, a pivotal term and point of reference emanating ethnicity and culture. In such abbreviated modes of identification, 'Chinese' is privileged as immutable fact, offset by the insignificance of birthplace as mere accident of geography.

'ABC,' 'BBC,' and its variations on a theme of 'Chineseness,' situate histories and experiences of migration across south east Asia and the West that predate "the great Chinese diaspora"²⁹ of the latter half of the nineteenth century," paralleled by the large-scale movement of middle and upper-class Chinese in the late twentieth century, along an implicitly unchanging continuum of 'Chineseness.' Alongside 'BBC' and 'ABC,' the conjunctions 'British Chinese' and 'Chinese American' present terms seemingly accorded equal weighting, a comparison that reveals a fundamental disparity between the articulation of identities and subject positions apparently assured by the spectre of a timeless, ahistorical essentialism, and those founded on historical struggles for citizenship across continents, countries, and colonies. To drop the middle term – 'born' – from 'British Chinese' is to suggest the unanchoring of fixed notions of race and nation, in favour of their configuration and potential contestation as constructed cultural, national subject positions. In the case of 'Chinese American,' the un-hyphenated terms may be symbolic of an unreconciled union. Alternatively, their ordering may suggest processes of assimilation and acculturation in the direction of immigrant to host country; if the 'immigrant-as-prefix' is read as a relationship of adjective to noun, it hints not only at possible 'types' of American (or Briton, as in 'Black British') but also

²⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "[c]onsulates were established by China to protect the interests of overseas Chinese and to encourage their continued involvement with China... China's 1909 Citizenship Law established the principle that children of a Chinese father remained Chinese citizens regardless of any other citizenship they might acquire overseas. (This principle remained in force for all mainland Chinese governments to the end of the 1950s and remains in effect in Taiwan even today.)" Edgar Wickberg, 'Overseas Chinese Adaptive Organization,' in Ronald Skeldon, ed., *Reluctant Exiles: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese* (New York: M.E. Sharpe; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), pp.68-84, p.74.

²⁹ Gary G. Hamilton, ed., *Cosmopolitan Capitalisms: Hong Kong and the Chinese Diaspora at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999) p.6. See also Edgar Wickberg's essay in the same volume, 'Localism and the Organization of Overseas Migration in the Nineteenth Century,' pp.35-55.

at the host country's transformation.³⁰ According to such a schema, 'British Chinese' might similarly be presumed to refer to an unreconciled duality of identities, cultures and histories, or indeed to Britons who have emigrated to China or Hong Kong – yet Britain's colonisation of the latter ensures that British ex-patriots need not seek Chinese citizenship to reside there. Inverting the logic, 'British Chinese' would seem instead to derive from 'British Hong Kong,' as 'British Asian' relates to 'British India,' a nominal memory of imperial usurpation and re-assignment of subjects under colonial rule. (Now that Hong Kong has been returned to China, should the shift of power be signalled by re-imagining UK-based subjects from the Special Administrative Region as 'diasporic Hong Kong SAR Chinese British'?)

Both 'Chinese American' and 'American-born Chinese,' in the company of other hybrid monikers such as 'Japanese American,' or 'American-born Vietnamese / Korean / Filipino,' are habitually subsumed under the umbrella, 'Asian American.' Emerging on the U.S West Coast in the late 1960s, "spearheaded by militant youth and college students, who took on the tactics and political rhetoric of the American antiwar movement, the revolutionary activism of the Students for a Democratic Society, and the Black Power movement,"³¹ the Asian American movement "seized upon the United States as the site for contestation, to claim as a politicized, pan-Asian people its spaces and ideals."³² Seeking to unify ethnically diverse peoples from China, Japan, South and South East Asia and Asia Pacific, within and beyond college campuses, to become "a grassroots working-class community struggle for liberation and self-determination,"³³ the Asian American movement posed a direct challenge to the "predominating image of the forever-foreign, unassimilable "Oriental" through which Asianness in the United States had historically been coded."³⁴ Its effects over subsequent decades has been to spawn numerous political organisations on the East Coast and

³⁰ "... lately, I have been thinking that we ought to leave out the hyphen in "Chinese-American," because the hyphen gives the word on either side equal weight, as if linking two nouns. It looks as if a Chinese-American is double citizenship, which is impossible in today's world. Without the hyphen, "Chinese" is an adjective and "American" a noun; a Chinese American is a type of American." Maxine Hong Kingston, 'Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers,' from Guy Amirthanayagam ed., *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities* (Macmillan, 1982), reprinted in Laura E. Skandera-Trombley ed., *Critical Essays on Maxine Hong Kingston* (New York: G. K. Hall; London: Prentice Hall International, 1998). <http://t3.preservice.org/T0301065/essay.html>

³¹ Jan Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 1998) p.127.

³² Gary Okihiro, 'Commentary,' in Lucy Maddox ed. *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999) p.441. Cited in Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003) p.21.

³³ "The birth of the Asian American Movement coincided with the largest student strike in the nation's history," with Asian Americans playing an integral role in a student strike launched at the San Francisco State University by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) in November 1968. Demanding and succeeding in securing curriculum reform, including equal access to minorities to higher education and the institutionalisation of ethnic studies. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood eds. *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000) pp.1-2.

³⁴ Chuh, op.cit., p.20.

elsewhere,³⁵ networks of student organisations in tandem with the proliferation (and contestations) of 'Asian American' histories, politics and cultures as multidisciplinary areas of academic study, as well as various artists collectives.³⁶ Questions around the "marginalization and exclusionary knowledge politics" within Asian American studies itself have been in play since its disciplinary inception,³⁷ reflected in gradual shifts in denominations and boundaries, which oscillate in their mobilisations and readings (not unlike 'black') between ethnic and political readings. Cautioning against the canonizing, stabilizing 'fielding' of otherness, Rey Chow asks,

How do we resist the turning-into-propriety of oppositional discourses, when the intention of such discourses has been that of displacing and disowning the proper? How do we prevent what begin as tactics... from turning into a solidly fenced-off field, in the military no less than in the academic sense?³⁸

Elsewhere, Kandice Chuh observes,

... the grounding assumptions of to whom and to what "Asian American" refers, of the nature and constitution of the object of knowledge of Asian American studies, have faced repeated interrogation. Criticized for its homogenization of peoples, artefacts, and histories, and for its sometime deployment with masculinist and heteronormative biases and tacit East Asian orientation, "Asian American" as a term of criticism has never functioned as a label free of dispute.³⁹

Reflecting such disputes, the multifarious dilemmas of an "ancestry" that is "not continuous but fraught with displacements and destructions," of identities "split between paradigms of distant grandeur and recent deprivation,"⁴⁰ whose "infinite heterogeneity" is barely secured by "fatally unstable" terms,⁴¹ have found prolific expression in the literary, filmic, visual and popular affirmations and 'interrogations' made visible both through and in spite of, identification with / as 'Asian American' culture.⁴²

³⁵ In addition to a radical youth group called the Red Guards in San Francisco, New York had I Wor Kuen (established in 1969 by elite college students) and the Basement Workshop (established in 1971 and composed of mainly working-class students). Community organisations included the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement, the Food Co-op, the Workers' Viewpoint, and the later Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), founded in 1974, reorganised in 1977 as the Chinatown Progressive Association (CPA). Lin, 'Solidarity, Community, and Electoral Politics,' op.cit., pp.121-146.

³⁶ Such as the Basement Workshop in New York (1971-1987), the Asian American Resource Workshop in Boston (established in 1978), the Kearny Street Workshop (1972) and Japantown Art and Media (1975- 2000) in San Francisco. The later Godzilla: Asian American Art Network, was founded by New York-based artists Ken Chu, Bing Lee, and curator and academic, Margo Machida (1990-1994). See Elaine H. Kim, 'Interstitial Subjects: Asian American Visual Art as a Site for New Cultural Conversations,' in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, eds., *Fresh Talk / Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003), pp.28-36.

³⁷ Chuh, op.cit., pp.2-4. See also Rey Chow, 'The Politics and Pedagogy of Asian Literatures', in Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp.120-143.

³⁸ Chow, op.cit., p.17.

³⁹ Chuh, op.cit., pp.2-4.

⁴⁰ Chow, op.cit., p.140.

⁴¹ Chuh, op.cit., pp.2-4.

⁴² In the early nineties, the launch of two large-scale touring exhibitions, *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art* (1994) and *Across the Pacific: Contemporary Korean and Korean*

(... Looking 'East', or South East)

Designated for the first time as an ethnic category in the 1991 U.K. census, the relative invisibility of the Chinese in Britain as a community has been attributed as much to their geographic disparity, as to an innate, racialised passivity.⁴³ The arrival of Chinese sailors in British ports such as Liverpool, London, Cardiff, and Glasgow from the late nineteenth century onwards was followed by two further waves of migration in the twentieth century, in the fifties and sixties, and again in the nineties. The first Chinese in Britain were “not sophisticated diplomats or merchants but reluctant émigrés, poor, ill-educated, and easily exploited by their own countrymen and foreigners alike.” Arriving

as migrants, not immigrants, and unlike those who went to Australia to look for gold, or to South Africa to dig coal, or to Malaya to mine tin, or to North America to build railroads, or to Cuba to tend sugarcane, they had no specific purpose in coming. They were not, on the whole, looking for long-term settlement, they were not very well-treated, and such economic niches as they occupied proved less than reliable as shipping dwindled and as steam laundries, and, later, laundrettes multiplied.⁴⁴

By the 1950s, few traces of this first wave remained, while a combination of factors brought a second wave over the ensuing decade of mostly out-of-work erstwhile Hong Kong Chinese rice farmers, to meet a growing post-austerity demand for exotic food, their numbers (inclusive of family members) coming to constitute “probably 75 to 80 percent” of the Chinese in the U.K. by the 1980s. A third surge was expected in light of 1997, which Britain anticipated by denying passports and residency rights eligible to the 3.2 million born and raised on British territory, limiting numbers to 50,000 heads of households for fear of being swamped; despite the sustained trend throughout the 1980s and 1990s for Hong Kong Chinese to opt for North America and Australasia over Europe.⁴⁵ Sporadic news coverage echoed such fears,

American Art (1993), was viewed by many as an indication that “art expressing heterogeneous Asian American aesthetic, political, and personal concerns was finally beginning to receive serious attention in discourses on U.S culture.” *Asia/America*, curated by Margo Machida, Asia Society and the Queens Museum, New York and touring, 1994; *Across the Pacific*, curated by Jane Farver and Young Chul Lee, Queens Museum and Kumho Museum, Seoul, Korea, 1993. Kim, op.cit., p.28.

⁴³ Statistics from the 2001 UK census showed that the proportion of Chinese had risen from 0.3 per cent to 0.4 percent in the previous ten years, forming more than two per cent of the population in Westminster, Cambridge, City of London and Barnet. Such figures are most likely underestimates, given the preclusion of illegal immigrants from the survey.

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/default.asp>. See also Hugh Baker, ‘Branches All Over: The Hong Kong Chinese in the United Kingdom,’ in Ronald Skeldon ed., *Reluctant Exiles: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese* (New York: M.E. Sharpe; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994) pp.291-307; and David Parker, ‘Emerging British Chinese Identities; Issues and Problems,’ in Elizabeth Sinn, ed., *The Last Half Century of Chinese Overseas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1998) pp.91-114.

⁴⁴ Baker, *ibid.*,

⁴⁵ Ronald Skeldon, ‘Hong Kong in an International Migration System,’ in Ming K. Chan and Gerard A. Postiglione, eds., *The Hong Kong Reader: Passage to Sovereignty* (New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), pp.133-168. Aihwa Ong notes that the 50,000 were to be chosen on a point system from householders with British connections in government and business, with a higher education and fluency in English as prerequisites, therefore “selected for their capacity to be normalised as British citizens and their ability to participate in the generation of transnational wealth” – a process criticised for its

reiterating the U.S originated myth of the 'model minority' – their apoliticism and work ethic leading to assimilation and economic and academic success⁴⁶ – or, that of the surreptitious, pollutant alien presence; events over the last few years have fuelled concerns: the deaths by suffocation of fifty-eight Chinese asylum seekers in Dover, hidden in the back of a lorry in 2000; the scape-goating of the Chinese catering industry during 2001 the foot and mouth crisis;⁴⁷ the 2003 international SARS epidemic;⁴⁸ and the discovery of twenty-one drowned Chinese migrant workers in Morecambe Bay in 2004.⁴⁹

Compared with campaigns for increased 'Asian American' representation in mainstream media beyond a handful of newsreaders, actors and models, 'British Chinese' and 'British East Asian' visibility in high and popular cultures and media has been lower still.⁵⁰ While signs

elitism but not its racism, that is, "the recoding of Asians (from the earlier images of railroad worker, scab, laundrymen, restaurant worker, houseboy, female garment worker, and war enemy) as *homo economicus*"... "the code term for wealthy Chinese immigrants assumed to be disciplined and productive citizens." Aihwa Ong, 'On the Edge of Empire: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora,' *Positions*, 1993, vol. 3, part 1, pp.745-778, pp.750, 764, 771.

⁴⁶ A phrase coined by academics in the 1960s to refer to Japanese Americans, subsequently popularised and generalised by the media to include Chinese Americans, which "celebrated those minorities who raised themselves up by their bootstraps, in contrast to the 'non-achieving' minorities like the African Americans and Hispanics." Ong, 'On the Edge of Empire: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora,' op.cit., p.763.

⁴⁷ In a letter to *The Guardian*, Jack Tan, editor of a British Chinese community website www.dimsum.co.uk responded to the widespread reporting of an unsubstantiated link between foot and mouth and the Chinese food industry: "Your reporting of the source of the foot and mouth outbreak... perpetuates racist stereotypes of the British Chinese community: involvement in smuggling, connection with Far Eastern criminal organisations, eating suspicious or bizarre meat. These 19th-century stereotypes continue to paint the Chinese community as foreigners, criminals, and a corrupting influence. The truth is that we are British. As well as waiters and takeaway owners, our ranks also include doctors, writers, businessmen, lawyers, teachers, nurses and more. We do not eat "cow's nostrils, monkey meat, elephant ... and smoked grubs"... and no one I know in the community has links to secret Far Eastern sausage-smuggling groups. Your later report... is too little, too late. There has been a 40% drop in trade in the intervening six days. If this continues, there will be a knock-on effect on wholesale butchers, since Chinese restaurants obtain all their meat from British suppliers (it's cheaper!), and eventually on the beleaguered British livestock farmer. Needless hardship has been caused by these unsubstantiated stories and stereotypes to thousands of families in the Chinese community." Jack Tan, 'Takeaway your Stereotypes,' *The Guardian*, 4 April 2001. Tan refers to three articles that had appeared in the same paper: Michael White and Nicholas Watt, 'Smuggled Meat Blamed,' 27 March 2001; Paul Brown, 'Illegal meat trail leads to infected countries,' 28 March 2001; Paul Kelso, 'Chinese restaurants feel the pinch,' 2 April 2001. Six days later, over a thousand protesters took to the streets marching from London's Chinatown to the headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. See also Chris Gray, 'Chinese stirred into action by racist smears and slanders,' *The Independent*, 7 April 2001.

⁴⁸ The outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), an atypical pneumonia of unknown aetiology, was recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) at the end of February 2003. After its sudden and rapid spread to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Hanoi and Toronto since first emerging in southern China in mid-November, 2002, the WHO issued a global warning on 12 March 2003. By the end of June 2003, WHO had removed Hong Kong and Beijing – the two most severely affected cities – from its list of areas with recent local transmission of SARS.

⁴⁹ The drowning of Chinese migrant workers illegally employed as cockle pickers recalled the deaths in Dover three years earlier, both tragedies raising the alarm on international organised criminals trafficking in illegal immigrants. 'Lorry deaths a 'stark warning', says Straw' *The Guardian*, 19 June, 2000; Ian Johnston, 'Scandal of Chinese cockle-pickers' deaths,' *Scotland on Sunday*, 8 February 2004.

⁵⁰ An issue raised by the BBC Radio 4 series, 'Beyond the Takeaway,' 10-14 March, 2003, in which actor and director David K.S. Tse, of the Yellow Earth Theatre Company, spoke to second and third generation British Chinese: "... we're the third largest ethnic minority here so why have we remained

of a pervasive 'Chinese Americana' perpetuate a supposedly innocuous 'positive' stereotype celebrating a hybrid 'Chinese American' identity (for example through the iconic Chinese American 'take-out' box or 'fortune cookie' – culturally indigenous, even quintessential, to America rather than China), a contemporary 'British Chinese' iconography ('British Chinoiserie'?) has yet to emerge.⁵¹ The sparse yet enduring images of the last few decades include the 1970s' (Japanese) imports *Monkey* and *The Water Margin* (retellings of classic Chinese tales dubbed in exaggerated mock-Chinese-accented English), nostalgia for which has been recently revived.⁵² US imports over the same period included the popular children's cartoon, *Hong Kong Phooey*, and drama series, *Kung Fu*. Some remember the 1980s British offering, *The Chinese Detective*;⁵³ others noted the short-lived appearance of a Chinese family in the TV soap, *Brookside*. Advertising imagery continues to feature noodle-slurpers and the occasional high-kicking barmaid, while four late night shorts, controversially called, *The Missing Chink*, have recently offered television's first 'British Chinese' comics.⁵⁴

A contributing factor to the absence of a comparatively visible, or visibly contested, politicised 'British Chinese' culture and identities, lies with the specificity of historical struggles and claims to citizenship (or lack of) rooted in fundamentally different relationships to host or destination countries. Chinese in America, among other Asian minorities, have had to fight against disenfranchisement, their settlements and rights restricted and regulated until the mid-twentieth century by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the staggered repeal of which between 1943 and 1952 "dramatically changed the status of immigrants of all Asian origins, from 'aliens ineligible to citizenship' to that of 'citizen'."⁵⁵ The majority of Chinese migrants to Britain, however, have come from Hong Kong as British colonial subjects; early arrivals

such ghostly figures on the landscape of British society and what are we doing now to make ourselves more visible? Hopefully the series will help to dispel some of the standard stereotypes of British Chinese - we don't all do kung fu and work in takeaways!"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/factual/beyondthetakeaway.shtml>

⁵¹ A Chinese-American themed Christmas tree in Macy's San Francisco, Union Square store in 2003 featured replica take-out boxes, lanterns, fans, fortune cookies, mini buddhas and Chinese baby dolls.

⁵² The 26 episodes of *The Water Margin* and 52 episodes of *Monkey* ((first broadcast by the BBC in 1976 and 1979, respectively) became available on DVD in 2004.

⁵³ *The Chinese Detective* (BBC, 1981-82) starred David Yip as the first and only (British-born) Chinese actor to take a lead role on British television, an update of the archetypal Charlie Chan character of the internationally successful detective films of the 1930s and 1940s, a role invariably taken by white actors in 'yellowface.' "Yellowface marks the Asian body as unmistakably Oriental; it sharply defines the Oriental in a racial opposition to whiteness. Yellowface exaggerates "racial" features that have been designated "Oriental," such as slanted eyes, overbite, and mustard-yellow skin colour. Only the racialized Oriental is yellow; Asians are not." Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian American in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) p.2

⁵⁴ *The Missing Chink*, written and performed by Paul Courtney Hyu and Paul Chan (Channel 4, 19-22 January, 2004) prompted over 145 complaints to the broadcaster and Ofcom about the offensive nature of the title.

⁵⁵ Lisa Lowe, 'Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization,' in Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: on Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996) pp.1-36, p.7. Lowe cites Neil Gotanda's 'Towards Repeal of Asian Exclusion: The Magnuson Act of 1943, the Act of July 2, 1946, the Presidential Proclamation of July 4, 1946, the Act of August 9, 1949, and the Act of August 1, 1950,' in Hyung Chan Kim, ed., *Asian Americans in Congress: A Documentary History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1995).

sojourned as seamen, those migrating in the 1950s and 1960s (permitted by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act to bring dependants) retaining their status as Hong Kong residents, and a 'right of abode' which could then, prior to 1997 and the end of colonial rule, be passed on to their British-born offspring. Conversely, Hong Kong-born subjects had no such rights in relation to the ruling country, and, following the implementation of the 1981 British Nationality Act, entry to the U.K for dependants became harder:

In Hong Kong, residents are designated as 'British-Dependent Territory Citizens' (BDTC) in the remnant corner of the empire, with limitless rights of travel but no rights to reside in Great Britain. When Hong Kong reverts to mainland China rule, these same residents will be called 'British Nationals (Overseas)' (BNO), with the conditions of domicile and travel unchanged. Hong Kong Chinese are thus normalised as an overseas population that is in but not of the empire: their partial citizenship rests on differences: of territoriality, coloniality, and (unmentioned) non-British origins.⁵⁶

Though some 'British (born) Chinese' subjects may enjoy a certain degree of what Aihwa Ong has called "flexible citizenship," residing between two or more places according to economic and political circumstances, such mobility is, as Ong recognises, the preserve of "the cosmopolitan and affluent", "that stratum of upper middle-class and upper-class diaspora Chinese who have the resources to negotiate and exploit the varied conditions of commerce and family residence in China, Britain, and other countries."⁵⁷ Recent tragedies resulting from the illegal trafficking of immigrants from mainland China, around which disparate Chinese communities nationwide have begun to unite and mobilise, are a reminder of the darker narratives entwined with the privileged and sometimes romanticised accounts of diasporic subjectivities.

It is as significant, then, to consider the geographies encompassed by the Asia Pacific, across which Chinese have for centuries journeyed west, south west, east and south east, mythologically and historically, as it may be to compare 'British Chinese' and 'Asian American' cultures within a transatlantic frame. Hong Kong in particular remains a key site and portal, providing a transient residential base, offering virtual popular cultural continuity via satellite and cable channels, movies and online media, as well as through newspapers and magazines, and continuing to serve migrants as "a door in and out of China."⁵⁸ The legacy of post/colonial ties is reflected in cultural as well as migrant flows and exchanges of diasporic Chinese in Britain, the wide dissemination of contemporary icons from Hong Kong's 'Cantopop', film and television industries, often compensating for a considerable deficit of role models at 'home'.⁵⁹ Within this broader context, 'Oriental', 'East Asian,' and 'Chinese' studies have developed as academic fields of inquiry since Britain's first imperial forays into the 'Far East,' yet the significant production of cultural representations of Chinese in Britain – by

⁵⁶ Ong, op.cit., p.748.

⁵⁷ Ong, op.cit., pp.746 and 753.

⁵⁸ Windberg, op.cit., p.51.

Chinese in Britain – is a recent phenomenon, coinciding with the coming of age of largely second-generation immigrants, many university educated, and their large-scale departure from the catering industry into white-collar professions, though relatively few have moved towards the arts.⁶⁰ Those who have are looking both 'east' and 'west' to 'Asian' contemporaries in search of political, cultural and aesthetic ties, disconnections, and tactics of interrogation, confrontation, complicity and subversion;⁶¹ in a landscape of increasingly bureaucratized cultural diversity, in a decade and a half that has seen artists from mainland China achieve notable success and notoriety in the West, and against a backdrop of the simultaneous 'Westernisation of Asia' and 'Asianisation of the West'.⁶²

Managing Diversity⁶³

The term 'British Chinese' has emerged in the context of increasing governmental prioritisation of 'diversity' in its arts and social policies. Uncertainties around the relationships and distinctions between 'Black,' 'Asian' and 'Chinese' within or against 'British' art, have been evidenced in regional bureaucratic moves to alter existing funding parameters or invent them anew. A Chinese Arts Centre was established in Manchester by the Chinese View Arts Association in the late 1980s,⁶⁴ while the term 'British Chinese' was officially inaugurated with the establishment of the British Chinese Artists' Association (BCAA) in 1991.⁶⁵ One regional

⁵⁹ See Parker, op.cit., and his entry for 'Britain,' in Lynn Pan ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999) pp.308-309.

⁶⁰ Parker, 'Emerging British Chinese Identities; Issues and Problems,' op.cit.

⁶¹ Ong considers "how Overseas Chinese (mainly from Hong Kong) are variously constructed as citizens on the edge of empires – China, Britain, the United States – and investigates the subject's own complicity and subversion of these constructions." Ong, op.cit., p.747.

⁶² Two chapters in Warren I. Cohen's *The Asian American Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002) are called, respectively, 'The Americanization of East Asia' and 'The Asianization of America.' By borrowing and broadening this premise (where Cohen is keen not to generalise), I refer similarly to how "contact... has changed the way East Asian peoples are governed, how they eat, how they think, how they amuse themselves," and "the accelerating influence of East Asia on [Western] life and identity... It is clear that art, film, food, and religion in [the West] have been profoundly affected by contact with Asia." Pp.3-4.

⁶³ A reference to Sarat Maharaj's warning against "'multicultural managerialism' – something we have to watch out for in EU approaches to cultural diversity..." Sarat Maharaj in conversation with Annie Fletcher, 'dislocations: on cultural translation,' in *CIRCA*, no.91, Spring 2000, pp. 31-33. See also Sarat Maharaj, 'Introduction: Black Art's Autobiography,' in Gilane Tawadros and Victoria Clarke eds., *Annotations 5: Run through the Jungle: Selected Writings by Eddie Chambers* (London: inIVA, 1999). pp. 4-8.

⁶⁴ The Chinese Arts Centre emerged from the Chinese View Arts Association, established after 'Chinese View '86', the first Chinese festival to take place in Manchester in 1986 (home to the second largest population of Chinese in Britain). By the following year, plans for a permanent centre were underway, finally opening in a first floor former office suite in Chinatown in October, 1989. In March 1997, the centre relocated to the city's Northern Quarter, and after a temporary setback following a burglary and arson attack in August, 1998, re-opened the next February. In 2001, Chinese Arts Centre was allocated £2.1 million from Art Council England's Lottery funded Arts Capital Programme towards the development of a new building, which opened in November 2003.

⁶⁵ Based in north west London, BCAA was established as a result of the ACE funded Chinese Artists Forum in 1991, its aim to promote the developments within Chinese arts and artists of Chinese descent living and working in Britain, providing a public information and advice service, publishing a regular bilingual arts newsletter, and maintaining the British Chinese Artists' Association Database.
<http://www.bcaa.org.uk/new/about.htm>

funding body initially expanded the category of 'Black' to include 'Chinese'; another distinguished between the 'Chinese, East and South East Asian' while allocating them a separate collective category.⁶⁶ As artists and curators continue to negotiate policy struggles to acknowledge, keep pace with and find a language for critical, reflexive practices that have long signalled the contentious and shifting landscape of 'Britishness,' while paradoxically maintaining their marginality, designations and definitions for 'the other' have wavered, consistent only in perpetuating (inadvertently or otherwise) the distinction of an unidentified, presumably 'non-ethnic majority white art,' by dint of its alternately 'ethnic' / 'minority' / 'Black' and latterly 'culturally diverse' others.

Since 1994, Arts Council England (ACE) has specified that 'Cultural Diversity' means "African, Caribbean, Asian, and Chinese Arts",⁶⁷ or 'Black Arts' in shorthand, their communities "for the sake of brevity" similarly condensed to 'Black and Asian.' While acknowledging that such terms "[yoke] together a geographical and a race concept," and "give a mistaken impression of homogeneity,"⁶⁸ they are nonetheless favoured in place of more "cumbersome" modes of nomenclature.⁶⁹ 'Black art' is in turn made interchangeable with 'cultural diversity', again despite recognition that ethnicity is but one of "multiple components that make up today's diverse society" (such as "gender, age, geographical location, ability"),⁷⁰ while 'diversity' is then declared equivalent to 'difference'. In ACE-speak, it would seem then that 'African, Caribbean, Asian, and Chinese' = 'Black' = 'culturally diverse' = 'diversity' = 'difference' – apparently discrete "components" or slices of a British pie. The paradigm invites investment in 'pure' and 'authentic' ahistorical traditions, yet also celebrates their contemporary 'hybrid' counterparts (perceived as intersecting slices). It is then somehow possible to claim both a purportedly "non-deterministic and challenging context created by Government thinking," and, in contradiction, a decidedly determinist 'Britishness': from "the equal alliance of different cultural perspectives" emerges a "distinctively", "quintessentially British", "hybrid arts."⁷¹

⁶⁶ Such discrepancies can be seen as attempts to respond to local constituencies, in these instances by the North West and South East Arts Boards, respectively, as they were known prior to April 2001. The following year heralded a restructured Arts Council of England, thereafter truncated and rebranded as simply Arts Council England (which also prefixed regional council names, hence, ACE, London, or ACE, North West), a single development organisation for the arts. Reforms included the streamlining of over one hundred grant schemes to just five; a "core ambition" remains the "championing of cultural diversity" with a focus on "race and ethnicity, disability and social inclusion"

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/ambition.php#diversity>

In the 2001 census, "The term Asian and Black refers to people who did not describe themselves as white... Instead, they chose one of the following broad categories: Asian, Black, Chinese, mixed heritage, or other." http://www.britishcouncil.org/diversity/race_population.htm#Table1

⁶⁷ *Cultural Diversity Action Plan* (London: Arts Council of England, 1998) p.5. n.1

⁶⁸ *Cultural Diversity Action Plan*, ibid. pp.22 and 24.

⁶⁹ Such as "people who are of Asian, African and Caribbean descent"; see *Correcting the Picture: New Perspectives on Cultural Diversity in Arts Management*, conference at the Drum, Birmingham, 21-22 April 1998. Conference report, pp. 4 & 5, note on terminology.

⁷⁰ *Whose Heritage? The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain's Living Heritage*, conference at G-Mex, Manchester 1-3 November, 1999, co-ordinated by the Arts Council of England and North West Arts Board. Conference report, p.4

⁷¹ *Cultural Diversity Action Plan*, ibid. pp.6, 8 and 12.

Reflecting this somewhat befuddled commitment was the earmarking, then inexplicable postponement, of 2001 as the 'Year of Cultural Diversity', a project subsequently extended into an eighteen-month programme and rebranded as 2002's 'The Big Idea' – in turn later scrapped.⁷² Another rebranding and injection of millions of pounds resuscitated the initiative, launched finally in May 2003 as 'decibel', carrying the strap-line, 'raising the voice of cultural diversity in the arts', its logo, 'dB', standing also for 'Diverse Britain'. While this last move lessened the finite ring of tokenism, it nonetheless set off alarm bells for cynical and weary practitioners wondering to what such a short-term project, with its conceptual naiveté and 'stock in trade piety', would amount.⁷³ If rhetorical euphemisms are "unhelpful because they presuppose normality to be white and everything else to be diverse", how is it possible to have it several ways – a quintessentially British Black-African-Caribbean-Asian-Chinese-hybrid-pie (and eat it)?⁷⁴ The independently commissioned 2000 Runnymede report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain suggests that that pie is still somewhere in the stratosphere; far from "quintessentially hybrid", the idea of Britishness continues to carry "largely unspoken racial connotations": "the nation is usually imagined as white."⁷⁵

Playing the Other

Imperial connotations too; from the mid-nineties, the countdown to the return of Britain's erstwhile colony, Hong Kong, to Chinese sovereignty, was accompanied by a colonial nostalgia manifested in the vogue – in culture, couture and cuisine – for 'all things Chinese'.⁷⁶ For a short time, and in a hitherto disinterested climate, exhibitions of Chinese art seemed to proliferate, regionally, nationally and internationally. Some shows drew vague distinctions between the 'traditional' and the 'contemporary', others consisted of hastily thrown together

⁷² Richard Hylton, 'The Politics of Cultural Diversity,' *Art Monthly*, no.274, March 2004, pp.20-21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁷⁴ "... Decibel has failed to spark debate about art world pathologies. The fact that it has attracted very little in the way of serious critical attention may itself signal a critical indifference, apathy or even antipathy towards the broader aims of cultural diversity as promoted by ACE. At the risk of sounding conspiracist, one has to wonder whether the organisational and political problems that have beset Decibel are themselves mechanisms of control manufactured in order to stifle real change. In fact segregation in the art world is being legitimised. In this way 'the landscape is changing' as never before." *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁷⁵ Further qualifications of terminology can be found in the Runnymede report, which finds the terms 'black, Asian and Irish', 'black and Asian' or 'Asian and black' used, where 'black' "refers to people with recent origins in Africa or the Caribbean, and 'Asian' refers to all Asian countries and regions, not to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan only." 'African-Caribbean' is used in preference to 'Afro-Caribbean' or 'Black Caribbean', and the term 'South Asian' is preferred where the reference is to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The concept of 'recent origins' displaces essentialising notions of 'race', while intimating ambiguous relations between ethnicity and location.

<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/meb/TheReport.htm> See also Stuart Hall, 'A Question of Identity (II)', *The Observer*, 15 October 2000.

⁷⁶ 1997 also marked the fiftieth anniversary of the partition of India into two Dominions, India and Pakistan, the trend for things Chinese thus coinciding with a wider interest and nostalgia for the East, illustrated for example by Madeleine Bunting's 'Let's wear our frills with pride,' *The Guardian*, 5 April, 2000, cited in Ali Nobil Ahmad, 'Whose Underground? Asian Cool and the Poverty of 'Hybridity',' *Third Text*, no.54, Spring, 2001, p.80.

surveys that offered uncritical juxtapositions of works by artists brought together irrespective of differences in practice, politics, generation, history or geography, superficially united by a casual reference to 'the Chinese diaspora', or even more loosely, 'East Asia'. The ambition and generalisation underpinning an internationally touring large-scale exhibition which came to London's Hayward Gallery in 1999, was reflected in its lengthy subtitle: 'Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos and Global Change – East Asian Art, Architecture and Film Now.' Followed the same summer by '000zerozerozero' at London's Whitechapel Art Gallery, "a celebration of British Asian culture" which found some artists migrating from one context to the other, both projects raised again the question of boundaries – who and where are 'East / British Asia(n)'?⁷⁷ What and when are the slippages between? While timely group shows have been effective in generating a degree of exposure, bringing many isolated individuals into contact with one another, they have also promoted unease over the celebratory rhetoric by which artists are frequently brought under the same indiscriminate 'diverse' umbrella – the convenience packaging presented by the artists' apparent ethnicity left unaddressed, despite the conflicts and contradictions in practice, politics, generation, history or geography evidenced by the works themselves, a dilemma familiar to many an old or newly designated so-called 'minority'.⁷⁸

With the hindsight afforded by the histories and legacies of 'black art' in Britain since the 1980s, and the prevailing apoliticism of the 'YBA'-dominated 1990s, the mobilisation of the term 'British Chinese' has been unsurprisingly wary and contentious. (Just as well then that no sooner has 'Chinese' begun to come into visibility as a category distinct from or encompassed by 'Black', than the curatorial tide seems to have turned against so-called 'single ethnicity' projects, though cynics might say that they simply turn up as 'multi-ethnicity' projects.) Debated in terms of access to funding and the 'mainstream', integration and segregation, 'British Chinese' has proved an unending "source of division, derision and dissatisfaction."⁷⁹ If a younger constituency appear more willing to embrace the term,

⁷⁷ 'Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos and Global Change – East Asian Art, Architecture and Film Now' was at the Hayward Gallery, London, 13 May – 27 June 1999. '000zerozerozero' was at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, 10 – 31 July 1999. In 'Art Is Black: Culturally Diverse Artists on Show,' a one-off newspaper supplement in *The Guardian*, 28 February 2004, Niru Ratnam asserted, "We simply do not need insulting patronising shows like zerozerozero ever again."

⁷⁸ Examples include the exhibitions, 'Links 96,' Chinese Arts Centre and Yang Sing Restaurant, Manchester (1996), 'Tradition and Modernity: Contemporary Chinese Painting,' British Museum (1996); 'Reckoning with the Past,' Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and touring (1996); 'Far from the Shore,' Pitshanger Manor and Gallery (1998); 'Another Province,' Watermans Arts Centre, London and Brewery Arts, Cirencester (1998).

⁷⁹ The debate on 'British-Chinese Culture and Contemporary Art' was held at the Central Library, Manchester, 7 December, 1995. A related and much larger scale conference and exhibition project, 'Journeys West' had taken place the previous year, organised jointly by the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester (Kwong Lee); FirstSite, Colchester (Katherine Wood); Lambeth Chinese Community Association, London (Jessie Lim); University Gallery, Essex University (Jessica Kenny) in collaboration with inIVA (the Institute of International Visual Arts), London (Gilane Tawadros) and supported by *Eastern Art Report* (Sajid Rizvi). The conference on 21 October 1995 was chaired by Jeremy Theophilus of the Arts Council of England, who also curated the exhibition across two venues, the University Galleries and at the Minorities.

reflecting perhaps both a greater embeddedness and investment in British culture, and a simultaneous lack of certainty about the nature of their 'Chineseness', this seems to be conversely mirrored by the assurance of an older generation as to the 'purity' of their own ethnic and cultural identities, distinct from their identities as British citizens, a legal status bestowed by their passports.⁸⁰ 'British Chinese' culture is thus often situated as at once integrated with 'contemporary British culture' and outside of, separate from 'traditional Chinese' culture, an unwieldy 'catchall' that has undoubtedly been useful in increasing visibility (whose visibility?), yet fails repeatedly and inevitably to address the experiences and demands of its disparate constituencies. Is it possible, for example, to recuperate the late Li Yuan Chia, who migrated from China to Britain, establishing his own museum and practising as an artist for some forty years, as a forebear in an as-yet-unwritten history of 'British Chinese' artists?⁸¹ A conference on 'Contemporary Chinese Arts in the International Arena' in 2002 both magnified and complicated the double-conflicts facing so-called 'British Chinese' artists, marginalised not only by dominant discourses around contemporary British art, but also contemporary Chinese art, newly valorised by an international curatorial and market agenda.⁸² How is the 'Chinese' in 'British Chinese' to be articulated or corroborated in this conjunction of terms? Can it only be read in a similar fashion to 'Asian,' which for some merely "qualifies the term artist to *deplete* it"?⁸³ Does it follow that enough ethnic, national labels, seen as supplementary, can devalue an artist by increments, to nil? Conversely, such applications of 'Chinese' are countered by sinocentric practices, equally essentialised and racialised signifiers in which, to cite Rey Chow, "Everything Chinese... is fantasized as somehow better – longer in existence, more intelligent, more scientific, more valuable, and ultimately beyond comparison."⁸⁴ In both scenarios, 'Chinese' and 'Chineseness' are configured as transcendentally or fundamentally, irreconcilably 'other'; the hierarchical

⁸⁰ Minutes from a meeting of the Chinese Arts Network at the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 13 December 1995.

⁸¹ Gilane Tawadros makes this observation in her preface to the exhibition catalogue, *Ten Thousand Li* (Liverpool: Liverpool School of Art & Design / CAIR, 2002) p.5.

⁸² 'Contemporary Chinese Arts in the International Arena,' British Museum, 18-20 April, 2002. Many events involved the Chinese Arts Centre, which came under the directorship of Sarah Champion in 1996. These included 'Borderlines,' a seminar at the Studio Theatre of North Westminster Community School in London in April 1998, organised as part of a major programme of cultural events arranged by Visiting Arts (VA) to accompany the ASEM (Asia-Europe Economic Meeting) summit of Asian and European heads of government; 'A New Vocabulary for Chinese Arts?' a day seminar at The Place, London, 3 October, 1998, co-ordinated with Andy Gunn-Yu Cheung, then-Arts and Education Co-ordinator for BCAA, and Pit Fong Loh, founder of BiMa Dance Company and director of the 'Re: Orient' Dance Season at The Place, as partner organisations. 'Re: Orient,' first launched in 1994, provided an important platform for dance practitioners from East and South East Asia, within an international cultural space; 'A New Vocabulary for Chinese Arts?' was the closing event of its 1998 season. 'New Moves: Chinese Arts Conference,' was produced by Jessie Lim and Grace Lau (Fusion Arts) in partnership with Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester and London's Victoria and Albert Museum, where it was held on 18 December, 1999.

⁸³ May Lam, cited in the exhibition catalogue for *Here Not There* (Brisbane: Institute of modern Art, 1993), curated by Hiram To and Nicholas Tsoutas at IMA 6-28 August, 1993; texts by May Lam, Robert Nery and Fazal Rizvi.

⁸⁴ Chow, *ibid.* p.5

opposition of 'China' and 'the West', imaginary entities distinguished by ambiguous and highly contested boundaries, inverted.

Beyond the singling out of an 'ethnicity du jour' or mere celebration of a 'difference' and 'hybridity' as stable products of hierarchised cultural encounter, the challenge, in the face of the deceptive redundancy of terms, may be one of strategy – how to play, gamble, cheat and unpack the 'card' or category at stake, in recognition of how the moment, and with it the game of alignments, differentiations and possible tactics, have changed? Against a backdrop of Chinese-themed survey shows, and echoing artist-organised precedents in the U.S.,⁸⁵ the exhibition 'numbersix' (1998) in Brixton constituted an early instance of so-called 'British Chinese' artists collectively curating a project that sought critical positionings in relation to their habitual ethno-national classifications, the title an oblique reference to the catering industry.⁸⁶ Prior to 'numbersix', a notable exception to the prevalent group shows featuring Chinese and East Asian artists was the critical curatorial framework offered by 'I Am Not What I Am' (1996). Rejecting the conventional format of a survey show, seven exhibitions by U.K. and U.S. based artists unfolded over several months, staggered temporally and spatially across four sites: Kary Ka-Che Kwok at the Camerawork Gallery, London; Ik-Joong Ka and Lynne Yamamoto at Leeds Metropolitan University Gallery; Ken Chu and Wenda Gu at the Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham; Lauri Sing and Gavin Lee at the Zone Gallery, Newcastle. The project, curated by Barbara Hunt and Suzy Kerr, offered a paradigm for simultaneously invoking and placing under erasure the limits of identity and ethnicity, reaching generationally and geographically across diasporas to address

... the difficult and complex challenge which artists confront, within the art world and society, as they struggle to resist stereotyping and categorisation. In the international art world, 'otherness' has become foregrounded in cultural production, often to the exclusion of all other aesthetic, theoretical or political content. This has become particularly problematic for artists who, because of their race, gender or sexual orientation, are unequivocally positioned as 'other' and their work only read within this limiting framework.⁸⁷

Perhaps the highest profiled of 'British Chinese' shows over the last decade, however, was 'Ten Thousand Li: Chinese Infusion in Contemporary British Culture' (2002-3),⁸⁸ a national touring exhibition which brought together four artists framed by literal distances and metaphorical removes from Chinese (and British) culture(s), and less explicitly by lens-based medium (the exhibition was organised by the Open Eye, Liverpool). Dinu Li's photographic

⁸⁵ 'Yellow Peril: Reconsidered' (1990-1991) featured Asian Canadian artists; 'The Curio Shop' (1993) was organised by Godzilla at Artists Space, New York. Kim, op.cit., pp.30-31.

⁸⁶ The exhibition 'number six,' TS2K, London, 1998, was organised by and featured the artists Anthony Key, Yeu-Lai Mo, Erika Tan, Mayling To, Tony Ward, and myself. The project is discussed in greater length in the last chapter, 'Back Words'.

⁸⁷ *I Am Not What I Am*, exhibition notes, <http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/~as0kan/iamnot.htm>

⁸⁸ 'Ten Thousand Li' (2002), Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool and touring; curated by Deborah Chan and Wing-Fai Leung.

series, *Secret Shadows* (2001), explored the living spaces of Chinese illegal immigrants, intimately detailing shoes, bedding, a comb, a makeshift side-table, the identities of temporary inhabitants remaining anonymous beyond the frame; Yuen Yi-Lo's *Women.Script.II – Work in Progress 01* (2000) and *A Mad Woman Speaks* (1999), employed drawing, print, sewing, collage, video stills, computer manipulated imagery and references to 'nūshu' to investigate social, visual and linguistic constructions of Chinese women; in Pamela So's postcard work, *Role Play* (2001), laser printed *Dress Code Series* (2001) and video piece, *Chinese Chest* (2001), the clothes of three generations of women found residing in an old family chest become costumes or props to be mobilised in a play and rejection of multiple identities and femininities.

"Ten Thousand Li" is the Chinese name for the Great Wall, where 'li' refers to a traditional unit of measurement, approximate to a third of a mile. Moreover, the title is a reference to Amy Tan's novel, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), "in which a feather from a 'thousand li' away is to be passed on from a Chinese mother to her American daughter."⁸⁹ Evoking narratives of migration and issues of cultural continuity across generations and geographies, the curatorial framework effected a partial shift away from ideas of authenticity and ethnicity, albeit romantically. Nevertheless, the notion of 'Chinese infusion' simultaneously invokes the brews and concoctions of Chinese herbal medicine, imbuing metaphors of immersion, injection, extraction and pervasion with a note of the exotic. The juxtaposition of terms infers an admixture that situates an elusive 'something Chinese' within a dominant British cultural frame, suggesting an unequal one-way relationship of assimilation / accommodation, in which 'Britishness' and 'Chineseness' nevertheless remain somehow intact.

Though ten thousand may be an alluring and impressive figure, satisfyingly round, the very repetition of loops in those zeros inscribing comfortably closed circuits of 'here-and-there,' 'home-and-away,' such allusions to a pervasive, tautological paradigm of diaspora that presupposes the ethnically grounded, culturally centred fixity of 'home' needs to be resisted, in recognition of the impossibility of return. A simple conversion from 'li' to the more prosaic (from a Western perspective) 'mile,' might help to relinquish the exotic embellishments and ethnographic undertones of acts of measuring and grouping, whilst alluding to the mundane migrant necessity of translation, and dilemmas of 'conversion'. Splintering that flawless sum and displacing its root, the distance travelled in the oblique trip to a place and back (by a never-same route) becomes, then, immeasurable, always-already unlimited: 3333... point 3 to infinity.

We Are Not What We Are

⁸⁹ Deborah Chan, 'Talking Chinese, Speaking English,' in Chan ed., *Ten Thousand Li* (2002), pp.40-43.

At different times, 'England' has presented for many like and unlike the young Salman Rushdie in Bombay "as wonderful a prospect as Oz"; and like Dorothy's 'Kansas,' is "no more real."⁹⁰ From bare feet and sandals to ruby slippers and home:

The real secret of the ruby slippers is not that 'there's no place like home,' but rather there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began.⁹¹

Unsettled, resettled, determined not by locale per se, but as much through journeys and traversals, literal and metaphorical, small and large, tame and fabulous. It is these that are suggested by Sanderson's *He Took Fabulous Trips*, invoking between broad caricaturistic strokes and sober details both generalised and heterogeneous narratives; the subtle complications and twists to a tale or tales that involve movements – geographical, cultural and linguistic – in at least two directions, and the contingent negotiation of the ambiguities of positioning between 'traveller' / 'tourist' / 'coloniser' / 'emigrant' / 'colonised' and 'migrant'. Fanciful stories of adventures 'East' come into tension with those less heard of migrations 'South', 'North' and 'West', towards such equally fabulous destinations as 'England'. Through this imaginary land the 'Yellow Brick Road' winds a precarious passage, resonating with the racialised stereotyping of Chinese as the 'Yellow Peril,'⁹² as well as the immigrant-as-sojourner's hopes of returning home, and the laborious work of reinventing and building a way of life overseas. Exceeding simplistic 'here/there' narratives, *He Took Fabulous Trips* offers an oblique glimpse into unfathomed archives, its blanks and omissions pointing to the gaps, complexities and departures in so many ongoing, fragmented stories of the so-called 'Chinese diaspora' that, in Britain – behind and beyond the one-dimensional 'public face' – are also stories of 'not-Chineseness,' 'not-Britishness,' 'not-Blackness,' 'not-Asianness.' Sanderson's relatively recent framing as a Chinese artist, or specifically, as a contemporary Chinese woman artist in diaspora, marginal to the increasingly commodified male-dominated arena of contemporary Chinese art,⁹³ coincides with a significant change in her practice since the late nineties, now explicitly undertaken in collaboration with the artist Neil Conroy; the very conjunction Conroy/Sanderson stalling habits of identification and recognition, underlining the limits and transgression of categories, and complicating 'same/other', 'insider/outsider', 'West/non-West' binaries.

⁹⁰ Salman Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992) pp. 9 and 19.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁹² See Jenny Clegg, *Fu Manchu and the 'Yellow Peril': The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire, Trentham Books, 1994).

⁹³ Sanderson presented a paper at the international conference 'Feminism in China Since the Women's Bell,' held at Fudan University, Shanghai, 16-19 June, 2004, as part of the panel, 'Embodying Feminism, Re-Envisioning Chinese Contemporary Art,' organised by Sasha Su-Ling Welland. The exhibition, 'Cruel/Loving Bodies,' co-ordinated by Welland, was organised concurrently for Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai and 798 Gallery, Beijing, 2004. A version of Sanderson's paper appears in the exhibition catalogue, *Cruel /Loving Bodies* (Shanghai: Duolun Museum of Modern Art, 2004).

Mutations and reinventions of name mark successive generations of migrations, responses to shifting socio-cultural frames and idiosyncracies of language and place: last-names become first-names, and first-names last; English names are given or adopted, and Chinese names dropped, combined or hyphenated: Westernisation and assimilation eventually appear complete, at least on paper. Maxine Hong Kingston has suggested, “The Chinese I know hide their names; sojourners take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence.”⁹⁴ Seemingly painless transitions bely the lengthy, perhaps unending procedures towards ‘naturalisation’ and ‘flexible citizenry,’ and the convoluted histories that traverse Singapore, Mauritius, South Africa, South China, Canada, or the Caribbean, departing from the usual stories, or their expectation.⁹⁵ Such trajectories point to the existence of narratives marginalised within already marginalised narratives, their ‘transgressions’ alerting us to the wider historical and cultural contingencies between ‘majorities,’ ‘minorities,’ and diasporas, usually perceived as discrete and coherent entities occupying equally discrete territories, with segregated cultures and heritages in tow.

As the recently minted moniker ‘British-Chinese’ gains and loses currency – a novelty for some, a wearisome label for others – each invocation triggers one or another attempt to articulate an affiliation or otherwise to the terms in tandem and apart. That a complicated and variable neither-one-nor-other identity could be so concisely framed might prove momentarily satisfying or discomfiting: swept into a collective ethno-national category, swept under the weight and weightlessness of a name that proffers the impossible – a seemingly irresistibly seamless suturing of languages, cultures, generations and geographies. For some, ‘Chineseness’ remains as an atemporal, immutable if somewhat elusive element, arguably affirmed by birthplace, kinship, language and culture. For others, voluntary or forced relocations and dispersals of family and community make difficult notions of heritage in unevenly / inequitably bi- or multi-linguistic and cultural environments. A one-time readiness to identify with ‘British Chinese’ might now be replaced by hesitancy; rather than abandon the term altogether, it is deployed with caution.⁹⁶

Perhaps, with caution, we can displace the notion of the ‘quintessential’ with the ‘rudimentary’ (sic): a ‘rudemental Britishness’ – or ‘Chineseness’ – with imperfect, pidgin beginnings, improvised and undeveloped. ‘Rude’ in the sense of roughly made, sometimes impolite and offensive, lacking subtlety or accuracy – its shortcomings necessarily recognised if it is to somehow belong to those disparate subjects and communities it presently excludes and elides. Perhaps we can also retrieve those bureaucratically-unfriendly, cumbersome and

⁹⁴ Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, first published 1976; (London: Picador, 1981) p.13.

⁹⁵ For example, the South African-born artist, Anthony Key, whose work is discussed in the next chapter, spent his childhood and youth negotiating a volatile grey space between ‘black’ and ‘white,’ his negatively-determined legal status – not ‘white’, nor ‘colored’ but ‘non-white’ – subsuming his Chinese ethnicity. Interview with the artist, 11 June 2002, unpublished.

⁹⁶ See for example my text, ‘Anthony Key,’ in *Empire and I*, exhibition catalogue (London: Terra Incognita, 1999).

inconvenient long-handed arts council nomenclatures, “people who are of Asian, African and Caribbean descent,” to insist upon a degree of visibility, even as the terms on offer are not really cumbersome enough, invariably belying the contention, unruliness and leakage of categories. Dispensing with pies (and pots), we might then begin to articulate a rudemental ‘black british anglo asian Chinese yellow red white blue-ness---’, or a ‘british born south-eastern / northern / southern-schooled london-based hongkong-chinese English broken-cantonese-ness---’ – subjects in the make-shifting, inauthentic, ambivalent and impure, whose self-taught inscriptions, appropriations and improvisations, historical, economic, linguistic and cultural necessities are more ‘pidgin-all’ than original. As “de-originated” subjects,⁹⁷ yet time and again mistaken for some ‘other’ and an ‘elsewhere,’ it is often necessary to claim careful contingency to so many historical, cultural and political legacies of the marginal, and yet to insist upon the indiscretion of unnatural denominations. For ‘these colours run’;⁹⁸ and, as the Vietnamese-American-postcolonial-feminist-artist-intellectual-filmmaker-theorist-hybrid⁹⁹ Trinh T. Minh-ha has said, “categories always leak.” Remembering too, Ien Ang:

If I am inescapably Chinese by *descent*, I am only sometimes Chinese by *consent*.
When and how is a matter of politics.¹⁰⁰

Given the right timing, as an opening – though never closing – gambit, is it possible to play a ‘false hand’? To consent, sometimes, to several names, always at least and not-quite ‘yellow and british and asian and white and chinese and black---’, never curtailed to the one? Such play intimates at least two-way flow between ‘British’ and ‘Chinese’ cultures, and the subjective and collective necessity of an at least “double-consciousness”¹⁰¹ in the face of at least ‘triple binds.’¹⁰² As Hall reminds us, “belonging is a tricky concept,” the difficulty falling on the inaudible and not-always visible, yet persistent, hyphen, that signals the conflictual yet necessary intertwinings of mutually imbricated identities and histories; its “predicament and potency” or ‘trickiness’ lies in negotiating difference as neither fixed nor interchangeable components, but as contingent and unstable processes, sometimes untranslatable. To borrow from Trinh, the challenge of the hyphenated reality lies in the ‘becoming’ British (-) Chinese –

⁹⁷ “Alongside each utterance, one might say that off-stage voices can be heard... in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is lost in the vast perspective of the *already-written*) de-originate the utterance...” Roland Barthes, *S/Z* trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), cited in Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.50.

⁹⁸ Lesley Sanderson, *These Colours Run*, mixed media installation, 1994.

⁹⁹ After Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an elaboration of her reference to “the academic/intellectual/artistic hybrid,” displacing the divisional, diagonal stroke with a hyphen, marking thus a conjunction, division, a break in sense, an omission. Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) p. x.

¹⁰⁰ Ien Ang, ‘On Not Speaking Chinese: Diasporic Identifications and Postmodern Ethnicity,’ in Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) pp.21-36, p.36.

¹⁰¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993), p.1.

¹⁰² Trinh T.Minh-ha, ‘Commitment form the Mirror-Writing Box,’ in Trinh, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989) p.6.

... a transient and constant state: one is born over and over again as hyphen rather than as fixed entity... refusing to settle down in one (tubicolous) world or another.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ “Since the routes by which the minorities have travelled to this identity are different in some crucial respects from that taken by native people, they are unlikely to feel 'British' in exactly the same way. That is why the hyphen - Black-British, British-Asian - persists.” Stuart Hall, ‘A Question of Identity (II)’, *The Observer*, 15 October, 2000. “The challenge of the hyphenated reality lies in the hyphen itself: the *becoming* Asian-American; the realm in-between, where predetermined rules cannot fully apply.” Trinh T. Minh-ha, ‘Bold Omissions and Minute Depictions,’ in Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) pp.155-166.

Take Outs

How to Wave Flags

In Anthony Key's *Free Delivery* (1998) [Figs.5,6], a map of the British Isles sits atop a military-style table, its papery topography delicately punctured by a swathe of miniature red flags. Each proclaims the name of a Chinese restaurant or takeaway, a procession of Bamboo Inns and Golden Dragons, Silver Lakes and Peking Gardens, usurping conventional landmarks to stake territories far and near. From metropolitan centres to rural outposts, these banners herald a steady encroachment in scattered guise, curiously transforming the landscape, unexpectedly uniting an otherwise discordant kingdom.¹

If flags speak of nations, empires, conquests, contests, and allegiances, *Free Delivery* can be located within historical continua of artistic interventions and contestations from within and traversing the West (from Jasper Johns to David Hammons, Sung Ho Choi to Kary Ka Che Kwok), speaking particularly to appropriations and usurpations of the Union Jack by its others. This history was approached some five years earlier, when artist and curator Eddie Chambers had organised the exhibition, 'Black People and the British Flag.'² Dating the Union Jack back to 1801, when Ireland joined Scotland, Wales and England in the United Kingdom, when "the cash from slavery was still rolling and the glory days of the British Empire were only just beginning," Chambers writes,

... the British flag has increasingly come to symbolise little more than British bigotry, racism, intolerance, and the remaining vestiges of the '*Rule Britannia*' Empire mentality. In more recent times, and to an irreversible degree, the British flag has been aggressively co-opted by right-wing groups such as the National Front, who peppered the streets and public utilities of Britain with ugly little 'flag' stickers (or stickers using the red white and blue colours) inviting patriotic Brits to kick shit out of Black people, then write in for more details....

It is now widely accepted that the British flag was degenerated into not much more than a vile and nauseous symbol of 'British' (or to more specific, a certain type of vulgar white working class *English*) jingoism.³

The persistent failure of Britain to acknowledge or recognise the centuries of contributions made by Black people in the development and prosperity of the country and its empire, and the tensions of the immediately preceding decade – "the fire-storm years of protest marches, petitions, smash-ups, burn outs and sit downs as Black and Asian areas of the English cities

¹ Anthony Key, *Free Delivery* (1998), wood, map, printed flags.

² *Black People and the British Flag*, curated by Eddie Chambers, Cornerhouse, Manchester and City Gallery, Leicester, in collaboration with inIVA, 1993.

³ Eddie Chambers, *Black People and the British Flag*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated (Cornerhouse, Manchester and City Gallery, Leicester; London: inIVA, 1993).

cried out against unacceptable conditions, racist violence and policing"⁴ – forcefully determined Chambers' view that the flag can offer "[no] prospect whatsoever of ever being any use to us, politically or in any other sense." In his final analysis, "Black people and the British flag are ultimately irreconcilable."⁵

And yet the exhibition itself paradoxically demonstrated the 'usefulness' of the flag for artists whose tactical appropriations insist upon the emblem's political, historical, racial and cultural underpinnings and shortcomings, its ramifications and repressions, its power and fragility. Chambers' own early work, *Destruction of the National Front* (1980), which juxtaposes the Union Flag with the National Front symbol, progressively disjointed and fragmented over four panels, makes blunt the affiliation between nationalism and fascism, its systematic dissolution suggesting a resolute resistance and will to overcome.⁶ The inclusion of David Hammons' *African American Flag* (1990) [Fig.7] in the show, which sees another patriotic red, white and blue transposed into the pan-African red, gold and green, implied an affinity between parallel political struggles, situating 'Black British' politics within a 'black atlantic' context,⁷ while representing a less separatist, antagonistic perspective from which histories might begin to be redressed, and some sort of reconciliation or assimilation imagined, albeit idealised.⁸

Beyond the context of Chambers' show, these politics and histories are inflected with immigrant experiences in Sung Ho Choi's installation made in the same period, *American Dream* (1988-1992),⁹ [Fig.8] which like Hammons' use of the stars and stripes, inevitably evokes the late 1950s avant-garde pop iconography of Jasper Johns. Choi conflates flag and target, the ideological promise rather than geographic reality of America constituting the immigrant's goal, an ambivalent dream-landscape braided with Korean-language newspapers stories of immigrant struggles. Below it sits an open suitcase brimming with used kimchi jars, the kimchi (Korean spicy pickled cabbage) replaced with clippings from the *New York Times*, representing "an accumulation of time spent in America, in which private memories of Korea have been exchanged for American realities."¹⁰ In the later *American Pie* (1996), a ceiling mural commissioned for a New York public school, Choi's flag-target-pie chart is divided into

⁴ Sarat Maharaj, 'Introduction: Black Art's Autobiography,' in Gilane Tawadros and Victoria Clarke, eds., *Run Through The Jungle: Selected Writings by Eddie Chambers* (London: inIVA, 1999) p.4.

⁵ Chambers, *ibid.*

⁶ Eddie Chambers, *Destruction of the National Front* (1980), collage.

⁷ Paul Gilroy, 'The Black Atlantic as Counterculture of Modernity,' in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) pp.1-40.

⁸ David Hammons, *African American Flag* (1990). The American flag has also been a recurring motif in Faith Ringgold's work: *The American People Series #18: The Flag is Bleeding* (1967), oil on canvas; *The Black Light Series: Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger* (1969), oil on canvas; *Flag Story Quilt* (1985), acrylic on canvas, dyed, painted and pieced fabric; *The Flag is Bleeding #2* (1997), acrylic on canvas; painted and pieced border.

⁹ Sung Ho Choi, *American Dream* (1988-1992), acrylic, newspaper, wood, glass jars, suitcase.

¹⁰ Sharon Mizota, 'Sung Ho Choi,' in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, eds., *Fresh Talk / Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003) p.93.

forty-nine 'slices' "symbolizing the dream of entitlement."¹¹ Incorporating newspaper clippings in a variety of languages – "public, quotidian documents of the diversity of immigrant life in the United States" – some might read the de-personalised Imagery as an evolution, "from a symbol of immigrant disillusionment to one of affirmation and acceptance,"¹² although affirmation and acceptance do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Over the latter half of the twentieth century... several factors have emerged to challenge the framework of national identity and the sovereignty of the nation-state: among them, the migration of peoples from disparate cultures (notably the ex-colonies) into the West, and the new media operating through transnational communications and corporatism which do not necessarily follow national agendas. As a result, British culture has become more overtly heterogeneous. The characteristics of national identity previously constructed by a self-interested élite class are now inadequate to define a nation composed of multiple ethnic, class and religious communities, each with differing and sometimes conflicting worldviews. Thus, the new and diverse ethnicities within the European metropolis have created a crisis in those cultural identities assumed to be unique and homogeneous. What have emerged in Britain are overlapping cultural and national identities, formed as simultaneously 'here' and 'elsewhere', and producing their own temporal and spatial cultural maps whose trajectories only partially intersect with a narrow definition of 'British' identity. With such internal pluralism, what now does it mean to be 'English', 'British', 'Asian British' or 'black British', or 'Italian British', 'Greek British' or Irish British', for that matter?

(Jean Fisher)¹³

Echoing Chambers, Lola Young asserts that the Union Jack "cannot manage the dynamic process of cultural transformation and thus represents no more than an attempt to bind together the disparate elements of an imagined community"; the juxtaposition of Blackness with the red, white and blue constitutes "an irresolvable contradiction".¹⁴ A decade on, the coincidence of the 2002 World Cup and the Queen's Golden Jubilee sees Union Jacks and the avowedly English cross of St George proliferating in streets, hanging in the windows of homes, cornershops, and takeaways.¹⁵ England supporters play at being monarchists (the Queen Mother's death helps to shift apathy to sympathy) and vice versa, a blurring of loyalties summed up in a tabloid front-page image of England captain David Beckham against the flag

¹¹ Sharon Mizota, 'Gallery,' in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, eds., *ibid.*, p.56.

¹² Sharon Mizota, *ibid.*

¹³ Jean Fisher, 'Vitrines from the Pathology Museum,' in Jean Fisher, *Vampire in the Text: Narratives of Contemporary Art* (London: inIVA, 2003) pp.258-259; first published in David Burrows, ed., *Who's Afraid of Red White and Blue?* (Birmingham: ARTicle Press, 1988).

¹⁴ Lola Young, 'The Union Jack: Not Waving But Drowning' in Chambers, ed., *Black People and the British Flag* (London: inIVA, 1993, unpaginated) [ref Benedict Anderson]

¹⁵ "Despite this English devotion to St George, he was feted elsewhere. And here, perhaps, lies his strength and even his relevance today. For George is venerated not just by the Church of England, but by the Orthodox and Coptic churches. He is the patron saint of Aragon, Bavaria, Catalonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Palestine, Portugal, Germany and Greece; and of Moscow, Istanbul, Genoa and Venice (second to St Mark). He is the patron saint of soldiers, cavalry and chivalry; of farmers and field workers, boy scouts and butchers; of horses, riders and saddlers; and of sufferers from leprosy, plague and syphilis. He is - remember Agincourt - the patron saint of archers." Jonathan Glancy, 'By George!' *The Guardian*, 20 June 2002.

of St George, with the inscription, "The King. We love 'im."¹⁶ (The other half of the full-page pullout window poster features the Queen against the Union Jack with the slogan, "The Queen. We love 'er'," although, as one critic argues, "official attempts to feed World Cup fever into the Golden Jubilee only highlight the irrelevance of the Royal Family today. When even the window-poster produced by the patriotic *Sun* puts Beckham on top of the Queen, you know just which institution the British revere."¹⁷) Beckham's image is pasted in windows and shop-fronts, sometimes jostling with posters of the latest Bollywood heartthrob, who happens also, in one instance, to be the owner of the small Midlands chip-shop in which they're displayed.¹⁸

In a scenario that, ten years ago, might have been presumed unlikely, if not impossible, yet today appears less unimaginable than one might expect, different traditional and contemporary cultural heritages seem to combine happily, while football fandom may no longer invoke white racist hooligans but the loyalty – or patriotism – of well-assimilated immigrants to a multicultural host nation. Some sort of 'reconciliation' then, a 'contradiction' resolved – a government-sanctioned idyll of diversity made real? Or a rose-tinted liberal fantasy based on mutual tolerance, belying essentialist and separatist ideologies? Against the backdrop of devolution and the European Union, the resurrection of symbols long seen as "a badge of fascism, nationalism and hooliganism, a gesture of aggression, narrow-mindedness and brutality"¹⁹ continues to raise questions of contemporary, post-imperial constructions of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness' (and, by implication, the grounds against which terms might be constructed in opposition). Key's *Three Lions on a Shirt* (1996) [Figs.11-12],²⁰ an England football shirt with Chinese lions – a counterpoint to the popular anthem, *Three Lions* - heralds the endurance of issues of allegiance and belonging for those whose 'home-coming' is less than assured.

If the question of 'Britishness' has also long been muddled with a London-centric 'Englishness' – Chambers points us to the Union Jack T-shirts emblazoned with 'England' sold in London's tourist shops, and its revivals every time the city is deemed once again to be 'swinging'²¹ – the flag has not only been repeatedly appropriated as "the vehicle for national identifications", but also, as Kevin Davey notes, as a vehicle for dis-identifications and subversions, subjected to "multiple translations and ethnic recolourings – from the ripped t-

¹⁶ *The Sun*, 29 May 2002.

¹⁷ Jennie Bristow, 'Golden Jubilee Blues,' 30 May 2003, <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006D914.htm>

¹⁸ See Timothy Garton Ash, 'Two Flags, One Muddle,' *The Guardian*, 13 June 2002; and Emma Brockes, 'Grease is the Word,' *The Guardian*, 28 November 2002, a profile of Ram Asra, "a major Bollywood heartthrob" who runs a chip-shop in Long Eaton, a small Midlands town near Nottingham.

¹⁹ Jonathan Glancy, 'By George!' *The Guardian*, 20 June 2002.

²⁰ Anthony Key, *Three Lions On A Shirt* (1996), football shirt and badges. The song, *Three Lions*, was written by comedians David Baddiel and Frank Skinner, with Ian Broudie of 'The Lightning Seeds,' as the anthem for the England Euro '96 squad, with the repetitious refrain "football's coming home."

²¹ Chambers, *ibid*.

shirt of Prodigy's lead singer to the browns and yellows of the version worn on the cover of the new Asian style magazine, *Second Generation*.²² Increasingly recognised as "the kernel of an ever-growing debate about what it means to be British – or, closer to the bone and blood, English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish," 'Britishness' presents a dilemma not only for the country's generations of economic and political immigrants, and newer waves of refugees and asylum seekers, but also for its supposed 'natives'.²³ Successively cited by so-called 'British Chinese' artists, 'Young British Artists', and 'Black British' artists, among others, instances range from Vanley Burke's *Flying the Flag* (1968) [Fig.10], a photograph of a young black boy with a Union Jack on the handlebars of his bike in Birmingham to Lesley Sanderson's *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), a drawing depicting the St George flag on the artist's face; from Jonathon Parson's *Achrome* (1994), black and white rendering of the flag, to Colin Graham's *Union Black* (1999), an image made up of names and organisations of Black and Asian origin within British history;²⁴ from Yukinori Yanagi's *Union Jack Ant Farm* (1994) [Fig.9], a perspex-boxed formation in coloured sand progressively disrupted by its ant inhabitants, to Mark Wallinger's *Oxymoron* (1997), the union flag in the colours of the Irish tricolor;²⁵ from Gu Wenda's *United Nations: Hong Kong Monument: The Historical Clash* (1997) [Fig.13], consisting of a Chinese flag made of Chinese hair, a Union Jack made of British hair, and hair cuttings from Hong Kong scattered on the floor, to Mayling To's *NFS Flag – Second Time Around* (1998) [Fig.14], which flies on alternate sides the 'double standard' of the Union Jack and Hong Kong SAR combined;²⁶ and Gonkar Gyatso's *Soft Touch* (2003) [Figs.15,16]²⁷, a floor cushion made from Tibetan brocades and London charity shop shirts, and covered in needles.

²² Kevin Davey, *English Imaginaries* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), p.117.

²³ "For some, an older generation, it symbolises a time of greater certainty, when Britain had an empire, the king was on his throne and a pound was worth a pound... For [others] it represents outdated political and social beliefs: it can be read as the standard under which Ireland was annexed and subdued with the subtlety of a sledgehammer. It can be seen as the banner of an empire that made white people feel superior to black people. It has been worn as a badge of fascism, nationalism and hooliganism, a gesture of aggression, narrow-mindedness and brutality." Jonathan Glancey *The Guardian*, 5 January 2000.

²⁴ Vanley Burke's *Flying the Flag* (1968), black and white photograph; Lesley Sanderson's *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), pencil on paper; Johnathan Parsons, *Achrome* (1994), sewn polyester flag with rope and toggle; Colin Graham's *Union Black* (1999), computer-generated image, board.

²⁵ Yukinori Yanagi's *Union Jack Ant Farm* (1994), ants, coloured sand, Perspex; Mark Wallinger, *Oxymoron* (1997), fabric. Wallinger's piece was later echoed by U.S. based artist Jack Daws' *Agreement* (2003); Daws had previously made *White Flag* (2002), an American flag bleached white, and *Reconstruction* (2002), the Confederate flag in colours of the Ethiopian flag.

²⁶ Gu Wenda, *United Nations: Hong Kong Monument: The Historical Clash* (1997), ink, rice paper, hair. Part of an ongoing series, the *United Nations* installations have been sited in Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, Holland, Hong Kong, Japan, Italy, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, and the United States. *The Mythos of Lost Dynasties: Wenda Gu 1984-1997* (Hong Kong: Hanart TZ Gallery, 1997), exhibition catalogue; Mayling To, *NFS flag – Second Time Around* (1998), acrylic, cotton.

²⁷ Gonkar Gyatso, *Soft Touch* (2003); made specifically for the exhibition, 'Leave to Remain' at the Central Space, London, the title is a pun on a phrase used to describe Britain as an easy target for asylum seekers.

With Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 and misplaced fears of an influx of Hong-Kong Chinese immigrants renewed, Key's sweeping of the late nineties British landscape with military standards offered a teasing provocation. Soon after, Mayling To raised her *NFS Flag* in a café interior of an arts organisation in Brixton, London, marking and intervening at a literal and metaphorical threshold, alluding both to the communities and histories invested in the locality and the ownership of a particular public space, and the contestations and negotiations over another. The Union Jack presides provocatively, yet closer inspection reveals a white flower against a red background on its reverse. The Hong Kong flag's central motif of a bauhinia or *bauhinia blakeana*, an 'impure' orchid botanically unique to Hong Kong and classified as a "chance hybrid" of unknown parentage, aptly reflects Hong Kong's indeterminate and contested origins, while its name, derived from one of its early governors, binds Hong Kong's colonial history to its postcolonial identity.²⁸ Adopted as the emblem of Hong Kong in 1965, the bauhinia represents not nation but region, retaining 'special administrative' status with the transfer of power from one sovereignty to another, from colonial master to motherland. The five stars and colour red symbolic of China are incorporated into its design as if to suggest Hong Kong's independence and self-determined character, inverting relations of power intimated on handover night, when China's flag rose literally over and above that of Hong Kong.

If the bauhinia's sterility is suggestive of Hong Kong's political impotence, its propagation from graftings nonetheless offers a metaphor for the historical migrations and 'para-sitical' adaptations of its at once 'native' and 'migrant' subjects.²⁹ To's *NFS Flag* – in actual fact a tea-towel – suggestively demarcates and domesticises both territory and subjects at stake, evoking duplicitous and ambiguous loyalties, sovereignties, nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities, brought 'home' to a place in itself at least double. Inspired by a tea-towel found in a charity shop, bearing the slogan 'Dry British' across the centre, To's oscillating version finds the slogan alternating with 'Wry Chinese'. 'Dry British / Wry Chinese': a coupling in which an exhortation to patriotic dish-drying activities begins to read instead as a statement of temperament, the one hinging upon the other; if the British are a 'dry' lot – "impassive; unsympathetic; hard; cold" ('dry' also carrying the meaning, interestingly, of advocating free trade), then their one-time colonial Chinese subjects are 'wry' – "contorted in disgust, disappointment, or mockery."³⁰

'Wry Chinese' might also be heard as 'Why Chinese', an affectation of poor pronunciation, an instance of Chinglish or latterday 'Chinese Pidgin English' (CPE), originally a form of linguistic exchange engendered by early trade in tea between China and Britain, to which the tea-towel

²⁸ The *bauhinia blakeana* was named after Sir Henry Blake, governor of Hong Kong from 1898 to 1903.

²⁹ "... para-sites... never take over a field in its entirety but erode it slowly and tactically..." Rey Chow, 'Introduction,' in Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp.1-26.

as flag obliquely alludes. The probable etymology of tea from the Chinese via the Dutch to the seventeenth century English 'tay' / 'tey', signal its historical arrival in Britain, the precedent of Dutch trade, the later monopoly of the British East India Company on commerce in China and India, and wider affinities between domesticity and empire.³¹ Tea exported from China was bought with opium imported from India, the former the most important source of profit for the British government, the latter an illegal trade which China's attempts to resist led directly to the Opium Wars in mid-nineteenth-century China and the subsequent cession of Hong Kong and the New Territories 'in perpetuity'.³² To's flag speaks of split sovereignties, loyalties, affinities; hybrid origins, the 'roots' and routes of identity as economic and political formations. The raising of the flag is a territorial act, an uncertain claim to 'British Hong Kong Chinese' identity, the honouring and remembering of an irresolvable, irreducible dilemma.

Inglorious Food

Key's vision of a 'Chinese British Isles,' a Britain over-run and co-opted by an immigrant other, plays upon and makes mock of historically contradictory cultural perceptions of Chinese in Britain. These hark back to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century racist ideologies that proliferated disproportionately to the then-small concentrations of Chinese in London's and Liverpool's docks. Media representations continuously identified the Chinese as servile and submissive, "lowly and hardworking",³³ yet their perceived passivity and insularity also provoked suspicion and speculation, inspiring "tales of drug trafficking, secret societies and seductions of young white women", and feeding wider fears of an imminent 'yellow peril'.³⁴ Following Dragon Palace dictates ('palate' dictates?) *Free Delivery* stages a small-scale enactment, an invasion and inversion whereby one imperial power consumes another. However, the vaunting of a foreboding 666 flags (representing some 2000 establishments) is striking less for its triumphalism, than for the simple effect of making visible a presence which has until recent years remained largely unacknowledged across historical, cultural and

³⁰ Delia Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

³¹ A recent exhibition at the The British Library's on the East India Company met with protests from the Chinese community and criticisms from the media for 'Whitewashing the past'. "In its day, the company occupied and manipulated the interstices of a truly global economy. Tea from China was bought with opium from India; Indian and later British textiles (made from cotton grown in India) purchased slaves in west Africa, who were sold in the Americas for gold and silver, which was invested in England, where the sugar harvested by the slaves ensured a booming market for the tea from China. The big winners sat in the City of London. The more numerous losers could be found in every corner of the globe." Mike Marquese, 'Whitewashing the past', *The Guardian*, 24 May 2002.

³² For a discussion of another 'imperial commerce,' see Anne McClintock, 'Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising,' in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) pp.304-315.

³³ Chinese began to appear in British ports such as Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool and London from the late eighteenth century, mostly male, mostly seamen comprising "a lowly, hardworking [community]". Hugh Baker, "Branches All Over: The Hong Kong Chinese in the United Kingdom," in Ronald Skeldon, ed., *Reluctant Exiles?* (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1994) p.292.

³⁴ As epitomised by the popular fictional villain Fu Manchu, the creation of writer Sax Rohmer, which appeared in popular fiction and a succession of B-movies from the 1920s to the 1960s. See Jenny Clegg, *Fu Manchu and the 'Yellow Peril': The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire: Trentham Books, 1994), p. ix.

political spheres.³⁵ Alluding to the economic niche occupied by the largely Hong Kong Chinese following their large-scale immigration to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, thereby privileging the catering trade over other industries and professions, Key's map reflects the dominant narrative behind the widespread settlement and dispersal of Chinese in Britain over the last half-century. Each methodical, handwritten inscription adds to a sense of homage, even as the difficulty in differentiating one flag from another risks the reduction of the particular to the generic. The extent of the dissemination of Chinese across Britain may be surprising to some, yet, confined as this surveyed presence is to by and large welcome incursions within the specific territory of hitherto austerity-impooverished cuisine, the 'mock-peril' may only elicit a 'mock-fear'. In this seemingly inevitable expansion, are the Chinese staking a claim or do they remain in service? The title promises 'something for nothing,' a one-sided exchange; or does it hint at an ambiguous emancipation? The amusing yet unsettling sight of a 'Chinese British Isles,' sinified by stealth and delivered by a weakness of stomach unto the tables and counters of innumerable restaurants and takeaways, gently turns notions of assimilation around – back to front, belly up.³⁶

Free Delivery relates to a larger body of work in which Key explores perceptions of 'Chineseness' within the contexts of migration and diaspora, playing on the fears and aspirations of immigrant and host, processes of assimilation and integration, and playing with supposedly discrete cultures of food and consumption. *Yellow Peril* (1997) [Fig.17] sees hundreds of bottles of soy sauce 'flooding' a gallery space.³⁷ Again, Key parodies the dreaded influx of immigrants (all looking the same), anticipating Anthony Gormley's later ethnicised spin on his own universalist visions of humanity in *Asian Field* (2003) [Fig.18],³⁸ an alternative terracotta army of in which 'Everyman' is Chinese. Key's innumerable subjects advance portentously, absurdly reduced, however, to a symbol of the industry with which they are most readily identified. The 'threat' is served up as both indictment and palliative – a mirror to preconceptions, an assurance of harmlessness, a salty condiment to ease consumption, or a pollutant and poison in disguise. (The sea of soy might invoke for a bilingual few the warning, "Ham see ahl / Death by salt!" – a melodramatic caution against an unlikely though not impossible hazard.)

³⁵ The number of restaurant proprietors and managers in Britain rose from thirty six in 1951 to some seven thousand in 1984, with growth slowing down since the 1970s. Baker, op.cit., p.295.

³⁶ As does the opening of the first English takeaway, or fish and chip shop in Beijing in the summer of 2004, by two Chinese friends with British wives. Louisa Lim, 'The Beijing chippy,' *From Our Own Correspondent*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 12 June 2004.

³⁷ Anthony Key, *Yellow Peril* (1997), soy sauce bottles.

³⁸ Anthony Gormley, *Asian Field* (2003-2004), 192,000 clay figures made by villagers from the Huadu district in Guangzhou, first installed in Guangzhou, and subsequently in Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing. David Ward, '380,000 eyes fulfil a sculptor's vision: Antony Gormley collaborates with Chinese villagers on huge project,' *The Guardian*, 25 March 2003.

Soy sauce has been deployed by other artists as a surrogate for calligraphy ink or sepia tint (Hongtu Zhang and Phung Huynh³⁹), its substance replicated via the installation of a small-scale fermentation factory in a gallery (Phillip Lai⁴⁰), and thrown from the bottle in battle as part of a soy/ketchup fight/performance piece (Cai Yuan and JJ Xi⁴¹). In contrast to this later anarchic, animated amalgamation, Key's 'self-portrait', *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997) [Fig.21], a ketchup bottle filled with soy sauce, stands still, a sculptural 'still-life' that might be read as "foreign contents in a western body... an integrated body comfortable with itself,"⁴² a moment in an one-way transformation of acculturation, and addition to numerous metaphors that speak of fears of racial, ethnic and cultural 'dilution', from the outside in, or inside out (for example, 'banana' and 'bamboo' – yellow on the outside, white on the inside). The revelation that 'ketchup' derives from the Cantonese Chinese 'ke chap' for 'tomato sauce' casts doubt on the purity of origins and simplistic notions of assimilation; it is 'Englishness' as much as 'Chineseness' that is called into question.

Intimations of mutual change and exchange are also invoked in *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997) [Fig.22], in which a knife and fork are painstakingly carved into the ends of a pair of chopsticks. Meanwhile, *McDonalds Napkin (Naturalisation Series)* (1997) strikes a slightly different note, rendering the disposable serviette of the ubiquitous fast-food giant in embroidered Chinese silk. Countering cultures of mass-production with the handmade, Key pitches the modern against the traditional, high against low, and 'West' against 'East', in knowing yet troubling oppositions, Hongtu Zhang resorting to similar tactics in his later *Mai Dang Lao* and *Kekou-Kele* (2003) [Figs.19,20]. A similar inversion occurs in Key's *Peking Duck* (1996), in which three takeaway cartons of the eponymous dish rise diagonally, right to left, across a wall.⁴³ A play on the ceramic flying ducks typical of a particular clichéd, nostalgic image of English domesticity, these cooked birds make an improbable journey 'West'; impulses to 'home' and migrate are unevenly allied, the latter ill-fated flock destined for literal and metaphorical consumption.

The takeaway carton is a recurring material in Key's work, deployed in the singular and elevated to a plinth in *Stir-Fry with the Sound of its Own Making* (1997). A direct reference to

³⁹ See for example Hongtu Zhang's *Soy Book* (1994 – 1995), soy sauce, rice paper and plywood; and *Soy Calligraphy: The Sweat-shop Help Wanted Ad* (1996), soy sauce on rice paper, sealed in epoxy resin. Phung Huynh uses soy to achieve a sepia tone in the painting, *You Will Attract Cultured and Artistic People to Your Home* (2001), oil and mixed media on unstretched canvas.

⁴⁰ Co-commissioned by The Showroom, London and inIVA (the institute of International Visual Arts), Phillip Lai produced two distinct but linked environments, one a working soy-sauce fermentation unit and the other a room with 'automatic' drawings on the gallery walls and skulls mounted on sticks. *Phillip Lai*, The Showroom (1997).

⁴¹ Cai Yuan and Jian Jun Xi, *Naked Soy Sauce and Ketchup Fight At Buckingham Palace* (2000), performance. Nick Paton Walsh, 'It's a new Cultural Revolution,' *The Observer*, 11 June 2000.

⁴² Anthony Key, *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), ketchup bottle, soy sauce; unpublished artist's statement (2002).

⁴³ Anthony Key, *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997), chopsticks; *McDonalds Napkin (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), napkin, embroidery thread; *Peking Duck* (1996), takeaway cartons.

Robert Morris' *Box with the Sound of its own Making* (1961),⁴⁴ Key's take transferring the troubling of the notion that an art object might somehow 'contain' an inherent meaning, onto the work of objectifying the 'other', her/his metonymic construction a process. Cooking sounds emanate, a sample recording from a series of audio cassettes of Chinese takeaway dishes being prepared by the artist. The exposition of hidden labour mimics the self-reflexivity of the post/modern artist, an introspection in which the economies of culinary and fine arts coalesce, with little disclosed of their agents. Elsewhere, the cartons are stacked upside-down and bound to resemble a miniature of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank [Fig.23], a well-known Hong Kong architectural landmark and symbol of Chinese economic success;⁴⁵ arranged like gold bullion bars to evoke the dreams of wealth anticipated in nineteenth century migrants' name for San Francisco – 'Gam Saan' (Gold Mountain);⁴⁶ or assembled into the form of a monumental Chinese lion or 'Foo dog', usually found in pairs guarding the entrances to temples, palaces as well as homes and businesses such as restaurants, here comically galvanized into a solitary, invading body, a mythical creature whose danger and further hybridisation are intimated by the cross-cultural references in its name, *Trojan Horse (Foo Dog)* (1999) [Fig.24].⁴⁷

Another monument is mimicked and miniaturised in Key's *Great Wall* (1998) [Fig.25], a demonstration of the necessity and inevitability of subjective and cultural reinvention and transformation.⁴⁸ Like others before him who have attempted to walk its length, salvage its ruins or reproduce it,⁴⁹ Key symbolically appropriates the border to challenge the integrity of the cultures it mythically contains and excluded; *Great Wall* takes the English for a structure called 'The Long Wall' in Chinese, to name a temporary and incomplete version of comparatively modest scale, dissecting the space with 'bricks' cast from cartons. Two kingdoms, 'United' and 'Middle', are displaced, those dispersed to their margins commemorated by the throwaway-made-monumental. The ambiguous boundary demarcates not China, nor a 'Chineseness' intact, but the shifting territories, relations and permeable

⁴⁴ Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (1961), walnut box, speaker, and three-and-one-half-hour recorded tape.

⁴⁵ Anthony Key, *Hong Kong Shanghai Bank* (1996), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁶ Anthony Key, *Gam Sann* (1997), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁷ Anthony Key, *Trojan Horse (Foo Dog)* (1999), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁸ Anthony Key, *Great Wall* (1999), cast bricks.

⁴⁹ For example, Xu Bing's *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* (1990), a performance in which the artist and a crew of students and peasants made ink rubbings of a thirty metre section of the wall, over twenty four days, to produce a paper wall subsequently exhibited as an installation; Zheng Lianjie's *Big Explosion Series* (1993), photographs documenting a performance in which fallen bricks are recovered, bound in ribbon and placed along the top of the wall; and Marina Abramovich and Ulay's *The Lovers* (1988), a performance in which the artists set out from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China, walking for ninety days and over 1,250 miles to meet in the middle. See Wu Hung, 'Counter-Monument,' in Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago UP, 1999), pp.30-34; C. Carr, 'A Great Wall,' in C. Carr, *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993) pp.25-48. I also draw on personal notes on Gao Minglu's unpublished paper 'Wall as intermediary: Chinese art in a global context,' presented at the conference, 'Contemporary Chinese Art in the International Arena,' British Museum, London, in collaboration with Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 18 – 20 April, 2002.

interfaces between native and emigrant, host and immigrant. Inside out and outside in, the 'majority-minority', 'same-other' view across the wall – an opaque looking-glass – is disorientating; dislocation becomes a shared predicament.

Key's work displays a sensitivity to the immigrant's habit and necessity of perpetual double-taking, of reading and walking between and beyond oppositional lines, invoking 'West' and 'East' in pleurably deceptive union, belying the complexities and aspirations of the displaced. These are perhaps most poignantly evoked by *Wok/Satellite Dish* (1996) [Fig.27],⁵⁰ where the former is positioned on an interior wall to resemble the latter. Food and utensils become globalised commodities, objects and means of cultural exchange and transmission. If mobility is expressed through the acquisition and display of technologically advanced goods, the wok provides both surrogate and vehicle for such ambitions. Recalling the sometime Hong Kong-Chinese slang for those perpetual migrants of a certain class and wealth, 'commuting' between continents as 'astronauts,' *Wok/Satellite Dish* suggests, with pathos, a less affluent subject in orbit; and the loneliness of long distance flights.⁵¹ Elsewhere, the terrestrial realities of life in a new not-yet home are summoned up by *Window 39* (1998), in which a temporary wallpaper of Home Office tickets line the walls of a waiting room. Recalling the days-long queues annually endured over a decade by the artist, among others, as temporary residents seeking to extend stays in Britain, the backdrop of slow queues and stalled journeys is a reminder of the often bureaucratic landscapes of migration.⁵²

Service Not Included

The dominance of the takeaway as a recurring motif in 'British Chinese' art and culture over the last decade affirm its centrality in the consciousness and experiences of both host and immigrant communities, the archetypal British-Chinese institution.⁵³ Work by artists Kwong Lee, Mayling To, Yeu Lai Mo, Julie Fu, and across the performing arts by theatre companies Yellow Earth and Mulan, as well as BiMa Contemporary Dance, have all drawn on the sights, sounds, and paraphernalia of the takeaway in their articulations of British and Chinese cultural exchange and (con)fusion. To and Mo in particular have pointed to the restaurant and takeaway as gendered and sexualised spheres of labour. Deploying ceramics to invoke both traditional Chinese culture and their necessary function as accoutrements in the construction of an 'authentic' experience of cultural and culinary consumption, an experience that often includes service by 'oriental' women in 'oriental' dress, To's early work includes a rice bowl

⁵⁰ Anthony Key, *Wok/Satellite Dish* (1996), wok.

⁵¹ Aihwa Ong, op.cit., p.761.

⁵² Anthony Key, *Window 39* (1998), paper; unpublished artist's statement (2002),

⁵³ See for example Yellow Earth theatre company's *Behind the Chinese Take Away* (1997), directed by Erika Tan and David K.S. Tse (founder and artistic director); BiMa Dance Company's *Chinese Takeaway* (1997), choreographed by Pit Fong Loh (co-founder and artistic director); and Mulan Theatre Company's *Takeaway* (1998), by Stephen Clark, directed by Paul Courtenay-Hyu (artistic director).

which, once emptied, offers the terse reminder, "Waitress Not Included."⁵⁴ Mo's *My Mother's Moulds* (1994) [Fig.28],⁵⁵ a series of taut, wrung dishcloths, bear the imprints of exertion, a prosthetic portrait of a subject articulated through petrified signs of her labour. In *Wok-Wave* (1994) [Figs.28,29],⁵⁶ stylised waters swirl about the shallow well of a cooking pan, caught mid-curl, stilled tidal waves in the manner of Hokusai rising over an inverted sea-bed. Fusing 'high' and 'low' perceptions of the 'East' in the pairing of fast food and print art traditions, the movements of the 'wok-chan' (the wide spatula-like utensil used for stir-frying) and circuits of labour and consumption that pass through the kitchen are evoked alongside the expansive ocean waters crossed in migration and imagination.

Where Key returns repeatedly to the formal possibilities of the carton, and notions of containment and disguise, Mo empties them out to debunk exoticising myths around the consumption of 'foreign food,' with a stress on sensory, visceral experience. Recalling Helen Chadwick's works with food, from *Carcass* (1987) to *Meat Lamps* (1989), which speak to Western academic traditions of still-life, invoking plenitude and decay, notions of beauty, desire, and repulsion, and questioning the limits and borders between and within bodies, Mo's manipulation of animal and vegetable matter transgresses distinctions of sameness and otherness, indigenous and foreign, through culinary combinations that irreverently ignore the sanctity of the anachronistic notion of national cuisine.

In *Yeu Lai's House* (1997) [Fig.30-31],⁵⁷ a mocked-up takeaway interior includes photographic light-box menu combinations, in which cucumber petals circle pools of curry, prawn cracker blooms garnish nests of noodles coiled in sweet and sour sauce, finished with carrot florettes. *Food Jars* (1998) [Figs.32,33] (an unintended pun?) and *Foodscapes* (2000) [Figs.34,35] comprise series of seductive yet stomach-turning vistas in tanks and jars, variously layering chips, noodles, lard, vinegar, vegetables, oil, cornflakes, water, tinned spaghetti, rice, beans, bread, whole chicken, pigs' trotters, ox tripe, goat tripe, brown sauce, curry sauce, tomato ketchup, 'hundred year-old eggs,' black fungi, lily bulbs, and vermicelli – the staple ingredients and condiments of a contemporary 'British Chinese' hybrid kitchen, perhaps.⁵⁸ Tapping the phone of a West Midlands takeaway in the later *Untitled Sound Piece* (2002) [Fig.37], Mo demystifies and deflects myths of the at once supposedly 'exotic' and hygienically dubious contents of Chinese cuisine, by foregrounding the equally exotic and dubious tastes of its clientele.⁵⁹ Brief verbal encounters hint at the sexual and illicit, as cravings are divulged and assured imminent satisfaction. The scenario hints at a subtext of hierarchical, gendered power relations, and 'miscegenation' of a culinary sort, which might, in other contexts, be

⁵⁴ Mayling To, *Warning: Waitress Not Included* (1995), ceramic bowl, ink.

⁵⁵ Yeu Lai Mo, *My Mother's Moulds* (1994), stainless steel shelf, dish cloths set in plaster.

⁵⁶ Yeu Lai Mo, *Wok-Wave* (1994), open etching on iron wok.

⁵⁷ Yeu Lai Mo, *Yeu Lai's House* (1997), the Gallerette, London, and Quay Art Gallery, Kingston upon Hull (2000).

⁵⁸ Yeu Lai Mo, *Food Jars I – VI* (1998), mixed media; *Foodscapes I – III* (2000), mixed media.

more glamorously invoked as 'fusion cuisine.' Yet if food serves as metaphor for sex, and "eating represents consumption in its crudest form,"⁶⁰ those venturing into the "playground"⁶¹ of the other may do well to heed Coco Fusco's reminder that "we who serve you could be eating as well."⁶²

Assimulations (sic)

Both Key and Mo's practices involve deceptively simple acts, droll and disarming – 'set meals' as 'set pieces' consisting of pragmatic, preposterous, and exquisite marriages of convenience and food. Key's work finds popular cultural symbols hybridised, the proverbial rendered familiar and unfamiliar via unexpected transpositions, reversals and inversions.

Preconceptions are played out to their (il)logical conclusions, uprooting certainties, upturning orders – yet provocations and animosities are diverted with a subtle, defensive, deprecating humour.⁶³ Masking mutual vulnerabilities and saving face, 'integration' is enacted, assimilation a sly simulation of harmonious hybridity – a jesting, jousting, or 'passing' to get by. Despite submitting to service not only with a smile, but also licks and kisses⁶⁴ (and almost invariably, chips), Mo's position is less than appeasing, with a menu that proffers assimilation with indigestion. Playing mockingly to happy eaters of the exotic, and desires for cultural consumption as subsumption and literal incorporation, Mo suggests the historical necessity of acculturation by serving exaggerated "stylised adaptation[s] of Chinese cooking to suit British tastes and British purses,"⁶⁵ while her aesthetically striking yet gastronomically challenging arrangements belie a sardonic and nauseated ambivalence toward notions of the hybrid and authentic.

As reviews of Key's work, among that of other so-called 'British Chinese' artists, begin to appear, so parallels with the wider critical reception of mainland Chinese artists in the West are intimated, in terms of the dual, contradictory expectations and desires for indisputable essences or inscrutable differences to be inscribed or manifested, but also dismissed; that is, for 'Chineseness' to be in evidence as a distinguishing marker within the hegemonic languages of contemporary aesthetic discourses, assimilated into Western cultures, yet

⁵⁹ Yeu Lai Mo, *Untitled Sound Piece* (2002), framed photographs, headphones, cassette tape.

⁶⁰ Coco Fusco and Nao Bustamante, 'Stuff,' in Fusco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours* (London: inIVA, 2001), pp.111-127, p.111.

⁶¹ "When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of the specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power over intimate encounters with the other." bell hooks, 'Eating the Other,' in hooks *Black Looks* (1992), pp.21-25, p.23; cited in Fusco, *ibid.*, p.232.

⁶² Fusco, cited in Caroline Vercoe, 'Agency and ambivalence,' in Fusco, *ibid.*, pp.231-246, p.243

⁶³ See Sigmund Freud's essay, 'Humour,' in *Art & Literature*, ed. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1988), pp.426-433.

⁶⁴ Yeu Lai Mo, *Service, Licking, Kissing* (1997), video, 5 mins looped.

⁶⁵ For a history of Chinese takeaways in post-war Britain, and adaptations of cuisine, see J.A.G. Roberts, 'The Globalisation of Chinese Food since 1945,' in Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (London: Reaktion, 2002) pp.161-203, p.

paradoxically 'timeless' and disposable, immutable and irrelevant, a sometime party-trick.

Capricious views are often held wilfully and precariously in balance: the migrant, on the one hand, may be expected to lay the ghost of her or his 'Chineseness' to rest, and on the other hand, to (clairvoyantly?) summon and display an authentic 'otherness' on demand – a 'Chineseness' equivalent to the sum of so many romantic or derogatory exoticising clichés.⁶⁶

Harsh criticisms are typified by the position of mainland Chinese artist, curator and critic, Wang Nanming, who vehemently opposes the "standards placed upon Chinese contemporary art that are defined by Western hegemony and are derived from a forced distinction between Eastern and Western art, as well as the class-like distinctions inherent therein." Deriding the West's evaluation of Chinese contemporary art as "at best, based on outdated and rarified stereotypes," he also targets those "Chinese artists living abroad" whose survival strategy is to carve out a cultural market niche by "conform[ing] to the 'Chinese characteristics' mandated by the West." Arguing that the appropriation and formulation of traditional motifs and symbols into "some 'essential' markers of Chinese-ness" have "hardened into standards by which to measure Chinese-ness" and resulted in the production and perpetuation of a "Chinatown culture," Wang dismisses such work as cultural side-shows, capitulations to the West that simply service the foreign tourism industry.⁶⁷

Almost as if taking orders at a trade fair, China's local curators, critics, and artists busily vie for a way in... the so-called 'contemporary art' of China's tourist culture has departed from its own audience and culture, largely to offer Western audiences the romance of faraway, imagined lands.⁶⁸

Wang's indictment is also a call for 'contemporary Chinese art' to engage "its own audience and culture",⁶⁹ a priority reflected in "current Chinese criticism." Academic and curator, Wu Hung, distinguishes these writings from comparable Western studies, which demonstrate strong connections to specific cities, institutions and social contexts within China, and thereby "reveal regional and institutional variations inside contemporary Chinese art." 'Chinese art' is considered "an independent tradition with its own missions and dilemmas"; like Wang, "most of [these critics] oppose the kind of 'fake' Chinese art created in their view to cater to western tastes based on orientalist fascination of Cold War rhetoric."⁷⁰

While the implication is that 'real' Chinese art is authenticated by engaging audiences and social and political contexts within local, regional and national frameworks – conflating cultural and geographical boundaries – it would seem that those artists of Chinese ethnicity and

⁶⁶ The predicament of 'contemporary Chinese art' in terms of the expectations and interpretations of different audiences are articulated in Stanley K. Abe's essay, 'No Questions, No Answers: China and *A Book from the Sky*,' in Rey Chow, ed. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), pp.227-250.

⁶⁷ Wang Nanming, trans. Robert Bernell, 'The Shanghai Art Museum should not become a market stall in China for Western hegemony,' in Wu Hung ed., *ibid.*, pp.265-268.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.268.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.268.

heritage born or based outside of China are disqualified from speaking of or to the question of 'Chineseness.' For some, attempts to address resultant experiences and dilemmas of dislocation and "transmigration between cultures"⁷¹ are automatically invalidated for failing to be 'true' in the sense of authentic, but also in the sense of loyal – seen instead to be pandering to the tastes and whims of the West. Categorised by one critic as a preference for "works that appear political, fashionable, subversive, psychopathic, mixed in with a little of China's traditional art... with a pinch of postmodernism"⁷² Charges of inauthenticity come from the West too; Francesca dal Lago observes that while the likes of Cai Guoqiang, Chen Zhen, Wang Du and Huang Yongping (artists from mainland China living and working in Europe and the United States since the late eighties and early nineties), find "the purity of their 'Chineseness'... often disputed by fellow artists and critics in mainland China", they have also become "a stable fixture in any 'serious' multicultural art show" precisely on account of "their supposedly 'authentic' Chinese character." Again making a distinction between artists based in and out of China, dal Lago rebukes "the ingratiating works of artists versed in Western artistic practices" who capitalize on ready supplies of ignorance and awe by employing cryptic and esoteric "'Chinese'-indexed symbolism," to construct a version of 'Chinese' contemporary art – rarely seen by a Chinese public, created either in Europe, America or China, but mostly exhibited, judged and prized in Western contexts..."⁷³

Praised by others for their invocations of contemporary postcolonial discourses of globalisation and migration, accusations of dilution, capitulation and betrayal persist. The devaluation of artists of Chinese descent neither born nor based in China is made possible by the presupposition of a geographically bound, imaginary core of 'Chineseness', that denies its historical and contemporary ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, a myth perpetually resuscitated by Western and Chinese critics alike. Artists in the West who wear their problematic 'Chineseness' on the sleeve may find that they simultaneously please, fool, bemuse and aggravate their audiences, in search of varieties of authenticity; artists who fail to do so play an obvious game, seeking perhaps to evade a dilemma, risk disappointment and dismissal for their lack, reduced to imitators, parodists. Featured in a group exhibition themed not by ethnicity but food, Key was nevertheless singled out by a reviewer for his 'Chineseness,' a difference noted inconsequentially and without elaboration;⁷⁴ an instance of the 'harmless' habitual distinction of those outside the 'norm' of an unspoken 'white ethnicity,'

⁷⁰ Wu Hung, 'Reflections on Contemporary Chinese Art by Chinese Critics,' in Wu Hung ed., *ibid*, pp.68-70.

⁷¹ Huang Du, 'Existence of Art and Cultural Identity: Changes in Chinese Contemporary Art and its Position,' in Wu Hung ed, pp.82-90, p.84.

⁷² Zhu Qi, 'Do Westerners Really Understand Chinese Avant Garde Art?' in John Clark ed., *Chinese Art at the End of the Millenium: Chinese-art.com 1998-1999* (Hong Kong: New Art Media, 2000) pp.55-60.

⁷³ Francesca dal Lago, 'Chinese Art at the Venice Biennale: The Virtual Reality of Chinese Contemporary Art,' in John Clark ed., *op.cit.*, pp.158-166.

⁷⁴ Neal Brown, 'Wait and See (What's for Dinner?): Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne,' *Frieze*, November-December 1997, issue 37, pp.87-88.

which serves to reaffirm the latter's continued hegemony like a reflex (a habit that begins to register if the reverse is imagined and all the artists in the show, excepting Key, are systematically qualified as 'white'). Another critic has summarised Key's work as "Warhol pop and Koons-pap given an extra-ironic immigrant twist,"⁷⁵ the artist reduced to a clever signatorial flourish, an ethnic embellishment, a witty but mere addendum to the post/modernist tale. Happily falling back on orientalist suppositions and colonial expectations, yet another concludes, "The East accomodates itself to life in the West."⁷⁶ Checking the works' irony, symbols of 'Chineseness' are unquestioningly taken at face value, in careless readings that gloss over the ambiguities of Key's and others' practices. If Key's 'culinary poetics' display a wit and lightness of touch effecting immaculate fusings and pleasing miscegenations, whose apparently effortless syntheses hint at a liberal, multicultural idyll, it may also, unwittingly, play into neo-orientalist 'poco-Chinese-lite' hands.⁷⁷

Subsequent works by Key arguably complicate such appropriations of 'culture to go' [Fig.26], shifting the accent onto the 'host' nation, and deploying items of 'English' food to raise questions of indigeneity. *Pork Scratchings* (1999) [Fig.39] taxonomises the products of a local Walsall industry, the resultant collection, curious puffs of cocoon pinned like odd butterfly-parts, framed and exhibited in the town's museum, an anthropological artefact or archaeological find.⁷⁸ The title, *Chips with Everything* (2000) [Fig.40], digs gently at humdrum eating habits, unearthing unhomely truths from native/foreign soils (the spud is a sixteenth century Peruvian import); the simple ensemble of standard issue office furnishings – a desk, a chair, an angle-poise lamp – establish a faceless bureaucracy before which are stood several sacks of still-lush potato plants, stocky bodies huddled patiently, aloof or anxious, as if waiting for permits to enter, or 'leave to remain'.⁷⁹ *Trespassing* (2000) [Fig.41],⁸⁰ a laboriously woven reel of 'instant noodle'-barbed wire, speaks of the self-perpetuated or imposed folly of fixations on territories and boundaries both cultural and economic, whose conscientious construction may lead to an unwittingly confinement. Such a presentiment is advanced by

⁷⁵ Robert Clark, *The Guardian Guide*, 20-26 February, 1999, p.6.

⁷⁶ Laura Cumming, 'Making a meal of it', *The Guardian*, 19 August 1997.

⁷⁷ Referring specifically to Cuban art, Fusco suggests that "postcolonial chic" is characterised by "muted and aestheticized references to the local," dubbing "the style of choice" for those who want to take part in "biennials and other blockbuster exhibitions" as "Havana-lite." Fusco, 'Bridge Over Troubled Water,' op.cit., pp.154.162. Also a reference to Julian Stallabrass' notion of 'high art lite' [---], Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (London and New York: Verso, 1999).

⁷⁸ Anthony Key, *Pork Scratchings* (1999), pork scratchings.

⁷⁹ Anthony Key, *Chips with Everything* (2000), potato plants, table, lamp, chair. The work's humour was undercut by its own melancholic undercurrents, heightened by the timing of the exhibition's opening, the day following the tragic deaths of fifty eight Chinese illegal immigrants, found suffocated in the back of a container lorry in Dover. 'Leave to remain' refers to terminology employed by the Home Office for several types of visas allowing an applicant to stay in the UK for a limited period or an indefinite period of time. The phrase was used to name an exhibition of "artists who are or have been refugees and/or asylum seekers," organised by artist and curator, Margareta Kern; 'Leave to Remain,' 16 - 22 June 2003, The Central Space, London.

⁸⁰ Anthony Key, *Trespassing* (2000), noodles, MDF reel.

Shopping Trolley (with cable ties) (2002) [Fig.44],⁸¹ recalling both Michael Landy's *Closing Down Sale* (1992/2002) [Fig.42], Sylvie Fleury's *ELA 75/K, Easy. Breezy. Beautiful (No.6)* (2000) [Fig.43].⁸² Fleury's sometimes literal elevation of the fruits and vehicles of adventures in designer consumption (here, a golden trolley on a plinth) has been interpreted as a blurring of distinctions between art and commodity culture, without criticality or irony⁸³ (although a hint might be detected in the allusion to a gilded cage), while Landy's exposition of the gallery as a shop "filled with shopping trolleys and day-glo signs with their desperate messages exhorting the viewer to buy with tales of economic woe ('Gone Into Receivership', 'Meltdown Madness Sale'...)", drew a direct connection between the country's economy and the art market, the former "still in recession," the latter "in deep retrenchment."⁸⁴ Invoking issues around "mass commercial culture"⁸⁵ in contemporary China (the publicity for the exhibition, 'Supermarket Art for Sale,' held in a Shanghai shopping centre in 1999, featured a trolley crammed with brightly packaged goods⁸⁶), as well as the commercialisation of 'Chinese culture' in the West, Key's arresting, bristling, embodiment of compulsive behaviour addresses the allure of art-with-a-touch-of-the-forbidden as cultural consumption, whose trade serves as therapy, liberation, bondage and entrapment.

The presumed staples of diet, tradition, and culture harbour sometimes bloody histories of import and export, production and consumption, their routes, crossings and acquisitions simultaneously constructing the 'foreign', and confounding as much as confirming the 'native'. If Mo and Key's ironic citations and amalgamations point towards an ambivalence that risks occasional oversight – the very 'success' of aesthetic forms and pleasurable puns overriding ambiguities – some works can be seen to confront the short-sighted 'recognition' of both naïve and 'knowing' subjects, by explicitly turning the exoticising eye back onto itself. "Busting through" Kipling-esque assertions of unbridgeable, unknowable difference, the fictional Chinese American hero, Wittman Ah Sing, affirms,

'Twain shall.'... There is no East here. West is meeting West. This was all West. All you saw was West. This is The Journey *In* the West.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Anthony Key, *Shopping Trolley (with cables ties)* (2002), trolley, cable ties.

⁸² Michael Landy, *Closing Down Sale* (1992), mixed media installation originally at Karsten Schubert Gallery, London, reprised for the exhibition 'Shopping,' Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2002) and Tate Liverpool (2002-2003); Sylvie Fleury's *ELA 75/K, Easy. Breezy. Beautiful (No.6)* (2000), supermarket trolley on pedestal, also featured in 'Shopping.'

⁸³ An observation made by Julian Stallabrass in his essay, 'Shop Until You Stop,' in Christoph Grunenberg and Max Hollien, eds., *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture* (Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), exhibition catalogue, pp.222-230.

⁸⁴ Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p.8.

⁸⁵ Wu Hung, 'Reinventing Exhibition Space in China,' in Wu Hung ed., *Chinese Art at the Crossroads: Between Past and Future, Between East and West* (Hong Kong: New Art Media; London: inIVA, 2001), pp.162-176, p.171.

⁸⁶ Cited in Wu Hung, 'Reinventing Exhibition Space in China,' *ibid.*, p.170.

⁸⁷ Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

Take Outs

'Othered' by the same, 'Englishness' becomes quaint and mysterious, its 'norms' rendered arcane, its eccentricities impenetrable, an 'essence' reduced to tired clichés and archaisms. The 'West' is accommodating to life in the 'West,' an exotic wonderland it turns out, in which no one really lives.

**PAGE
NUMBERING
AS ORIGINAL**

Outtakes

... when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?

My silence was thickest – total – during the three years that I covered my school paintings with black paint. I painted layers of black over houses and flowers and suns, and when I drew on the blackboard I put a layer of chalk on top. I was making a stage curtain, and it was the moment before the curtain parted or rose.

(Maxine Hong Kingston)¹

Cutting In

The scenery is shifting; glimpses beyond fabricated walls reveal the odd prop, accessories in the staging of a performance about to begin, in stasis perhaps, or over. Each figural look, photographic stance, and filmic gesture is at once purposeful, ambivalent, straight and ironic, practiced and off-hand, offset by mirrors, masks, seams, and frames that upset the appeal of the 'real'. A foot casts off a shoe; a woman carries a screen; a face is half-hidden by an ape-like mask. Costumes consist of such simple accessories as a sarong, some sandals, catering wear and kung fu robes, sartorial shorthand for stereotypical and often vague cultural others.

Over-familiarity with visual narrative conventions of television, film, and their self-referential 'uncut' and 'reality' manifestations prompts my temptation to see these movements and moments in disparate art works as 'outtakes' of sorts: the preparatory gestures and expressions caught in the lead in-and-out time as the camera rolls, inhaling in anticipation of the call to scripted, directed 'action', or exhaling as the action is 'cut'; those imperfect, extraneous shots, messed-up lines, and straight-to-camera asides that end up on the literal or virtual cutting room floor (undesirable, improper to the scene, character, or narrative drive), or moments of 'naturalism' staged for 'behind the scenes' or 'making of' movie documentaries. If 'outtakes' typically frame temporalities, spatialities, glances, words and gestures in excess of desired narratives, classifying and regulating that which falls out of, or reflects upon, favoured parameters and behaviours, that endangers the illusion and threatens to reveal the trickery behind the magic, such excised excesses may also paradoxically become covetable, reinforcing desired narratives when turned to the task of perpetuating a 'real' behind the fiction, foregrounding its fabrication, the choreographing of physical and virtual stunts, and promising insights (their exclusive value indicated by their 'as yet unseen' or 'previously unavailable' status) that encourage the conflation (a flattening) of actors and roles, locations and scenes, histories and fictions.

¹ Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (London: Picador, 1981) pp.13 & 149. First published in 1976.

Dispensing with assumptions of authenticities and realities awaiting revelation, the notion may nevertheless become useful in positioning the sometimes seemingly ad hoc posturings and performativity of work by four artists discussed below, whose coincident and divergent thematic concerns may be seen to tactically coalesce in their invocation of spaces and subjectivities between and beyond discursive frames, in ambiguous and critical relation to the pervasive orientalism of cultural practices from the 'fine' and 'high' to the 'low' and popular. Reading certain gestures, postures and moments as 'outtakes', their 'excess' emerges through gently antagonistic relationships to the 'scenes' of dominant visual discursive narratives, playing on and replaying fictions behind fictions and ever-receding realities. Actions are performed and repeated out of context, to absurdity; sound and image perplex and frustrate out of linear sequence; tableaux in two, three and four dimensions present blanks, blank expressions, circular and inconclusive narratives.

Negotiating an array of orientalising, objectifying, idealising, and regulatory gazes, artists Lesley Sanderson, Erika Tan, Yeu Lai Mo and Mayling To invoke discourses ranging from the Western academy to video art, anthropological film to Hollywood movie-making, cult cartoons to martial arts, variously concerned to debunk and explore assumptions, constructions, expectations, and aspirations towards exotic, authentic 'difference'. Sanderson becomes Conroy/Sanderson, progressively bared, concealed, doubled, multi-vocal and muffled, in often stripped back settings; Tan absents herself from successive scenes, complex set-ups that open up and unravel narratives of (missing) knowledge and plays of power; Mo play acts, playing up to mundane fantasies, serving up servitude; while To directs the elaborate charades of deluded, duplicitous subjects, sublimated into loved and loathed cartoon characters, in search of 'true' identities.

Subjectivities and identities move (sometimes literally) from centre to margin, from the singular to the hybrid and plural, from the 'authentic' autobiographical to explicitly inauthentic fictions, there/not there, reclaiming yet eschewing visibility. Reflecting shifts and strategies in political, theoretical and cultural thinking of the last three decades, these works begin to appear "at the end of a period in which deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and feminism have maintained hegemony, to a great or lesser extent, over intellectual culture", when the spectre of "the Other" as a question or problem for "the white intelligentsia" (to be rejected, exploited, assimilated, segregated) loomed large, galvanised by "the existence and continuing emergence of challenging work by artists of color and... the extraordinary influence [of] postcolonial studies".² Coco Fusco notes the "sweeping changes in the approach to otherness" since the mid-1990s, stressing Kobena Mercer's observation that "Difference is everywhere"; yet "symbolic visibility" is "no guarantee of political power". The normalisation of

² Coco Fusco, 'Fantasies of Oppositionality,' in Grant H. Kester ed., *Art, Activism, & Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998) pp.60-75. Fusco, writing in 1988, cites the influence of postcolonial studies alongside the "new ethnography" and black literary studies in the U.S. academy.

diversity and prevailing “bureaucratic multiculturalism” (akin to Sarat Maharaj’s notion of “multicultural managerialism”, of which “systemic exclusions and blindspots” are symptomatic)³ have come to privilege art and ‘others’ seen to promote ‘global postmodernism’, which as Stuart Hall has said, loves nothing better than a certain kind of difference:

a touch of ethnicity, a taste of the exotic, as we say in England, ‘a bit of the other’ (which in the United Kingdom has a sexual as well as ethnic connotation)”⁴

To which might be added Fusco assertion, that

global cultural consumerism and white desire play a far larger role in maintaining primitivist paradigms than any misidentification of subaltern artists, whose pervasive use of irony and parody with notions of the primitive is often a response to the naturalisation of the other.⁵

The problem of “symbolic visibility” as an effective or deceptive strategy is one that continues to be both debated and berated in Britain, its various monikers and unstable parameters (‘minority’, ‘ethnic’, ‘black’, ‘culturally diverse’) constituting bureaucratic categories that fail inevitably to reflect the range of contemporary postcolonial aesthetic practices in play.

Sanderson, Tan, Mo and To figure among younger generations of artists simultaneously informed by the legacies of Black art, cautious of the trans-Atlantic backlash against 1980s ‘identity art’ and the “emotional striptease” associated with it, witnesses to and occasional marginal players in the 1990s phenomenon of ‘Young British Art’ (not without its own varieties of striptease),⁶ and situated in ambiguous relation to the concurrent rise of ‘contemporary (mainland) Chinese art’ on the international scene.⁷ Where artworks are necessarily contingent to their historical and cultural contexts of dissemination and interpretation, the effectivity of fictitious ‘dropped frames’ or art-historical ‘outtakes’ in thwarting rather than reinforcing the unity and coherence of persistent orientalist narratives of gender and ethnicity may be slight and indeed questionable, given the ease with which tradition appears to assimilate and recuperate via minor revisions once oppositional strategies, reduced to a

³ Sarat Maharaj, ‘Introduction,’ in Gilane Tawadros and Victoria Clarke eds., *Annotations 5: Run through the Jungle: Selected Writings by Eddie Chambers* (London: inIVA, 1999). pp. 4-8.

⁴ Stuart Hall, ‘What is this ‘black’ in black popular culture,’ in Gina Dent ed., *Black Popular Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), reprinted in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) pp.465-475, p.467.

⁵ Coco Fusco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours* (London: inIVA, 2001), pp.xv-xvi.

⁶ Lesley Sanderson showed in the ‘British Art Show,’ 1990, McLellan Gallery, Glasgow, and touring; Mayling To featured in ‘Fun de Siecle: Irony Parody and Humour in Contemporary Art,’ 1998-9, Walsall Museum and Art Gallery, and touring, which included work by Damien Hirst and Cornelia Parker.

⁷ Part of this rise has been charted and promoted on www.chinese-art.com, a website founded by Beijing based US art publisher and collector, Robert Bernell. Collections of the site’s prolific articles, interviews and reviews can be found in John Clark ed., *Chinese Art at the End of the Millenium: Chinese-art.com 1998-1999* (Hong Kong: New Art Media, 2000) and Wu Hung ed., *Chinese Art at the Crossroads: between Past and Future, Between East and West* (London: inIVA and Hong Kong: New Art Media, 2001).

generalised litany of “muted and aestheticized” postmodern and postcolonial artistic moves.⁸ Hence the necessity of reading across and locating within wider continua of critical practices constellations of provocative, politicised counterpoints to the bureaucratically and economically driven accounts and projects distinguished by “a global art marketplace” and naïveté or complacency in ‘poco-lite’ art, not least in the face of a burgeoning ‘diversity fatigue’.⁹

A notable if simplistic point of convergence in these practices lies in the gravitation towards video, a barely forty-year-old medium whose contested origins and ‘multiplicity’ confuses and antagonises those art histories still fixated on the singular and original.¹⁰ The task of historicising its heterogeneous practices immediately presents a plurality of styles that defy easy categorisation, and a simultaneity of beginnings that could just as easily be traced through discourses of science, linguistics, technology, mass media, and politics, as through art. This heterogeneity and simultaneity is echoed across these works in terms of their wide-ranging media and discursive references. As such they invoke histories and practices of subversion in which video has, since its inception, been deployed as a means of adopting a critical distance from commercial television, film, and other forms of commodified culture, contesting mass media imagery and the very politics of representation, as well as the representation of politics. For artists already marginalised by gender, ‘race’, ethnicity or sexuality, video, whose “pedigree is anything but pure”,¹¹ continues to offer resonant visual, linguistic and spatial vernaculars for “signifyin(g) on” (to borrow Henry Louis Gates’ terms) the representation and commodification of ‘authentic’ cultural otherness.

Each ‘outtake’ decelerates and derails the ‘main’ action, disrupting the narrative flow and demanding pause, stepping back and aside into a meta-discursive space, gesturing against a global cultural consumerist grain which desires ‘otherness’ as de-politicised novelty, or palatable, digestible chunks of novelty politics. Engaging yet refusing ‘identity’, attempting to

⁸ Referring specifically to Cuban art, Fusco suggests that “postcolonial chic” is characterised by “muted and aestheticized references to the local,” dubbing “the style of choice” for those who want to take part in “biennials and other blockbuster exhibitions” as “Havana-lite.” Fusco, ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water,’ op.cit., pp.154.162

⁹ Again, I refer both to Fusco’s “Havana-lite” and Julian Stallabrass’ *High Art Lite* (London and New York: Verso, 1999). I suggest the incipience of ‘diversity fatigue’ in Britain in a paper, ‘Teach Yourself Chinglish (Exercises in Rudimentary Britishness),’ presented as part of a panel on ‘Multiculturalism and the Arts in the Colonial/Postcolonial Age,’ at the CAA 91st annual conference, February 19-22, 2003, New York City.

¹⁰ Susan Hiller argues that video can be considered a kind of printmaking, where “printmaking... added something to the traditional practices, the idea of multiplicity,” from which “can be derived the legitimacy of a range of other things... it seems to me that it’s logical to understand that not only photography as an art practice, but all the things that come out of that, videotapes, etc. need to be seen as extensions of the theory of printmaking.” Susan Hiller, ‘The Idea of Multiplicity in Art,’ in Barbara Einzig ed., *Thinking About Art: Conversations with Susan Hiller* (Manchester University Press, 1996), pp.159-165.

steer courses that traverse mainstream and ghettoized practices without losing sight of the histories deemed distasteful or unfashionable by those set on 'international' success (where "a touch of the local" will suffice),¹² wry interruptions to prevalent debates around 'Britishness', 'Chineseness', nationality, ethnicity and 'hybridity', are often knowingly accompanied by heavy doses of irony and parody, humour, self-deprecation, and stubborn ambiguity. 'Difference' is progressively de-naturalised, displaced via "a hall of mirrors", multiple re-imaginings of colonial pasts and postcolonial futures creating "a noisy disturbance in silence", as subjects return to perform and perplex in other guises.¹³

*

If looks can kill, a glance might cut. Deflecting the glare of exoticising gazes, the artist defies mortification, dares to look back, and takes off with another (same and other), relenting to be seen yet unseen. After her early confrontational self-portraits, Lesley Sanderson's work through the late 1980s and early 1990s offer a progressive deconstruction of Western art-historical narratives of orientalist, objectified female bodies, consistently exploiting the tensions between figure, frame and gaze. Drawing, "a precarious object" traditionally ranked as a working, in-process, anticipatory precursor to a 'final work' of art, continues to be mobilised within Sanderson's progressively object-based, interventionist and installation works for its "peculiar attributes" of "transience, incompleteness, contingency", against notions of originality, uniqueness, and authenticity.¹⁴ From *Negative* (1988) [Fig.46] to *Self Portrait – Larger than Life* (1990) [Fig.45], *Reproductions* (1991) [Fig.47] and *These Colours Run* (1994) [Fig.48], imaged subjects, image planes, imaginary and actual frames (including those of the gallery), are subjected to persistent fragmentation and multiplication.¹⁵ Looming large, looking back with several eyes, now masked, now screened, dispersing and disappearing between borders, the staging of subjectivities and identities via a series of literal and metaphorical unframings augments in scale and complexity, invoking painting, photography, curatorial conventions of re/presentation, and the orientalist paraphernalia that accompany the intertwined visual narratives of Western art history and contemporary popular tourism. As evidenced in such pieces as *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990) and *Can't See the Wood for the Trees* (1992) [Fig.49], Sanderson's "bold omissions and minute depictions" gently displace

¹¹ Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, 'Introduction: Complexities of an Art Form,' in Hall and Fifer eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture in association with Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), p.14.

¹² Fusco, 'Hustling for Dollars,' op.cit., pp.137-153.

¹³ Henry Louis Gates, 'The Signifying Monkey and the Language of Signifyin(g): Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning,' in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.44-88.

¹⁴ Gilane Tawadros, 'Working Drawings,' in *These Colours Run* (Eddie Chambers/Wrexham Library Arts Centre, 1994), exhibition catalogue, pp.20-28.

¹⁵ Lesley Sanderson, *Negative* (1988), pencil on paper, laser copies, red signature stamp; *Self Portrait – Larger than Life* (1990), pencil on paper; *Reproductions* (1991), mixed media; *These Colours Run* (1994), mixed media.

the whole.¹⁶ Props and accessories from sarongs to sandals, masks to shoes, seals to screens, hint inconclusively at 'other' visual and spatial narratives of culture and identity, evoking clichés of the exotic, primitive East or the modern progressive West, yet withholds the possibility of a behind-the-scenes-real; instead, Sanderson unfolds a succession of 'de-mises en scènes' adrift with blankness – a signifier of silence, potential, absence and erasure, or "an invisible and ubiquitous technological presence" – interrupted.¹⁷

Subjects slip out of view, evasive, gestures and poses ambiguous. Later, expansive landscapes of flesh invite scrutiny without mastery, their proximity and boundlessness deferring the delimiting of 'I', an envelope opened out. Disembodied and indeterminate in intimate monochrome, skin comes up close, a surface of feathery granite, the grain of a voice, ventriloquised.¹⁸ *Fabrication and Reality* (1998) [Figs.50-52] finds this porous, elusive landscape locked into a dyad with miniaturised twin towers, schematically delineated on carbon copy paper.¹⁹ A cheap wardrobe-husk braces the body-fragment, a strange, dense expanse dwarfing a duplicate double icon of identity, power, and birth-place. An emblematic home: Asia-as-landmark, Malaysia made toy-like and flimsy, diminished in ambiguous relation to an incorporated yet segregated subject. An eye-hole punctures the boxed body shells, summoning voyeurs to peer into the blue: the substance of daydream, inside and out.

The de-centralised, ex-centricity of Sanderson's own body, combined with her tactical use of the nude or exposed flesh, suggest an affinity with performance art, her 'performances' mediated through drawing as the medium of documentation, whose constructed-ness levers control over the spectacle, and distances the aura of 'authenticity' about imaginary encounters. As Fusco has noted of the practices of contemporary black American artists, a context with which Sanderson's has been broadly aligned, bodies are continuously returned to historical scenes (partially emptied, necessarily incomplete), demonstrating their imbrication in contemporary racial and cultural consciousness, whilst their increasing occupation of a muted "fantasmatic realm of intertwined fear and desire" mirrors a paradigmatic shift in the 1990s away from emphases on "the indexicality of images of racism".²⁰

¹⁶ Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Bold Omissions and Minute Depictions,' in Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) pp.155-166. Lesley Sanderson, *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990), pencil and acrylic on paper; *Can't See the Wood for the Trees* (1992), pencil on board, monoprints.

¹⁷ Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Blankness as a Signifier,' in Gilbert-Rolfe, *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime* (New York: Allworth Press, 1999) pp.109-123.

¹⁸ "The 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs..." Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice,' in Barthes, trans. Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p.188.

¹⁹ Neil Conroy/Lesley Sanderson. *Fabrication and Reality* (1998), pencil on paper, carbon copy paper, light, viewing device (lens), timber.

²⁰ Fusco, op.cit., pp. 8-9. Sanderson's work has been included in 'Black Art: Plotting the Course,' 1988, Oldham Art Gallery and touring, 'Four x 4,' 1991, Harris Museum, Preston, 'History and Identity: Seven Painters' (1991), Norwich Gallery and touring. and 'Transforming the Crown: African,

If Lorna Simpson established a “zero degree” in the late 1980 and early 1990s for rethinking the representation, exhibition and subversion of iconic black female bodies, particularly via the photographic image, some of her tactics are echoed in Sanderson's practice: bodies slip in and out of frame, partially blocked, the relationship between subject and historical and socio-cultural context destabilised. The use of ‘props’ by Simpson and Lyle Ashton Harris, to signify the constructed-ness of femininity, masculinity, Afrocentricity or African-ness, serve a similar function in Sanderson's work, theatricalising the coding and performance of gendered ethnicity, ‘British Chinese-ness’ and cultural otherness.²¹ Paraphrasing Fusco, the shift might be elaborated as a move away from representing the ‘oriental’, to representing what it means to be orientalised, by offering and refusing the artists' own bodies as subjects and objects, or in Stuart Hall's terms, effecting a shift “from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself.”²² The intimation of unbounded, indeterminable bodies in Sanderson's later pieces, made in collaboration with the artist Neil Conroy, hints furthermore at the possibility of a new humanism unhindered by ‘race’; contradicting the “triumphal tones of the anthropological discourses that were enthusiastically supportive of race-thinking in earlier, imperial times... conceived explicitly as a response to the sufferings that raciology has wrought”, Paul Gilroy expounds a “universality” where

the constraints of bodily existence (being in the world) are admitted and even welcomed, though there is a strong inducement to see and value them differently as sources of identification and empathy. The recurrence of pain, disease, humiliation and loss of dignity, grief, and care for those one loves can all contribute to an abstract sense of a human similarity powerful enough to make solidarities based on cultural particularity appear suddenly trivial.²³

Having worked informally with Conroy over a number of years, *Fabrication and Reality* marked the beginning of Conroy/Sanderson's formal collaborative practice, a splitting and doubling and further multiplication of hybrid positionings projected symbolised by the stylised form of the double image of Kuala Lumpur's landmark Petronas Twin Towers, further twinned with a meticulously rendered yet indeterminate expanse of skin. Their dual agency and authorship foreground the mutual, historical, ideological, and cultural imbrication of gendered and ethnicised cultural identities, whose ambiguity complicate the binary opposition of dominant/marginal, male/female, white/black, same/other positionings, histories and genealogies. This intricacy is intimated in *He Took Fabulous Trips*, and most explicitly in *Fabrication* (1998) [Figs.53,54], where both artists and their respective parents are nominally

Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain,’ The Bronx Museum and Studio Museum, New York, 1997-1998.

²¹ Such as Simpson's *Waterbearer* (1986) and Ashton Harris' *Brotherhood* series (1994).

²² Fusco, op.cit., pp.14-16; Stuart Hall, ‘New Ethnicities,’ in Kobena Mercer ed., *ICA Documents 7: Black Film, British Cinema* (London: ICA, 1989), reprinted in Morley and Chen eds., op.cit. pp.441-449, p.442.

²³ Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Penguin, 2000) pp.17-18.

represented in primarily blank full length 'portraits' depicting only the foreheads of their subjects.²⁴ Each panel is scanned by a red light, at the same time 'underscored' by a blue neon strip, which pulses to the accompanying sound of lifts ascending and descending. Bodies are suspended, near-evaporated, made similar by the dissolution of physiognomic references to race and gender, eluding regulatory frames and electronic eyes.

Conroy/Sanderson's recent 'self-portraits' effect a shift in tone and an abrupt return to physical, sensory bodies, focusing with dry humour on the intense alliance and antagonism that might arise in a partnership where identities and positionings are explicitly contingent. In so doing, they also respond to a fascination with culturally and ethnically 'mixed' relationships by performatively offering and denying themselves as spectacle. *Here We Are* (2003) [Fig.55], a series of photographic light boxes, finds Conroy/Sanderson variously concealed or muffled; doubled up in 'double happiness' (the doubling of a Chinese character symbolising marital bliss), s/he's captured, enraptured, enraged.²⁵ Wrapped up, in arms, their faces-for-hands are tied. They become singular, a two-headed monster, an everyday abnormality staring out from pretty coloured strings, now mummified, now bandaged, or blind and mute behind cartoon mouths and eyes. Bandages suggest wounds in need of covering, broken skin, disfigurements; or indeed, deployed to such excess, they become a cover for invisibility, an 'aide memoire et voir.' Literally clipped by the ears for 'wrong-doings', conjoined by choice and reparation, internalising the playground rhymes and jibes that normalise and racialise same/other bodies, the double-dealing, double-faced, double-hearted, double-tongued speak from the belly, *venter loqui*:

chinese japanese dirty knees what are these / heads shoulders knees and toes knees
and toes / chinese japanese / heads shoulders / dirty knees what are these / knees
and toes knees and toes²⁶

²⁴ Conroy/Sanderson, *Fabrication* (1998), pencil on paper, timber wedge constructions, neon lights, speakers.

²⁵ Conroy/Sanderson, *Doctored* (2003), photo light boxes.

²⁶ Conroy/Sanderson, work in progress (2003), video.

Acting Out

... mimicry represents an *ironic* compromise... mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal.

(Homi Bhabha)²⁷

Sanderson's *Time for a Change* (1988) [Fig.56], an early painting within a painting which comments on configurations of 'oriental femininity', is recalled by Yeu Lai Mo's *Geisha* (1994) [Fig.57] and the later *Spitting* (1997), in a body of work that similarly features self-portraiture as a central device for negotiating dual positions as "subject of the artist's self-reflexive gaze and object of the viewer's gaze."²⁸ In *Time for a Change*, the gaze of the artist-as-nude interrupts and returns by proxy that directed to the young, passive East Asian woman with downcast eyes depicted behind her, "an Orientalist painting of a Malay or Chinese woman (or, more accurately, a popular reproduction of an orientalist painting) reproduced by the artist within the frame of her own work."²⁹ *Geisha*, meanwhile, finds Mo clad in Japanese hostess/prostitute's robes, accessorised with palette and paintbrushes, a conflation of exotic images: the sexually available oriental woman whose impassive demeanour is supplemented by tools evoking the modern, romantic, virile masculine ideal of uninhibited artistic self-expression; or the cross-cultural dressing western artist-outsider who swaps gender and paint-covered smock for the restrictive robes of a mysterious eastern muse.³⁰

Geisha also shares commonalities with the work of a number of Asian American artists since the 1970s, touching on the complexities of Yasumasa Morimura's and Tiana Thi Thanh Nga's art historical and Hollywood 'drag', by which the mythologised heroes and heroines of the Western high art canon and popular cinema are impersonated and Asianized, refurnished with orientalised and transgendered Mona Lisas, Manets and Marilyn's, and their accompanying bit-players – from 'high-kicking vice cops' to 'dragon ladys' to 'war brides' – reframed. [Figs.58-60]³¹ Mo, in turn, echoes earlier endeavours to claim the right to representation by imitation and usurpation, performing a double 'cultural drag' (Chinese as

²⁷ Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man,' in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) pp.85-92.

²⁸ Tawadros, op.cit. Lesley Sanderson, *Time for a Change* (1988), oil on canvas; Yeu Lai Mo, *Geisha* (1994), colour cibachrome print.

²⁹ Tawadros, ibid. p22.

³⁰ See for example the essay, 'God's Little Artist' in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* (London: Pandora, 1981) pp.82-113 and Carol Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early 20th-Century Vanguard Painting,' *Artforum*, December 1973, pp. 30-39.

³¹ Yasumasa Morimura's digitally manipulated photographs, such as the *Self Portrait As Art History* series, have been exhibited widely, including solo shows at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1992), the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Jouy-en-Josas, France (1993), the Hara Art Museum, Hara, Japan (1994), and the Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan (1996), and the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (1996). Tiana Thi Thanh Nga dir. *From Hollywood to Hanoi* (US, 1993), film, colour, 78 minutes, incorporates clips from Tiana Thi Thanh Nga's acting career under the name 'Tiana Alexandra.' Peter X Feng, *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video* (Duke UP, 2002) pp.128-147.

Japanese, muse as maker), playing to the tendency to see all Asian cultures as interchangeable, and foregrounding the fiction of an authentic, ethnic 'self'.

Turning to a particular contemporary image of young Chinese women, *Service, Licking, Kissing* (1997) [Fig.36] looks at the politics and economics of the Chinese takeaway as a public site of sexualised labour and cultural exchange.³² The artist films herself mouthing and repeating words of welcome, accommodation and gratitude, each miming denaturalising the utterance, the stance, the subject. Bending to kiss and lick the counter over which she smilingly presides, she translates her attitude of servitude and compliance from the verbal to the physical. This 'semiotics of the takeaway' invokes video as a historical means of staging, documenting and extending the impact of performance, especially for feminist art practices of the 1970s that sought "a challenge to formalism... to negate the division between art and life, to explore relational dynamics between artist and audience and to understand art as social and experiential".³³ Indeed, *Service* is reminiscent of several pieces by Martha Rosler, in particular *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) [Fig.61], *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization* (1978), and *The East is Red and the West is Bending* (1977).³⁴ Echoing Rosler's deadpan, absurd, yet politicised works dealing with class, gender and race-inflected relationships between women, food, labour, class, and power (food-production as a means of domestic entrapment and drudgery, economic independence or exploitation; and in its exotic 'gourmet' form, as a vehicle of cosmopolitan self-improvement and transformation into imperialist connoisseur of the other), Mo inhabits and oversees the public space of 'foreign' exchange, the 'exotic'

³² Yeu Lai Mo, *Service, Licking, Kissing* (1997), video.

³³ Maria Troy, 'I Say I Am: Women's Performance Video from the 1970s,' also the title to a collection of "early feminist tapes" curated by Troy as Associate Curator of Media at the Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio. The title refers to Chris Straayer's essay, 'I Say I Am: Feminist Performance Video in the '70s,' *Afterimage*, November 1985, pp. 8-12. <http://www.vdb.org/resources/resourceframe.html> April 7, 2004.

³⁴ Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (US, 1975), video, b&w, sound, length given as 5:25, 5:30, 6:00, 6:09 and 7:00 minutes by various online distributors, including Video Data Bank www.vdb.org and Electronic Arts Intermix www.eai.org; *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization* (New York: Printed Matter, 1978); *The East is Red and the West is Bending* (US, 1977), video, b&w, sound, 20 minutes. *Semiotics* "'shows and tells' the ingredients of the housewife's day, the ABCs of kitchen gadgets, with movements more samurai-like than suburban," (Troy, op.cit.) a demonstration of "gourmet cooking utensils within a lexicon of rage and frustration." *Service* comprises a series of postcard novels, 'A Budding Gourmet,' about "a middle class housewife who takes a gourmet cooking class because she feels it will enhance [her] as a human being'," 'McTowers Maid,' which centres on "a woman employee who organises the workers in a fast-food chain," and 'Tijuana Maid,' about "a Mexican woman who comes to San Diego to work as a maid in a middle class household." Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker eds., *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985* (London; Pandora, 1987), p.318. *The East is Red* returns to the format of the amateur cooking demo, with Rosler reading from the instruction booklet for the latest consumer kitchen appliance, a West Bend electric wok. *A Budding Gourmet* is also the title to a 1974 video piece by Rosler, which "explores the ideological processes through which food preparation comes to be seen as 'cuisine,' a product of national culture. Accompanied by the strains of a violin concerto, Rosler's deadpan narrator explains her reasons for wanting to become a gourmet. Photographs from food and travel magazines alternate as Rosler's narrator discusses food as a key to refinement, breeding, and, in the case of 'Eastern' cuisines, spirituality..." <http://www.eai.org/eai/tape.jsp?itemID=2547>

accentuated as a metaphor for sexual and cultural consumption, served up in convenient packages for the alleviation and enhancement of contemporary lifestyles.

Centre-frame, centre-stage, eyes meeting the direct gaze of the lens, *Service* revisits the practical limitations of early video technology, aesthetically typified by “long takes, little or no editing, little or no camera movement, and direct address of the viewer”.³⁵ If such traits led Rosalind Krauss to argue in the late 1970s that video art is in essence narcissistic, the ‘camera-as-mirror’ a metaphor for the artist’s self-reflection or self-expression, the notion has since been complicated by psychoanalytic formulations of subjectivity and mis-recognition, and film theory.³⁶ The cumulative absurdity of Mo’s behaviour serves to distance the artist from her performing self, not a ‘true’, narcissistic expression of authentic subjecthood, but an emphatically performative fiction whose parodic mimicry of feminine and ethnic ‘types’ hints at agency by appropriating, distinguishing and exceeding the limits of pervasive images. Just as Sanderson’s ‘self-portraits’ are representations or articulations that mirror not the artist’s self, but wider networks of relationships of looking and power in which audiences are implicated, so video is frequently deployed to ‘mirror’ back audiences’ misidentifications and misrecognitions.

Shown in a number of combinations and contexts, including an installation called *Yeu Lai’s House* (1997) (which included part of a mocked up takeaway in a gallery space complete with lino floor, formica counter, and back-lit photographs of sample dishes on a fictitious menu), a key thematic emerges through the figure of ‘Yeu Lai’, a literal fabrication whose ‘inauthenticity’ or ‘staged-ness’ (like Thi Thanh Nga’s various personae) is accentuated in degrees: by the monitor as a frame within the frame or stage-set of the inauthentic takeaway, in turn framed by the gallery. The anticipated frisson of a live encounter with the eponymous hostess is diffused: look closely, and the figure standing behind the counter, mirroring the character on screen, is no more real – a mere colour copy cut-out, the artist duplicated and duplicitous.³⁷

The monitor is a familiar object in the takeaway, operating, as its name suggests, as a means of surveillance,³⁸ as well as a medium of display for the broadcasting of satellite TV for satellite cultures, that is, for the conspicuous consumption of the takeaway’s workers rather

³⁵ Straayer, op.cit., p.8, cited in Troy, op.cit.

³⁶ “Even if the artist is narcissistically performing for the video-mirror, the spectator of the image of this behaviour is not. Conversely, if the spectator is performing for the mirror in a video installation, then the artist is not himself or herself seeking narcissistic gratification nor is the nature of the spectator’s interaction with the installation necessarily narcissistic. Nor are all artists who appear in their own tapes simply seeking the self-affirmation of a narcissistic involvement...” Maureen Turim, ‘The Cultural Logic of Video,’ *Illuminating Video* op.cit., pp.331-342.

³⁷ *Service, Licking, Kissing* was shown as part of solo exhibition, ‘Yeu Lai’s House’ (1997), named after the installation on show, at the Gallerette, London and Quay Art Gallery, Kingston upon Hull (2000); in a group show, ‘Number Six’ (1998), TS2K, London; and in a two-person show, ‘Licked’ (2000), Gasworks, London.

³⁸ Dan Graham notes the presence of video as a means of surveillance in private and public spaces in his essay, ‘Video in Relation to Architecture,’ in *Illuminating Video*, op.cit., pp. 168-188.

than for its clientele (though the latter might expect and enjoy it as an element of authenticity, along with Chinese figurines, bamboo and a fish tank). In *Service, Licking, Kissing*, the segregation of circuits of spectatorship and consumption is collapsed, the sole spectacle being the takeaway employee performing her compliance and conforming to type for both employer and client, made complicit through the act of looking. This act is later facilitated by the magnification of the subject/object under observation: "Yeu Lai", in a catering pinafore, smiles down from a hanging scroll dominating a gallery wall. Scale monumentalises the mundane and otherwise unseen, yet also underscores the unreality, the fiction of the representation. Displacing mountain-water scenes or images of Chinese and East Asian landmarks with a latter day calendar-girl, the picture of contemporary 'British Chinese' femininity revisits with irony Cultural Revolution representations of industrious, unself-conscious young women, in contrast to their frivolous, pleasure seeking, Westernised forerunners.³⁹ Elsewhere, the notion of surveillance is picked up through the tapping of brief telephone encounters, in which appetites are divulged and assured imminent satisfaction, and banal utterances are given disembodied voice.⁴⁰

Mo's own "lexicon of rage and frustration" is alluded to in a photographic triptych, *Pointing, Service, and Spitting* (1997) [Fig.62],⁴¹ in which a smiling still from *Service, Licking, Kissing* is flanked by images of aggression and desire. In *Pointing*, artificial strip lights are supplanted by natural sunlight and catering clothes are ditched for the uniform of Western casual attire, a denim jacket; the artist, as the title suggests, points into the camera. In *Spitting*, she is seated, her head thrown back as globules of saliva arc towards the lens, arms held out as if bracing against the exertion. The frame crops another, that of a poster behind her revealing the curves of a 'beach babe' (Pamela Anderson?), a tanned (decapitated) blonde fantasy body in front of which Mo's spitting reads as an emulated ejaculation. Beyond the confines of the takeaway, despite 'reality effects', Mo's persona is no more real; "Yeu Lai" mimes another stereotype, that of the young yobbish English other, hateful and lustful. Though her gesturing and posturing might also be interpreted as the dissent of a hidden 'yellow, perilous' force, plotting in bedrooms, spilling onto the streets, Mo's serial mimicry forcefully demonstrates the entwining of deep-seated fears and desires perpetuating tired fictions, her replication and inversion of perceptions suggesting the preclusion of easy escape.

³⁹ Ellen Johnston Liang, 'The People's Republic of China and the 1930s Advertisement Calender Poster Artists,' paper presented at the symposium, 'On Contemporary Chinese Visual Culture,' University of Westminster, 6 February 2004, convened by Dr Katie Hill.

⁴⁰ Yeu Lai Mo, *Service, 1, 2, 3* (1997/2001), inkjet, mixed media and *Untitled (Sound Piece)* were shown in the exhibition, 'Ten Thousand Li' (2002), Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool and touring.

⁴¹ Yeu Lai Mo, *Pointing, Service, and Spitting* (1997), cibachrome photographs.

Setting Up

Where Mo takes the role of performer for herself, Erika Tan's audiences are subtly cajoled into role-play. Reflecting a background in anthropology and filmmaking, Tan's wide-ranging practice explores the discursive generation and dissemination of knowledges and/as information, and attendant, reflexive plays of power. Tan's early video and installation pieces, like those of Susan Hiller (an obvious anthropologist-turned-artist predecessor), reflect an interest in systems of classification and categorisation, particularly as they relate to colonial and imperialist gazes bound up with Victorian anthropological and ethno-documentary visual constructions of 'oriental' ethnicities and cultures, and their alternately derogatory and sublime invocations within hierarchical formations.

Tan's *Passing — slipping between the boundaries unnoticed* (1995) [Figs.63,64] finds non-linear, multiple-layered video and sound narratives converging and diverging across three screens, registering the impact of Trinh T. Minh-ha's critiques as a cultural theorist and filmmaker on the disciplines and practices of traditional Western anthropology and film,⁴² bringing to mind Nam June Paik's early emulations of the bombardment of imagery in mass broadcast media, as well as Keith Piper's use of collage, multimedia and digital technologies exploring constructions of racialised otherness.⁴³ In *Passing*, images and texts flicker confrontationally and distractingly, evoking pejorative historical and contemporary definitions and formations of 'Chinese identity', 'reassembled' and flattened to repetitive, nonsensical and destabilising effect.⁴⁴ In addition, the title remembers another, Adrian Piper's 'Passing for White, Passing for Black' (1992), an essay on the presumptions and projections of 'race' as easily detected and categorized, her wider work on the history of miscegenation illuminating the slippage between ethnic boundaries of subjects – like Tan^{who is} of mixed Chinese/English parentage – simultaneously identified, misidentified, interpellated or erased by such fixed discursive constructions.⁴⁵

The invocation of an absent/present 'missing' subject between discursive positionings and temporal and spatial frames is embodied by Tan herself in *Travels with Pup* (1996) [Figs.65,66].⁴⁶ Dislocated from yet tied to historical and contemporary narratives as a guest and ghost from the future, Tan montages her image into a number of photographs of her father in various locations in Britain, their forged encounters and proximity articulating

⁴² See for example Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), Trinh dir. *Reassemblage* (US, 1982), colour, 40 minutes and *Naked Spaces – Living is Round* (US, 1985), colour, 135 mins.

⁴³ For example Keith Piper's *Surveillances: Tagging The Other* (1994), four monitor, four, tape source computer animation/video installation with projected slide, and the later mixed media exhibition, website and CD rom project, *Relocating the Remains* (1997-2000).

⁴⁴ Erika Tan, *Passing — slipping between the boundaries unnoticed* (1995), installation with three monitors, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, and as part of the exhibition, 'Half the Sky' (1997), Museum of London.

⁴⁵ Adrian Piper, 'Passing for White, Passing for Black,' *Transition 58* (1992), pp.4-32.

⁴⁶ Erika Tan, *Travels with Pup* (1996), series of photographic prints.

distances, disparities, and empathetic disjunctures, parallel migrations and arrivals. The later *Guarded Proximity* (1997) [Figs.67,68] invites audiences into a darkened room, their cautious movements triggering projections of groups of Chinese photographed in Beijing, backs to the camera, conversations in Mandarin relayed through speakers.⁴⁷ Audiences are literally 'in the dark', stumbling upon unfamiliar territory, their inquisition allied with a touristic gaze disorientated and rejected by physical exclusion from the social and linguistic exchange. Again, title and tactics seem to echo those of another, Lorna Simpson's *Guarded Conditions* (1989) [Fig.69],⁴⁸ "in which a brown-skinned woman in a shapeless white shift is shot from behind – with every aspect of subjectivity both bodily and facial is occluded, except the need to cover itself up – and then multiplied".⁴⁹ In *Guarded Proximity*, the solitary viewer is confronted with a multiplicity of anonymous subjects, shot from behind, the confrontation abrupt yet oblique. Where Simpson's incorporation of text (repetitive captions alternating between 'SEX ATTACKS', SKIN ATTACKS') state the brutal fact of sexual and racial violence and its perpetration upon black female bodies, Tan's use is less direct, the recorded spoken exchanges situating audiences as both onlookers and eavesdroppers, at once centre-stage and peripheral, seeking to identify with, yet intruding upon, scenes of cultural otherness.

Tan's consistent concern to elaborate spaces and parameters of encounter as both artist and curator is evidenced across a number of projects that engage notions of the 'site-specific' and 'public', where art works are staged as games / scenes / sets for the imaginary and physical enactment of intervention and exchange. The installation *Chintz* (1997), later elaborated into *From China to Chintz* (1999) [Figs.70-73], a response to and transformation of the drawing room of a Victorian manor, whose wallpaper demonstrated the prevailing taste for chinoiserie in the period, embroiled in histories of imperialism. Conjuring scenes of economic and cultural trade and negotiation through the juxtaposition of tea-chests, birdcages and birdsong, the exoticisation and desire for, or 'captivation' of and by, an 'other', are fixed in fanciful flight.⁵⁰ Other pieces deploy games as a framework and modality for interaction, from an alternative set of Rubik's cubes and floorgame that comprised part of *Sites of Construction* (1996) [Fig.74-76] to the eponymous *Boat Race* (1998-2000) [Figs.77,78]. Audiences become the voluntary players / actors / pawns in the artwork-as-game, in (a) minimally scripted play. Revisiting the use of the iconography of the grid and colour-coding to demonstrate collective compulsions to construct, systematise, hierarchise and measure difference, 'interactive' participants are directly implicated in plays of power and meaning, re-arranging coloured

⁴⁷ Erika Tan, *Guarded Proximity* (1997), slide projection and sound.

⁴⁸ Lorna Simpson, *Guarded Conditions* (1989) colour Polaroids, plastic plaques, plastic letters.

⁴⁹ Lorraine O'Grady, 'Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming black female subjectivity.' in *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality*, op.cit., pp.286-286.

⁵⁰ Erika Tan, *Chintz* (1997) and *From China to Chintz* (1999), installations with sound, video, lighting, wallpaper, tea chests, tea, lavender essence, P.I.R detectors, bird cages, the latter part of the group exhibition 'Empire & I', Pitshanger Manor Museum and Gallery, London; also reconfigured as *East*, in 'East International' (2000), Norwich Gallery.

counters and racing paper boats, acting out and upon impulses to invent and enforce rules for the identification and regulation of difference.⁵¹

The former included a single projection, evoking voyeuristic and proprietorial desire via the imaging of an elusive and ambiguous subject. Green luminescent gridlines undulate subtly as a computerised eye scans and produces the bare contours of a landscape. The occasional curve eventually suggests a female body, whose bland indeterminacy echoes and inverts the opacities that figure in Sanderson's richly textured renderings of indeterminate areas of skin. Closely observed yet concealed by scale and proximity, the body represented eludes and exceeds the limits of display, de-coded of colour, hence race and physiognomy, invisible in its entirety. Now and again broken by lines whose insistence and regularity evoke the compulsion of a latter day ethno-scientific gaze seeking to mark and delimit unknown territory, the minimal, digitalised form also points to the translation of individuals into electronic data, and the consumption and transaction of bodies over virtual space.

Tan's interest in and use of moving image technologies, from analogue video to digital web-streaming, in such internet works as *Saving Face* (2001) and *RE-FRESH* (2002),⁵² reflects wider developments over the last ten to fifteen years. As hardware and software have become cheaper, and digital video is increasingly accepted as a film format, artistic appropriation of internet technologies further complicate audience/user relationships to notions of the 'real', the 'original', the 'fiction' and the 'copy', temporality, spatiality and narrativity, authorship, authenticity, and dissemination. If the 'truth' of digital materials lies in part in the potential for 'falsification' or corruptibility, this adds a pertinent twist to the 'naturalisation' of subjects and others within and beyond supposedly discrete contemporary art 'scenes'; expectations of 'finality' are met with recalcitrance, as 'objects' become infinitely imitable, variable, and downloadable, often dependent on perpetual activation and reconfiguration.⁵³

Making Of

... popular culture, commodified and stereotyped as it often is, is not at all, as we sometimes think of it, the arena where we find who we really are, the truth of our experience. It is an arena that is *profoundly* mythic. It is a theatre of popular desires, a

⁵¹ Erika Tan, *Sites of Construction – Rubik's Cubes / The Body / Floorgame* (1996), Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne; *Boatrace* (1998-2000), installation and event, CAS, Osaka, Japan and East International, Norwich, in which audiences were invited to make red, yellow, white, black, and brown paper boats which 'were later 'raced' on a nearby river.

⁵² Erika Tan, *Saving Face* (2001) at www.slipstream.net.uk, and *RE-FRESH: circumstance/choice/chance* (2002), at www.identinet.net; series of digital customised screensavers.

⁵³ The notion of an artistic project's (lack of) 'finality' being a particular prerogative and difficulty for arts institutions accustomed to dealing and thinking in terms finite, discrete objects, even where these might have a time-based element, a point stressed recently by Sarah Cook, postdoctoral curator and researcher at the University of Sunderland, Gateshead, UK, at the one-day conference *British New Media Art*, Tate Britain, April 3, 2004.

theatre of popular fantasies. It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented, not only to the audiences out there who do not get the message, but to ourselves for the first time.)⁵⁴

Another set up; the staging of a crime scene redolent of 1970s American TV detective shows, with the requisite array of clues to be deciphered: a hand-made Hong Kong Phooey lies trussed up on the rug; nearby, a glass has been knocked over, leaving a stain on the swirly, brown-patterned carpet; an open suitcase reveals bundles of 'heaven/hell-money'; photographs – from a holiday? – lie scattered; there is a Bruce Lee poster on the MDF wall, while a book of his fighting methods rests on the side of an armchair. In a corner, a TV has been left on, quietly transmitting noise, the broadcast long over.⁵⁵ Across the room, sleep and needles pin a prostrate, soft-sculptured dog to a foam-topped, glass-encased plinth. The artist sews and stuffs the look-alike-imposter for a second time, a cult cartoon character from another era, an animation made inanimate, a fabrication made material.

Doubling the double, a celluloid fiction aspires to fiction: 'Penry' by day, a mild-mannered dog-janitor, and 'Hong Kong Phooey' by night, a would-be kung-fu-kicking superhero, his crime-fighting success sealed by the surreptitious interventions of a feline side-kick, 'Spot'.⁵⁶ The fur-deep hybrid of dubious heritage (a martial-arts craze influenced, orientalist US invention) dreams Chinese-Black-American dreams, lovable and laughable for his impotent pretensions. His comic value derives from his status as the unknowing the butt of the joke: haha, there is no real you. The pleasure and pain-staked hero and nemesis is a copy, a dummy, another addition to the tradition of 'Ching Chong Chinamen' buffoons littering the galleries of Western popular culture, an idiot and surrogate victim/hero for the aggressions/ affections of the artist as victim/bully. Eyes closed, blacked out in black, she lays him to rest, an injurious love/hate dying, awaiting a fairytale truth.

In *Death of Hong Kong* (1998) [Figs.79-81] and *A Cute Puncture* (1998) [Fig.82],⁵⁷ Mayling To's painstaking recreations play on an ambivalent relationship to a character at once sympathetic (as a 'second-generation immigrant' of confused heritage) and loathsome (a fool, for the very same reason, with pretensions to compensate). Its materialisation alludes to tangible and intangible forms of cultural and ideological consumption, the 'copy' covetable as an 'original' in place of one that never was, a doubling that pays homage to an absence, yet makes present a substitute upon which aggressions as well as affections can be played out.

⁵⁴ Stuart Hall, 'What is this 'black' in black popular culture,' op.cit., p.474.

⁵⁵ Mayling To, *Death of Hong Kong* (1998), installation with MDF, carpet, rug, TV, lamp, suitcase, books, ornaments, paper, photographs, wire, fabric, polyester, foam.

⁵⁶ *Hong Kong Phooey*, a Hanna-Barbera creation, first aired in 1974 at the height of the popularity of martial arts in the film, television and comic industries. A brief 2001 revival saw the character buffed up by Time Warner Company's Cartoon Network, which produced an updated online adventure featuring a muscular, werewolf-like Hong Kong Phooey and Manga/animé styled martial arts action. http://www.cartoonnetwork.com/watch/web_shows/hkp/

⁵⁷ Mayling To, *A Cute Puncture* (1998), wood, foam, fabric, polyester, acupuncture needles.

The monitor provides an “anti-TV” moment, highlighting an historically tense relationship between video and television, and an ambiguous distinction between illusion and reality.⁵⁸ Hong Kong Phooey's fate here also serves as an idiosyncratic symbol of, and allegory for, the fortunes of its territorial namesake, Hong Kong, whose return to Chinese sovereignty displaces already displaced notions of ‘origins’, and familiar ‘East/West’ formulations of hybridity and ‘in-between-ness’. In the one scenario, the Hong Kong Phooey-copy lies dead or hurt; nearby, he reappears in another guise, an array of acupuncture needles applied through black, traditional Chinese attire, an attempt to revive or curse, to further a metaphorical cultural return, or eternal banishment. What afterlife is there for this ambiguous entity, neither one nor other, here nor there?

To's transitions between printmaking, soft-sculpture, installation, photography and most recently video, exemplify a formal and conceptual interest in multiplicity and ‘susceptibility to the copy’. Via frequently ironic, comedic and combative strategies, To sets up scenes for exploring the pervasive cultural tourism and consumption across ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms of popular cultural representations of the ‘oriental’ in the West, or indeed, ‘the oriental in the West’, seizing in particular on the imaging of ‘martial’ arts in television and film, and the knowing citations and cross-overs between film and television, mutually reinvented through re-makes of the other. Early prints coalesce gendered clichés, placing muscular warrior bodies in cheongsam, their anonymity and ambiguity assured behind Chinese opera masks. Such titles as *Hollywood Dress, I'd like to thank...* (1995) directly implicate the movie-making machine and its role in the construction and perpetuation of orientalist representations, from the mysterious martial arts hero to the emasculated ‘Chinaman’, and the seductive dragon/temptress. *Punchbag* (1995) [Fig.84] again conflates types, inviting or articulating aggressions upon cinematic images of oriental femininity, invoking myths of masculine prowess alongside those of female submission.⁵⁹

Widely understood as systems of combat or self-defence developed in China and East Asia (with particular philosophical underpinnings), ‘martial arts’ are often practiced as sport and recognised as a popular movie genre (or subgenres of ‘action’ or ‘epic historical drama’, depending on cultural vantage point). Materialising cartoon abstractions and conjuring unlikely urban migrant mascots, To explores the fascination and emulation of martial arts in the West

⁵⁸ “... video is unique in its evolution out of the most advanced apparatus of mass culture, the most commercial and/or state-power-controlled instrument to date, television. Video comes after television, taking its hardware, but more or less abandoning its vocation as commercial mass communicator.” Turim, op.cit., p.335.

⁵⁹ Mayling To, *Hollywood Dress, I'd like to thank...* (1995), print on paper; *Punchbag* (1996-7), mixed media. *Punchbag* added further complexities to questions of raced, gendered and cultural identities raised by Glenn Ligon's *Skin Tight: Muhammed Ali Text* (1995) [Figs.85-86], a punchbag and text piece which specifically sought to address “how black men have used boxing to confront issues of black American identity” and “the construction of masculinity in relation to questions of violence, the commodification of black subjects, sexuality and resistance.” Glenn Ligon, ‘Skin Tight,’ in David

(her *Repertoire Dog* (1999) [Fig.83] referencing film⁶⁰), often through ambiguous hero-figures. Reinvented as uneasy embodiments of masculinity, with uncertain cultural affinities, To stages and directs displays of anxiety and fixation that not only question and deflate the lure of heroic martial arts mythologies, but also comment implicitly on cultures of copying, recycling and remaking.⁶¹ If the 'making-of' a movie points to the idea of a 'reality' behind the 'fiction', a reality that precedes fabrication, it is in itself a strange fiction – a construction of a 'reality' based often on the juxtaposition of actors speaking 'as themselves' and performing 'in role', that is just as likely to have been 'made after'. Promising glimpses into the workings of the movie-machine whilst functioning as both publicity mechanism and money-making spin-off, the 'making of' responds to desires to see more, to get closer, to get to the reality behind the fiction. How close is close enough for the fiction to be 'true'?⁶²

The pairing of *Making Of* and *Fight Sequence* (2001) [Figs.87,88], two short looped video pieces, deconstructs the opposition of 'reality' and 'fiction', referencing the common practice in martial arts films of playing outtakes alongside the end credits, showing stunts going wrong and actors 'corpsing' (breaking with their character, for example, into laughter – an interesting metaphor for the collapse of an illusive reality), in some instances almost literally (when stunts prove near-fatal).⁶³ *Making Of* and *Fight Sequence* comprise the same shots, differently edited. One includes off-camera noises and remarks, that draw attention to the technical apparatus and wider context beyond the prescribed 'action', the other cuts these out. Convention encourages us to read the latter as more 'finished' than the former, yet expectations of a forward-moving, plot-driving linearity are displaced by the juxtaposition and repetition of relatively long takes, the similarities and differences between the frames and angles of a single 'action', as well as the question of the would-be actor/stuntman's purpose. The domestic, prosaic nature of the 'fight sequence' throws into relief the normalisation of high-cost spectacle, and the degree to which audiences expect to be wowed by cinematic

Chandler, John Gill, Tania Guha and Gilane Tawadros eds., *Boxer: An Anthology of Writings on Boxing and Visual Culture* (London: Institute of international Visual Arts, 1996), p. 59.

⁶⁰ Hong Kong Phooey returns in Mayling To's *Repertoire Dog* (1999), fabric, polyester, plastic guns, the title a pun on Quentin Tarantino's film, *Reservoir Dogs* (US, 1992), colour, 99 minutes.

⁶¹ The last three decades have seen the successes (to varying critical and commercial degrees) of Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Chow Yun Fat, Michelle Yeoh, all of whom found fame in Hong Kong before making an impact in Hollywood. The influence of Hong Kong action and martial arts film-making in terms of stylistics and aesthetics (from John Woo's 'balletic' gun play to the use of wires in martial arts fight sequences) is perhaps most evident in such projects as the Warshowski Brothers' *The Matrix Trilogy* (US, 1999-2003), and Quentin Tarantino's homage to several genres, *Kill Bill: Vols. 1 & 2* (US, 2003-4).

⁶² Richard Shiff, 'Closeness,' in Naomi Salaman and Ronnie Simpson eds., *Postcards on Photography: The Handmade Copy in Reproduction* (Cambridge Darkroom Gallery, 1998) pp.11-36.

⁶³ Mayling To, *Making Of* and *Fight Sequence* (2001), video, colour, 1 min 20 sec loop each. Jackie Chan in particular has made such outtakes something of a signature. As is widely known, the martial arts-skilled actor performs all his stunts himself; if errors of judgement reveal that his vulnerability after all, they also paradoxically accentuate his 'superhuman' feats. Outtakes also figure in the end credits of Chan's long-time collaborator Sammo Hung's *Martial Law*, a Chinese-in-America US TV cop drama that follows both in the fish-out-of-cultural-water tradition, as well as that of the comic, cod-

thrills, especially with the onset of digital technology (the latter spilling open different cans of real and fictional worms), in a language of fast edits and jump-cuts that stress action and gesture over dialogue. As two young anonymous non-Chinese men perform and play to unspecified demographics, acting out pale and comparatively clumsy low-budget imitations of onscreen action hero-fictions, it is perhaps not so much the iconology of Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan or Jet Li that is invoked, but television and filmic traditions of 'wannabes', pretenders and admirers (among them, Hong Kong Phooey). Their willing participation in the staging of physical combat raises questions of identification with, desire for, and the performativity of a masculinity and ethnicity bound up in stylised violence, caught in a plot-less loop.

Three further filmic works introduce another character to To's cast of martial arts anti-heroes, first appearing as a diminutive sculpture, later carried off as an ill-fitting disguise on an unidentified man. *Pandemonium* (1998) sets a small stuffed panda upon a shallow brick plinth, adopting a combative, mock kung-fu stance, in defence of a country/side under siege, or a newly claimed urban territory. In *Learn How to be Hard Mutha* (1998), its pose is repeated in bill posters pasted on an external gallery wall, offering lessons in the fictitious 'Bamboo Forest Fist (Southern style)' from a 'Master Pang Dah'.⁶⁴ Some respond territorially to the perceived act of trespass and vandalism by tearing the posters down, while others signal their approval with comments in graffiti ("cool"). Taken at face value, one passer-by asks if it is a man in a panda-suit; interestingly, he doesn't ask why.

From fictitious martial arts lessons to home enlightenment (or enlight-entertainment?), the panda grimacing in the posters rematerialises as the panda-suited-man-without-a-name, the protagonist of *Living* (2001), *Being* (2001) and *The Stranger* (2002) [Figs.90,91].⁶⁵ Whereas "Hong Kong Phooey is an animal with a human personality... Panda is already a human; it jars to know that it's a man inside the costume."⁶⁶ The costume makes literal the masquerading of cultural identity as neither authentic nor fixed, but performed and fictive, the character's misidentification and misrecognition encapsulated in a moment before a full-length mirror, reflecting back a fake-furred, fake-skinned self-constructed or externally imposed artifice. The less than unconvincing home-made suit reveals the distance between the subject and his ambiguous object of identification. If the panda serves as a symbol of China, its representation and adoption in the form of a (bad) costume makes literal a comically excessive and impossible desire for identification and unification with a displaced cultural, philosophical and physical other.

philosophizing (pun unintended), de-sexualised, law-abiding 'oriental,' epitomised by his character's fictional detective predecessor, Charlie Chan.

⁶⁴ Mayling To, *Pandemonium* (1998), bricks, imitation grass, clay, aluminium, fabric, polyester; *Learn How to be a Hard Mutha* (1998), digital prints.

⁶⁵ Mayling To, *Living* (2001), *Being* (2001), *The Stranger* (2002), video, colour, respectively 8 mins 20 secs; 3 mins 45 secs; 11 min 25 secs.

⁶⁶ Mayling To in conversation with Melanie Keen (2002) <http://www.iniva.org/archive/resource/2255>.

Living sees the pantomime panda making his way into a flat, and setting down a pint of milk and a roll of black tape. Carefully customising a white stick, he performs a series of martial arts moves in various small, awkward spaces between furniture and walls, with similarly improvised weaponry. Afterwards he sits on the side of a bed, silent and solitary. *Living* suggests the mundanity, interiority, and solitude required of martial arts practice, questioning its function and motivation. By contrast, *Being* touches on the fantastic, exploring the desire for otherness in an existential, other-worldly frame. Turning to a 'Teach Yourself Meditation' manual, the character takes a by-the-book approach to his search for enlightenment, a quest which takes him to an English garden with oriental pretensions (it features a pagoda) and, via a dream-sequence (a familiar filmic trope of interiority), to a literally higher plane. The sequence ends abruptly as he lands with a thud, taking his frustrations out on a tree. Finally, *The Stranger* finds the panda perusing shop windows, collecting stuffed toys in his own untrue image – idols in miniature, endangered nation-symbols, preserved. Back in his flat, he caresses and assaults, cutting and mutilating, pulling synthetic insides out. Unknown and unknowable, least of all to himself, he projects his self-love and loathing, desire, revulsion and regret.

In contrast to *Making Of* and *Fight Sequence* (which point to a meta-discursive space between ostensible narratives) and *Living* (which offers no punch-line by way of closure), *Being* and *Stranger* operate within story-telling and editing conventions, with narratives driven by predictable 'jokes' or 'twists', the former accompanied in part by an immersive soundtrack, the latter developed from a storyboard, suggestive of the possibilities as well as constraints of higher production values. In the wider context of To's work, these may be read as 'signifying on' television and filmic genres and specific orientalist tropes, imitating the stylistic models and conventions that "call for the very rote actions... that fix their characters in a state of being rather than becoming".⁶⁷ *Being* in particular might be read in a similar light to Tan's *Travels with Pup*, *Guarded Proximity*, and *From China to Chintz*, insofar as they might all be considered in relation to an Asian American film and video tradition of the "counter-travelogue" (narratives of the attempted 'return' and 'recovery' of a real or imaginary 'China' as a lost or displaced heritage and homeland). Sign-posting a culturally pre-fabricated 'China', in turn equated with 'Chinese-ness' as a trans-historical, transcendental, fixed identity or state of being, which "gives the lie to one-way cultural flow", To's work is littered with parodic references to the journeys made by martial arts protagonists on various roads to enlightenment and the discovery of their 'true' power or calling – their 'place' in the world.

Without character or plot exposition – the unanswered questions, what happened to the Hong Kong Phooey-look-alike? Who is he? Who and why is the man in a panda-suit? – To's anti-heroes are fixed in the present (though fixated on an imaginary past), unable to move forwards or backwards. Despite action-flick gestures, their fundamental immobility is

conveyed through troubled identifications with two-dimensional cartoon characters and cartoon-ish cultural symbols. Nameless (titles are borrowed or unspecified) and speechless (as subjects that are passively spoken rather than actively speaking), each character exists in a state of isolated staticity, foreign-ness, or briefly literal suspension; a momentary defiance of gravity and comical return to earth, indicative of fascinations with and desires for an elsewhere, beyond the pathos of placelessness.⁶⁸

Martial Art

The 'outtake' is sometimes indulged as a marginal space in which to fool or 'monkey around', puncturing the 'proper' narrative with humour and laughter. The primitivist figure of the de-sexualised buck-toothed buffoon (and other variations of the compliant 'Ching-Chong China(wo)man') in historical and contemporary representations of the 'oriental' in the West complicate this potential.⁶⁹ Sanderson appropriates and alludes to such images by donning a monkey-mask in an early piece, *Accessories* (1988) [Fig.92];⁷⁰ Mo's silent servility mimics 'model' behaviour, while hints at the sexual and illicit hark back to late nineteenth-century US presumptions of Chinese and Japanese women as being of "bad character and immoral purpose";⁷¹ To's sub/human protagonists figure as impotent fools, harmless despite their inability to assimilate, their nostalgia and aspirations fixed instead on 'return'; Tan latterly shifts register to stage her 'self' as straight/comic ventriloquist/dummy in *Me and My Dummy* (2003).⁷²

'Monkeying' may have primitive and childish associations, yet it also resonates here with the mythological persona of the 'Monkey King' of classic Chinese legend, *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji*).⁷³ Made familiar to audiences in the West via an acclaimed 1960s animation from

⁶⁷ Feng, op.cit., p.155.

⁶⁸ The levitation recalls the characterisation of mobile diasporic Chinese between residences in Hong Kong and abroad as 'astronauts families' and 'satellite kids.' See Aihwa Ong, 'On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora,' in *Positions*, 1993, v.3 part 1, pp.745-778. The moment is also redolent of a fantasy sequence in Isaac Julien's *Baltimore* (2003), a three screen DVD projection with sound, which sees a be-wigged female character leap vertically to an impossible height, and hover, before landing precisely on her stiletto heels; a lower budget variation on a narrative of fleeting (failed?) transcendence?

⁶⁹ Robert G. Lee dubs the portrayal of "buck-toothed, squinty-eyed and pigtailed" Chinese wearing straw 'coolie' hats as "yellowface". "Yellow face exaggerates "racial" features that have been designated "Oriental," such as "slanted" eyes, overbite, and mustard-yellow skin colour. Only the racialized Oriental is yellow. Asians are not." Lee, *Oriental: Asian American in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) pp.1-2.

⁷⁰ Lesley Sanderson, *Accessories* (1988), pencil on paper.

⁷¹ Thousands were brought into the US and coerced into prostitution in the mid and late nineteenth century. Subsequently sensationalised as figures of pollution and social decay, the 1870 Page Act prohibited "Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian women" from being brought into or entering the United States to "engage in immoral or licentious activities". Lee, op.cit., p.89.

⁷² Erika Tan, *Me and My Dummy* (2003), DVD, 15 minutes.

⁷³ The epic Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji*) is attributed to Wu Ch'eng-en (c.1500-1582). Born from a stone egg. "Monkey... progresses from becoming the King of the Monkeys on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, to achieving supernatural Daoist skills. Bounding through the skies on clouds, he creates havoc on his visits to heaven in the vain hope of achieving ever higher

China, and later by a 1970s Japanese television adaptation (dubbed into a much-emulated 'Chinese-accented' English for UK broadcast),⁷⁴ the legendary figure of the Monkey King displays extraordinary prowess, performs supernatural feats, acquires immortality and wisdom, and, with his "sarcasm, humour, wit and exuberance," embodies above all rebellion.⁷⁵ In a short film, *Monkey King Creates Havoc in the Heavenly Palace* (2004), artists Cai Yuan and JJ Xin make themselves up as the eponymous hero to cause havoc in the 'heavenly palace' of the British Museum.⁷⁶ As the institution closes its doors, two flies buzz their way in, entering a silent, empty 'after hours' zone; an 'outtake' from its official activities unfolds: the flies morph into two monkey king-look-alikes, two pretenders to the pretender to the thrones of multiple kingdoms. They climb and muse over relics, and improvise a re-enactment of the monkey king's consumption of the celestial peaches of immortality, and inebriation on celestial wine. Reeling, the artist-monkeys happen across their mirror images, their already doubled amateurish play re-doubled: laughing lengthily, they roll about the floor, amused by their own antics (an ambiguous joke – stony statues serve as straight men), before mutating once more and departing in the guise of flies.

From studied prankster-ism and embodied "replication" to disembodied "rebuttal,"⁷⁷ Sanderson, Mo, Tan, and To may also be seen to steal upon and 'trip' on discursive spaces,⁷⁸ doubling, tripling and multiplying armies of selves against ideological and cultural rule(s). Yet they posit no easy exuberance or affiliation with the non-Western (male) heroic figure, no alternative grand narratives. Complicit and subversive,⁷⁹ they cut into the action, 'act out' to 'act up'; scenes are usurped and sets rearranged, Monkey's aria echoing: "I. I. I. I. I. I. I. I. I." ⁸⁰

celestial office. Having eaten the peaches of immortality specially grown for the banquet to be held by the Heavenly Queen Mother of the West, and upset the Jade Emperor and other deities, he is finally incarcerated beneath the Mountain of the Five Elements by the Buddha. Released to accompany the monk Xuanzang on his quest to obtain the holy Buddhist scriptures from India, these two, and three other pilgrims – Pigsy, Monk Sha and the dragon horse – overcome 81 calamities and confrontations in the form of supernatural phenomena and monsters before reaching their goal and returning to China with the texts." *The Mythical Quests: In Search of Adventure, Romance and Enlightenment*, exhibition notes, The British Library, London (1997). <http://www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/mythical.html>

⁷⁴ Wan Laiming dir. *Uproar in Heaven (Da'nao Tiangong)*, also known as *Havoc in Heaven* (China, 1961, 1964), animation, colour. The Japanese television series, *Monkey*, first aired in the UK in 1979.

⁷⁵ *The Mythical Quests*, op.cit.

⁷⁶ Cai Yuan and JJ Xin's often irreverent, performative interventions pointedly challenge the hegemonic values of the contemporary Western art world and its institutions. They are perhaps best known for jumping on Tracey Emin's Turner Prize-winning exhibit, *My Bed*, at Tate Britain (1999), and for urinating at Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* in Tate Modern (2000).

⁷⁷ Feng describes Tiana Alexandra's representations of Vietnam as "replications, elaborations and rebuttals of U.S. imagery." Op.cit., p.130. A comparative study of the mythical 'monkey king' of Chinese literature and the 'signifying monkey' of African-American vernacular oral as prankster or 'trickster' figures, is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁷⁸ I refer here to Wittman Ah Sing, the Chinese-American protagonist of Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

⁷⁹ Some "Asian subjects selectively participate in Orientalist formulations as they negotiate shifting discursive terrains in the world economy," via a strategic "complicity and subversion of these constructions." Aihwa Ong, 'On the Edge of Empire: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora,' *Positions*, 1993, vol. 3, part 1, pp.745-778, pp.746-7.

⁸⁰ Monkey's aria from *The Journey to the West*, cited in Kingston, op.cit. p. []

Translators' Notes¹

An introductory aside: the title of this essay refers to an exhibition for which I was commissioned to make a new work, *Notes On Return* (2003).² My discussion focuses however on *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2001) [Figs.93-104, 109, 110], a recent multi-media installation work by Erika Tan. I begin with this brief deviation and doubling to draw attention to the 'where from' and 'how' of my speaking, intimate and distanced, performatively 'outside in' and 'inside out' in relation to the disciplinary, discursive, cultural and conceptual frames across which many of us "shuttle", in this instant literally – my image and voice appear both in the work and documentation of *PIDGIN*.³ Acknowledging then the mutual contingency, coincidences and sometimes untranslatability of critical practices and positionings, what follows might be considered, with caution, as a sometime artist-writer-translator's notes, on translators' notes.

Interrupted Transmission

This writing belongs, not to a monument outside the history it narrates, nor to a philosophical system of the kind Marx was striving to leave behind, but to a practice of communication, a process of writing and rewriting, what the Situationists called 'detourning,' or the appropriation and retooling of phrases, terms, polemics.

Pidgin [pij'in] 1. a minimal second language that is a combination of the vocabulary and pronunciation patterns of two or more languages, created when groups speaking mutually unintelligible languages have a need to communicate, as for trade or negotiations; grammatically, it usually is a simplified form of one of the languages. 2. loosely, any simplified or abridged form of a language used by non-native speakers. (Said to be from a Chinese mispronunciation of the word business within Chinese Treaty ports.)⁴

Blinds down, the gallery is darkened, dim. Light flickers, bouncing from double projections that double the dimensions, two to four, of obliquely opposing walls. Pigeons flock, stilled mid-

¹ This essay is developed from a review, 'PIDGIN: interrupted transmission,' *Third Text*, vol.16, no.3, 2002. A longer version was presented as a paper at the conference, 'Contemporary Chinese Art in the International Arena,' held at the British Museum, London, in collaboration with the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 18 – 20 April, 2002. The paper appeared the same year on the site www.chinese-art.com. 'PIDGIN: interrupted transmission' was at Norwich Gallery, 28 November – 20 December, 2001, touring to Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth, 9 March to 20 April, 2002.

² Jose Ortega y Gasset, 'The Misery and Splendor of Translation' (1937) in Lawrence Venuti ed. *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000). 'The Translator's Notes' was curated by Irene Amore for Café Gallery Projects, London, 26 March – 20 April, 2003.

³ Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Outside In, Inside Out,' *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991) pp.65-78.

⁴ McKenzie Wark, 'All That Is Solid Melts Into Airwaves,' 15 March, 1998, <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-1-9803/msg00075.html>, and unattributed dictionary definition, cited in Simon Willmoth, ed. *PIDGIN interrupted transmission / ERIKA TAN*, exhibition catalogue (London: Film and Video Umbrella, 2002) unpaginated.

flight in black and white, later flying into and past the artist's lens, colourful; a head in profile, lips moving, whispers (— me, my lips to E.'s ear); pages of texts in unfamiliar scripts; text messages, abbreviations and decodings; and aerial views of a flat, indistinct landscape. Somewhere in the sequence comes the announcement, “an exercise in: phonological stretching”. Falling for the authority of the caption, an old love of linearity re-surfacing, I catch myself wondering if I have arrived, by chance, at the beginning, realising much later that there is none, no one, only many. Talking heads ensue, speaking heavily accented, halting versions of English, awkward shapes of words coming uneasily from ill-practised mouths. From the spoken to the written: texts appear fleetingly, white on black, again in various languages – too briefly to be caught, and only then by speed-reading multi-linguists. This is followed by a slow and suspenseful game of whispers: from me to E. ... to E. ... D. ... A. ... P., M. ... J., J., A. (or is this a later round?) ... and finally to S., who tells us, “Language is a skill that relates to a toy.”

Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire.⁵

PIDGIN: interrupted transmission takes up the thematics of some of Tan's earlier works, which explore the discursive construction, classification and dissemination of orientalist identities, histories, cultures and knowledges. In *PIDGIN*, questions of cultural origin, authenticity and meaning are raised via expositions of “the “heteroglossia, the productivity, multiplicity, and the open-ended nature of language”, in the form of “borderline skirmishes”.⁶ The complex and ambitious project appears to take as its starting point the task of defining and locating the origins of ‘pidgin’. And yet, while various definitions can indeed be found within the overall work, Tan’s project is not so much to define, than to mediate as a site at / through which multiple meanings and processes might coalesce or contradict each other, as “a site where incongruous things can meet”.⁷ Theory and practice are necessarily embroiled in “aspects of language and translation” within a wider, open-ended inquiry.⁸ Mixing and stretching metaphors, offsetting the written, in varieties of immutable print and idiosyncratic hand, with the elusive and infinitely elastic spoken, Tan’s work maps a difficult and disjointed trajectory of loops, slippages and double-takes, exploring the always already perforated “contact zones”, “zones of domination” as well as “mediation” between cultures, via the “contact languages” of pidgin that inhabit and transgress their borders.⁹ Solemn,

⁵ The erroneous transcription is mine; Tan’s own transcription reads, “Language is a skill that legs to toys.” The ‘original’ (translated) quotation, which appears in the exhibition catalogue, is from Roland Barthes trans. Richard Howard, *A Lovers Discourse: Fragments*, first published 1977 (London: Penguin, 1990) p.73.

⁶ Willmoth, in Willmoth ed., op cit.

⁷ Trinh T. Minh-ha *Cinema Interval* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p.69.

⁸ I refer to George Steiner’s *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975)

⁹ “Contact zone” is a phrase used by Mary Louise Pratt to characterise the space of encounter between China and the West, which Arif Dirlik elaborates as a “zone of domination” as well as “mediation;”

overwhelming, at turns alienating and engaging, *PIDGIN Interrupted transmission* is perhaps most affecting in the seemingly unaffected moments of bewilderment, frustration, and pleasure, during affectations – or stagings – of play.

Pidgin, Pigeon

Do you hear 'pidgin' or 'pigeon'?¹⁰ Footage of carrier pigeons being tagged, released, and variations of, recur; a single pigeon in flight, close-ups of pigeons in a loft. Black and white stills of pilots with pigeons amid cheering crowds parallel later colour moving image footage from a cockpit, the pilot faintly heard but unseen as he navigates a plane over green fields, eventually coming in to land. The play on 'pidgin' / 'pigeon' enacts a slippage that registers as a visual and written pun but not in the spoken;¹¹ a gap in translation that casts doubt on the transparency and stability of language as a mere tool of communication, or reliable means of representation.

This doubt is embodied by the struggles of Tan's filmic subjects to speak. Tackling texts translated into English, then phonetically transcribed into each speaker's so-called 'mother tongue,' languages and meanings becomes emphatically distanced, several times removed for both speaker and audience. Thus, a range of strangely inflected, splintered English(es) are rendered through a collage of approximate sounds in Mandarin/Putonghua Chinese, Greek(s), Arabic, Dutch and Afrikaans (already classified by many as a pidgin or creole), into alternative pidgin languages.¹² Halting the sometimes frenetic flow of images, altering the pace and space of the work, each hesitation signals a lack of symmetry between signifier and signified, gesturing towards the elusive / inventive nature of meaning construction, communication and translation.

:-) smile :D big grin :-I grim face ;-) wink :P sticking out tongue {{{{{{ }}}}} lots of hugs
:'(crying :-& tongue-tied :-)X(-: kiss ('}') boy and girl kissing ()? []? coffee or tea
C[] a pint of beer >^,,^< cat <:3)~ mouse ^ (oo)^ spider <(((>< fish @(*O*)@ koala
~^~^~^~8> snake ><*. *>< crab @(-_-)@ Princes Leia (_8(I) Homer Simpson
@@@@8 (I) Marge Simpson (:::[]::) Band Aid SS ><)))"> Something Smells Fishy

cited by Michelle Yeh in 'International Theory and the Transnational Critic: China in the Age of Multiculturalism,' in Rey Chow, ed. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) pp.251-80. Contact languages are "so called because they come about through contact between two or more existing languages," Mark Sebba, *Contact Languages: Pidgins and Creoles* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 1997) p.2

¹⁰ A "'corruption' or 'distortion' of English," "a 'jargon' of some sort," or "a medium sized bird with a stocky body and short legs... often trained for racing and carrying messages"? Sebba, *ibid.* p.1, and Delia Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

¹¹ 'Pidgin' and 'pigeon' share the same IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) pronunciation, *ibid.*

¹² One speaker is from Athens and another is from the south, so the sounds of two different Greek languages are spoken between the two (unpublished correspondence with the artist). Sebba offers a broad definition of creole as "pidgins which have become native languages for their speakers." *Op.cit.* p.16

AFK Away From Keyboard **ATK** At The Keyboard **BBL** Be Back Later **B4N** By For Now
BRB Be Right Back **FWIW** For What It's Worth **GMTA** Great Minds Think Alike **IMHO** In My Humble Opinion **LOL** Laughing Out Loud **LTNS** Long Time No See **TTFN** Ta-Ta For Now **TTYL** Talk To You Later **OIC** Oh I See **L8R** Later **SI** Sarcasm Intended **OOO** Out Of Order **SOMY** Sick of Me Yet? **GLB4UGH** Get Lost Before You Get Hurt **WYBMADIITY** Will You Buy Me A Drink If I Tell You? ¹³

Gaps between acts of speaking and writing, enunciation and inscription, spoken and written, are accentuated by the contrast of stalled speech-acts and accelerated modes of writing represented by SMS mobile phone text messaging (and imaging), based on abbreviations and alphanumeric strings which function “more like a specialised orthography (spelling conventions)... than an actual pidgin.”¹⁴ For Tan, text messaging is demonstrative of “the creation of a language on a minute level”.¹⁵ Inscribing a poetics of interruption, disjunctures between registers are further compounded by the relationship between video and audio tracks, and underscored by the formal arrangement of objects in the space. Two projections are framed by opposing walls that, like their content, are slightly askew. Not-quite parallel, not-quite mirror — one is set at an angle, subtly distinguishing the space like an accent over a vowel. Unsynchronised passages shift attention to six speakers, whose visibility foregrounds their role as output mechanisms, artificial mouths similarly estranged from their ‘words’ and ‘utterances’. Emitting varied sounds, they bear forth the tappings of a telegraphic transmission (morse code perhaps), sounds of a woman singing in Chinese, radio stations tuning in and out, and with them, voices and languages veering and swerving towards and away from each another, before disappearing into the ‘silence’ of background interference; pigeons coo; a phone rings – or is that coming from the gallery office? An appropriate interference nonetheless.

A computer monitor supplies a third screen, not a means of active engagement but an additional viewing mechanism, appearing to make transparent the workings of the piece via an overall ‘timeline’. The technology used to create the work and control different devices (two DVD players and a CD player, “switching each one on and off, locating specific sections within a disk to create a dialogue with the different elements of the work”), is sophisticated yet unable to ‘converse’ with seamless jumps:

It takes a couple of seconds to ‘locate’ and ‘trigger’ the next bit of footage. As it jumps, there is a break in transmission – ¹⁶

Digital media is utilised in extrapolation of the potential of video’s “potential to become a conceptual technology, one that can look at the history of the image, of sound/sense articulation in language and speech, and of narrative through a refiguration of space and a

¹³ Willmoth, ed., op.cit.

¹⁴ Unattributed quote, ibid.

¹⁵ Tan, ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

multiple mapping of time.”¹⁷ On closer inspection, the timeline reveals itself to be something of a comforting “ruse”, its structure artificial, its simplifications belying discrepancies and lapses in timing between the representation and encounter of image / sound events. Like the contents of an accompanying “research book”, presented without “beginning or ending or index”, supplementing, coinciding with, and distracting from other parts of the work, this third screen offers only an illusory unifying meta-narrative: far from transparent, the black background, at once flat and fathomless, simply conceals and swallows the excesses.¹⁸

Is it a coincidence that we name the most inventive, innovative and homely uses of language as pidgin?¹⁹

From ‘pidgin’ to ‘pigeon’ and back again – the slippage suggests the latter as metaphor for the former, language as carrier, bearer or messenger of meanings picked up and dropped intact, a mode of delivery. However, the recurrence of ruptured speech-acts and indeterminate sounds evoke language as an always already interrupted transmission, dispossessed of its source. Tensions between such formulations are intimated in the juxtaposition of ‘carriers’ — carrier pigeons, aircraft carriers, carrier waves. Unlike pigeons and aircraft, which may be prescribed routes and destinations, the electromagnetic waves modulated to carry a signal in, for example, radio transmission, guarantee no single, final point of arrival. Birds take off, planes come in, compelled or instructed by a necessity to ‘home’, to return to / from a/loft. Contrasting predetermined schedules of departure and return, sounds diffuse in multiple directions, after in(de)finite, indeed infinite courses. As meanings slide, deferred with each reverberation, the notion of language as ‘true’ carrier is countered by an associated potential as harbinger of disease, infection, pollution and corruption, and simultaneously undone by its homonym – for ‘pigeon’ can also mean a decoy.²⁰

Preoccupations with precursors and beginnings pervade dictionary definitions of ‘pidgin’. Peppered with firsts, chief, secondary, minor, denigrated as “trivial” and “derivative”, its very name is thought to be a ‘corruption,’ a Chinese mispronunciation of ‘business’.²¹ In their ever-increasing proliferations, pidgins deflect and defer questions of origins, attesting rather to relations of trade and power concomitant with contexts and processes of colonisation and globalisation, as suggested by the non-exhaustive or exclusive classifications or “broad types” proffered by linguists:

1. Military and police pidgins

¹⁷ Maureen Turim, ‘The Cultural Logic of Video,’ in Doug Hall and Sally Fifer eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture in association with Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), pp.331-342.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nikos Papastergiadis, ‘Catch the pidgin,’ in Willmoth ed., *ibid.*

²⁰ As in ‘stool-pigeon’ – originally a decoy of a pigeon fixed to a stool – it can signify “somebody who is easily swindled or deceived,” *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, op.cit.

²¹ Steiner, op.cit. p.44; Sebba, op.cit., p.26.

2. Seafaring and trade pidgins and creoles
3. Plantation pidgins and creoles
4. Mine and construction pidgins
5. Immigrants' pidgins
6. Tourist pidgins
7. Urban contact vernaculars.²²

The earliest known European pidgin ('Sabir' or 'Lingua Franca') is of military origin, thought to have emerged after the late eleventh century with the Crusades.²³ Its retrospective designation arises however out of the 'mispronunciation' classifying one of the oldest varieties of English-lexicon, non-native secondary or auxiliary 'makeshift' languages, necessitated by and historically intertwined with economic relations between European colonial and Chinese imperial powers. In turn, with possible roots in an earlier Portuguese pidgin used around the Macau from the mid sixteenth century, Chinese Pidgin English, or CPE, emerged and developed into a regional 'lingua franca'.²⁴ From the establishment of a trading station in Canton (Guangzhou) in 1664, to the opening of several treaty ports to foreign trade following the Opium War around 1843, CPE, comprising "a vocabulary of English, Chinese, Portuguese and Anglo-Indian words arranged according to Cantonese syntax",²⁵ came to serve as a "socially neutral" common language, facilitating communication between Europeans and Chinese "at arms length".²⁶

As a "contact zone" between not two but here, at least four languages, pidgin may entail the appropriation and transformation not of a single 'dominant' tongue, but of several coterminous languages. Rather than taking 'first' and 'primary' as designations of some untainted a priori original, such terms may be read as impositions indicative of hierarchical economic and political relations between synchronic cultures, whose diachronic ranking hazardously disregards the at least two-way traffic already jamming the proverbial streets. Whether one 'begins' with English, Chinese, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish or Arabic, the to-and-fro translation of pidgin intimates the incessant and mutual susceptibility and capacity for invention and 'adulteration'.²⁷

²² Sebba, op.cit., p.27

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), p.46. Welsh describes pidgin as a lingua franca, which Sebba notes is derived from 'Lingua Franca,' "a Medieval trading pidgin used in the Mediterranean... where traders' native languages included many very different languages such as Portuguese, Greek, Arabic and Turkish"; also "a language of wider communication... native only to some," for example Swahili, and internationally, English.

²⁵ Welsh, ibid.

²⁶ R.A. Hall, *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1966) p.8, cited in Sebba, op.cit., pp.66-67. Sebba argues that because pidgin is "no-one's native language, 'all speakers are equal' – there are no native speakers with a 'superior' knowledge of the language. "Pidgins may therefore be seen as socially neutral, even though they may also have a low status." pp.16-17.

²⁷ Welsh offers the following examples of words that have passed into 'common usage': "shroff", originally assayer and money changer, 'chop', seal or permit, and 'godown', warehouse, 'amah', nurse, are Portuguese; 'hong', factory or firm, 'taipan', 'junk' and 'chow' are Chinese."Op.cit.

Chinglish Pinyin English

CPE is said to have completed a three hundred year 'life cycle', falling out of use from about 1900.²⁸ It might be argued however that the increasingly widespread teaching of Standard English in mainland China over the last century has ironically brought about a certain revitalisation of CPE in the form of 'Chinglish,' the poor English translations found in many public places, whose erroneous vocabulary and grammar arise in part from combinations of careless spelling, out of date textbooks, and literal translations of Chinese colloquialisms and idioms. A cause of amusement for foreigners and embarrassment to the Beijing government (who a month after their confirmation in 2002 as host for the 2008 Olympics Games, launched a campaign to eradicate Chinglish by this date),²⁹ its prevalence is apparent not only as a means of communication between locals and foreigners, but also between locals and peoples from other regions in China (whose dialects may be mutually unintelligible) as a lingua franca.

If 'standard' or 'print' languages come to hierarchically distinguish geographies and subjects, economically and politically empowered or disempowered according to their ability, or otherwise, to speak the 'standard', they also succeed in rendering other dialects (a social rather than linguistic distinction) inferior.³⁰ Like 'Standard English', the notion of 'Standard Chinese' serves nation and economy-building interests, belying a multiplicity of ethnicities and language.³¹

China... is not a simple, homogeneous nation, and the Chinese language has a complex political relationship to the notion of 'China. Within China there is not just one language, but a multiplicity of languages, ranging from Tibetan and Mongolian to the majority Han language. Even in the Han language, the spoken form has hundreds of different varieties, many of them as different as Spanish from Italian. The official language, 'Mandarin', or *putonghua*, serves the same political function as English once did in the British Isles, to integrate the nation, or as English did for the old 'British Empire'. Like English across the empire, even *putonghua*, the standard language, is spoken in different ways in different parts of mainland China, which have immediate political readings and effects. And then there are Taiwan and Hong Kong, with their form of the standard language existing alongside other forms of Chinese or other languages...³²

Language is the mate of empire.³³

²⁸ Sebba, op.cit., p.67

²⁹ 'Beijing Clamps Down on Chinglish,' 14 August 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1491288.stm>.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991).

³¹ "According to McArthur (1993), 'Standard English' as a term was first used during the Industrial Revolution in Britain, when having 'standard' parts became important for mass-production." Sebba, op.cit., p.6

³² Bob Hodge and Kam Louie, *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998) p.9.

³³ Manuel de Nebrija, cited in Sebba, op.cit., p.7. Sebba summarises the spread of standard languages, which had "a functional role in nation and empire building during the era when large nation-states like Spain and France were being established in Europe and creating empires abroad through trade and colonisation; ... reinforced and consolidated by the advent of printed books... and, later, by industrialisation and the introduction of mass media."

A friend performs an interesting slippage, repeatedly referring to *PIDGIN* as *PINYIN* – in a sense, pidgin's 'other'. For whereas pinyin denotes a Romanised transliteration of written Chinese characters, authorised in the late 1950s in a drive to standardise Chinese in translation, pidgin (here in its Chinglish variations), by contrast, may be said to arise out of unauthorised translations and ad hoc improvisations, occupying a fluid orality between written standards.³⁴ Where pinyin serves alongside Mandarin or Putonghua (literally, 'common speech') as a means of homogenising and solidifying Chinese against the dominance of English (and by extension against numerous other Chinese 'dialects'), pidgin neither favours nor fears the supremacy of any language, sited as it is in the perforated borders in-between.

Since the 1984 signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong's future, contestations over language as a site of power, authority and identity have been particularly evident in controversies surrounding the official medium of instruction in Hong Kong's schools. In spite of the dominance of Anglo-Chinese schools during colonial rule, in which English was designated as the official language of instruction, the government continuously faced issues over the competency of usage and pervasiveness of Chinglish in teaching-learning process. Concurrently, recommendations regarding the learning of Putonghua have seen a shift from optional extracurricular activity to core curriculum subject, and as post-reunification trade with China continues to expand, so speculations increase that it will eventually supplant English and Cantonese as the language of instruction, power, government.³⁵

Such trends have been met with resistance from those who regard Cantonese, and even Chinglish, as Hong Kong's mother tongue, whose idiosyncracies are seen as crucial to its cultural identity. As Kwai-Cheung Lo writes,

... the vitality of Hong Kong's language, many believe, lies precisely in its intractability to the taming by standard Chinese.

The language of Hong Kong... is a schizophrenic contextual combination of the vernacular Cantonese, the written form of Chinese, and verbal, written, and broken English. Many cultural critics of Hong Kong are proud of this hybrid language, and they see in this linguistic predicament as a *positive* opportunity both for constructing a critical discourse against pure Chinese national tradition and for problematizing the classic binary opposition between East and West.³⁶

³⁴ Established for diplomatic, official and media uses, introduced in 1959 and adopted by the PRC in 1979.

³⁵ Gerard A. Postiglione, 'The Decolonization of Hong Kong Education,' in Ming K. Chan and Gerard A. Postiglione eds. *The Hong Kong Reader* (London, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996) pp.98-123.

³⁶ Kwai-Cheung Lo, 'Look Who's Talking: The Politics of Orality in Transitional Hong Kong Mass Culture,' in Rey Chow ed. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining A Field* (Durham, London: Duke UP, 2000) pp.185-6.

Abstract notions of an 'essential' Chinese (or English) subject and a 'standard' Chinese (or English) language often come hand in hand, concealing a multiplicity of mutually unintelligible languages, ethnicities and identities.³⁷ Enforced, according to Rey Chow, as "a sign of the systematic *codification and management of ethnicity* that is typical of modernity", Lo identifies the role of a written or print standard in the suppression of "the political chaos of the voice, a chaos that disrupts the tidiness and self-transparency of the logos that is the nation".³⁸ Chow adds that

Mandarin is, properly speaking, also *the white man's Chinese*, the Chinese that receives its international authentication as "standard Chinese" in part because, among the many forms of Chinese speeches, it is the one inflected with the largest number of foreign, especially Western, accents.³⁹

As such, linguistic competence in 'standard Chinese' functions to lend the Western 'outsider' professional credibility and academic authority, a "status symbol, an additional professional asset", whilst for the so-called Chinese 'insider', the ability to speak the language is frequently taken as an index of ethnic authenticity. Conversely:

Those who are ethnically Chinese but for historical reasons have become linguistically distant or dispossessed are, without exception, deemed inauthentic and lacking.⁴⁰

While mainland Chinglish arises out of pragmatic attempts to engage and deploy the economic lingua franca, Hong Kong Chinglish evidences its subjects' imbrication and ambivalence in the linguistic negotiation of a British colonial past and Chinese sovereign present, from a predominantly Cantonese (culturally as well as politically subordinate) position. As a latter day pidgin used widely among young people, professionals, academics and government officials alike, Chinglish signals both a habitual and playful shuttling to and fro of subjects inside and between languages and cultures,⁴¹ a wilful re-pidginisation that declares both an affinity to an 'inauthentic' heterogeneous locality, and a distance from ruling authorities or homogeneous nations.

In the decade or so preceding the Handover, questions around the contestation and configuration of power, identity and history on linguistic territory, over language as territory and culture, came to the fore in works by a number of contemporary artists from mainland

³⁷ John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), cited in Chow, op.cit. p.8.

³⁸ Lo, op.cit., p.186.

³⁹ Chow, op.cit., p.8.

⁴⁰ Chow, op.cit., p.9. When one 'other' attempts to speak in relation to another 'other', those who subscribe to the 'insider/outsider' paradigm are liable to get confused or affronted; Vietnamese-born-academic-theorist-filmmaker-hybrid Trinh T. Minh-ha, based in the States via Paris and Senegal, neither 'authentic Chinese' nor an 'authoritative Chinese scholar,' has been challenged over her work 'on China'. Trinh's response (which is also a response to assumptions that her films should be in and about Vietnam) is simply, 'Why Vietnam?' Trinh, *Cinema Interval* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999) p. 219.

⁴¹ See Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Cotton and Iron', in Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.11-26.

China and Hong Kong. Perhaps the most well-known of these is Xu Bing's *A Book from the Sky* [Fig.105], an installation consisting of books and hanging scrolls imprinted with some two thousand hand-carved woodblock characters, partially recognisable yet ultimately illegible, as they are all invented. First exhibited in Beijing in 1988 and 1989, the work met with "considerable perplexity over whether to read [it] as a critique, or as an instantiation of Chinese culture, or as both". Subsequently received in the West to critical acclaim, "its insertion into a transnational circuit of exhibition [transformed it] from a limited work that responds to primarily local concerns into a commodified, aesthetic spectacle of contemplation and collection". *A Book from the Sky* has been taken up as "a simple allegory of good (individual expression) against evil (traditional despotism)", and the excessive labour invested in the work has been interpreted both as a "representation of oppressive human toil in China" and of authentic Chinese meditative practices. Yet as Stanley K. Abe points out, the very title(s) of the work reflects the slippery specificity of its readings between Chinese and Western audiences of differing politics and degrees of literacy, the "unstable litany of names and translations suggest[ing] the manner in which it is able to elicit a multiplicity of readings, something like a Rorschach test, that reveals the interests and politics of the viewer."⁴²

Since 1984, Gu Wenda's production of monumental pseudo seal scripts, following the format of calligraphic copybooks, have caused controversy for their simultaneous invocation and demystification of the written word, at once iconoclastic and glorifying, not of empire but "the spirit of the absurd".⁴³ Trained in the specialist classical scholarly art of seal-carving yet unable to comprehend the characters he crafted, Gu's mimicking and reinvention of forms long incomprehensible to many Chinese (except for professional linguists), into an aesthetically convincing yet nonsensical script, multiplies their illegibility and negation of translatability [Fig.106]. Gu asks:

Who writes the truth, and what gets written in or out of history?⁴⁴

Confounding the possibility of a clear cut 'insider-ism' or 'outsider-ism' in relation to supposedly discrete, monolithic and immutable bodies of language and culture, questions around China's heritage(s) and inheritors, its territorial, cultural and linguistic properties and

⁴² Its names have varied from *Fenxi Shijie de Shu* (*A Book that Analyzes the World*), to *Tian Shu* (*A Book from the Sky* or *Nonsense Writing*), to *Xishu Jian* or *Xishu Jian: Shijimo Yuan* (variously translated as *An Analyzed Reflection of the World*, *A Mirror that Analyzes the World*, and *Analytical Mirrors of the World: The Final Volumes of the Century* or *Fin de Siecle Volumes*). Stanley K. Abe, 'No Questions, No Answers: China and *A Book from the Sky*,' in Chow ed., op.cit, pp.227-250. Wu Hung adds *Heavenly Book* to the litany in, 'Counter-Monument,' an essay from Wu Hung's *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago UP, 1999), pp.30-34.

⁴³ Chang Tsong-zung, 'Temples of Mass Power,' *Wenda Gu: The Mythos of Lost Dynasties, 1984-1997* (Hong Kong: Hanart T Z Gallery, 1997) exhibition catalogue, unpaginated. See also Hung, 'Anti-Writing,' op.cit., pp.36-41.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Pamela Kember, 'A Battle with Existence Itself: The Work of Gu Wenda,' first published in *Asian Art News*, September/October 1997, reprinted in John Clark ed. *Chinese Art at the End of the Millenium: Chinese-art.com 1998-1999* (Hong Kong: New Art Media Ltd, 2000) pp.197-203.

proprietors, are brought into relief in the particular, peculiar context of the Hong Kong. Tsang Tsou Choi, dubbed the 'King of Kowloon' by the local media, has written himself into history by insistently rewriting Hong Kong's past across its territories [Fig.108]. For several decades, Tsang has claimed Kowloon as ancestral land wrongfully usurped by a foreign crown without compensation.⁴⁵ He makes his protests against dispossession via highly visible calligraphic inscriptions (in a context relatively free of graffiti) from walls and street furniture to flyovers and bus stops, including public places poignant for their proximity to sites of British crown authority, such as the Central Government Offices, Government House, and Victoria Park; the demise of colonial power has seen Tsang redirect his claims to symbols of Chinese state authority, though he "doubts China will return land the British stole."⁴⁶

Given the absence of a public arena for the expression of dissent, Tsang invades or defiles existing sites of power, or at least occupies their margins. Usually he places his writing in sites with high pedestrian traffic, where it will have a ready visibility, but he is normally careful not to choose surfaces which are too sensitive, from which his inscriptions would be immediately cleared. Since his calligraphy can be found all over the territory it becomes a trace of its author's wanderings... enact[ing] the displacement his texts speak of: the ruler wanders in exile.⁴⁷

Tsang's writing is described as "eccentric... bold" and "raw... without clear precedent in calligraphic tradition," a makeshift miming and adaptation of the rhetoric of power, to publicly contest those in possession.⁴⁸ In the period preceding the Handover, the re-framing of Tsang's project as art, first by a local curator, then by dint of its appropriation by a number of local artists and designers,⁴⁹ prompted outrage and accusations of manipulation (many question Tsang's mental health); yet his work has nevertheless become "a much-circulated symbol of the local".⁵⁰ Previously inscribed objects and surfaces were exhibited between freshly 'defaced' gallery walls, Tsang's public interventions re-presented as artistic installation, translated into a medium adopted by many young Hong Kong artists emerging in the late 1980s. The lack of affordable space for working in traditional media or of a developed market driving the production of art objects as commodities, contributes to the popularity of installation, as does its relatively short history and cultural status as the preserve of neither Western nor Chinese canons. Moreover, its transience and particular relation to the specificities of local sites and their histories resonated with the prevalent concerns of a

⁴⁵ Tsang claims this is recorded in a family ancestral book from his home village of Liantang in Guangdong province. Lau Kin Wai, trans. Mirium Lui, 'Steets [sic] Calligrapher – Tsang Tsou Choi,' in Lau Kin Wai, ed. *The Street Calligraphy of Tsang Tsou Cho*, exhibition catalogue (Hong Kong: Kin Wai's Workshop, 1997), pp.8-10. The mis-spelling is a not uncommon instance of Chinglish that often appears in such publications.

⁴⁶ Gary Silverman, 'Long Live the King,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 3, 1996, reprinted in Lau, ed., *ibid*.

⁴⁷ David Clarke, *Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization* (London: Reaktion, 2001) pp.175-185.

⁴⁸ Lau and Clarke, respectively, *op.cit* and *ibid*.

⁴⁹ Lau invited artist Lee Ka-Sing to respond to Tsang's work for the exhibition, *Cultural Chop Shui 1*, Fringe Gallery, Hong Kong, 4-18 October, 1995. Lau later curated *The Street Calligraphy of Tsang Tsou Choi* for the Agfa Gallery, Goethe Institute, Hong Kong, 24 April – 17 May and Hong Kong Arts Centre, 3-4 Floor Atrium, 24 April – 6 May, 1997.

⁵⁰ Clarke, *op. cit*.

number of artists keen to recuperate local popular and material culture “for a fragile alternative history”, often via traces of the vernacular.⁵¹

Oscar Ho's ongoing works on paper, *Stories Around Town* (1991-), resemble newspaper cartoon strips, combining text and image to fabricate tales based largely on urban myth, sometimes incorporating imitations of Tsang's writing style as well as news stories (on occasion produced for and disseminated in the press itself), questioning the veracity and power of 'truths' and expressing the frustrations and boredom in anticipation of the 'historical moment' encapsulated by the date 'June 30, 1997'.⁵² In contrast to the interest in written Chinese languages demonstrated by such artists from the mainland as Xu and Gu, a number of artists from Hong Kong display a particular interest in spoken language and Cantonese as the predominant local vernacular. The English titles of various pieces by Antonio Mak render absurd and opaque homonymic and visual/verbal puns revealed only in their Cantonese translation, such as *Bible from Happy Valley* (1992)⁵³ (a horse with a large open book across its back for wings symbolises gamblers' dreams of winning; 'happy valley' is a race course and 'bible' translates into 'shu', which can mean 'book' and 'to lose'). Kith Tsang Tak-Ping translates his *Hello! Hong Kong* series (1996 –1997)⁵⁴ by sounding out English with Chinese written characters (a method that harks back to the Cantonese phonological representation of English that typified CPE),⁵⁵ while Warren Leung Chi-Wo has monumentalised and memorialised the vernacular in *Dream of a Path* (1996), by engraving items from a 1960s street stall menu into the floor of a former shop space, a “fake relic” that recovers the lost traces of urban renewal and development. Leung also deploys word play in both titles and inscriptions, notably *Vis(i)ta* (1996-7) [Fig.107],⁵⁶ in which the locations of photographic views of Sun Gai, Gau Long, and Heung Gong are occluded from those without adequate knowledge of romanized Cantonese to recognise the otherwise familiar New Territories, Kowloon and Hong Kong Island; in this way, Leung highlights the dimensions of the local and the linguistic in the hierarchical production of knowledge and designation of territory and ownership, imitating and escaping the dual competitive hegemonies of standard English and Chinese.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Clarke, 'Para/site Art Space,' op.cit., pp.70-99.

⁵² Oscar Ho, *Stories Around Town* (1991-), ink on paper. Ho featured in *Exhibition 6.30*, Hanart TZ Gallery, curated by Chang Tsong Zung, 20 – 30 June 1997, as did Kith Tsang and Warren Leung.

⁵³ Antonio Mak, *Bible from Happy Valley* (1992), bronze and lead.

⁵⁴ Kith Tsang Tak-Ping, *Hello! Hong Kong* series (1996 –1997), mixed media installations.

⁵⁵ “CPE is strongly influenced by Cantonese in phonology and syntax... there is a lack of consonant clusters in Cantonese syllable structure, so when there is a consonant cluster, each consonant is represented by a character – but in Cantonese each character is a syllable i.e. it has a vowel inserted after the consonant. For example “small” if represented phonologically is written in 3 characters i.e.: simala or change = cheenchee, count = conta...” D. Shi, 'Learning Pidgin English Through Chinese Characters,' in F. Byrne and J. Holm, *Atlantic Meets Pacific – A Global View of Pidginization and Creolization* (Amsterdam: Benjaminsem, 1993) p.459; cited in Willmoth ed., op.cit.

⁵⁶ Warren Leung Chi-Wo, *Dream of a Path* (1996), site-specific engravings; *Vis(i)ta* (1996-7), wood, zinc plate, mirror, iron, liquid light.

Reflective perhaps of the historical exclusion of Chinese women from reading and writing, hence from centres of power, the artists from mainland China and Hong Kong engaging language appear to be predominantly male. Work by such 'British Chinese' artists as Lesley Sanderson, Yeu-Lai Mo, Mayling To, differently up-rooted from 'motherlands' and 'mother tongues', often articulate a silence or silencing, a speechlessness or sense of speaking into a vacuum.⁵⁸ Sanderson's 'disappearing act' takes place as her self-image disperses across several works, returning doubled with mouth, face and head bandaged and bound, and speaking only at odds with her collaborative partner, less a dialogue than two monologues comprising Western rhymes and taunts; a solitary Mo mouths an equally limited repetitive script as part of a soundless spectacle, her voice inaudible until disembodied; To's cartoon anti-heroes say nothing. However, like their Hong Kong and mainland contemporaries, a common strategy lies in the visual/verbal punning of titles, usually in English, whose 'Chinglishness' resides in the frequent cultural double entendres, for example in Anthony Key's *Free Delivery*, *Great Wall*, *Chips with Everything*, and To's *Pandemonium* and *A Cute Puncture*. As Coco Fusco comments on the artist David Hammons, "jokes are there for those who [can] decipher them". Puns and word games "short-circuit" the dominant meanings accrued to given objects or terms, "taking, twisting, and transforming English to make it otherwise." Paraphrasing Fusco's description of Hammons, these artists might be positioned as sometime investigators of how oppositional, marginalised and diasporic Chinese identities "can be generated through a dialogue with "high" culture, particularly as it is articulated through Standard English" – and Chinese.⁵⁹

Tan's *PIDGIN*, meanwhile, strikingly contrasts these works through the sheer proliferation of voices, relentless word and image play, linguistic invention and experimentation. Traversing silences and inarticulacies, the speeches and transliterations generated by *PIDGIN* are compelled by curiosity yet recall the resourcefulness and ingenuity of those historically, linguistically and economically excluded from discourses of power, among them the inventors of the recently discovered *nūshu*, literally 'women's writing', a unique, secret script originating in oral traditions of the southern Chinese province of Hunan, created and used exclusively by women in transgression of a formerly male preserve and defiance of an imposed illiteracy.⁶⁰

Debunking the myth of flawless standards and steadfast origins, there can be only flaws and fluctuations. Mispronunciations, interruptions, pidgins and Chinglishes – these practices of speaking across move from economic to cultural necessity. Reliably incompetent in various

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tan for example, born in Singapore and based in Britain, was trained in Britain and Beijing. Her identity card states Hokkien as a mother tongue yet she speaks English and what she refers to as her own pidgin Mandarin Chinese, a result of mixed parentage and schooling.

⁵⁹ Coco Fusco, 'David Hammons,' in *The Bodies That Were Not Ours* (London: inIVA, 2001), pp.43-48.

⁶⁰ For an introduction to *nūshu*, see Anne E. McLaren, "Crossing Gender Boundaries in China: *Nūshu* Narratives,' http://www.sshe.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/back_issues/nushu2.html 20 May, 2000.

languages, can we take pleasure in owning up to what some would decry as 'artificial pidgin scholarship' – in more senses than one?⁶¹ Ngai dai teng deg chut ngo me hai boon dai yan a o? Dan hai – while some of us do not claim to 'speak about' 'Chinese' and 'Chineseness' with suitably distanced 'authority' or an intimate 'authenticity', we can 'speak nearby': for 'this *is* our pidgin' – our 'business', our responsibility, our affair.

Home

How to make sense of (impulses to) 'home' when the means or mechanisms – political, economic, ideological and linguistic – fall short or fail? Pidgin languages, like the subjects that speak them, "[do] not belong to a particular place", but arrive and depart "when two or more cultures meet at any border".⁶² Across such hyphenated realities, what is 'home' but an illusory origin, an imaginary centre – several and no places at once? Conceptualisations of diaspora are often formulated around axes of origin and return, centre and periphery. Ien Ang notes the tendency to "favor... a hierarchical centering and a linear rerouting back to the imagined ancestral home", a paradigm that suppresses what James Clifford calls "the lateral axes of diaspora" – "the ways in which diasporic identities are produced through creolization and hybridization", and we might add pidginisation, "through both conflictive and collaborative coexistence and intermixture with other cultures".⁶³ While "[t]he empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling *here* assumes solidarity and connection *there... there* is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation."⁶⁴

As a legally recognised place of domicile and residence, 'home' may locate one as a 'Citizen' here and 'Permanent Resident' there, a status familiar to recent generations of Hong Kong's migrants whose relocations – to Australia, Canada, Britain or the United States – determined by economic, educational and political prerogatives, are often protracted, 'in perpetuity'. When the distances of dispersal are regularly crossed, leaving and arriving may become not events but conditions of living. 'Home' as neither 'there' and 'here', nor 'then' and 'now', but staggered by air-miles or electronic ether in not-quite synchronicity – 'ahead' or 'behind' depending on direction of travel. Such disorientating and exhausting looping and curving of identities and histories dispersed through / under / over temporalities, geographies and languages, demand the complex de-configuring and reconfiguring of subjectivities, inadequately approximated by the notion of 'jetlag.' ('Subject / sujet-lag?')⁶⁵ Yet such duplicity

⁶¹ Lui Dong, 'Beware of Artificial 'Pidgin Scholarship'' ('Xiaoxin renwei de 'yangjingbang xueshu''') *Twenty-First Century*, April 1995, n.28, pp.7-11, cited in Yeh, op.cit., pp.251-80.

⁶² Papastergiadis, op.cit.

⁶³ James Clifford, 'Diasporas,' in Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) pp.266, 269.

⁶⁴ Ien Ang, 'Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm,' in Chow ed., op.cit., pp.281-300.

⁶⁵ The notion was suggested to me upon hearing Norman Jackson Ford's reflections on the appropriateness of his jet-lagged delivery of a paper, 'On Traversals: Negotiating 'Crossings' Between Hong Kong and Vienna,' at the conference, 'Contemporary Chinese Art in the International Arena,' the

and multiplicity, as difficult and often unarticulated mundaneities, may also in part be playfully spoken through linguistic flights 'home' and away, to and from "the home we make, or the homes that are made for us... which [are] anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began."⁶⁶

Precisely because translation is an activity that immediately problematizes the ontological hierarchy of languages – "which is primary and which is secondary?" – it is also the place where the oldest prejudices about origins and derivations come into play most forcefully...⁶⁷

Emerging as a necessary and imaginative leap, miming, seducing, intertwining; pidgin glances sidelong in more than one direction, at a supposed 'first', 'original' language, but also at others. Having no time nor need to discriminate between virginal originals and tainted derivatives, pidgin presumes and embodies indiscretion, treating and treading supposedly discrete bodies of languages and cultures as porous and malleable media of transformation, 'corrupt' from the outset, amorphous like water. As a mode of translation, pidgin upsets and contradicts conventional expectations – that it should entail a uni-directional movement (from the 'original'), that it should be 'natural', and self-effacing, covering its tracks. Contravening limits, pidgin moves in several directions, making its betrayals and deceptions explicit.⁶⁸ Emphatically 'bad', it sounds aloud its translated-ness, the tracks of its trespass everywhere announcing its un-originality and infidelity.⁶⁹ Pidgin is, as Papastergiadis puts it, "promiscuous" – its promiscuity the very "poetry of translation".⁷⁰

The purpose of dismantling the notion of inferiority is not to supplant it with a true status as equal or superior, but to acknowledge its proliferations and condition, as with all speech, as tactical. If pidgin arises out of incomprehension and imposition, can it not only signal a process of acclimatisation, but also one of subversion? The artist Steve Ouditt, a "post-independence American / English-educated Christian Indian Trinidadian West Indian male artist",⁷¹ speaks of creole insite; perhaps we can also speak of 'pidgin insite'. Ouditt's condensation of 'insight' and 'site' alerts us to the historical and geographical specificity and

British Museum, London, 18-20 April, 2002. The project is documented in Norman Jackson Ford, ed. *Traversals* (Hong Kong: Mapbook, 2001).

⁶⁶ Salman Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992) p.57.

⁶⁷ Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p.184.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, 'pigeon' can signify "a person easily swindled." *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, op.cit.

⁶⁹ "It is assumed that translation means a movement from the 'original' to the language of 'translation' but not vice versa: it is assumed that the value of translation is derived solely from the 'original,' which is the authenticator of itself and of its subsequent versions. Of the 'translation,' a tyrannical demand is made: the translation must perform its task of conveying the 'original' without leaving its own traces; the 'originality of the translation' must lie 'in self-effacement, a vanishing act'." Chow, op.cit.

⁷⁰ Papastergiadis, op.cit.

⁷¹ Gilane Tawadros ed., *inIVA Annotations 4: Steve Ouditt: Creole In-site* (London: inIVA, 1998), foreword, unpaginated.

boundedness of creole experience, insight and site made intimate and inextricable, yet also unstable. 'Creole' shifts the classificatory practice of naming onto similarly unsteady territory with uneasily determined borders, intimating not only nation and ethnicity but also language and generation, an attempt to resist the summary inclusion and erasure of such differences as "Amerindian Caribbean" or "Indo Caribbean" under a privileged, normalising, all-embracing term, 'Afro-Caribbean' – "the blanket term for any 'Caribbean' in England".⁷²

If 'creole insite' may come with processes of 'recreolisation', not the assimilation and elaboration of the pidgin of a previous generation into a native tongue,⁷³ but a purposefully acquired *learnt* language, mobilised with English in code-switching practices that reinvent and inscribe the specificities and ambiguities of social, cultural and linguistic spaces claimed by certain young 'Black British' subjects, then perhaps 'pidgin insite' may speak of the 'repidginisation' tactically deployed or performed by certain 'British Chinese': insights into and sitings of the ambiguous, uneven, inevitable and infinite collisions and transmutations perpetuating along "the lateral axes of diaspora." Signalling some of the prosaic, makeshift strategies and experiences of mutual acculturation generated by colonialisms and migrations in the shift from the national to the international to the global; indicative of the experiences, practices and processes of not-quite-same-not-quite-otherness that disregard and dismantle 'appropriate' frameworks;⁷⁴ cautioning against the habitual flattening of historical, geographical, cultural and generational differences in such dominant, competitive, sweeping linguistic and ethno-national categories as 'English' and 'Chinese'.⁷⁵ Can we speak of 'pidgin English cultures'? What, then, of a 'pidgin Chinese cultures'? Pidgin cultures and pidgin aesthetics?

*

Native speakers may not know this, but English is a scabrous mouthful... I always hear myself displacing the two languages, conflating them – maybe conflagrating them – for there's so much rubbing and friction, a fire always threatens to blow up between the tongues. Friction, affliction.⁷⁶

A screen goes dark — a broken transmission, a lapse into silence and the unspoken, unwritten. Barthes' evocation of language recalls the body and flesh, the muscle and cord that g/rasps, rasps and speaks, locating its irrefutable materiality beside its impalpability.

⁷² Ouditt, in Tawadros ed., op.cit, p.8.

⁷³ Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (London: Penguin, 1994) p.33.

⁷⁴ Interestingly, Ouditt avoids the term diaspora; perhaps, as a noun it suggests too coherent an entity. Even when qualified by Ang as a "loose paradigm," a perspective "motivated... by notions of dispersal, mobility and disappearance" which "[work] against its consolidation as a paradigm proper," in which "the seeds of its own deconstruction" are contained, grammatical convention competes against conceptual will. As with creole, pidgin may be said to name a practice or practices, processes and experiences in which no 'settling' is possible for, as Ouditt puts it, "To settle is to flatten..."

⁷⁵ Echoing Ouditt, how does 'British Chinese' even begin to locate, for example, the linguistic and experiential differences of first, second, third generations from mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Caribbean or South Africa, in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales?

⁷⁶ Chang-Rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (London: Granta, 1995) pp.217-8.

Embodied, embedded as possibility, it is intimate, curious, sexually charged and sensuous, activating a frisson, a tension, a "rub". There is a sense of language as a fraught and sexualised territory, inflections of ethnicity adding a hint of miscegenation to the notion of 'corruption', though this is underplayed. Words are glimpsed and glanced, tender and awkward touches ventured like the determined yet slightly embarrassed fumbings of a new lover. Silences accumulate and culminate in an inevitably anti-climatic, bemused and bemusing utterance; the 'final' translation revealing something strange, confused and unresolved: words have been dropped, displaced, and invented, but remain distinct, exemplifying an impulse to compensate for the misheard and unknown; conjuring a certain sense out of nonsense and nonsense out of sense, language is given "legs" in the pursuit of play, its meanings spiralling out of the circle.

"Do you translate by eye or by ear?" asks Trinh, elsewhere.⁷⁷ By eye, by ear, by touch. In the recurring motif of 'Chinese Whispers', a "scene of translations," lips repeatedly approach the ear of another.

... frequencies, fibrillations, somatic vibrations and shivers, acoustic perturbation, hand-face movements, flapping arms-wrists, lip suction, mouth-pump action, darting eyes, frowns, voice tone, tremor, pitch...)⁷⁸

This is "the space of orality," a space which coincides here with pidgin, the not-one, not-other, the none and several in motion. Silences accumulate, culminating in an anti-climatic, bemused and bemusing utterance, the 'final' translation revealing something strange, confused and unresolved. Words are dropped, displaced, and invented, compensating for the misheard and unknown, conjuring a peculiar sense out of nonsense, and nonsense out of sense, as language is given "legs" in the pursuit of play, its meanings spiralling out of the circle. Who dares to hazard a word and be (mis)heard – admit to a not-knowing, not-quite placing? Pleasure in the corruption, the subversion and invention; pleasure in mistranslation.

⁷⁷ Filmscript for Trinh T. Minh-ha, dir., *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), 108 mins, colour and b&w, in Trinh, *Framer Framed* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.80.

⁷⁸ Sarat Maharaj, 'Dislocutions,' in Jean Fisher ed., *Reverberations: Tactics of Resistance, Forms of Agency in Trans/cultural Practices* (Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2000).

Interval

Cinema Interval

W1: This is but a shot in the dark.

W2: There are three items. Make a guess at any one of them.

W1: Let's see... It's not quite an object.

W2: Right.

W1: It begins with a B.

W2: ... Wrong...

W1: It begins with a D.¹

'Shoot for the Contents' is a guessing game, a game of divination, a deciphering of puns and metaphors in an attempt to arrive at the unidentified object(s) contained within a real or imaginary box. Upon and around this notional framework, so many intricate words and images might be spun, the naming of said object(s) delayed, deferred by the pleasures of not-quite naming. The game lends a name to, yet withholds the naming of, a 1991 film by Trinh T. Minh-ha, the text of which is often as elusive as its apparent - or rather, non-apparent – subject, 'China'. Repeatedly invoking the capricious symbol of a dragon for 'China' in its 'ten thousand aspects' – now "small as a silkworm," now "large as the world – *Shoot*, together with Trinh's other filmic works, may itself be said to be as purposefully unreliable, inconsistent and fabulous.

The full scripts for *Shoot* and the more recent *A Tale of Love* (1995), can be found in Trinh's latest book, *Cinema Interval*. If Trinh's earlier films – *Reassemblage* (1982), *Naked Spaces – Living Is Round* (1985), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), and *Shoot* – often screened under 'documentary' or 'experimental' umbrellas, might be referred to crudely as her 'Africa', 'Vietnam' and 'China' films respectively, *A Tale of Love*, billed as her 'first feature narrative', would seem to represent a formal break as well as a departure in genre.² 'First', 'feature', 'narrative'; as a set of hierarchised terms and means of compartmentalisation, it is, as anyone familiar with Trinh's work might imagine, a classification both she – an 'award-winning-Vietnamese-American-academic-artist-feminist-theorist-poet-composer-filmmaker---' – and the work refuses. Previous works deploy varied and multiple tactics in challenging the legitimacy of 'documentary' and 'fiction' as conventionally oppositional and mutually exclusive modes of narrative practice, their wilful 'illegitimacy' affronting audiences anxious to preserve disciplinary lines, unexpectedly unsettled by the complexity of voices, the continual translations between visual and aural texts and registers, and perpetual deferrals of 'truths'. For *A Tale*, Trinh ostensibly makes a 'return' to 'documentary' from which to build a 'fiction',

¹ Filmscript for Trinh T. Minh-ha, dir., *Shoots for the Contents* (1991), 102 mins, colour; cited in Trinh, *Cinema Interval* (New York, London: Routledge, 1999), p. 152.

² Trinh T. Minh-ha, dir., *A Tale of Love* (1995), 108 mins, colour; *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), 108 mins, colour and b&w; *Naked Spaces - Living Is Round* (1985), 135 mins, colour; *Reassemblage* (1982) 40 mins, colour.

tracing a different route back / towards 'other', 'earlier' territories. Taking up a strand of *Surname Viet*, Trinh appropriates and displaces a popular nineteenth-century Vietnamese epic poem, in order to spin another, quite different, 'Tale of Kieu'.

Confounding 'firsts' and compounding 'fictions', *A Tale* invokes 'A Tale...' and its eponymous mythical, legendary heroine through a latter-day imaginary, Vietnamese-American counterpart, interweaving culturally intimate yet geographically and temporally distant stories into the fabric of a "scenography of love" (as opposed to 'love story'). Focusing on the state of 'being in love' as "an altered state of the mind and body... in which our senses are strangely aroused and sillily obscured – hypersensitive; so lucid and so blind at the same time", disengaged from realism and the classical economy of narrative cinema, *A Tale* is neither plot nor character-driven (Trinh refers instead to 'dis-inherited' and 'non-' characters). As 'real actors' and audiences struggle with the resultant difficulties of identification and reading, lights and cameras are subordinated to neither actors nor set, but come in and out of visibility as their trajectories cross, suggesting other rhythms and spaces, and "the intensity of a veiled theatricality". Presenting "partial views, saturated colours, elliptical narratives, sounds separated from context", endeavouring towards what Trinh calls "a radical multiplicity instead of complementarity", *A Tale* is "just a moment of a no-story", the desired 'happy / tragic ending' elusive, resolved to remain unresolved.³

VOICE 2: Interpreting orientation and form is not without risk, because in Ancient books the beast exists in a thousand forms; has ten thousand aspects; stands or crouches; it is huge or tiny, unruly, or obedient, reserved or extravagant. Infinitely in metamorphosis, it dives deep, rises high, meanders, coils, leaps, and takes its flight.⁴

Like Trinh's previous publication, *Framer Framed* (1992), *Cinema Interval* couples film scripts with interviews, the latter conducted over a six-year period.⁵ Where *Framer Framed* presents the two as separate categories, the interspersal of script, set and lighting notes, film stills and occasional blank pages, as well as the achronological ordering of texts, works conversely to disturb the boundaries of their supposedly distinct terrains – images and words spilling out of their respective frames to circumscribe discontinuous, unfinished, unexpected relations. *Cinema Interval* goes further, dispensing with the momentary assurance of a script/interview binary and the demarcation of theoretical or disciplinary terrains, turning our attention instead to the necessary movements between. Abandoning a horizontal axis of sure-footed progression to embark headlong on a spiralling, gently vertiginous trip, Trinh invites / dares the reader to partake in three moves, gestures, attitudes – 'Upward: Diving in, Non-seeing', 'Midway: Returning to the Scripts', 'Downward: Surfacing, Non-knowing' – to slip, semi-blind, into waters of uncertain depth.

³ 'A Scenography of Love,' Trinh T. Minh-ha with Deb Verhoeven, in Trinh, op.cit., pp.3-15.

⁴ Trinh, *ibid.*, p. 153.

Trinh suggests that it is unnecessary to see or have seen either film before or after the book, which resides, then, both and neither in their anticipation and/nor wake. Gaps and discontinuities are not to be filled but accentuated, contemplated, a collection of pauses and/or thoughts. Her eighth book, her fifth film, her earliest, her latest – such attempts to differentiate or chronologize, to trace a line of thought or development, make little sense as a tactic of making sense of Trinh's work as a 'body' – for it is always already a contingent non-whole-work-in-progress. Each interview, for example, already occupies at least two moments and places, each shift in location a double move, each winding between questions and texts a temporal twist and shadowing, shadowed by a not-same yet similar contorted chronology. Preceded by the interviewers' 'original' introductions, bio- and bibliographical summaries mediated by Trinh, earlier contexts are recalled, and the possible affects and implications of their reframing signalled. Exchanges – with Deb Verhoeven, Homi Bhabha, Annamaria Morelli, Berenice Reynaud, Margaret Kelly, Kim Hawkins, Paul Kalina, Nancy Chen, Gwendolyn Foster, Mary Zournazi – travel to and fro, forth and back between 1998 and 1992, revisiting and revisited by Trinh's earlier writings, films, and the virtual and real spaces of journals, books, and cities – from London to Naples, New York to New Zealand, Rotterdam to Sydney, Melbourne to California – further modulated by the particular attentions, dis/affectations and alignments of each interviewer, in degrees of tension or accord with her/his interviewee.

The interrogation into the politics of interview in *Surname Viet* (structured by two sets of interviews, one staged, one 'real', translated, re-edited, re-enacted and re-transcribed into English from the 'original' Vietnamese) allowed Trinh to foreground the necessary and numerous mediations, not only between languages and cultures, but also between the spoken and written, the visible and the audible, each in turn complexly inflected by regional, historical and political accentuations. Any expectation that the interviews and scripts might here promise elucidation, clarification, or the definitive interpretation of *Shoot or A Tale*, is misplaced. If dialogue, as the exchange of spoken words, has been deprivileged in the filmic texts, the scripts can only bring into relief particular (deceptively translatable) aspects of diffuse filmic bodies. Interrupting the already fragmented interview texts – scripts for quite a different kind of performance and staging – they are themselves interrupted by colour stills and handwritten notes, while black-and-white stills break up the rest of the text. "What is visible and audible can prevent one from seeing and hearing".⁶ The images and the blanks produced by their framings and juxtapositions breathe uncertainties along the speculative labyrinthine paths hewn into relief by words, marking their limits (their relation to the films

⁵ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Framer Framed* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁶ Trinh / Verhoeven, op.cit., p.7.

“never one of unmediated explanation, but rather one of supplementarity – that is, of outsideness and substitution”), and the “infinite relation” between word and image.⁷ We are warned at the beginning (a mere point of entry), “Beware of Wolf Intervals” – those ‘bad’, dissonant, aberrant disharmonies that announce, rather howlingly for certain ears, an “out of place” or “out there” relation. In this rupture, “a temporal hiatus, an intermission, a distance, a pause, a lapse, or gap between different states,” “the infinity of the task of speaking nearby” is preserved. Improperly and inappropriately positioned, disclaiming authorship and authority to displace ‘translation’ – like ‘love’ – as a relation of loyalty and betrayal,⁸ Trinh’s practices reflect and deflect the make-believe spectres of the originary, authentic and true. She describes *Cinema Interval* as “an interrelational space of detour”; it cannot be said to ‘go anywhere’ – there is no point of closure, nor arrival. Duplicitous, multiplicitous, wavering and wayward, after the dragon, it too “dives deep, rises high, meanders, coils, leaps, and takes its flight,” negotiating protracted, convoluted shots at the belly, in the dark. *Cinema Interval* opens (itself) up – curtain raised, out of sight – and leaves itself (and its audience, in wonder or frustration at its own predicament) gaping. Adrift, treading watery currents and “flat waves,” there is nothing to hold onto, nothing to fix (on), the last words going to another:

“... and we called that nothing an interval”.⁹

⁷ Trinh, ‘Beware of Wolf Intervals,’ in Trinh, *Cinema Interval*, op.cit., pp.xi - xiv.

⁸ Rey Chow cites the Italian expression ‘traduttore, traditore’ (translator, traitor) in her discussion of film as ethnography, in Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 182-184.

⁹ Clarice Lispector, cited in Trinh, *Cinema Interval*, op.cit., p.267.

Practice (In Writing)

Back Words

Always compelling is the desire to unlearn and thwart all artistic and discursive forms that attempt at laying hold of its object. A creative event does not grasp, it does not take possession, it is an excursion...¹

Writing down, writing up... seesaw... committing to paper, completing; the latter imperative perpetually forestalled as verticality and momentum summon cumulative strokes of columnic script to mind: Chinese breaking English into a sweat, inducing mild vertigo as lines cross-hatch in my head. I look sideways, side-long, aslant, and veer at times into Chinglish, experimental tanglings, or tango-ings – gliding, pausing, stumbling – that double and couple a practice bound up with mis/naming, dis/locating, and un/translating. (Not mending nor mourning the always already broken; who's afraid of the frayed?²)

Looking backwards, these 'back words' – residing, edging, sliding in-between works – may be backward or back talking, somewhat reticent, or irreverent. In post-ambles that pursue the temporal and spatial slack succeeding objects and events since dematerialised, returned to in-progress (the perennial predicament of installation and performance), I re-visit and re-site, approximating and shadowing, attempting to coax and vex the parameters and scenes of encounter, the sometime stagings of departures or 'excursions' into partial view, and imaginary earshot. Re-wording scenes already traversed by the verbal – transcribed and translated, written and spoken, sung and echoed – the recurring play of text across a disparate 'pidgin' practice at turns visual, spatial, filmic, sonic, poetic and performative, occurs to me belatedly, in still-blinkered retrospect or hindsight (such turns of phrase exhibiting the habitual submission of the temporal and textual to the visual). Striving towards a difficult, distracted mode of attention, an interludic space and language where sights crawls, eyes feel, and ears graze on the near, I yearn for "a wonderful moment... on the verge of sleep,"³ echoing and anticipating the day's hazy break, an asleep-awake myopic dawn and easily shattered "fragile region," where writing "knows neither limit or hesitation."⁴

¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Cotton and Iron,' in Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.11-27.

² I am thinking here of Spivak on translation: "By juggling the disruptive rhetoricity that breaks the surface in not necessarily connected ways, we feel the selvages of the language-textile give way, fray into frayages or facilitations" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation,' in Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips, eds. *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp.177-200, p.178.

³ Maxine Hong Kingston, *To Be The Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.11.

⁴ "Critical work requires a difficult mode of attention: one sees and listens to it happening; one plays (with) it as one experiences it in/as an activity of production. One does not really catch it, nor does one speak *about* it without contingent detours and demanding patience." Trinh, 'The Other Question,' op.cit., p.234.

I cannot write without *distracting* my gaze from capturing. I write by distraction.

Distracted.

When I go off (writing is first of all a departure, an embarkation, an expedition) I slip away...

When I am in pursuit of a thought which bolts off before me like some marvellous game, my eyes see only the neutral and empty space where its shadow darts away.⁵

Trails

No magic in my slippers, but still I put them on, on stepping over a threshold. If home is “anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began,”⁶ that place for me is several, an itinerary that precedes me, sings and speaks me, names I remember in order to depart:

[CANTONESE/PINYIN, English] YU WU, WING WU, HUIYANG City, HUIZHOU District GUANGDONG (Guangdong Province) CHUNGGUO (China); SHEK KIP MEI, GAU LOONG (Kowloon), HEUNG GONG (Hong Kong); CHENG SAN DAU, GAU LOONG (Kowloon), HEUNG GONG (Hong Kong); HA YEUNG, SUN GAI (New Territories), HEUNG GONG (Hong Kong); Sheung Sze Wan, SUN GAI (New Territories), HEUNG GONG (Hong Kong); FATGUO (France); LIK MUT PO (Liverpool), HE LAI FOOK (Hereford), LIU KAR SO (Newcastle), SAR FOO YAN (Southend), EH PING (Epping), HA LO (Harlow), LUN DUN (London), YINGGUO (England).

I carry the ghost-bones of no-longer-homes not yet forgotten, though perhaps mistranslated; places sharp-shaded in tastes and smells, long hardships, small pleasures, partings and deaths; topographies worn to smooth-pebble details and dates. Places that now and then, now as then, displace me, dissuade me from settling, and draw me across.

A young-black-british-anglo-asian-hong-kong-chinese-southern-english-yellow-red-white-brown-blue-artist-writer-mother-(oldest)daughter-(elder)sister-('Dai-Lui'-'Gar-Je'-)... ?

Traditional Chinese terms of address signalling kinship and respect for paternalistic order, fail to stick to us second generation siblings, un-adhered to community. Like our parents before us (their solitary, staggered arrivals at odds with metaphors of ‘mass influx’ in ‘waves’) we adapt, invert, anglicise or sinicise, and extrapolate our identities in more or less makeshift ways, at least nominally, each name-track a schematic of encounters:

Yeung, Yuet Ying / Yeung, Fu Sing / Yeung, Yuk Ying / Lok, Yueng Yuk Ying / Ah Ying / Yuk Ying Lok / Judy Yuk Ying Lok / Judy Y. Y. Lok / Judy Lok / Y. Y. Lok / Mrs Lok / Lok Tai

Lok, Lai Chuen / Ah Chuen / Lai Chuen Lok / James Lai Chuen Lok / James L. C. Lok / Jim / Jimmy Lok / Lock / Locke / L. C. Lok / Mr Lok / Lok Sang

⁵ Hélène Cixous trans. Eric Prenowitz, ‘Writing blind: conversation with the donkey,’ in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.139-140.

⁶ Salman Rushdie *The Wizard of Oz* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), p.57.

Susan Pei San Lok. Susan P-E-I, S-A-N, two words, no hyphen, Lok, L-O-K. Or Lok Pei San. Or Luo Pei Shan. Or Susan, Lok Pei San. Or Susan Lok. Or Susie / Sue, or Su-without-an-e. Or Susan Pui San Lok - Pui San - two words, P-U-I, S-AN. Or Susan, Lok Pui-hyphen-San. Or Susan Pusan - one word, no hyphen - Lok. Or Susan, Lok Pusan.⁷

Undoing

Unravelling (1994) [Fig.111]⁸

Too many yet tongue-tied, I oscillate between excess and silence, naming lengthily and pithily, proffering signatures and later, a legend, 'SPSL,' or retreating, drawing blanks. In an early work, *Unravelling*, a handful of childhood photographs from a scant family archive were submitted to scrutiny via dissection, disintegration and dissemination, their multiplication and partial obliteration intimating the shortfalls and compensations of memory/making by such objects; attempts to stay the failures of identities and histories to unify and cohere, submissions to delusory beginnings cast adrift between partial and indifferent narratives. Reproduced and degraded through a copier, image-fragments cling to the surfaces of wooden blocks scattered among custom-made yet ill-fitting boxes, in shades of blue ('the colour of interior life'⁹). Elevated onto a shallow plinth or false floor, *Unravelling* evokes child's play, playing out the fetishisation of unknowable image-objects, magnifying and making intimate details simultaneously distanced by repeated mediation, as well as implicating and frustrating voyeuristic, tactile and narrative desires, by refusing interaction and reconstruction.

Made during my time as an art student, this work no doubt reflects the influence of Helen Chadwick, and such work as *Ego Geometria Sum* (1983) and *Of Mutability* (1989). The relationship between the sculptural plywood boxes of the former, covered with photographic images of her own body and objects from childhood, and a companion photographic series on paper, *Ego Geometria Sum: The Labours I-X* (1986), is tentatively echoed in the correlation between *Unravelling* and *Mute* (1994), in which polaroids of sets of image-blocks and boxes are individually shrouded in thickset red fabric-covered frames. Memorialising an

⁷ From 'Notes to Let You Down,' artist's statement, 'Retrospectre / Un- (part 6),' solo exhibition, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 22 November 1996 – 6 January 1997. Like most of my Hong Kong-born contemporaries, my name comprises a Chinese name in Chinese script, the anglicized version of this, and an English name. If in the early years of colonisation, English names were adopted to accommodate the ruling authorities, enabling the British to address the Chinese without having to speak Chinese, by the later twentieth century, such names came to represent a willing capitulation and identification with contemporary Western culture. Recent trends away from conventional naming practices also complicate the simplistic hierarchical opposition of English and Chinese cultures, or the detection of geographical or cultural hints of place. When playful and serious fabrications comprise "made-up words, Japanese names and a combination of the two... such as Yuki, Zany, Eona, Ranma, Juko, Sanni and Taki," or "nonsensical names from a variety of languages" such as "Windy, Baton, Fritz, Bebeanna, Boniface, Dis, Benz, and Amen," names may no longer be 'given' or 'proper', but throwaway, disposable, impermanently tied to person or place. Annie Hau-nung Chan, 'Consumption, Popular Culture, and Cultural Identity: Japan in Post-colonial Hong Kong,' in *Studies In Popular Culture*, 2000, vol.23. no.1, pp.35-55.

⁸ *Unravelling* (1994), installation with photocopies, emulsion, wood.

⁹ William Gass, *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1976).

act of memorialising, the title underscores the notion of voicelessness or silencing of the other, pertaining to the lapses and omissions in cultural as well as personal memory.¹⁰

Un- (1996) [Fig.112,113]¹¹

One of these photographs, originally black and white, was later enlarged and reproduced through a colour copier in the composite colours required to render a mechanical 'real' – black, yellow, cyan, magenta (again taking a cue from Chadwick). *Un-* cropped and re-touched the visual fragments, tinted and then juxtaposed with passages traced from a 1960s textbook, 'Teach Yourself Chinese,' among them truncated instructions on Chinese customs (as interpreted by Westerners for Westerners), including the euphemistic, business-like arrangement of a marriage. The image details refer to a Chinese couple, the woman in traditional dress, the man in a Western suit, whose look and cut suggest the late 1950s. Cotemporaneous narratives of union and exchange are invoked: of marriage, culture, language, dress, and address, as modes of partial encounter, incomplete transaction and mistranslation.

exercises in travel

... arms thread, they stand on a verge...

() a clue in parentheses, undone
my hesitation the question
mark, cut and paste cut and paste cut and paste
to and fro to recover

... 'Un-' less than titled
but not quite un-named
a contrary pre-fix
annulling, depriving, releasing, displacing
causing to be no longer
not¹²

No truths to 'unravel', only fictions, fabrications. The resistance to naming, fixing, and narrativising the visual is pre-empted by the title, and enacted in the disjunctures between image and text. The formal arrangement of faux-calligraphic and pictorial markings may recall traditional scroll paintings, or indeed the popular contemporary counterpart often neighboured by its classical reproductions, the Chinese supermarket calendar hanging in many a Chinese household, but for the disharmonious narrative at odds with the anticipated confluence of image and text (whether literary, numerical, or signatorial). Gestures in emulsion and ink hint at signatures in the form of self-negating painterly flourishes (white on white) and paradoxically hand-drawn seals or chops, signalling ownership, authenticity, and cultural difference, but also, upon the revelation of their inconsistency, the instability of such notions.

¹⁰ *Mute* (1994), Polaroids, perspex, timber, fabric, staples.

¹¹ *Un –* (1996), wood, laser copies, tracing paper, emulsion, ink, 36 parts.

Following mixed traditions of artistic self and pseudonymic invention and ironic valorisation,¹³ these slight, quiet performances of Identity and self-authentication play to expectations of cultural insiderism, which unsettle as the mimicry persists and selves become plural. In turn, the purported 'outsider' authority of the dated textbook is perpetuated by its painstaking copy, but also diminishes through its disintegration; its 'quaintness' is glimpsed and indulged, or scanned for the relations of power made apparent by historical shifts in knowledges and politics. Meanwhile, bilingual inscriptions traced from the photograph's reverse offer names and dates that float and catch in the fractured peripheries, a rhythmic annotation that doubles and un-anchors, un-couples the couple, on a verge, or verges.

*Un- (prose-fiction, pose-friction) (1998)*¹⁴

Invited some time later to give a gallery talk on an exhibition of contemporary Chinese art, expressly as a 'British Chinese' artist recently returned from a newly post-handover Hong Kong, I struggled to articulate a position in relation to the disparate collection of works whose array of cultural references I could read only cursorily, suspecting expectations to the contrary. Anxious not to play the authenticating 'insider,' to lend a seemingly appropriate voice, accent or physiognomy to the artists and curators in their absence, but to speak the difficulties of translation via narratives marginal to spot-lit historical and artistic 'scenes,' I multiplied voices as I had previously done with signatures. Scripting a 'dialogue' for two voices that also mimed twenty others, where first and third person interviews interweaved personal reflections and English was continually interrupted by Cantonese and Chinglish, the half-hour long spoken text comprised repetitions and circularities in a superficially linear, numerical order. Inverting political directives and impulses to 'count down,' to arrive at a zero, a nothing, a clean slate and break, I counted up, accumulating, in continuity.

two speakers, eighteen voices
performance
auto-fiction-bio-graphy made up
of memories made up;

... a multitude of 'I's speaking
in turn, the etiquette;
or conversing with others, absent

... we talk to / at you

behind and ahead of us, before you a
square of light, full
of expectation

¹² Artist's notes on *Un-*, 1996-1998.

¹³ Recent examples in mind include Annette Messenger's *Collection to find my best signature* (1972), album-collection no.24, 92 ink on paper drawings, Lesley Sanderson's *Negative* (1988), and Gavin Turk, *Title* (1990), pigment on canvas.

¹⁴ *Un- (prose-fiction, pose-friction)* (1998), slide projector, screen, teapot, cups, table, chairs, performance with Annie Lok at the Cornerhouse, Manchester, 20 September 1997. Closing event to the exhibition, 'Reckoning with the Past Contemporary Chinese Painting,' 2 August – 21 September 1997.

after so many translations (we've lost track of beginnings)

... learning to gain from the 'losses'¹⁵

Un- (prose-fiction, pose-friction) was the first occasion on which I approached the 'artist's talk' as a performative mode, whereby expectations and assumptions of artistic or cultural authenticity or authority, and the voice as a medium of veracity, could be tested. Alerted to the politics of interview and translation, in particular by the work of Trinh T. Minh-ha, my 'set' owed something to her filmic stagings: a darkened gallery, two chairs, a table, a matching Chinese teapot and cups. Backlit by an empty slide projection, two seated figures sip and speak, voices similar in pitch and timbre now separating, now mingling, now indistinct. If the square of light draws attention both to the conventional format of punctuating talk with visual evidence or distractions and relationship – the framing of practice as dissipated object or undocumented event, and the compensatory, explicatory, or authenticating function of its spoken narrative representation – my later 'talks' explored the status and potential of the projection beyond verbal 'prop,' rather, as a discursive plane across which correlations and divergences between the visual, verbal and linguistic could be played out. Thinking about the 'artist's talk' as a performative process of positioning, a live oral archiving, de/constructing meaning and authority (Hayley Newman's fake documentation of incomprehensible lectures delivered with a mouth numbed by local anaesthetic spring to mind), I have begun to see this hitherto tangential activity as an intrinsic strand of a wider, necessarily theatrical installation practice; a practice based on the visual/verbal assemblage of found and custom-made objects, pre-recorded voices and sung or spoken word, staging and orchestrating of cultural, linguistic, conceptual and visceral encounters with props, sound and light effects, and sometimes reluctant players.

Writing, listening, speaking, translating, watching, wondering, and wandering; sounds track and disrupt the visible and legible, signs mislead and diverting from the audible; voices and noises are multiplied, disembodied, displaced, inhabiting and invoking other temporalities, in tandem. Such tactics are discernible in the work discussed below, made over a five year period, from the site-specific interventions for the group show 'numbersix,' to the installations commissioned for 'DEAL' and later, 'The Translator's Notes,' to the interim two-week projects, 'Lean To,' FCHKUK,' and 'Elements of Drawing Blind.'

Dealing

For the joint artist-curated 'numbersix',¹⁶ I responded in part to the ghettoisation by ethnicity practiced by much arts programming since the eighties, such as the tendency to time showcases of 'ethnic artists' to coincide with cultural festivals. Contacted in late 1997 by Erika

¹⁵ Artist's notes on *Un- (prose-fiction, pose-friction)*, 1999.

Tan, then arts worker for London's Lambeth Chinese Community, along with Anthony Key, Yeu Lai Mo, Mayling To, and Tony Ward (having come across each other's work in a recent spate of exhibitions between London and Manchester¹⁷), we discussed the possibility of exhibiting together, and tactics for avoiding pigeon-holing as a culturally novel, 'Chinese show' for Chinese New Year. Under the moniker, 'numbersix,' which referred to the reductive coding of mass consumed culinary 'exotica,' and by extension, the question of naming, classification, and differentiation, we declared our aim to "explore and invoke the contradictions of so-called 'British-Chinese' culture, within a dislocated, immigrant, diasporian landscape."¹⁸ The negotiations of exhibiting space that followed reminded me of 'The Thin Black Line' over ten years earlier, whose title served as a curatorial comment on the 'accommodation' of work by eleven black women artists in a narrow corridor-like space of London's ICA, a situation reflective of their wider historical institutional neglect.¹⁹ Initially welcomed to install and make work throughout the newly renovated TS2K Brixton building occupying several floors, 'health and safety' concerns eventually ushered our 'thin yellow line' into a waiting room and café/bar. A corridor linked these refurbished public spaces to the back of the building: private, unused areas including a closet, stairwell, and small rooms off a dank labyrinthine basement; our interest in these additional, out-of-sight spaces raised eyebrows but no objections.

Untitled (Walls Have Ears / Trans-it / Remains) (1998) [Figs.114-117]

Unseen perhaps, but walls have ears... I marked the corridor with waves of black crosses and red circles, perfunctory signatures and empty chops skimming and grazing the emulsion, claiming the border-territory-skin, with no-name names of absent parties, lurking, listening, gathering into a loose dragon-shaped swathe, heading for a sign reading 'exit'... A succession of transitional spaces: The end door opens onto a small landing between stairwells, and another door, marked 'Private.' Handle and lock removed, standing slightly ajar, train sounds emanate from the unlit interior, crowded and interrupted by tannoy announcements inferring that one is now in Hong Kong / London / Hong Kong; the absence of a lock is taken by some as permission to ignore the prohibitive signage, yet, jammed from the inside, a boundary is activated, and the act of listening transformed into eavesdropping... Steep steps descend into the basement, its turns following the cable and light of a solitary bulb illuminating the space under the stairs, for things remaindered, that have no place elsewhere. It brims with blank till

¹⁶ 'number six,' TS2K, London, 27 February – 27 March, 1998.

¹⁷ Such as 'Links 96,' Chinese Arts Centre and Yang Sing Restaurant, Manchester, 1996; 'Far from the Shore,' Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, London, 1998; and 'Another Province,' Watermans Arts Centre, London, 1998.

¹⁸ 'numbersix' press release, written by myself in consultation with the other artists.

¹⁹ Lubaina Himid, ed., *The Thin Black Line* (Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press, 1985), exhibition catalogue. Curated by Lubaina Himid, artists included Brenda Agard, Chila Burman, Claudette Johnson, Ingrid Pollard, Jennifer Comrie, Lubaina Himid, Marlene Smith, Maud Sulter, Sonia Boyce, Sutapa Biswas, Veronica Ryan.

rolls, unravelled, records of exchanges deleted, impeded, disposed of or forgotten, scrolls unadorned or faded, untranslated.²⁰

These paper strips reappeared soon after, along with a proliferation of signatures and slogans, as part of new work commissioned by the 198 Gallery. Having met one its curators a year earlier (the artist Godfried Donker), and approached Mayling To about showing together, 'DEAL' – a contract, a pact, a transaction, an imminent gamble – was conceived as an opportunity for exploring in dialogue our respective relationships to Hong Kong and Britain as second generation immigrants, in light of the return of the colony to Chinese sovereignty.²¹ I had spent several months in Hong Kong in the period preceding the Handover, meeting with artists and curators for whom questions around local, migrant and diasporic identities, cultures and histories were evidenced across work that played – through the use of sites, materials and text – on and off official 'standards' of language, of culture, of history (against which Hong Kong had often been derided as falling short or lacking). Living with my sister and maternal grandmother, I listened to the minutiae of tales told between English, Chinglish accents, and Hakka and Cantonese dialects, receding from our mother's to her mother's tongue. Occasionally freelancing for a couple of US newspapers, I also listened for vox pop sound-bites to furnish history-in-the-making, sentiments peppered with proverbial imagery made striking, or exotic, in translation. Back in England, the tables were turned when I met with expectations to testify to the 'Historical Moment'; unable to reconcile the history validated in print and images, with the half-heard and unheard, semi-literate stories circulating between our three generations, my ambiguous positionings were thrown into relief: as a sister-daughter-granddaughter-resident-insider-outsider-visitor-stranger-tourist, with ancestral, familial, cultural and linguistic ties and knots,

Witness (1998) [Figs.118-120]²²

A year later, my work for 'DEAL' explored this dilemma, sharing tactics with those predisposed by the history of Hong Kong to "border" or "parasite" practices, "the tactics of those who do not have claims to territorial propriety or cultural centrality."²³ In the second

²⁰ *Untitled (Walls have Ears)* (1998), China marker and endorsing ink on walls; *Untitled (Transit)*, doorstop, Dictaphone, speakers; *Untitled (Remains)* (1998), lightbulb, paper.

²¹ 'DEAL,' 198 Gallery, London, 30 June – 15 August 1998. By exhibiting at 198, established in 1988 to support the work of black artists, our presence would also be seen as an implicit or explicit challenge to the definitions, affinities and territories suggested by notions of 'blackness.' When Mayling To put up fake bill posters on the gallery's outside wall, these were seen by some as an affront to the community, a form of trespass, as they (temporarily) covered up a mural work (also temporary) that the gallery had long-intended to paint over.

²² *Witness* (1998), till rolls, sound, light, lasercopies, photograph corners.

²³ Rey Chow, 'Introduction,' in Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp.1-26. In addition, Ackbar Abbas asserts that Hong Kong is "less a site than a *para-site*, in that its dominance in its region is due largely to its geographic proximity to China, together with its accessibility to the rest of the world... The para-site therefore connotes a position that in some strange way is both autonomous and dependent at the same time, a position in which autonomy is paradoxically a function of dependence."

gallery, irregular in shape and windowless but for a small skylight, I began to suspend a line of paper, blank strips of till roll. The 'wall' blocked the already narrow entrance, thickening slowly into a mass and filling the gallery, but for walking space about its perimeter. Making a temporary territorial claim without claiming territory, a para-sitic 'border' slowly eroding its field of habitation, without usurpation, I sought to evoke location yet deny locatedness, to invoke a presence at once oppressive and overwhelming yet without fixity and weight; an encounter with a city and its histories, at once permeable, invisible, excessive, intangible, monumental and weightless.

Distrusting my own testimony, nor wishing for others to trust it, I mimed others', speaking again the testimonials transcribed and edited for the earlier *Un- (prose-fiction-pose-friction)*. My stage-whisper delivery a theatrical intimacy, the truth-value of opinions made questionable, conspiratorial, gossip-like, I layered these with Dictaphone recordings, rough sound-shots as counterpoints to the familiar picture postcard imagery of neon, skylines, and junks, which celebrated power or stereotyped otherness.²⁴ Sounds set the stillness of images and objects into motion, into contexts of activity: out of a window, cooking noises are carried up with their smells, the scrape of a wok-chan clashing with the cymbals of a radio opera; subjects move between neighbouring floors and blocks, twenty times twelve, as taxis, minibuses, trams and trains hum and drone. Reverberations and distortions exaggerate and condense the words, whispers and rhythms, mixed into a six-minute loop: silences alternate, bracketed by sounds.

The inner gallery, obstructed: a wall of paper. Follow it – not a plane but a mass, a body. No windows, but light glimmers in slivers; the blank forest hovers, translucent. Till rolls, no, ticker-tape, no, scrolls... a sober commemoration, transactions, exchanges, bribes, stripped bare. Verticals descend, relentless, harsh fronds, like canvases cut up. No marks, no gestures, everything and nothing to be said. It stirs with the movement of bodies, and parts, rustling, like a papery sea.

Deep, the papery sea swallows sounds, casts them back, unperturbed by rough-audio roars, shotfull of noise, rush-hushing the space. Trains, planes, rockets, voices and dragons, swerve invisibly, disappear; muffles and echoes return to engulf.

Walk between walls, firm and infirm, to a walking-stick mirage: an abandoned, forsaken guide. A pattern of corners glint softly when sunned, invisible photographs fading. Retreat into a recess; light fills and filters through clouds beyond a skylight, now bright, now dull; look up and a low-rise cluster peers back. Something familiar, unfamiliar. Here, somewhere else.

★

Ackbar Abbas *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.74.

²⁴ Ackbar Abbas 'Photographing Disappearance,' in Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp.91-110.

Back Words

live, heavy, and light
Hong Kong in Popo's flat

a great wall of paper
an opaque gift
I listen
a difficult transmission

leaving again

out of the window
a little England, fraught with lines

bound by hours striated
by earth, all watery stains
this movement, belonging

the sky is rueful, route-full

live, heavy and light
here not here in flux
speak don't-speak mis-quote
air dense with un-
and not-yet said

blind, she sees differently
near-seeing, I am deaf

too many words
dry leaves scorched to dust before I can gather
soft, soft hands make up
make up

I feel the terror of loss

here I am
no, there

at the / of the very moment

momentous
momentous²⁵

Monumental Bargain and *97 Proofs* (1998) [Figs.121,122] ²⁶

In the gallery's adjacent shop space, I placed a tower of T-shirts onto a plinth, a miniature high-rise repeatedly endorsed with a self-appointed legend, 'SPSL,' my earlier, evasive, empty chops displaced by a bold brand, a touch-in-cheek authenticity. The tower stood before a wall of framed slogans, in the manner of commemorative plaques or memorial walls found in Chinese temples, or minimalist multiples. *Monumental Bargain* and *97 Proofs* inject a hybrid specificity into the citation of Western art historical grids and stacks, the customised

²⁵ Artist's notes on *Witness*, 1998 – 2003.

²⁶ *Monumental Bargain* (1998), 97 T-shirts, ink, plinth, barriers; *97 Proofs* (1998), paper, permanent marker, endorsing ink, plastic frames.

collection of belated mock souvenirs, original takes and authentic fakes, playing on the ubiquity of 'fake brands' in Hong Kong rendered in Chinglish, whose commonplace acceptance skewer notions and values attached to the authentic, 'genuine article'. Some invoke clichéd perceptions around Hong Kong and China, and Chinese in Britain, others commemorate ambivalent sentiments relating to the Handover. Referring to the abundance of souvenirs encountered in commemoration of something that was yet to happen (in the temporal if not political sense), these pieces comment on the handover as an event to be consumed as well as remembered, or remembered by consumption; and on history and art (in a 'YBA' and global capitalist climate) as market-savvy nostalgia. Buy a T-shirt, choose a slogan:

abacuss / addedass / agnes d. / asian flew / b&g / broken bond / brute lee /
buck choi / bunk of china / catty specific / china churl / china droll / chinese
junkie / chinese tease / chink in armour / choice sum / commie hilfrigger / coolie
britannia / counter revolutionary / custom maid / dim sum / dkhk / donna sharon
/ fakeaway / free delivery / fried quid / fruit of the boom / gavin klein / golden
phallus / good buy / handover fist / home bride / home pride / hong kong bunk
/ hong kong foolery / huge boss / kow loon dis-ease / levy / male ordered /
martial art / mind the gap / nicked / orient tally / pc tips / revel on / rolf lauren /
set deal / show gun /
some sang / spring roll-over / sweat & sour / tally ho / typhoon T / vagrant
harbour / vitreous china / well hung / won ton / wrangle / yellow pearl²⁷

Siting, Sightless

'Lean To,' 'FCHKUK,' and 'Elements of Drawing Blind' were all two week projects which took place between 2000 and 2001, the former solo exhibitions, the latter a group show, each approached as a short-term residency. While 'Lean To' and 'FCHKUK' resulted in installations that explored the very notion of residency as 'home' (both hosts, the East London gallery and Stuff, an artist-run space in Bethnal Green now coincidentally defunct), 'Elements of Drawing Blind,' responded performatively to an invitation to participate in a drawing residency in the West London-based artist-run Central Space.

'Lean to' refers to a makeshift, add-on shelter; as such, I viewed the gallery as a space in which to stake a short-term claim, to fashion a temporary accommodation for the temporary articulation of an ambiguous subject on the move.²⁸ Recycling and assembling found materials and objects as composites of an installation, marking and testing the property and propriety of the space – its boundaries and ownership – I assigned these to myself: chalking

²⁷ The 97 slogans featured in *97 Proofs*, 1998.

²⁸ Formerly part of the University of East London, the East London gallery showed work by contemporary artists, among them university staff and practice-based doctoral researchers. As a combined practice/theory PhD candidate appointed to Aavaa, I hovered or oscillated between departments, inspiring, I suspected, at best confusion, at worst suspicion (where did my true affinities lie?). This subtext, imagined or otherwise, added personal resonance to ostensible concerns with notions of 'home' and territory, and expectations to speak of or from a singular yet conflated position of artistic and cultural authenticity.

steps, tagging doors with stickers. Signing my 'self' as both infinitely reproducible (a badge to be worn), and unique and "special" (according to my Jewellery). Remembering Ana Mendieta's silhouettes and Felix Gonzalez-Torres' candy spills and screens, 'SPSL' was also offered up as a palliative for bite-sized consumption, while 'susan' departed amid sugar-coated barbs.

*Lean To: Killing Me, My He/Art / Your Sleeve, Wall; Space 1999; Susan's Room, Mobile, Take Me Away, Wait (Walk / Don't Walk) (2000) [Figs.123-134]*²⁹

On the steps outside the building, chalk outlines denote the passing of a body – the artist at work faking a death. Double-doors lead to double-doors plastered with 'SPSL' stickers, a territorial gesture, an exercise in public relations, or quality assurance. Beyond, a bowlful of badges and chocolate hearts offer to placate, a placebo as greeting with instructions (a request) on their consumption and dissemination: "Tell Me Where You Go With My He/art..." A curtain of paper strips, weighted with pennies, creates a foyer-like area. On another wall, a bright orange box warns, 'beware of the dog.'³⁰ A mediatory site of correspondence and exchange, the milk/letter box is emblematic of a nostalgic landscape of sub/urban living, couched in 'trust,' while the warning suggests a mistrustful present, where 'home' is a territory to be defended, and 'the community' both subject and object of surveillance. Adorned by a surplus of dysfunctional locks and handles, a doormat, and a string of fairy-lights glowing outside and in, audiences and trespassers will be welcome, or bitten.³¹ Two milk bottles contain, respectively, sea salt, and a boat: a milky waterway evaporated, a red envelope-note in the empties – a 'Lucky Money' vessel bearing wishes for good fortune and prosperity in the New Year, stranded. A little green man, a cartoon-ish alien, waves from inside the door, before a familiar image of the earth seen from outer space, suspended in blackness; a mirror inside the lid aligns viewer and alien within the same frame as temporary visitor, voyeur, tourist, or potential intruder.

²⁹ *Killing Me* (2000), chalk, permanent ink; *My He/Art / Your Sleeve* (2000), badges, chocolate, glass bowl, table, cloth, postcards, stand; *Space 1999* (1999), MDF, paint, doormat, brass, glass, salt, paper, card, lights, mirror; *Wall* (2000), paper, coins; *Susan's Room* (2000), doors, plaque; *Mobile* (2000), shoes, hanger; *Take Me Away* (2000), spikes, paper; *Wait (Walk / Don't Walk)* (2000), artificial grass, foamboard.

³⁰ *Space 1999* (1999) was originally commissioned by inIVA (the institute for International Visual Arts) for the exhibition 'Cities on the Move' at the Hayward Gallery, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Hou Hanru. Mediating a collaboration with artist Tsuyoshi Osawa, curator of the miniature so-called 'Nasubi Gallery' which takes its form from the once-common Japanese milk-box, the self-appointed 'Smallest Gallery in the World' was first launched in 1993 as a parody and protest against the prevailing commercial gallery system. inIVA invited nine artists to make work for the collection of portable exhibition spaces, which were then installed by Osawa in the interstitial spaces of 'Cities:' exhibitions within an exhibition, within an exhibition. *Space 1999* was recently included in Osawa's collection of new Nasubi galleries in 'Osawa Tsuyoshi: Answer with Yes and No!' Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 24 August – 5 December 2004.

³¹ Possibly by a gallery attendant; in the context of 'Cities,' the Hayward's lower galleries were crammed with banks of monitors nudging objects and installations with degrees of intended interactivity not always clear to the invigilators, let alone to audiences. Erring unsurprisingly on the side of caution, the presence of guards dotted about the overall monumental exotic spectacle of 'Cities'

The false wall reveals dilapidated doors leaning against the far wall, unhinged and unlocked, entry and exit points to undisclosed spaces. A business-like plaque designates informal ownership of a place – 'Susan's Room' – whose parameters are unclear, and inhabitant absent. A polaroid shows a pendant in the palm of a hand, 'Someone Special': bought second-hand, a sometime a mass-produced declaration of affection, uniqueness, and difference has been withdrawn, or a self-bestowed moniker relinquished, or acquired.

Specialness as a soporific soothes, anaesthetizes my sense of justice... Now I [sic] am not only given the permission to open up and talk, I am also encouraged to express my difference. My audience expects and demands it; otherwise people would feel as if they have been cheated...³²

On the floor lies a carpet or bed of six-inch spikes, of the kind found in restaurants and bars, a reference to the trade that brought the majority of Hong Kong Chinese immigrants to Britain in the last century. Each bears a sail-like paper bill, a miniature fleet heeding those who came before (meal tickets for dreams of meal tickets?) and cautioning those coming after, in search of exotic escapes, or escapes from the exotic. Each bill bears multiple signatures, fake chops and kite-marks, all false-verified versions of 'SPSL.' Another wall carries three abstract life-sized figures cut from artificial grass, frozen strides heading left and right, towards and away from an 'exit.' In the centre of the room, bulbs blink about a cluster of ill-matched shoes and boots suspended from the ceiling; a lantern of sorts, illuminating journeys past and future, or a mobile, going nowhere.

FCHKUK: Protection, FCHKUK, FCHKUK (Slow Island Hop) (2000) [Figs.135-141]³³

Intermittent echoes of a song float down the staircase leading up to Stuff's fifth floor gallery space. Inside its entrance is *Protection*, a found hat-stand, a skeletal figure that I decorate with a devil-horned hat and scarf covered in 'SPSL' badges; authenticity as accessory, or armour. The space is dominated by several suspended sheets, suggesting perhaps sails, flying carpets, or ghosts; props for childhood games that might transport one by water or air into other realms, or protect one from others. A bucket and spade lie amidst a sea or shore of spikes, a perforated border. Fluctuations of light offer a measure of temporality, through windows half-covered in pink tissue, casting occasional hints of a rose tint.

detracted inevitably from the notions of spontaneity and autonomy intrinsic to Osawa's conceptualisation of the Nasubi galleries.

³² Trinh T. Minh-ha's essay, 'Difference: "A Special Third World Issue",' in Trinh, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp.79-116.

³³ *FCHKUK*, Stuff Gallery, London, 11-15 July, 2000, installation with sound, tissue paper, fabric, spikes, bucket and spade.

Je ne sais pas où est ma maison, la maison où j'ai grandi.
Où est ma maison? Qui sait où est ma maison?
Ma maison, où est ma maison? Qui sait où est ma maison?"³⁴

The title 'FCHKUK' expands on one of the slogans from *97 Proofs*, appropriating a well-known clothing brand to insert 'Hong Kong' into 'French Connection UK', or an acronymic French connection between Hong Kong and UK. Francoise Hardy's "La maison où j'ai grandi" evokes nostalgia for a childhood home and laments its loss, its sentiments and sentimentality resonating with the yearnings of my younger self, and the persistent pull of Hong Kong, where I first heard the song. Where one might habitually read dualities – Anglo-Franco / British-Chinese – 'FCHKUK' alludes to the triangulation of histories, temporalities, geographies, and the sometimes less than transparent connections that weave cross-culturally and cross-linguistically; an attempt to disrupt tendencies to imagine 'home' in opposition to 'away', and to question longings for a no longer or never was 'safe place', a haven, or 'haven'.

Song evokes the 'quotidian' possibility – and impossibility of not – configuring memory, identities and histories complexly, perhaps unpredictably, across hierarchical distinctions usually underpinned by a logic of 'the West and the rest'.³⁵ Thinking of the conventional uses of sound and music in the articulation of body, space, mood and temporality in film and television,³⁶ I looked upon the gallery as a comparable theatrical and fictive space. The track plays over and over, trailing away into silences that alternate with and equal the song's duration. Its apparent function as musical commentary or 'voice-over' may be taken as straight or ironic, jarring with or enriching disparate contexts with the sudden power "to change the setting, to call up a thing, moment, place... at will".³⁷ Yet any illusory cohesion of sound and environment is regularly dissipation of the sung narrative, the fleeting coincidence between the recollection of a no-longer place re-imagined in the song, and those remembered and tentatively conjured up in the gallery space subsiding with its imposition, fading out.³⁸ The accentuated convergence and divergence of the visual, aural and spatial repeatedly brings the opening night audience to the verge of dancing. However, unlike the song and dance sequences in musicals, where "utopian space[s]" or "moments of escape into a mode of emotional expression" that cannot be enacted elsewhere are made seamless by the gradual

³⁴ Francoise Hardy, 'La Maison Où J'ai Grandi' (1966).

³⁵ Kay Dickenson, ed, *Movie Music, The Film Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) p.61.

³⁶ See for example Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space,' in Elisabeth Weis and John Belton eds. *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp.162-176.

³⁷ Michel Chion, trans. Claudia Gorbman, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (NY: Columbia UP, 1994), p.172.

³⁸ "[Film music] bonds: shot to shot, narrative event to meaning, spectator to narrative, spectator to audience... Overall, the two overarching roles of background music may be characterised as semiotic (as ancrage) and psychological (as suture or bonding)." Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI, 1987), p.55.

expansion of instrumental and rhythmic variations to match the image narrative,³⁹ escape and reverie are repeatedly curtailed, checked by awkwardness when the music recedes, and the 'set' remains.

In the bar adjacent to the gallery, a monitor is set up for *FCHKUK / Slow Island Hop*, a short piece that finds the opening sequence from Wong Kar Wai's 1992 film, *Chungking Express*, re-edited, and its soundtrack replaced by my own. A home video recording of a copy of a copy transmitted on television, three times degraded and removed from its source, the sequence is dirtied, decelerated and truncated. Subtitles are edited out and the resulting one and half minutes are drawn out into five. Where music might otherwise safely propel bodies as they stop / start through frames, their slowed, halting fragments remain floating, unanchored by text nor synchronous sound. The disjointedness of the visual track is compounded by the sonic navigation, dislocation and mistranslation of place: faint echoes of song are interrupted by whispers and laughter, in between the condensed whirl of traffic, while feet hit the ground in a solitary game of lines and square landings.

I was interested in the film's romantic evocation of Hong Kong and its illusory symmetries built upon repetitions and displacements, non-events and mis(s)-es (non-coincidences, non-meetings, mis-registrations, mis-understandings, mis-recognitions), and the enunciative slippages as camerawork and editing combine to condense time and space, compressing bodies into claustrophobic, discontinuous and disorientating spaces heightened by a humid saturated palette. The cumulative visual and narrative loops and reversals have a strange and ambiguous effect; there is little transition, in the sense of plot progression, only sudden changes in the circumstances and look of things that go barely noticed by the protagonists – ignored, misheard or misread. In a densely populated city of some seven million, the question of how subjects negotiate space and each other recurs; my sampling of the film aimed to undo the unifying, cohesive work of the soundtrack, bestrewn with nostalgic pop songs, to accentuate instead the irresolution of pursuits and dislocating encounters in a "fractal city," whose 'centre' proliferates in the repetition and displacement of itself – a self without centre – giving rise to the levelling out, the collapsing and skewering, of the temporal.⁴⁰

dropped into a dark narrow street made narrower with bodies, birdsong punctures the silence, heralds a head-rushing dive into noise

the opening scenes unfold, adulterated, the decelerated footage slowed further: an Asian woman disguised in dark glasses and blonde wig forces her way through the crowd, sharp movements made deliberate, the abruptness drawn out

³⁹ Ian Garwood, 'Must You Remember This? Orchestrating the "Standard" Pop Song in *Sleepless in Seattle*,' in Dickenson ed., op.cit., p.115.

⁴⁰ Ackbar Abbas proposes the notion of "ex-urbia" in relation to Hong Kong's 'New Towns': while suburbias develop in differentiation from, and marginal to, a metropolitan centre, "ex-urbias" find that centre duplicated in its entirety, razed and raised over and over again. Ackbar Abbas, 'Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics,' *Public Culture*, vol.9, no.3, 1997, pp.293-313.

cut from claustrophobic ground to a twilight panorama of roof-tops, skies soaked in polluted blues: a moment of stillness

bursts of birdsong ring clear against indistinct swathes of subterranean rumblings, traffic and building works, perhaps

voices weave and clamber, crawl over, beneath, sometimes looping – a distant megaphone, some whispered confidences, the shaky phrases of a song

acoustic debris and visual noise cling like hair drawn by static to a balloon; source locations blur, spaces layer, compress, dimensions multiply, exaggerating echoes where before there were none, all the while, if sometimes submerged, a rhythmic smacking of the pavement as feet hit the ground

Jump – Hop – Pivot

figures blur as the camera picks out a young man, plotting nuances of body, limbs, clothes, stopped in motion; he brushes past the camera, the woman in the wig, pursued / in pursuit of another, in a paper bag mask; he swerves into a building, its cursive pink neon sign waving, wavering, teasing, twisting; into labyrinthine corridors of eyes and elbows, glancing, grazing, and out again, slowing and stalled as he brushes the woman as before, and sounds recede, and each spins towards the other

hear a final

Jump – Hop – Pivot

a sudden connection, face to face for a second drawn out to five; fade to black⁴¹

Elements of Drawing Blind (2001) [Figs.142-145]⁴²

After a year's break from making work, I saw the invitation to participate in a short-term drawing project as an opportunity to resume, by reflecting on and engaging in what I had always considered, with little questioning, to be somehow fundamental to my practice. If the place of drawing in the Western academy has long been seen as having a preparatory, 'in progress' relation to finished works of art, a notion accompanied by the heavily diluted transmission of Ruskinian values in my training as an artist, I was also aware of a Chinese visual cultural – and Western modernist – heritage in which drawing and writing, in the form of calligraphy, could inhabit the highest artistic and literary spheres of value, integral rather than subordinate to the disciplines of literature and painting.

Turning to John Ruskin's classic 1857 book, *The Elements of Drawing*,⁴³ I invited an ex-Ruskin Art School lecturer to dictate and record the first part of the text onto audio-tape, preliminary lessons in the form of a series of letters to a student. Accompanied by a Dictaphone, I proceeded to follow Ruskin's instructions and exercises towards achieving the skills deemed attainable through a commitment to hard work and time: an artistically

⁴¹ Artist's notes on *FCHKUK/Slow Island Hop*, 2000-2001, unpublished.

⁴² *Elements of Drawing Blind* (2001) was part of the project, 'Drawing the Central Space,' curated by Ming Wong and Martin Newth for The Central Space, London, 1-17 June 2001. The other artists were Jenny Chong, Abigail Jones/Wendy Swallow, Thorsten Knaub, Nick Pearson and Sarah Warden.

authentic “innocent eye,” capable of seeing past an increasingly industrialised ‘culture’ and back to ‘nature’s’ unsullied truths. Working blind-folded to the pace of the spoken text, its painstaking, meticulous course accelerated, I endeavoured to draw and make notes on Ruskin’s exhortations, handling the crude commercial tools of corporate presentations – OHP markers, an overhead-projector, sheets of acetate – unsympathetic to the gentle, delicate work demanded by Ruskin, a far cry from the slow, quiet world he exalted.

Unlike the mid-nineteenth century English ‘lady painter’ sometimes addressed by the Victorian teacher of beauty and morals, for whom competence in drawing might complement piano-playing as a means of entry and acceptance into Western high culture, I appear to be somewhat dis/advantaged by the pervasive myths of coarseness that colour my background: late twentieth century cultureless Hong Kong farming stock meets tacky working class Essex. In the process of two rehearsals and an opening-night performance, I produced three books of fifty-something drawings, and a ten-metre scroll that subsequently tore under its own weight: the unwieldy outcome of an inevitably ‘corrupt’ enterprise.

How do we read the references behind the scroll, the blindfold, or the display of the artist herself, unseeing against the white gallery walls?

... While there can no longer be any faith in a single perspective of truth, or in cultural superiority, the blindfolded artist suggests that the blindness conferred by one viewpoint also offers a particular vision, and that the passages between different viewpoints are not always blocked, but may be illumined by provocations such as these.⁴⁴

Return

In contrast to the short timescales of these last three projects, *Notes On Return* (2003) [Figs. 146-148] developed over a two-year period, and takes up many existing thematic and conceptual concerns. Approached to contribute to a group exhibition, ‘The Translator’s Notes,’ I was asked to consider the gallery as ‘a blank page,’ and a quote from Jose Ortega y Gasset 1937 essay, ‘The Misery and Splendor of Translation,’ as a point of departure:

... speech is composed above all of silences. A person incapable of quieting many things would not be capable of talking. And each language is a different equation of statements and silences. All peoples silence some things in order to be able to say others. Otherwise, everything would be unsayable. From this we deduce the enormous difficulty of translation: in it one tries to say in a language precisely what that language tends to silence. But, at the same time, one glimpses a possible marvellous aspect of the enterprise of translating: the revelation of the mutual secrets that peoples and epochs keep to themselves and which contribute so much to their separation and hostility.⁴⁵

⁴³ John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, originally published in 1857 (New York: Dover, 1971).

⁴⁴ Julian Stallabrass, ‘Elements of Drawing Blind,’ www.chinese-art.com vol. 5, no.1, 2001.

⁴⁵ Jose Ortega y Gasset, ‘The Misery and Splendor of Translation,’ (1937) in Lawrence Venuti ed. *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.49-63. ‘The Translator’s’ Notes’ was curated by Irene Amore for Café Gallery Projects, London, 26 March – 20 April 2003.

Prior to this, I had happened upon a second-hand bilingual edition of a collection of poems, *Forms of Distance* (1994), by the Chinese poet in exile, Bei Dao. Struck by a particular poem, 'Folding Procedure,' I went on to make audio recordings of readings in English and Cantonese with my mother and father, each speaking the texts independently in both languages, and reciting them after each other, line by line, phrase by phrase, according to our differing degrees of fluency. A year later, I went back to the recordings, plotting the layering and to-and-fro movement of imperfect bilingual 'speech melodies' between three voices, eighteen tracks, and four speakers.⁴⁶

One by one.
The sounds. The sounds that move at a time
stops. Starts again
all but exceptions.
Stop. Start. Starts.
Contractions. Noise. Semblance of noise.
Broken Speech. One to one. At a time.
Cracked tongue. Broken tongue.
Pidgeon. Semblance of speech.
Swallows. Inhales. Stutter. Starts. Stops before
starts.
About to. Then stops. Exhale
swallowed to a sudden arrest.
Rest. Without. Can do without rests. Improper
to rest before begun even. Probation of rest.
Without them all.
Stop start.
Where proper pauses were expected.
But no more.⁴⁷

In the meantime, I spent a month in Hong Kong filming intermittently with a digital video camera, recalling the abstract images, rhythms and silences of these poetic text(s), and attempting to translate these "by eye and by ear"⁴⁸ into a visual-poetic that listened and cautiously spoke back to the text, editing the footage several months later.

- A) In trying to recall a certain poem, to translate forward from unrememory and language removed, a few words prevail; most fail me, or rather, I fail them...
- B) Notes for awkward movements, trans:
 - 1. Come back, go back, give back, get back; 2. Exchanges – game, if uneasy; 3. A dash, rush to fill it; 4. The space is a euphemism (unsaid); 5. Blankness, a

⁴⁶ Paul Hillier, 'Introduction,' in Hillier ed. *Steve Reich: Writings On Music, 1965-2000* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p.6. Hillier cites possible influences on Reich's work, in particular his use of taped speech.

⁴⁷ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée* (Berkeley, LA, London: California UP, 2001), p.75.

⁴⁸ Filmscript for Trinh T. Minh-ha, dir., *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), 108 mins, colour and b&w, in Trinh, *Framer Framed* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.80.

palimpsest, again, rubbed smooth; 6. Nonplussed but speechful; 7. Brimful of noise; 8. Not lost but displaced.⁴⁹

CONCRETE POETRY: TENSION OF THINGS – WORDS IN SPACE-TIME⁵⁰

In *Notes On Return*, I navigate space and language to find a location, a place, via dislocations.⁵¹ I am 'home' and 'away' and somewhere else, looking for meanings in the coincidences across and between registers, performing ad lib translations between word, sound and image, glimpsed, heard and spoken. Reading, looking, speaking, and moving, I stumble to connect up the concrete and abstract, futures, pasts, future-presents, the could-be and the vanished. My gaze is sometimes so close as to be myopic. (Myopia – a common condition, in which distant objects cannot be seen sharply; myopia: a lack of foresight.) I scale heights with my eyes. I stare hard at water and watery panes, surfaces that appear soft, harsh and malleable, transparent, luminescent, opaque. I look back and backwards, to find a way forward; compelled to look closely to 'see', 'everything' eludes me. In a state of suspension, yet perpetual movement, edges and parameters bleed and soften. I get used to my vision being muddy, which shifts my attention to the textures of places, of voices, of wordlessness.

A refrain of repeated returns speaks to the movements and cycles of change in the tangible and intangible; nothing is fixed. In flux, I read my and others' estrangement from a cultural past, my and others' disorientation and isolation in the coterminous present. I recall the words and rhythms of concealment and retreat – leaping, secluding, hurling, deluding, stepping back – which re-cast my relation to familiar unfamiliar, to my dearest, distant, to distances, displaced. If what emerges is a somewhat mournful relationship to space, to places and people – absent but for the feet of a seated shopkeeper, and an elderly woman lying prone, head and body turned away – it is an undisclosed subtext of a sudden death, coinciding with my flight from Hong Kong, that colours the tone of this piece. Yet *Notes On Return* also speaks to an ongoing endeavour to negotiate the discordant simultaneity of histories, geographies, and cultures, and the impossibility of 'return'; permitting difficulty, regret even, in the face of inevitable disconnections and discontinuities. The patient doubling, tripling and stumbling of tongues tail awkward and necessary transformations across unstable terrains, between generations, mediations ridden with silences and voids, that remember the comforts and wounds in translation, as intimacy across distance, which must come with departure.

Cats return to where they began

⁴⁹ Artist's statement, 'The Translator's Notes,' exhibition booklet, 2003.

⁵⁰ "... graphic-phonetic function-relations... and the substantive use of space as an element of composition entertain a simultaneous dialectics of eye and breath, that together with the ideogramic synthesis of meaning, creates a verbivocovisual' *sensible totality*, so that words and experience are held in a close phenomenological juxtaposition, formerly impossible." Augusto de Campo, 'CONCRETE POETRY, A Manifesto,' *AD (Architecture & Decoration)*, no.20, November – December, 1956, São Paulo, cited in *Between Poetry and Painting* (London: ICA, 1965) exhibition catalogue, p.73.

⁵¹ *Notes On Return*, 2003, DVD sound and video installation, 9 mins 38 secs.

Back Words

Battle fish
Leap beyond clerical heavens
And the soprano goes into seclusion

I return to where I began

Quixotic sand
Hurls itself against window-glass
That crowblack mask of cloud

Stones return to where they began

Dreams of good fortune
Grow into trees towering skyward
Like ink seeping into the map

Meanings return to where they began

The rainbow deluding this world
Is a glorious person's autobiography
[Sh]e steps back in to childhood⁵²

⁵² Bei Dao, 'Folding Procedure,' in Bei Dao trans. David Hinton, *Forms of Distance* (London: Anvil Press, 1994) pp.72-73.

Conclusion (Of Sorts, and Sorties)

A – Y: Of 'British Chinese' Art, began with the aim of identifying and articulating some of the historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts by which mine and others' practices might begin to be framed and read, in relation to and in excess of the emergence, since the early 1990s, of the signifiers 'British' and 'Chinese' in tandem. Examining the sometime necessity and limitations of these terms through the work of a handful of artists and peers who have participated regularly, and I believe, contributed significantly, to the questioning and continual reconfiguration of 'British Chinese-ness,' my readings have sought to heed their specificity and 'situated-ness,' while intimating the disparate genealogies by which these artists speak across gender, ethnicity, language and cultural difference, to wider aesthetic discourses of identity, history, memory, migration, commodification, and translation.

Seeking to locate by proxy some broader contexts for, and aspects of, my own practice, the process has brought into relief as many instances of divergence as convergence. Experientially, thematically, and aesthetically, we continue to coincide and depart; there is no single narrative or strategy from which to deviate, and those that I had thought to have anticipated, have proved far more complex; many avenues remain un-adventured. In pursuit of others, I have glimpsed their / my fictions of selves, shifting positionings within and between frames: posing and playing on names and narratives of 'otherness', proffering consumption, indigestion and un/assimilation, placed and displaced in diaspora, gesturing dumbstruck and loose-tongued, unloosed from 'home.' 'False hands' have been played (we are not what we are), and looks turned sidelong and back. 'Becoming' proves duplicitous and multiplicitous work, in part a mimicking, the mysteriousness of the 'other' shown off (a 'self'-duping'); in part a proliferation of corruptions and skirmishes, sardonic and anxious unravelings, sometime mournful stumblings. In the process, the weave of my writing inside my practice, as drawing, as concrete poetic verbal/vocal/textual twining, begins to emerge.

These trajectories have been scattered and several; if *A – Y* suggests, among other things, a journey that stops short of its destination, or a catalogue that stops short of completion, other subjects or routes having been missed or bypassed, then it already exaggerates the miles on the clock and misleads from the aim: no point of arrival nor closure, only pitstops, detours and interruptions. Younger generations are emerging, and the increasing international prominence of artists of Chinese, Asian American and Asian Pacific heritages, as well as the proliferation of art biennials and triennials in the last two decades (including Shanghai, Gwangju, Busan and Yokohama), stress the necessary conceptualisation of dialogues and practices beyond ethnic and national constraints. Perhaps '*A – ?*' would better reflect the hindsight or the long-view yet to come, that might permit some estimation of how far gone. My qualification, then, of

Conclusion

this 'conclusion,' as a conclusion 'of sorts,' signals my temporary and hesitant evaluation and summation of materials, ideas and encounters, of a 'moment' attenuated – a decade long even – the one concrete conclusion being the impossibility of concluding, of drawing to a close or a halt the readings and re-readings of work by sometime so-called 'British Chinese' artists; it is also, however, a call for the ending of discourses of 'sorts' – of categories, varieties, types – in favour, perhaps, of 'sorties': subtle, critical, poetic attacks, mock-military, mock-monkey-ing, on literal and metaphorical 'native' / 'foreign' speak, and soils. Sorties: trips away, to unfamiliar places.

Bibliography

- Ackbar Abbas, 'Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics,' *Public Culture*, vol.9, no.3, 1997, pp.293-313.
- Ackbar Abbas *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
- Ali Nobil Ahmad, 'Whose Underground? Asian Cool and the Poverty of 'hybridity,'" *Third Text*, no.54, Spring, 2001, pp.71-84.
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991).
- Ien Ang, 'On Not Speaking Chinese: Diasporic Identifications and Postmodern Ethnicity,' in Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) pp.21-36.
- J. Anu, 'Drawing on Asian roots,' *Sunday Star* (Malaysia), 7 January 1996.
- Rasheed Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain*, exhibition catalogue (London: South Bank Centre, 1989).
- Rasheed Araeen, 'Hello Giuliani, We Love You!' in Andrew Patrizio ed., *TwoNineTwo: Essays in Visual Culture*, no.1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Projects, 2000) pp.86-95.
- Timothy Garton Ash, 'Two Flags, One Muddle,' *The Guardian*, 13 June 2002.
- Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg eds., *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- Hugh Baker, 'Branches All Over: The Hong Kong Chinese in the United Kingdom,' in Ronald Skeldon ed., *Reluctant Exiles: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese* (New York: M.E. Sharpe; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994) pp.291-307.
- Roland Barthes trans. Richard Howard, *A Lovers Discourse: Fragments*, first published 1977 (London: Penguin, 1990).
- Roland Barthes trans. Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 'Beijing Clamps Down on Chinglish,' 14 August 2001. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1491288.stm>.
- Rosemary Betterton, 'Lesley Sanderson,' *Art Monthly*, no.184, March 1995, pp.32-3.
- Between Poetry and Painting*, exhibition catalogue (London: ICA, 1965).
- Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man,' in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) pp.85-92.
- Fiona Bradley ed., *Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos and Global Change – East Asian Art, Architecture and Film Now*, exhibition catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery, 1999).
- Jennie Bristow, 'Golden Jubilee Blues,' 30 May 2003, <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006D914.htm>.
- Emma Brockes, 'Grease is the Word,' *The Guardian*, 28 November 2002.

Bibliography

Neal Brown, 'Wait and See (What's for Dinner?): Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne,' *Frieze*, November-December 1997, issue 37, pp.87-88.

Paul Brown, 'Illegal meat trail leads to infected countries,' *The Guardian*, 28 March 2001.

C. Carr, 'A Great Wall,' in C. Carr, *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993) pp.25-48.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (Berkeley, LA, London: California UP, 2001).

Eddie Chambers ed., *History and Identity; Seven Painters*, exhibition catalogue (Norfolk: Norfolk Institute of Art and Design, 1991).

Eddie Chambers, *Black People and the British Flag*, exhibition catalogue (London: inIVA, 1993).

Annie Hau-nung Chan, 'Consumption, Popular Culture, and Cultural Identity: Japan in Post-colonial Hong Kong,' in *Studies In Popular Culture*, 2000, vol.23. no.1, pp.35-55.

Deborah Chan, ed., *Ten Thousand Li*, exhibition catalogue (Liverpool: Liverpool School of Art & Design / CAIR, 2002).

Yiu Man Chan, 'The Chinese in Greater Manchester: A Demographic Profile,' *New Community*, vol.20, no.4, July 1994, pp.655-659.

Chang Tsong Zung, ed. *Exhibition 6.30*, exhibition catalogue (Hong Kong: Hanart TZ Gallery, 1997).

Chanting Heads: a glimpse of eleven artists working in Britain today, CD rom (London: Aavaa, Wiltshire: NSEAD, and North Carolina: John Hope Franklin Center, 2001)

Michel Chion trans. Claudia Gorbman, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (NY: Columbia UP, 1994).

Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Rey Chow, ed. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

Allen Chun, 'Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity' *Boundary*, vol.23, no.2, 1996, pp.111-138.

Hélène Cixous trans. Eric Prenowitz, 'Writing blind: conversation with the donkey,' in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998).

David Clarke, 'Between East and West: Negotiations with Tradition and Modernity in Hong Kong Art', *Third text*, no.28/9, Autumn/Winter 1994, pp.71-86.

David Clarke, 'Varieties of Cultural Hybridity: Hong Kong Art in the Late Colonial Era,' *Public Culture*, vol. 9, no.3, 1997, pp.395-415.

David Clarke, 'The Culture of a Border Within: Hong Kong Art and China,' *Art Journal*, vol.59, no.2, Summer 2000, pp.89-101.

Bibliography

David Clarke, *Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization* (London: Reaktion, 2001).

John Clark ed., *Chinese Art at the End of the Millenium: Chinese-art.com 1998-1999* (Hong Kong: New Art Media, 2000).

Robert Clarke, 'New North,' *The Guardian*, 4 June 1990.

Robert Clarke, 'Lesley Sanderson,' *The Guardian*, 1 November 1994.

Robert Clarke, 'Lines of Desire,' *The Guardian*, 26 October 1998.

Robert Clark, *The Guardian Guide*, 20-26 February 1999.

Jenny Clegg, *Fu Manchu and the 'Yellow Peril': The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire, Trentham Books, 1994).

James Clifford, 'Diasporas,' in Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Warren I. Cohen, *The Asian American Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Correcting the Picture: New Perspectives on Cultural Diversity in Arts Management, conference report (London: Arts Council England, 1998).

Cultural Diversity Action Plan (London: Arts Council of England, 1998).

Laura Cumming, 'Making a meal of it', *The Guardian*, 19 August 1997.

Bei Dao trans. David Hinton, *Forms of Distance* (London: Anvil Press, 1994).

Kevin Davey, *English Imaginaries* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999).

Christina Davidson, 'Words from Heaven: Xu Bing interviewed by Christina Davidson,' *Art and Asia Pacific*, vol.1, no.2, April 1994, pp.48-55.

Allan deSouza, 'The Spoken Word: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's "Dictee"', *Third Text*, no.24, Autumn 1993, pp.73-79.

Kay Dickenson, ed, *Movie Music, The Film Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

Carol Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early 20th-Century Vanguard Painting,' *Artforum*, December 1973, pp.30-39.

Peter X. Feng, *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video* (Duke UP, 2002).

Jean Fisher ed., *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts* (London: Kala Press/inIVA, 1994).

Norman Jackson Ford, ed., *Traversals* (Hong Kong: Mapbook, 2001).

Michael Freeberne, 'Chinese Success in the UK,' *The Geographical Magazine*, vol.53, no.2, 1981, pp.706-711.

Sigmund Freud, 'Humour', in Freud, *Art & Literature*, ed. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1988).

Coco Fusco, 'Fantasies of Oppositionality,' in Grant H. Kester ed., *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998) pp.60-75.

Coco Fusco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours* (London: inIVA, 2001).

Rachel Garfield, 'Ali G: Just Who Does He Think He Is?' *Third Text* 54, Spring 2001, pp.63-70.

Bibliography

- Gao Minglu ed. *Inside Out: New Chinese Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London; University of California Press, 1998).
- Gao Minglu, 'Wall as intermediary: Chinese art in a global context,' unpublished conference paper, 2002.
- William H. Gass, *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1976).
- Jose Ortega y Gasset, 'The Misery and Splendor of Translation' (1937), in Lawrence Venuti ed. *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Blankness as a Signifier,' in Gilbert-Rolfe, *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime* (New York: Allworth Press, 1999) pp.109-123.
- Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993)
- Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Penguin, 2000).
- Jonathan Glancy, 'By George!' *The Guardian*, 20 June 2002.
- Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI, 1987).
- Chris Gray, 'Chinese stirred into action by racist smears and slanders,' *The Independent*, 7 April 2001.
- Althea Greenan, 'Who Has the Last Laugh?' *Women's Art Magazine*, December 1994.
- Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, 'Introduction: Complexities of an Art Form,' in Hall and Fifer eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture and Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990).
- Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), pp.441-449.
- Stuart Hall, 'What is this 'black' in black popular culture,' in Gina Dent ed., *Black Popular Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), reprinted in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) pp.465-475.
- Stuart Hall, 'A Question of Identity (II)', *The Observer*, 15 October 2000.
- Gary G. Hamilton, ed., *Cosmopolitan Capitalisms: Hong Kong and the Chinese Diaspora at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999).
- Jonathan Hay, 'Ambivalent Icons: Works by five Chinese artists based in the United States,' *Orientations*, vol.23, no.7, 1992, pp.37-43.
- Here Not There*, exhibition catalogue (Brisbane: Institute of modern Art, 1993).
- Susan Hiller, 'The Idea of Multiplicity in Art,' in Barbara Einzig ed., *Thinking About Art: Conversations with Susan Hiller* (Manchester University Press, 1996).
- Paul Hillier, 'Introducton,' in Hillier ed. *Steve Reich: Writings On Music, 1965-2000* (Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Lubaina Himid, ed., *The Thin Black Line*, exhibition catalogue (Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press, 1985).

Bibliography

Oscar Ho Hing Kay, 'Being Oneself: Individualism in the Contemporary Art of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan,' *The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art; Brisbane, Australia* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1996) pp.41-43.

Robert Hobbs, *Hong Kong Now!*, exhibition catalogue (Virginia: Virginia Commonwealth University, 1997).

Bob Hodge and Kam Louie, *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998).

Hou Hanru, 'Departure Lounge Art: Chinese Artists Abroad,' *Art and Asia Pacific*, vol.1., no.2, April 1994, pp.36-41

Hou Hanru, 'Chinese Artists, Diaspora and Global Art,' keynote paper in Sophie Hanson ed., *New Moves: Chinese Arts Conference*, report (Manchester: Chinese Arts Centre, 2000).

Richard Hylton, 'The Politics of Cultural Diversity,' *Art Monthly*, no.274, March 2004, pp.20-21.

Linda Javin, 'Gu Wenda: Tao and the Art of Aesthetic Line Maintenance,' *Art and Asia Pacific*, vol.1., no.2, April 1994, pp.42-47.

Ian Johnston, 'Scandal of Chinese cockle-pickers' deaths,' *Scotland on Sunday*, 8 February 2004.

Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, 'De Margin and De Centre,' first printed as the 'Introduction' to *Screen* vol. 29, no.4 (1988), pp.2-10, and reprinted in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) pp.450-464.

Melanie Keen and Elizabeth Ward, *Recordings: A Select Bibliography of Contemporary African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian British Art* (London: inIVA and Chelsea College of Art and Design, 1996)

Paul Kelso, 'Chinese restaurants feel the pinch,' *The Guardian*, 2 April 2001.

Anthony Key, exhibition catalogue (Bristol: Eddie Chambers, 2002)

Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, eds., *Fresh Talk / Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003).

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).

Maxine Hong Kingston, 'Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers,' from Guy Amirthanayagam ed., *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities* (Macmillan, 1982), reprinted in Laura E. Skandera-Trombley ed., *Critical Essays on Maxine Hong Kingston* (New York: G. K. Hall; London: Prentice Hall International, 1998).

<http://t3.preservice.org/T0301065/essay.html>

Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

Maxine Hong Kingston, *To Be The Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Lau Kin Wai, ed., *Cultural Chop Shui 1* (Hong Kong: Lau Kin Wai, 1995).

Lau Kin Wai, ed., *Cultural Chop Shui 2* (Hong Kong: Lau Kin Wai, 1996).

Bibliography

- Lau Kin Wai, ed., *The Street Calligraphy of Tsang Tsou Cho*, exhibition catalogue (Hong Kong: Kin Wai's Workshop, 1997).
- Chang-Rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (London: Granta, 1995).
- Quentin Lee, 'Delineating Asian (Hong Kong) Intellectuals: Speculations on Intellectual Problematics and Post/Coloniality,' *Third Text*, no.26, Spring 1994, pp.11-23.
- Anthony Leung Po Shan ed., *Did you know that Hong Kong was still last night?* Exhibition catalogue (Hong Kong: Para/Site Art Space, 2003)
- Iris Lenz and Monika Winkler, *Balanceakte*, exhibition catalogue (Stuttgart and Bonn: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 1996).
- Constance M. Lewallen, *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982)* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001).
- Glenn Ligon, 'Skin Tight,' in David Chandler, John Gill, Tania Guha and Gilane Tawadros eds., *Boxer: An Anthology of Writings on Boxing and Visual Culture* (London: Institute of international Visual Arts, 1996), p.59.
- Jessie Lim and Li Yan, eds., *Another Province: new Chinese writing from London* (London: Lambeth Chinese Community Association, 1994).
- Louisa Lim, 'The Beijing chippy,' *From Our Own Correspondent*, BBC Radio 4, 12 June 2004.
- Jan Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 1998).
- susan pui san lok and Mayling To, *DEAL*, exhibition catalogue (London: BCWA, 1999)
- susan pui san lok, 'Anthony Key,' in *Empire and I*, exhibition catalogue (London: Terra Incognita, 1999).
- susan pui san lok, 'Staging / Translating: Surname Viet Given Name Nam,' *Third Text*, no.46, Spring 1999, pp.61-72.
- susan pui san lok, 'Trinh T. Minh-ha: Cinema Interval,' *parallax*, no.19, 2001, pp.128-130.
- susan pui san lok, 'Cruel/Loving Bodies,' *Cruel/Loving Bodies*, exhibition catalogue (Shanghai: Duolun Museum of Modern Art, 2004) pp.60-64.
- susan pui san lok, 'Inglorious Food,' *Anthony Key*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated (Bristol: Eddie Chambers, 2002).
- susan pui san lok, 'Teach Yourself Chinglish (Exercises in Rudimentary Britishness),' unpublished paper, CAA 91st annual conference, 2003.
- 'Lorry deaths a 'stark warning', says Straw' *The Guardian*, 19 June 2000.
- Lisa Lowe, 'Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization,' in Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: on Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996) pp.1-36.
- Sarat Maharaj, 'Introduction: Black Art's Autobiography,' in Gilane Tawadros and Victoria Clarke, eds., *Run Through The Jungle: Selected Writings by Eddie Chambers* (London: inIVA, 1999) pp.4-8.
- Sarat Maharaj, 'Dislocutions,' in Jean Fisher ed., *Reverberations: Tactics of Resistance, Forms of Agency in Trans/cultural Practices* (Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2000) pp.32-47.

Bibliography

Sarat Maharaj in conversation with Annie Fletcher, 'Dislocations: on cultural translation,' *CIRCA*, no.91, Spring 2000, pp. 31-33.

Mike Marquese, 'Whitewashing the past', *The Guardian*, 24 May 2002.

Anne McClintock, 'Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising,' in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) pp.304-315.

Timothy Mo, *Sour Sweet* (London: Abacus, 1983).

New North, exhibition catalogue (Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1990).

Lorraine O'Grady, 'Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming black female subjectivity.' in Grant H. Kester ed., *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998) pp.286-286.

Aihwa Ong, 'On the Edge of Empire: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora,' *Positions*, 1993, vol.3, part 1, pp.745-778.

Tsuyoshi Osawa and Fumi Toyoda, *Nasubi Gallery; The smallest gallery in the world* (Tokyo: Nasubi Gallery, 1996).

Lynn Pan ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999).

David Parker, *Through Different Eyes; The Cultural Identity of Young Chinese People in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995)

David Parker, 'Emerging British Chinese Identities; Issues and Problems,' in Elizabeth Sinn, ed., *The Last half Century of Chinese Overseas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1998) pp.91-114.

David Parker, 'Rethinking British Chinese Identities,' in Tracey Skelton and Gil Valentin eds., *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (London, Routledge, 1998) pp 66-82.

Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* (London: Pandora, 1981).

Deanna Petheridge, 'Black Art,' *The Financial Times*, 6 January 1989.

Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (London: Penguin, 1994).

Adrian Piper, 'Passing for White, Passing for Black,' *Transition*, no.58, 1992, pp.4-32.

Donald Preziosi, 'Grasping the World: Conceptualizing Ethics After Aesthetics,' 2003, www.glaadh.ac.uk

Pun Sing Lui ed., *Pre '97 Special Arts Zone*, exhibition catalogue (Hong Kong: Sun Sai Kei, 1996).

Robert Preece, 'Chinese Art, Manchester Style,' *Asian Art News*, vol.6, no.6, Nov/Dec 1998, pp.39-41.

J.A.G. Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (London: Reaktion, 2002).

John Roberts, 'Sonia Boyce in conversation with John Roberts', *Third Text*, no.1, Autumn 1987, pp.55-64.

Irit Rogoff, 'Tiny Anguishes: Reflections on Nagging, Scholastic Embarrassment, and Feminist Art History,' *Differences*, 1992 vol.4, no.3, pp.38-65.

Salman Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992).

Bibliography

John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (New York: Dover, 1971).

Lesley Sanderson, 'Always At Odds – An Evolving Response,' unpublished conference paper, 2002.

Mary Sara, 'Identity Crisis,' *The Yorkshire Post*, 11 June 1990.

Mary Sara, 'Strokes of inspiration for the issues of today,' *The Yorkshire Post*, 24 October 1994.

Mark Sebba, *Contact Languages: Pidgins and Creoles* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 1997).

M. Franklin Sirmans and Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd, eds., *Transforming the Crown: African, Asian, and Caribbean Artists in Britain, 1966-1996* (New York: Caribbean Cultural Center/African Diaspora Institute, 1997).

Richard Shiff, 'Closeness,' in Naomi Salaman and Ronnie Simpson eds., *Postcards on Photography: The Handmade Copy in Reproduction* (Cambridge Darkroom Gallery, 1998) pp.11-36.

Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Ronald Skeldon, 'Hong Kong in an International Migration System,' in Ming K. Chan and Gerard A. Postiglione, eds., *The Hong Kong Reader: Passage to Sovereignty* (New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), pp.133-168.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation,' in Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips, eds. *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp.177-200.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993)

Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (London and New York: Verso, 1999).

Julian Stallabrass, 'Elements of Drawing Blind,' www.chinese-art.com vol. 5, no.1, 2001.

Julian Stallabrass, 'Shop Until You Stop,' in Christoph Grunenberg and Max Hollien, eds., *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, exhibition catalogue (Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002) pp.222-230.

George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Michael Sullivan, 'Individualism, Protest and the Avant-garde in Modern Chinese Art,' in *China: Modernity and Art*, international conference papers (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1991).

Jack Tan, 'Takeaway your Stereotypes,' *The Guardian*, 4 April 2001.

Gilane Tawadros, 'Beyond the Boundary: The Work of Three Black Women Artists in Britain,' *Third Text*, no.8/9, Autumn/Winter 1989, pp.121-150.

Gilane Tawadros, ed., *inIVA Annotations 4: Steve Ouditt: Creole In-site* (London: inIVA, 1998).

The Mythos of Lost Dynasties: Wenda Gu 1984-1997, exhibition catalogue (Hong Kong: Hanart TZ Gallery, 1997).

Bibliography

These Colours Run, exhibition catalogue (Wrexham Library Arts Centre, 1994).

The Sun, front page, 29 May 2002.

Delia Thompson, ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (9th edition) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989)

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991)

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Cinema Interval* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

Kith Tsang, Blues Wong and Benny Chia eds., *Private Content: Public View – opinions on Hong Kong art and documents from the exhibition 'Restricted Exposure'* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Fringe Festival, 1997).

Maureen Turim, 'The Cultural Logic of Video,' in Hall and Fifer eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture in association with Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), pp.331-342.

Nick Paton Walsh, 'It's a new Cultural Revolution,' *The Observer*, 11 June 2000.

Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).

Michael White and Nicholas Watt, 'Smuggled Meat Blamed,' *The Guardian*, 27 March 2001.

David Ward, '380,000 eyes fulfil a sculptor's vision: Antony Gormley collaborates with Chinese villagers on huge project,' *The Guardian*, 25 March 2003.

Edgar Wickberg, 'Overseas Chinese Adaptive Organization,' in Ronald Skeldon, ed., *Reluctant Exiles: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese* (New York: M.E. Sharpe and Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994) pp.68-84.

Sasha Su-Ling Welland, *Cruel /Loving Bodies*, exhibition catalogue (Shanghai: Duolun Museum of Modern Art, 2004).

Whose Heritage? The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain's Living Heritage, conference report (London: Arts Council England, 2000).

Simon Willmoth, ed. *PIDGIN interrupted transmission / ERIKA TAN*, exhibition catalogue (London: Film and Video Umbrella, 2002).

Judith Wilson, 'In Memory of the News and of Our Selves: the Art of Adrian Piper', *Third Text*, no.16/17, Autumn/Winter 1991, pp.39-64.

Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago UP, 1999).

Wu Hung, 'Public Time-Telling and Political Time Space,' *Public Culture*, vol.9, no.3, 1997, pp.329-354. Wu Hung ed., *Chinese Art at the Crossroads: Between Past and Future, Between East and West* (Hong Kong: New Art Media and London: inIVA, 2001).

Lola Young, 'The Union Jack: Not Waving But Drowning' in Chambers, ed., *Black People and the British Flag* (London: inIVA, 1993) unpaginated.

Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood eds. *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000).

Appendices

A. 'Anthony Key,' *Empire and I*, exhibition catalogue (London: Terra Incognita, 1999), unpaginated.

A newly-built Great Wall stands in the gallery - a thousand red-pink bricks cutting up the space, rising to the ceiling; curving, staggering, snaking low to the ground, un/masking an under / other side to the surrounding skins of white-wash. Demarcating the space of the gallery whilst denoting the part-boundary of another, it also presents a vertical plane, a surface-space-edge, another, different, 'border' / 'territory'. Close-up, the bricks alter, are somehow unconvincing; or rather, I falter. And then I recognise the not-dissimilar, not-unfamiliar sloped and ridged forms: a thousand casts of / cast off take-away cartons.

Elsewhere in the room, a map of the British Isles. Approaching it, anticipating the mundane yet somehow appealing game of Identifying-Places-I-Know, I find myself at once disappointed and amazed, dislocated and re-orient-ated, before a kingdom of Golden Dragons and Peking Gardens, Bamboo Inns and China Palaces. Each major town and city has been usurped by a take-away establishment, an alternative cartography making visible the extent of the dispersal and expansion of the Chinese immigrant population in Britain via the catering industry. An ambiguous vision: a Britain exoticised and 'Eastern-ized' (to suit its own 'Western tastes'), a land of mythical creatures, 'dim sum' and chips; a Britain, fearful and insular, taken over by take-aways - the 'yellow peril', the dreaded alien invasion (suspensions finally justified).

Born in South Africa and resident in Britain since 1972, Anthony Key does not hesitate to call himself 'British-Chinese'. Not to assert a fixed position, but rather to interrogate the conflicts and ambiguities within and between this conjunction of terms. If Great Wall offers up a space / barrier / interface for traversal and negotiation, Free Delivery suggests 'routes' travelled, as well as conditions of both 'rooted-ness' and 'up-rooted-ness' (the viewer at once physically 'grounded' and imaginatively 'suspended' over an abstracted, scaled down geography). Both invoke the 'take-away' as an historical and economic point of entry for Chinese immigrants in Britain, a site that alludes to past / post-colonial histories and political, economic and cultural trans-actions, where 'British' and 'Chinese' continue to encounter and transform each other as 'other'.

Playing with borders and territories, re-mapping, making in/visible, Key intimates other national(s) identities and histories through a systematic dis-placing and re-positioning, a charting of movements between. If 'one' resides in / with an 'other', on unstable ground, categories become boundaries to cross. If 'my' / 'your' / 'his' / 'her' 'place' or 'position' is thus 'in motion', what, then, does it mean to 'belong'?

susan pui san lok
november 1998

B. 'Staging / Translating: *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*,' *Third Text*, no.46, Spring 1999, pp.61-72.

Third Text 46, Spring 1999

61

Staging/Translating *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*

Susan Pui San Lok

A black screen; a row of female bodies, framed shoulder to hip, stylised gestures moving decelerated against a watery soundtrack; light(ning?) — rain, thunder punctuates the title shot, raindrops distort the surface; drumming triggers a series of black and white images, women — white dresses — hats — flags — uniforms — guns — framed and re-framed; a brief interval: a contrast of colour, duration of shot, and silence; a woman's face, head covered by a scarf, her gaze preoccupied, eyes suddenly meeting yours-mine in the last frame; a sepia print of a girl-child shoots across the screen, a black and white still — the preceding frame; phrases of a song, a distant boat on the water, a few subtitles; a woman weaves; we move abruptly across archive images of women and children; a black screen. Blue-violet text; a quote: 'Ly, 37 years old...'; a female voice, disembodied, speaks other words, uneven, aligns with an image, again, the woman in the scarf.

Surname Viet Given Name Nam;¹ the conflation of subject with country in the title of Trinh T. Minh-ha's 1989 film implies an order of value by which nation is personified via the dehumanisation and objectification of its subjects, at once equated with it, and subsumed as its property. If we cast the images of women preceding the title shot as the subjects in question, their collective naming infers the submission of gender to nation and the preclusion of heterogeneous subjectivities by a silent/silenced image of homogeneity. The ambiguity as to whether this metaphorical subordination translates into an imagined voluntary embrace of patriotic ideologies, or an enforced political, social and economic disempowerment, immediately raises questions of the relations of power inherent in the designation and recognition of a speaking or spoken, naming or named subject. If the first few minutes of the film invoke dominant narratives of Vietnamese femininity, the enunciative cues for their simultaneous disruption and reconfiguration are also already in place. Nothing — no 'thing' happens — no single 'event', 'establishing shot', nor authoritative voice to locate me in a 'where', 'when' and 'how'. The alternating brevity and

¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam*, Cinenova, London, 1989, 108 mins, colour & b/w film.



- 2 Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p 47.
- 3 Luce Irigaray, 'Gesture in Psychoanalysis', in *Sexes and Genealogies*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p 98.
- 4 Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey, W W Norton & Company, New York, 1962, p 11–12.
- 5 In order to differentiate between the five places from which the women speak, citations from the film will appear in typesets corresponding to those employed in the transcript as it appears in Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Framer Framed*, Routledge, London, 1992, followed by '(SV)'. The two voice-overs in English: Vietnamese accent — plain, American accent — italic; the third voice: bold, with translations in plain typeface; subtitled interviews in Vietnamese and interviews in English synchronised with text — indented plain and italic texts. All other citations appear in italics, with footnotes.

prolonged attenuation of shots, together with discontinuities within and between image and sound tracks, combine to meet expectations of narrative stability and cohesion with an ambiguity that insists on a 'severalness', enabling and demanding readings with, against and beyond the visual grain, while hinting at the necessary internalisation of a critical distance on the part of the text. Even as the introduction of archival footage, interviews and voice-overs suggest the film's 'documentary' as opposed to 'fictional' status, the binary oppositions of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity', 'truth' and 'lie', 'authentic' and 'fake', by which such a distinction is underpinned, begin to come undone. Working to relocate the cinematic elaboration of Benveniste's rubric of discourse, which "distinguish[es] between the speaking subject... the subject of speech... and the spoken subject",² within a postcolonial politics of representation and translation, the emergence of the text's 'staging' transforms the question 'central' to this text without centre from a preliminary 'Who is speaking?' to 'Is she speaking at all/being spoken (for)/where from and how?'

At 24 frames a minute, accompanied by 'appropriate background music', creating the effect of 'real time' and space, I might assume myself to be witness, audience to women performing a traditional dance, in traditional dress (suggested by the uniformity of costume), presumably to 'authentic' traditional music. Slowed down, music displaced by shifting silence and watery reverberations, the scene transforms. An emphatic display of bodies denoting its purposeful citation, hence a denaturalisation of culturally designated codes of behaviour and representation. Arms and hips sway gently, semi-circular motions repeated as bodies turn and bow, suggesting another/its other scene, in which the subject delineates a shifting territory of, and around herself, circumscribing a subjective space to which access, in terms of the coherence of meaning and identity, is both 'solicited and refused'.³

- 6 Phan gai tu duc ven tuyen, / Cong, dung, ngon, hanh, / giu gin chang sai. (Every woman must fully practice and scrupulously conform to 4 virtues: be skillful in her work, modest in her behaviour, soft-spoken in her language, faultless in her principles.)
- Tai gia tong phu / Xuat gia tong phu / Phu tu tong tu (Daughter, she obeys her father / Wife, she obeys her husband / Widow, she obeys her son)
- Theo luan ly tam cuong ngu thuong / dan ba khi nao cung phai tuy thuoc dan ong / khi con nho thi phai theo cha / khi lay chong thi phai theo con / suot doi la ke vi thanh nhan / phai dua vao mot nguoi dan ong lam chu chot / chu khong bao gio duoc doc lap (According to the moral of the three deferments and the five virtues, / women must always depend on men / Child, she must follow her father / Married, she must follow her husband / Widowed, she must follow her son / all her life she remains a minor / depending on a man as on a central axle / and can never be self governing). SVGNN in Trinh, op cit, 1992, pp 84-85.

- 7 Trinh, "Who Is Speaking?" Of Nation, Community and First Person Interviews' interview with Isaac Julien and Laura Mulvey, in ibid, p 210.

If the 'voicelessness' of *Surname Viet*'s paradoxically destabilising 'establishing shot' denies a position of identification, it simultaneously intimates the necessity of occupying a linguistic position of subjectivity in order to be designated as a speaking subject, and might also signify a purposeful withholding. Tensions and discords, pauses, apertures and rests accentuate the textures of the acoustic, bind and unbind the visual, foreshadowing the tactical stagings to follow. As the naming and un-naming of Vietnamese women is cautiously mediated, the reconfiguration of subaltern to subject repeatedly inscribed in crossings into/between language(s), recurring allusions to water recall Freud's description of the 'oceanic', emblematic of the rhythmic, circular un/folding of the text as 'something limitless, unbounded', the condition of subjectivity, language and history, and the question of the other, alike yet unknown, in relations of perpetual becoming and transformation.⁴

Women in traditional dress, in everyday wear, weaving, hat-making, selling goods at the market; women dancing, praying, singing, marching, carrying arms, dishevelled, clasping children; family snapshots; wedding ceremonies. Female voices speak from five linguistically, geographically and generationally differentiated places, the singing of proverbs and poetry alternating and coinciding with monologues, voice-overs, subtitles and text.⁵ From archival war images to a Miss Vietnamese pageant, stories of women warriors, to pronunciations of the "four virtues and three submissions"⁶ interweaving visual, aural and oral strands, demonstrate the insistent designation of Vietnamese women at the intersection of gender and nation, in terms of subordination to father, son, husband, state: " — never fully witnessing, only glorified as heroines or victimized as bystanders of, spectators to, and exiles in their own history".⁷ As stories unravel, so the specificities and commonalities



- 8 Trinh, 'Between Theory and Poetry' interview with Pratibha Parmar, in *ibid.*, p 157.
- 9 "The 'object-oriented camera' — a camera that focuses only on catching the subject and is eager to objectify — obscures the role of negative space... the space that makes both composition and framing possible, that characterizes the way an image breathes. To see negative space as intensely as the figure and the field, instead of subjecting it to the latter in cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, and narrativity implies a whole different way of looking and of relating to things. This is not far from the notion of the Void in Asian philosophies. People often don't even know what you are talking about when you mention the vitality of the Void in the relationships between object and non-object, or between I and non-I. Again they may think it's a form of mystification. This is a problem with reifying, binarist thinking: emptiness here is not merely opposed to fullness or objecthood; it is the very site that makes forms and contents possible — that is, also inseparable." Trinh, 'From a Hybrid Place' interview with Judith Mayne, in *ibid.*, pp 141–142.
- 10 *The Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978.
- 11 "By having the staged and the real together, what is brought out is the element of fiction in representation — the fictions of film caught in the fictions of life." Trinh, 'Why A Fish Pond?' with Laleen Jayamane and Anne Rutherford, in Trinh, *op cit.*, 1992, p 165.

of women's internalisation of and resistances to Confucian patriarchal ideology emerge, signalling the disparities between the persistent glorification and idealisation of Vietnamese women's heroic capacity for self-sacrifice, and their social, political and economic disempowerment and dehumanisation at different historical and political moments.

*The claim of identity is often a strategic claim. It is a process which enables me to question my condition anew... The reflexive question asked... is no longer... Who am I? but When, where, how am I.. ?*⁸

Ostensibly, the interviews function to situate the 'real/true' voices of Vietnamese women, 'speaking for themselves', in opposition to their 'false/silenced/spoken' counterparts. Such a reading, with its attendant ideologies of authenticity and origins, is problematised as the staging of the interviews as re-enactments shifts into visibility. Settings progress from a discreet 'naturalism' to an increasingly indiscreet and stylised theatrical minimalism. From a static and non-intrusive medium distance during the first monologue with 'Ly', a moment before the abrupt end of the shot recalls and repeats an earlier still. 'Over-close' to 'Thu Van' such that only the lower half of her face is in frame, unstable camera movements and contrasts of angles begin to announce an interested and indiscriminate eye, equally attentive to the 'object' as the 'negative space' in frame.⁹ The distracted camera distracts; her face is displaced as the physiognomically privileged signifier of individuality, identity, and race — "faceless (-sl-) a., (esp.) without identity; purposely not identifiable"¹⁰ — as the camera drifts



12 "... the peoples of Third World countries used to be lumped together in their undifferentiated otherness... Even today, in many mainstream films on the Vietnamese experience, the people cast for the Vietnamese roles are the neighbouring Southeast Asians who can hardly speak a word of Vietnamese. Of course for many American viewers, it doesn't matter. Asians are Asians, and you can even take someone from the Philippines or Korea to fill in the roles." Trinh, 'Film as Translation, A Net with no Fisherman', interview with Scott Macdonald, in *ibid*, pp 111-133.

"Now, i am not only given the permission to open up and talk, i am also encouraged to express my difference. My audience expects it and demands it; otherwise people would feel that they have been cheated... Eager not to disappoint, i try my best to offer my benefactors and benefactresses what they most anxiously yearn for: the possibility of a difference, yet a difference or an otherness that will not go so far as to question the foundation of their beings and makings...

Today, planned authenticity is rife; as a product of hegemony and a remarkable counterpart of universal standardization, it constitutes an efficacious means of silencing the cry of racial oppression. We no longer wish to erase your difference. We demand, on the contrary, that you remember and assert it..." 'Difference: "A Special Third World Women Issue"' in Trinh, *Woman Native Other*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989, pp 79-116.

down to her hands, lingers over gestures, pans left, then right to focus on the white wall and space to either side of her body, articulating its/my/your desiring gaze yet refusing mastery.

Frequent lighting and 'prop' changes within otherwise bare interiors foreground the simple manipulations by which a private/domestic and public/professional space, and associated notions of intimacy/subjectivity and distance/objectivity, might be simultaneously evoked and undermined. As 'props', including clothes, seem to oscillate between function and metaphor, so settings hover between naturalism and abstraction, their very neutrality giving rise to ambiguity. 'Ly' in dark blue-purple shirt, crouched over vegetables, a chopping board, with knife and bowls, a circle of 'natural' light on the floor; standing with a broom, caught in a horizontal section of 'daylight', as if from a window out of frame. 'Thu Van' in white shirt and black trousers, seated; then again, with a pair of scissors, a red cloth, behind two wooden tables later standing and pacing before a white wall, the lighting even and constant. 'Cat Tien' in a beige-grey tunic, seated in a dimly lit 'interior', the camera slowly receding to allow a few branches to slip into frame; then a close-up in near darkness, the camera pulling back to reveal the outline of a bowl of water. A close-up of 'Anh' in a dark brown tunic, barely perceptible, a small lamp to her right; then in a better light, the camera on her other side; a medium-shot in a bright white 'room', in a white shirt and doctor's coat, a stethoscope on the table to her side; then in profile at the table, now lit against black, the same clothes, the stethoscope around her neck, pouring tea.

In the case of 'Ly', 'Cat Tien' and most noticeably with 'Anh', alterations in camera angle and distance occur between shots, the resultant discontinuities accentuating/accentuated by those in the monologues. For their duration, the camera's movements are slight and largely discreet, emphasising the stillness



- 13 Silverman, op cit, pp 51–52.
- 14 Homi K Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders', in Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (eds), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, 1995, p 33.
- 15 Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek, University of Miami Press, Coral Gables, 1971, p 227.
- 16 Trinh, 'When I Project it is Silent', interview with Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, in op cit, 1992, p 237.
- 17 Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Sarah Harasym (ed), *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp 307–308.
- 18 Rey Chow, 'Where Have All the Natives Gone?', in Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1993, pp 37–38, 112.
- 19 "Rather than saying that the native has already spoken because the dominant hegemonic discourse is split/hybrid/different from itself, and restoring her to her 'authentic' context, we should argue that it is the native's silence which is the most important clue to her displacement. That silence is at once the evidence of imperialist oppression (the naked body, the defiled image) and what, in the absence of the original witness to that oppression, must act in its place by performing or feigning as the pre-imperialist gaze." Chow, *ibid*, p 38.

of the speakers, thus also their few gestures, as they ignore the camera and talk uninterrupted as if to someone/thing out of frame. By contrast, the evenly lit shots with 'Thu Van' find both subject and camera markedly less still, 'Thu Van's' direct address to the camera, as though to a fixed point, acknowledging and drawing attention to its distracted gaze, while her gestures, pacing, and the latter's rigid vertical and horizontal patterns of movement, are mutually heightened.

If the neutrality of the dark clothes worn by 'Ly', 'Cat Tien' and 'Anh' suggests a certain ambiguity of identity, 'Thu Van's' white shirt and black trousers might then be read as representing a duality, symbolically transgressed by the small movements of her hands over the gap between two tables, and later by her literal criss-crossing of the space in front of a white wall. 'Anh's' adoption of a white coat in later shots constitutes the only 'costume' change, a reminder of the coding of identities in dress, whose ambiguities/transgressions signal the reappearance of the women as 'Khien', 'Hien', 'Kim' and 'Yen'. Subsequent changes in light and location, from interiors to exteriors, the 'artificial' to the 'natural', together with hairstyle, make-up and clothes, therefore reveal not the 'real' women behind their 'fictive' roles, but rather demonstrate a series of dramatic shifts (in the sense of both the 'sudden' and the 'theatrical') in the purposeful 'staging of identity'."

The most explicit cues come about half-way through the film when the progression through degrees of 'staged-ness' culminates in the changes of scene between 'Anh's' monologue, a shot with 'Thu Van', alternations with shots with 'Ly', and the beginning of a second set of interviews in which the women playing the interviewees are re-framed 'as themselves'. 'Anh' stops speaking, her expression and attitude alter; relaxing, she removes her glasses, stethoscope, and turns to the camera. The moment recalls the end of the very first shot with 'Ly', in which her eye catches the camera's gaze. Minus props, anticipating appraisal or perhaps her next cue, the interval demands acknowledgement of a performance, it signals the separation of speaker from monologue, from a 'given' identity. Excerpts of text enter 'late' and fade 'early', echoing and anticipating 'Thu Van's' words. She faces the camera with the expression, 'and have the illusion', and walks out of frame. A lengthy silence, her absence disorients; without a body or voice, the wall seems to dissolve. Re-entering as the shot ends, her words coincide with a voice-over's:

'I am caught between two worlds...'

'— and I would have to affirm this uncertainty: is a translated interview a written or spoken object?'

As common preconceptions of the intrinsic objectivity and neutrality of the interviewing medium are undermined, and the possibility of a coherent, totalising meaning refuted, boundaries between documentary and fiction, objectivity and subjectivity, inferiority and exteriority, blur, erode, turn inside out. Revealing themselves to be staged, mediated and constructed, as opposed to 'natural', 'spontaneous' and 'unaffected', the 'truths' of the interviews are displaced, dispersed as fictions among fictions, while the related notion of 'authenticity' and the seemingly politically correct, magnanimous gesture of 'giving voice' problematised.

Elsewhere, Trinh has argued that, where an 'authentic' other is posited against an 'inauthentic' other, or where differences are named 'affirmatively' in

- 20 From Chow's discussion of Chinese women's relationship to speech, *ibid.*, p 37.
- 21 "...the classical economy of film is its organization... as organic unity and the form of that economy is narrative, the narrativization of film... filmic procedures are to be held as narrative instances (very much as cues) exhaustively, without gap or contradiction", Stephen Heath, 'Narrative Space', in *Questions of Cinema*, Macmillan, London, 1981, pp 43, 54.
- 22 Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', in Bill Nichols (ed), *Movies & Methods Vol II*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, p 296.
- 23 Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space', in Weiss and Belton (eds), *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, University of Columbia Press, New York, 1985, p 335.
- 24 'li'gature 1. *n.* Tie or bandage (esp. In Surg.); thing that unites, bond; (Mus.) 'slur', 'tie' (Print) two or more letter joined (*ff*, *x*, etc). 2. *v.t* Bind or connect with ligature." *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*. For discussions of 'suture', see Heath, *op cit*, pp 66-112, and Silverman, *op cit*, pp 194-236.
- 25 Irigaray, *op cit*, p 99.
- 26 "Voice-off" refers to instances in which we hear the voice of a character who is not visible within the frame. Yet the film establishes, by means of previous shots or other contextual determinants, the character's 'presence' in the space of the scene, in the diegesis... The traditional use of voice-off constitutes a denial of the frame as a limit and an affirmation of the unity and homogeneity of the depicted space." Doane in Weiss and Belton (eds), *op cit*, p 338.

an effort to rectify the homogenising 'undifferentiated otherness' into which the identities of marginalised subjects are often collapsed, such tactics result in an essentialist reinstatement of dualistic subject/other relations.¹² As Rey Chow warns, whether deliberately deployed as a move to 'silenc[e] the cry of racial oppression', or 'generously', by a 'well-meaning' subject who presupposes an unproblematic transition from subaltern to subject status, the gesture of 'giving voice' too easily becomes one of 'speaking for' — a ventriloquism by which we 'have the illusion' that the otherwise silent minor/subaltern/other is 'speaking freely', and the untranslatability of her/his history is violently erased.

By 'speaking for' the other we leave intact the set of binaries in which the colonised non-West is constituted as Unconscious Other to the colonial West's self-appointed Conscious Subject. However, if the subject is split in enunciation, and the discourse of the one cannot be construed without that of the other ('neither can be conceived exclusively in terms of its capacity to speak, both are simultaneously spoken'), the discourse of the other might be discerned in "those moments of seeming silence within and around discursive events... when language would appear to cease, and with it subjectivity".¹³ It could thus be argued that the silence of the subaltern is "not really silent at all", articulating rather "the inaudible sounds of a second discourse, a discourse of which the subject remains oblivious", inscribing thus a 'double vision' and effecting a resistance, as Homi Bhabha suggests, in the very ambivalence of the presence and authority of the colonial text.¹⁴

Others would contend that to confine the discourse of the subaltern to the negativity and silences of the conscious discourse of the subject is to affirm that the other is destined never to speak, only to be spoken. If "[l]anguage is... the possibility of subjectivity",¹⁵ silences, whether incidental to voluntary, fail as strategies of resistance precisely on account of their dependence on their acknowledgement as such:

...the risk of going unheard is too great in a context where anonymity bears a strong negative connotation and silence can almost never be understood as a will not to say but only as a lack, a weakness or an effacement.¹⁶

Following Gayatri Spivak's assertion that "[i]f the subaltern can speak... the subaltern is not a subaltern anymore",¹⁷ recognising that... "'speaking' itself belongs to an already well-defined structure and history of domination",¹⁸ Chow suggests that we turn to the (subaltern-) subject's silences in speaking as strategic clues to her displacement and historical oppression, marks of the untranslatability inherent in her 'translation' from subaltern to subject.¹⁹ Thus, while *Surname Viet* suggests that Vietnamese women have been precluded from "the ownership — the propriety, the property — of speaking... because it has always been assumed by others in the name of the people, the oppressed classes, and the nation",²⁰ its pauses, hesitations, silences, disjunctures and gaps within and between visual, aural and linguistic registers, can be seen as strategic in negotiating the hegemonies of knowledge and power in which discourse is invariably implicated.

The relationship between 'speaking subject, subjects of speech and spoken subject' is premised not on the continuity of narrative space and time, the constitution of a unified coherent subject pertaining to the classical economy of film, but on the foregrounding, rather than foreclosure, of "the other scene of its vision..., the outside — heterogeneity, contradiction, history — of its coherent address".²¹ Insisting on a distance, a gap, in which the intervention of

27 "It is precisely because the voice is not localizable, because it cannot be yoked to a body, that it is capable of interpreting the image, producing its truth. Disembodied, lacking any specification in space or time, the voiceover is, as Bonitzer points out, beyond criticism – it censors the questions 'Who is speaking?', 'Where?', 'In what time?', and 'For whom?'. Pascal Bonitzer, 'Les Silences de la voix,' *Cahiers du cinema*, no 256, February–March, cited in Doane, *ibid*, p 341.

28 "At the cinema, the sonorous envelope provided by the theatrical space together with techniques employed in the construction of the sound track work to sustain the narcissistic pleasure derived from the image of a certain unity, cohesion, and hence, an identity grounded by the spectator's phantasmatic relation to his/her own body. The aural illusion of position constructed by the approximation of sound perspective and by techniques which spatialize the voice and endow it with 'presence' guarantees the singularity and stability of a point of audition, thus holding at bay the potential trauma of dispersal, dismemberment, difference." Doane, *ibid*, p 343.

29 *Ibid*, p 345.

30 "Alongside each utterance... off-stage voices can be heard.... in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is 'lost' in the vast perspective of the already-written) de-originate the utterance..." Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, Hill and Wang, New York, 1974, cited in Silverman, *op cit*, p 50.

31 Heath, *op cit*, p 55.

32 Trinh, *op cit*, 1992, p 146.

33 Desa Philippi on Mona Hatoum's *Measures of Distance* (1988), in 'The Witness Beside Herself', *Third Text*, no 12, 1990, p 78.

the apparatus, Trinh's mediation, become in/visible, in/audible, "[b]oth specular tranquillity and the assurance of one's own identity collapse"²² before the rupturing of the 'reality' of the cinema. In place of a "phantasmatic body" to "[offer] a support as well as a point of identification for the subject addressed by the film", confirm the coherence of the senses, the subject's unity, "presence-to-itself", and speech as individual property right,²³ *Surname Viet* enunciates 'another' body — for whom speech must be both claimed and disclaimed — 'other-s-subjects' — heterogeneous, multiple, fragmented, mutually imbricated, impossible to know.

A momentary disorientation at the beginning of the first monologue with 'Ly', when her words are neither coincident with the on-screen text, nor heard with an image; passages in which 'Cat Tien's' voice is intermittently overlaid with an accompanied singing, an American-English speaking voice-over, or her own voice speaking in Vietnamese; the introduction of 'Anh' in near total darkness, two voices, one closer than the other, wavering in volume, hovering with her image, words repeated between, and on-screen. The synchronisation of voice with image, key to the operation of 'suture', here alternates with the evidencing of (to draw on another surgical term) their 'ligature' — the (un) binding, tying, and slurring (as of two letters, or a musical phrase) of visual, aural, and linguistic strands.²⁴ Trinh's 'misuse' of synchronicity repeatedly 'maligns' and mal-aligns voice with body, neither always 'given'. Wandering from the 'proper' sites of identity, preceding/exceeding their 'appropriate' bodies, speaking to/near each other, "with (sometimes in) a



- 34 "...the notion of displacement is also a place of identity: there is no real me to return to, no whole self that synthesizes the woman, the woman of colour and the writer; instead, diverse recognitions of self through difference, and unfinished, contingent, arbitrary closures that make possible both politics and identity." Trinh, op cit, 1992, p 157.
- 35 Ibid, p 194.
- 36 Trinh, T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, Routledge, London, 1991, p 157.
- 37 Rey Chow, 'Film as Ethnography', in *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995. Chow cites the Italian expression 'traduttore, traditore' ('translator, traitor'); pp 182-184.
- 38 "It is assumed that translation means a movement from the 'original' to the language of 'translation' but not vice-versa; it is assumed that the value of translation is derived solely from the 'original', which is the authenticator of itself and of its subsequent versions. Of the 'translation', a tyrannical demand is made: the translation must perform its task of conveying the 'original' without leaving its own traces; the 'originality of translation' must lie 'in self-effacement, a vanishing act'." Ibid, p 184.
- 39 "...all the literature of the Third World gets translated into a sort of with-it translatee, so that the literature by a woman in Palestine begins to resemble, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan. The rhetoricity of Chinese and Arabic! The cultural politics of high-growth, capitalist Asia-Pacific, and devastated West Asia! Gender difference inscribed and inscribing in these differences!" Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, London, 1993, p 182.

silence",³⁵ voices are disconcertingly doubled, multiplied, and cut off abruptly, accumulating and collapsing into the same moment. Distinctions between 'voice-offs' and 'voice-overs' become troubled; the former, traditionally deployed in classical narrative film to "[hold] a spectacle to a space",³⁶ by contrast call attention to the disunity and heterogeneity, the disparate excesses that the limits of the frame would conventionally seek to deny; similarly, where voice-overs might in the realm of 'fiction' be understood as representing a character's inner thoughts or 'conscience', or in the case of 'documentary', signal an 'objective authority' positing truths concerning an 'out-there' reality,³⁷ here they are differentiated by gender, number, a non-hierarchical relation beside/within other voices, oscillating in volume, complementing, supplementing, distracting and contrasting the image track. Effecting tears in the sonorous envelope of the cinema's theatrical and diegetic space, dissolving the illusion of the subject's 'presence-to-itself', a singular and stable point of audition is repeatedly denied.³⁸ Across the resultant multiple and fragmented temporalities and spatialities, anonymity attracts rather than deflects attention, precisely to differences of language, accent, tone, and manner of speech, intimating the subjective, geographic, cultural and linguistic specificities of the subject, who nonetheless remains unfixed, a plural potential. Embodied, disembodied, emphasising "what Barthes refers to as the 'grain' of the voice over and against its expressivity or power of representation",³⁹ the utterances of the Vietnamese women are de-originated, de-authenticated.⁴⁰ Dislocated from the 'safe place' of the text,⁴¹ no longer securing/secured to the visual narrative but inscribed in a continuum of displacements, voices may be said to occupy paradoxically 'a no place' — a space of non-fixity and instability. As the women "embody other selves, other voices, and drift back to their own selves which are not really their 'natural' selves but the selves they want to project in front of the camera",⁴² their doubling figures "simultaneously [as] a splitting as the coinciding of the two... speaks the very distance separating them".⁴³ Evoking the historical, geographical and political proximities and distances between generations of Vietnamese women, the voice becomes both the site and means of the transgression of boundaries, and the interiorisation of distances, signalling the perpetual dispersal and reconfiguration of the subject along the axes of sexual, racial and cultural difference.⁴⁴

"I am caught between two worlds...."

"— and I would have to affirm this uncertainty: is a translated interview a written or spoken object?"

"Interview: an antiquated device of documentary. Truth is selected, reviewed, displaced and speech is always tactical."

On the brink of the second set of interviews, 'Thu Van's' words caution once more against a naive reading of their 'authenticity' against the 'staged-ness' of the first. Speaking of conflicting ideological and experiential realities, the words also point to interstitial positionings between "the differing fictions of living and acting".⁴⁵ As stories in Vietnam and America are juxtaposed, slippages between languages, modes of speech, between 'Ly' — 'Hien', 'Thu Van' — 'Khien', 'Cat Tien' — 'Kim' and 'Anh' — 'Yen', resonate with the dis/continuities and conflicts of struggles to locate a subjective space 'in-between' identities, cultures, histories and ideologies, a performative

40 Talal Asad, 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, pp 157-158, quoted in Chow, op cit, 1995, p 178.

41 Chow, op cit, 1995, p 177.

42 Iain Chambers, 'Signs of Silence, Lines of Listening', in Chambers and Curti (eds), *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, Routledge, London, 1996, p 49.

43 Spivak, op cit, 1993, pp 179-180.

44 "There is a way in which the rhetorical nature of every language disrupts its logical systemacity. If we emphasize the logical at the expense of these rhetorical interferences, we remain safe. 'Safety' is the appropriate term here, because we are talking of risks, of violence to the translating medium." Spivak, op cit, 1993, pp 170-181.

45 I borrow this expression from John Mowitt's 'Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages', in *Camera Obscura*, no 31, 1993, p 78.

46 Ibid. Mowitt qualifies *Xala*'s bilingualism in terms of "the dense interplay among French and Wolof 'shots'", where the former conform to the desire for continuity that determines shot selection in western cinematic discourse, "irreducibly driven by the logic of the copula", and the latter, in accordance with the persistent attenuation of the verb 'to be' in the syntax of Wolof, are marked by the absence of the copula. To what extent the shot sequences in *Surname Viet* might be said to enunciate the syntactical properties of Vietnamese, is, unfortunately, a question that exceeds the scope of this essay.

negotiation of what Trinh has called "the challenge of the hyphenated-reality".⁴⁰ Traversed by the question/statement of undecidability posed by the voice-over, which refers to the gap between subject and speech, speech and writing, the infinite displacement of meaning in the play of image, word and text, followed shortly by a brief exchange between voice-overs alluding to the processes of recording, transcribing, translating and editing, out of which the filmic text has come, the question of the politics of translation is explicitly raised.

*Precisely because translation is an activity that immediately problematises the ontological hierarchy of languages — 'which is primary and which is secondary?' — it is also the place where the oldest prejudices about origins and derivations come into play most forcefully...*⁴¹

"Grafting several languages, cultures and realities onto a single body. The problem of translation, after all, is a problem of reading and of identity." (SV)

Presupposing the neutrality and transitivity of language, 'good' translation is generally understood as a unidirectional movement, qualified in terms of 'fidelity', from the self-authenticating 'original' to the 'language of translation'. If, as Chow says, a "tyrannical demand is made: the translation must perform its task of conveying the 'original' without leaving its own traces",⁴² translation itself demonstrates a certain tyranny, where Third World languages are concerned, Spivak suggests that the real danger of betrayal pertains to their systematic "wholesale translation into English", when the democratic law of the majority becomes confused with the law of the strongest.⁴³ If the relative political-economic instability of the Third World renders their languages more vulnerable to "forcible transformation in the translation process",⁴⁴ this results in "the continual privileging of Western modes of language, philosophy, and historiography as 'standard knowledge', and the continual marginalisation of the equivalents from the non-West".⁴⁵

To desire then the self-effacement of the translation is to disavow the historical specificity of the translator and her/his imbrication in relations of power, knowledge and difference. To fail to recognise that "translation — mine of an other, an other's of me — is never a transparent activity but always involves a process of re-citing, hence cultural and historical re-siting",⁴⁶ is to concur with a 'speaking for'/'in the place of' an homogenised other. Understood not in terms of the transferral of bodies of meaning, but as a process of meaning-construction, translation's infidelity — its 'betrayal' of an imaginary 'authenticity' — becomes inevitable, even desirable.⁴⁷ As a "miming of the responsibility to trace the other in the self", the task of translation, Spivak contends, must entail a displacement of the violence of translation with a "violence to the translating medium"; a privileging of 'rhetoricity' over 'logic', an acknowledgement of silences, as marks of the experientially and discursively untranslatable, or otherwise co-operate with "a species of neo-colonialist construction of the non-Western scene".⁴⁸

Un-stitching text from voice as well as voice from image, opening up gaps and displacements between the written/sung/spoken, Trinh 'makes strange' the normalised, familiar practices of substituting one voice for another, revealing, refusing, the fallacy of homogeneity and closure. On-screen text seems initially to have an explanatory/validatory function introducing the interviewees with a designation of identity and location, providing translations of songs and proverbs for non-Vietnamese speakers. Feigning the role of

- 47 Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as such and the Language of Man', cited in Homi K Bhabha, 'Unpacking my library... again', in Chambers & Curti (eds), op cit, p 203.
- 48 Chambers, *ibid*, p 50.
- 49 Spivak, op cit, 1993, pp 183, 186.
- 50 *Ibid*, p 76.
- 51 "S/he who speaks, speaks to the tale as s/he begins telling and retelling it. S/he does not speak about it. For, without a certain work of displacement, 'speaking about' only partakes in the conservation of systems of binary opposition (subject/object; I/It; We/They) on which territorialized knowledge depends...", Trinh, 1991, op cit, p 12.
- 52 *Ibid*, p 20.
- 53 Chambers, in Chambers and Curti (eds), op cit, p 59.
- 54 An elaboration of Spivak's reference to the "academic/intellectual/artist hybrid", displacing the divisional, diagonal stroke '/' with a hyphen, marking thus a conjunction, division, a break in sense, an omission. Spivak, op cit, 1993, p x.
- 55 Trinh, op cit, 1989, pp 122-123.
- 56 Stuart Hall, 'When was 'the post-colonial'? Thinking at the limit', in Chambers and Curti (eds), op cit, p 247. A Derridean reading of *Surname Viet* must be the subject of another paper. For a reading of Trinh's *Woman, Native, Other* from such a perspective, see Herman Rapaport, 'Deconstruction's Other: Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jacques Derrida', *diacritics*, vol 25 no 2, 1995, pp 98-113.

'subtitles', promising to smooth out unruly rhetoric, to compensate and decipher the inaudible and incomprehensible, its perceived coherence and authority are gradually diminished by its minimal appearances, hence non-synchronicity with the spoken, and formal inconsistencies (at times covering the entire screen), succeeding by contrast to amplify discrepancies between spoken and written, to compound difficulties between seen and heard.

From Vietnamese to English, English to Vietnamese, the alternation and displacement of languages from their recognised cultural context intimate the issues of cultural translation implicit in the challenge of a diasporic present, as well as the legacy of Vietnam's — and Vietnamese women's — politically and ideologically colonised past. "Linguistic antagonisms"⁴⁷ are manifested in grammatical anomalies, syntactical omissions and mispronunciations that mark degrees of difficulty with a language that is other to the 'mother' tongue, the measured, sometimes difficult pace of the speakers emphasised by unusually long takes. The hegemonic status of English over other languages is destabilised, not by a mere reversal or inversion, but by opening up language as process and transformation. Via a tactics of repetition and displacement, by which the tensions and ambiguities between so many 'unfaithful' renderings are brought into relief, the 'logic' of the 'language of translation' is ruptured by the rhetoricity of so many 'originals'.

With/in/between the gaps and disjunctures of visual, aural and linguistic registers, the filmic text might be said to demonstrate an "imperfect bilingualism"⁴⁸ at both narrative and enunciative levels, or perhaps a 'translingualism', by which the uneasy movements and difficult crossings between 'selves', languages, cultures are invoked in the staging/translating of speech, silences and gestures. Disclosing/un-closing the multi-directional, multi-dimensional processes of the filmic text-as-translation, "pass[ing] through *continua* of transformation, not abstract ideas of identity and similarity",⁴⁹ in/visibly invoking the infinite reverberations of the 'transverse, transnational, trans-cultural movements' of the 'postcolonial' moment, *Surname Viet* embodies its own destiny and those of the subjects it inscribes — "never to add up, to arrive at complete comprehension or an exhaustive account".⁵⁰

"Surname Viet Given Name Nam
Film by Trinh T Minh-ha" (SV)

rain drums the screen ripples the words

"We call her: Trieu Thi Trinh, but also Trieu Trinh Vuong, Trieu-Trinh, Trieu-Au, Ba Trieu/"

"Van-Lang, Nam-Viet, Hoang Viet, Dai Viet, An-Nam (Bak Ky - Le Tonkin; Trung Ky - An Nam; Nam Ky - la Conchine), French Indochina, (Viet-Nam, 'Nam')"
(SV)

Trinh's violence to the fabric of the filmic text, disruptions of the perceived 'logic' of the medium of translation, make possible her 'intimacy' in the act of translation, in which not only "the history of the language" and "the history of the language-in-and-as-translation", but also "the history of the author's moment ... figure in the weaving".⁵¹ Words appear three times in gold on black, three namings, three conjugations brought into correlation. In the first instance, the choice of preposition over possession suggests Trinh's desire to position herself in non-mastering, non-proprietary relation 'by', 'near', 'alongside' the

57 Trinh, op cit, 1991, pp 104-105.

58 Trinh, op cit, 1992, p 121.

59 Trinh, op cit, 1991, pp 14, 104-105, 107, 159.

60 "In the complex reality of post-coloniality it is... vital to assume one's radical 'impurity' and to recognize the necessity of speaking from a hybrid place, hence of saying at least two, three things at the same time." Trinh, op cit, 1992, p 140.

61 "There are... probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places — places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society — which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found in culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias... capable of juxtaposing in a single place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible." Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', in *diacritics*, Spring, 1986.

62 "And yet it is passed on, with the mark of untranslatability on it, in the bound book, *Beloved*, that we hold in our hands. Contrast this to the confidence in accessibility in the house of power, where history is waiting to be restored." Spivak, op cit, 1993, p 195.

text and its subjects. Indirectly invoked through the literal inscription of her name into a genealogy of female figures of resistance, her encounters with the histories she translates acknowledged between 'voice-overs', the enunciative traces of her 'translation' are insistently evidenced in the in/visible, in/audible. Participating in the re-naming of Vietnamese women, hence also of Vietnam, she re-names herself, for she is unable to "speak of them without speaking of herself, of history without involving her story".⁵⁷ Speaking *to*, with, alongside others,⁵⁸ admitting "the anteriority of the tale to the teller... the merging of the two through a speech-act",⁵⁹ she alludes to, yet de-authorises her author-identity, unconfirmed until the end credits, marking her particularity, her "somewhere, not everywhere"⁶⁰ within shifting terrains, a so-called "Vietnamese – American woman – academic – intellectual – artist – filmmaker – translator – storyteller hybrid".⁶¹

*In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly...
...Each story is at once a fragment and a whole; a whole within a whole. And the same story has always been changing, for things which do not shift and grow cannot continue to circulate. Dead times, dead words, dead tongues. Not to repeat in oblivion.*⁶²

Film-as-translation-as-transformation, as auto/biography, as histor(iograph)y. Moving beyond binarisms, "from one conception of difference to another... from difference to difference"⁶³ displacing hierarchical notions of origins and authenticity with multiplicity, partiality and impurity as the conditions of subjective, linguistic and cultural translation, relations of domination and resistance are disrupted by the inscriptions and reverberations of other lives, other stories, other languages. In a heterogeneous reality that is "not merely double, but... invokes the crossing of an indeterminate number of borderlines, one that remains multiple in its hyphenation", the reclamation of identity is sought through the modifying of frontiers, difference produced as "situated, shifting and contingent... the only constant [being]... the irresistible to-and-fro movement across (sexual and political) boundaries".⁶⁴ Naming and un-naming, 'I' am neither autonomous, authentic, nor self-determining — 'I' cannot monopolise — am only momentarily 'I' in utterance, am "the site where all other 'I's can enter and cut across one another".⁶⁵ Plural, indeterminate, unstable — not 'being' but 'becoming'; the "Vietnamese – American – women – immigrants – professionals – mothers – wives – daughters – sisters" are irreducible to a 'pure' origin, essence and utterance; 'imperfectly' bi-trans-lingual, polyphonous, silent, duplicitous, true, "born over and over again as hyphen rather than as fixed entity",⁶⁶ they speak "from a hybrid place, ...saying at least two, three things at the same time",⁶⁷ transgress histories, geographies and languages in the 'heterotopia' of the cinematic text, "a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites in which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory".⁶⁸ Their stories are passed on, with "the mark of untranslatability".⁶⁹

All film stills courtesy of Cinenova.

A version of this paper was presented at 'Identities', the Association of Art Historians 24th Annual Conference, University of Plymouth at Exeter, April 4th 1998.

C.'Trinh T. Minh-ha: Cinema Interval,' *parallax*, no.19, 2001, pp.128-130.

by that text. Sharon Kivland's close re-working of the Freudian text is interrupted by a multitude of other voices: the many critics who have attempted a re-interpretation of the Dora case act out those interpretations in the section 'One or two things they all know about her'. The voices of Miss Lucy R and Jane Eyre are audible amongst those of 'Several governesses and some extracts from a poor translation of a romantic novel'. A number of women – Dora, Sharon Kivland, Anna Freud, Marie Bonaparte – walk about in a town which they do not know.

Amongst the most striking of the voices that proliferate in *A Case of Hysteria* are those of the female detectives, whose case histories, transposed from the pages of contemporary detective fiction, intervene in Sharon Kivland's own 'case'. 'Jeri', 'Freddie', 'Carlotta', 'V I' and 'Kinsey' – the woman as investigator rather than object of investigation – may appear to represent the possibility of reading from a position that transcends the polarised identifications that characterise previous work on the Dora case. However, *A Case of Hysteria* precludes any neat comparison between the work of the detective and that of the analyst, in which both seek the solution to a 'case': the interspersed case histories move not in the direction of resolution but rather extract details of their fictional heroines' personal lives from these mystery novels. Thus, in both *A Case of Hysteria* and the cases within it 'the mystery grows fainter and is no longer at the heart of the enterprise; it becomes merely the thing that causes the book to be written' (p.290).

Whilst *A Case of Hysteria* is billed a 'mystery novel', it is one without a denouement. Resisting such narrative closure, it offers no dramatic 'solution' to the Dora case. *A Case of Hysteria* does, however, effect an ending of a different sort. Although it initially speaks in a multitude of voices, freely borrowed not only from the *Fragment of an Analysis* but from a wide range of other texts, it finally finds its own distinctive voice. What is presented is accordingly the history of a reading subject and her attempt to 'work through' – I use the verb in both a textual and a psychoanalytic sense³ – the *Fragment of an Analysis*. In its comprehensive re-working of Freud's narrative, *A Case of Hysteria* marks the end of one instance of repetitious reading of the *Fragment of an Analysis*: the novel ends at the point when Sharon Kivland finally finds herself in a position where she has 'nothing more to say' (p.291).

Through its persistent use of a first person narrative, *A Case of Hysteria* raises the question as to whose hysteria this is in fact a case of. Freud's, Dora's, Sharon Kivland's are but a few of the cases of hysteria that proliferate within *A Case of Hysteria*. Sharon Kivland's meticulous research took her to Vienna, Franzensbad, Marienbad and Merano.

Interspersed between the pages of *A Case of Hysteria*, photographs of the geographical locations of the *Fragment of an Analysis* carry the traces of a life once-lived. However, these journeys and the visual 'clues' which they provide ultimately raise more questions than they resolve. What was the purpose of the journey to Orly-Ville to meet the mysterious S.? Exactly what questions were asked to be met with such a blank response in the Cosmo Restaurant in North London? Generating new mysteries – new symptoms – of its own, *A Case of Hysteria* increasingly implicates the reader in its narrative.

I have to confess I was initially somewhat reluctant on being asked to review *A Case of Hysteria*. I already seemed to have read a great deal about the *Fragment of an Analysis*. Sharon Kivland does not, however, offer (yet another) theoretically sophisticated exegesis of the Dora case, instead producing a rather more subtle commentary on the *Fragment of an Analysis*. In its repeated insistence not to make assumptions, *A Case of Hysteria* gestures towards the fallibility – and occasional violence – inherent in such previous attempts at interpretative closure. It instead negotiates a reading strategy that speaks to the reader's personal investment in the Freudian case history without essentialising or valorising Dora's suffering. *A Case of Hysteria* is not only a distinctive contribution to the now-extensive Dora archive, but also a highly enjoyable mystery novel.

Notes

¹ Charles Bernheimer & Claire Kahane (eds) *In Dora's Case: Freud, Hysteria, Feminism* (London: Virago, 1985), p.31.

² Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 25 January 1901 in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, (trans. and ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.433.

³ 'Working through is taken to be a sort of psychical work which allows the subject to accept certain repressed elements and to free himself from the grip of mechanisms of repetition'. J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1973), p.488.

Joanne Heath
University of Leeds

Trinh T. Minh-ha
Cinema Interval
(London: Routledge, 1999)

W1: This is but a shot in the dark.

W2: There are three items. Make a guess at any one of them.

W1: Let's see... It's not quite an object.

W2: Right.

W1: It begins with a B.

W2: ... Wrong...

W1: It begins with a D.

Shoot for the Contents

'Shoot for the Contents' is a guessing game, a game of divination, a deciphering of puns and metaphors

in an attempt to arrive at the unidentified object(s) contained within a real or imaginary box. Upon and around this notional framework, so many intricate words and images might be spun, the naming of said object(s) delayed, deferred by the pleasures of not-quite naming. The game lends a name to, yet withholds the naming of, a 1991 film by Trinh T. Minh-ha, the text of which is often as elusive as its apparent – or rather, non-apparent – subject, 'China'. Repeatedly invoking the capricious symbol of a dragon for 'China' in its 'ten thousand aspects' – now 'small as a silkworm', now 'large as the world' – *Shoot*, together with Trinh's other filmic works, may itself be said to be as purposefully unreliable, inconsistent and fabulous.

The full scripts for *Shoot* and the more recent *A Tale of Love* (1995), can be found in Trinh's latest book, *Cinema Interval*. If Trinh's earlier films – *Reassemblage* (1982), *Naked Spaces – Living Is Round* (1985), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), and *Shoot* – often screened under 'documentary' or 'experimental' umbrellas, might be referred to crudely as her 'Africa', 'Vietnam' and 'China' films respectively, *A Tale of Love*, billed as her 'first feature narrative', would seem to represent a formal break as well as a departure in genre.¹ 'First', 'feature', 'narrative'; as a set of hierarchized terms and means of compartmentalization, it is, as anyone familiar with Trinh's work might imagine, a classification both she – an 'award-winning-Vietnamese-American-academic-artist-feminist-theorist-poet-composer-filmmaker.....' – and the work refuses. Previous works deploy varied and multiple tactics in challenging the legitimacy of 'documentary' and 'fiction' as conventionally oppositional and mutually exclusive modes of narrative practice, their willful 'illegitimacy' affronting audiences anxious to preserve disciplinary lines, unexpectedly unsettled by the complexity of voices, the continual translations between visual and aural texts and registers, and perpetual deferrals of 'truths'. For *A Tale*, Trinh ostensibly makes a 'return' to 'documentary' from which to build a 'fiction', tracing a different route back/towards 'other', 'earlier' territories. Taking up a strand of *Surname Viet*, Trinh appropriates and displaces a popular nineteenth century Vietnamese epic poem, in order to spin another, quite different, 'Tale of Kieu'.

Confounding 'firsts' and compounding 'fictions', *A Tale* invokes 'A Tale...' and its eponymous mythical, legendary heroine through a latter day imaginary, Vietnamese-American counterpart, interweaving culturally intimate yet geographically and temporally distant stories into the fabric of a 'scenography of love' (as opposed to 'love story'). Focusing on the state of 'being in love' as 'an altered state of the mind and body... in which our senses are strangely aroused and sillily obscured –

hypersensitive; so lucid and so blind at the same time', disengaged from realism and the classical economy of narrative cinema, *A Tale* is neither plot nor character-driven (Trinh refers instead to 'dis-inherited' and 'non-' characters). As 'real actors' and audiences struggle with the resultant difficulties of identification and reading, lights and cameras are subordinated to neither actors nor set, but come in and out of visibility as their trajectories cross, suggesting other rhythms and spaces, and 'the intensity of a veiled theatricality'. Presenting 'partial views, saturated colours, elliptical narratives, sounds separated from context', endeavouring towards what Trinh calls 'a radical multiplicity instead of complementarity', *A Tale* is 'just a moment of a no-story', the desired 'happy/tragic ending' elusive, resolved to remain unresolved.²

VOICE 2: Interpreting orientation and form is not without risk, because in Ancient books the beast exists in a thousand forms; has ten thousand aspects; stands or crouches; it is huge or tiny, unruly, or obedient, reserved or extravagant. Infinitely in metamorphosis, it dives deep, rises high, meanders, coils, leaps, and takes its flight.

Shoot for the Contents

Like Trinh's previous publication, *Framer Framed* (1992), *Cinema Interval* couples film scripts with interviews, the latter conducted over a six year period.³ Where *Framer Framed* presents the two as separate categories, the interspersal of script, set and lighting notes, film stills and occasional blank pages, as well as the achronological ordering of texts, works conversely to disturb the boundaries of their supposedly distinct terrains – images and words spilling out of their respective frames to circumscribe discontinuous, unfinished, unexpected relations, *Cinema Interval* goes further, dispensing with the momentary assurance of a script/interview binary and the demarcation of theoretical or disciplinary terrains, turning our attention instead to the necessary movements between. Abandoning a horizontal axis of sure-footed progression to embark headlong on a spiraling, gently vertiginous trip, Trinh invites/dares the reader to partake in three moves, gestures, attitudes – 'Upward: Diving in, Non-seeing', 'Midway: Returning to the Scripts', 'Downward: Surfacing, Non-knowing' – to slip, semi-blind, into waters of uncertain depth.

Trinh suggests that it is unnecessary to see or have seen either film before or after the book, which resides, then, both and neither in their anticipation and/nor wake. Gaps and discontinuities are not to be filled but accentuated, contemplated, a collection of pauses and/or thoughts. Her eighth book, her fifth film, her earliest, her latest – such attempts to differentiate or chronologize, to trace a

line of thought or development, make little sense as a tactic of making sense of Trinh's work as a 'body' – for it is always already a contingent non-whole-work-in-progress. Each interview, for example, already occupies at least two moments and places, each shift in location a double move, each winding between questions and texts a temporal twist and shadowing, shadowed by a not-same yet similar contorted chronology. Preceded by the interviewers' 'original' introductions, bio- and bibliographical summaries mediated by Trinh, earlier contexts are recalled, and the possible affects and implications of their reframing signaled. Exchanges – with Deb Verhoeven, Homi Bhabha, Annamaria Morelli, Berenice Reynaud, Margaret Kelly, Kim Hawkins, Paul Kalina, Nancy Chen, Gwendolyn Foster, Mary Zournazi – travel to and fro, forth and back between 1998 and 1992, revisiting and revisited by Trinh's earlier writings, films, and the virtual and real spaces of journals, books, and cities – from London to Naples, New York to New Zealand, Rotterdam to Sydney, Melbourne to California – further modulated by the particular attentions, dis/affectations and alignments of each interviewer, in degrees of tension or accord with her/his interviewee.

The interrogation into the politics of interview in *Surname Viet* (structured by two sets of interviews, one staged, one 'real', translated, re-edited, re-enacted and re-transcribed into English from the 'original' Vietnamese) allowed Trinh to foreground the necessary and numerous mediations, not only between languages and cultures, but also between the spoken and written, the visible and the audible, each in turn complexly inflected by regional, historical and political accentuations. Any expectation that the interviews and scripts might here promise elucidation, clarification, or the definitive interpretation of *Shoot* or *A Tale*, is misplaced. If dialogue, as the exchange of spoken words, has been deprivileged in the filmic texts, the scripts can only bring into relief particular (deceptively translatable) aspects of diffuse filmic bodies. Interrupting the already fragmented interview texts – scripts for quite a different kind of performance and staging – they are themselves interrupted by colour stills and handwritten notes, while black-and-white stills break up the rest of the text. 'What is visible and audible can prevent one from seeing and hearing'.⁴ The images and the blanks produced by their framings and juxtapositions breathe uncertainties along the

speculative labyrinthine paths hewn into relief by words, marking their limits (their relation to the films 'never one of unmediated explanation, but rather one of supplementarity – that is, of outsideness and substitution'), and the 'infinite relation' between word and image.⁵

We are warned at the beginning (a mere point of entry), 'Beware of Wolf Intervals' – those 'bad', dissonant, aberrant disharmonies that announce, rather howlingly for certain ears, an 'out of place' or 'out there' relation. In this rupture, 'a temporal hiatus, an intermission, a distance, a pause, a lapse, or gap between different states', 'the infinity of the task of speaking nearby' is preserved. Improperly and inappropriately positioned, disclaiming authorship and authority to displace 'translation' – like 'love' – as a relation of loyalty and betrayal,⁶ Trinh's practices reflect and deflect the make-believe spectres of the originary, authentic and true. She describes *Cinema Interval* as 'an interrelational space of detour'; it cannot be said to 'go anywhere' – there is no point of closure, nor arrival. Duplicious, multiplicitous, wavering and wayward, after the dragon, it too 'dives deep, rises high, meanders, coils, leaps, and takes its flight', negotiating protracted, convoluted shots at the belly, in the dark. *Cinema Interval* opens (itself) up – curtain raised, out of sight – and leaves itself (and its audience, in wonder or frustration) gaping. Adrift, treading watery currents and 'flat waves', there is nothing to hold onto, nothing to fix (on), the last words going to another:

'... and we called that nothing an interval'.⁷

Notes

¹ *A Tale of Love* (108 mins, colour, 1995), *Shoot for the Contents* (102 mins, colour, 1991), *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (108 mins, colour and b&w, 1989), *Naked Spores – Living Is Round* (135 mins, colour, 1985), *Reassemblage* (40 mins, colour, 1982).

² Trinh with Deb Verhoeven, 'A Scenography of Love', *Cinema Interval*, pp.3–15.

³ *Framer Framed* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁴ 'A Scenography of Love', p.7.

⁵ 'Beware of Wolf Intervals', *Cinema Interval*, pp.xi–xiv.

⁶ Rey Chow cites the Italian expression 'traduttore, traditore' (translator, traitor) in her discussion of film as ethnography in Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp.182–184.

⁷ Clarice Lispector as quoted by Trinh, *Cinema Interval*, p.267.

Susan Pui San Lok
Middlesex University

D. 'Inglorious Food,' *Anthony Key*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated (Bristol: Eddie Chambers, 2002).

Of take-outs and takeovers

In Anthony Key's *Free Delivery* (1999), a map of the British Isles sits atop a military-style table, its papery topography delicately punctured by a swathe of miniature red flags. Each one proclaims the name of a Chinese restaurant or take-away, a procession of Bamboo Inns and Golden Dragons, Silver Lakes and Peking Gardens, usurping conventional landmarks to stake territories far and near. From metropolitan centres to rural outposts, the banners herald a steady encroachment, unexpectedly uniting an otherwise discordant kingdom.

Key's vision of a 'Chinese British Isles', a Britain over-run and co-opted by an immigrant other, plays upon and mocks historically contradictory cultural perceptions of Chinese in Britain. These hark back to late nineteenth and early twentieth century racist ideologies, which proliferated disproportionately to the then-small concentrations of "lowly and hardworking" Chinese in London's and Liverpool's docks.¹ Media representations identified the Chinese as servile and submissive, yet their perceived passivity and insularity also provoked suspicion and speculation, inspiring "tales of drug trafficking, secret societies and seductions of young white women", and feeding wider fears of an imminent 'yellow peril'.²

The vaunting of a foreboding six hundred and sixty six flags (representing some two thousand establishments) is striking less for its triumphalism, than for the simple effect of making visible a presence which, but for the annual Chinese New Year coverage, has until recent years remained largely unacknowledged across historical, cultural and political spheres.³ *Free Delivery* alludes to the economic niche taken up by the Chinese in Britain following their immigration in the 1950s and 1960s (largely, though by no means exclusively, from Hong Kong). If Key privileges the catering trade over other industries and professions, his map nonetheless reflects the dominant narrative behind the

widespread settlement and dispersal of Chinese in Britain over the last half-century. Each methodical, handwritten inscription adds to a sense of homage, even as the difficulty in differentiating one flag from another risks the reduction of the particular to the generic. Moreover, the title's promise of 'something for nothing' – made over the familiar if peculiar telephone transactions and remote rituals of a particular kind of cultural exchange – also hints at an ambiguous emancipation. For whom and from what? The amusing yet unsettling sight of a 'Chinese British Isles', Sinified by stealth and delivered by a weakness of stomach unto the tables and counters of innumerable restaurants and take-aways, turns the notion of assimilation back to front, belly up.

Assimulations (sic)

Free Delivery relates to a larger body of work in which Key explores perceptions of 'Chineseness' within the contexts of migration and diaspora, playing on the fears and aspirations of immigrant and host, processes of assimilation and integration, and playing with supposedly discrete cultures of food and consumption. *Yellow Peril* (1997) sees hundreds of bottles of soy sauce 'flooding' a gallery space. As in the later *Free Delivery*, Key parodies the dread of an influx of immigrants (all looking the same), in light of the return of one of Britain's last colonies, Hong Kong, to mainland China.⁴ Reclaiming Gormley's universalist fields of humanity as an alternate terracotta army in which 'Everyman' is Chinese, innumerable subjects advance portentously, absurdly reduced to a condiment symbolic of the industry with which they are most identified. The 'threat' is served up as both indictment and palliative – a mirror to preconceptions, an assurance of harmlessness, a reaffirmation of consumer relations, or a mere guise? What lies beyond the anonymity?

Stir-Fry with the Sound of Its Own Making (1997) finds a take-away carton elevated to a plinth. Cooking sounds emanate, a sample recording from a series of audio cassettes of various dishes being prepared by the artist, available to buy. The exposition of hidden labour mimics the self-reflexivity of the post/modern artist, an introspection in which the economies of culinary and fine arts coalesce, with little disclosed of their agents. [The term *post/modern* is used because it could be argued that modern and postmodern sensibilities aesthetics and politics are concurrently, rather than consecutively, in play - that the latter has not simply superseded the former.] Key's 'self-portrait', *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), is deceptively straightforward, revealing no true, 'natural' self. Whether read as "foreign contents in a western body or more positively, an integrated body comfortable with itself", appearances are not what they seem.⁵ The revelation that 'ketchup' derives from the Cantonese Chinese 'ke chap' for 'tomato sauce' casts doubt on origins and naïve notions of assimilation; it is 'Englishness' as much as 'Chineseness' that is called into question.

Intimations of mutual exchange and transformation are also invoked in *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997), in which a knife and fork are painstakingly carved into the ends of a pair of chopsticks, while *McNapkin (Naturalisation Series)* (1997) strikes a slightly different note, rendering the disposable serviette of the ubiquitous fast-food giant in Chinese silk. Countering cultures of mass-production with the handmade, Key pitches the modern against the traditional, 'West' against 'East', in knowing yet troubling oppositions. A similar inversion occurs with *Peking Duck* (1996), in which three take-away cartons of the eponymous dish rise diagonally, right to left, across a wall. A play on the ceramic flying ducks typical of a particular clichéd, nostalgic image of English domesticity, these cooked birds make an improbable journey 'West'; impulses

to 'home' and migrate are unevenly allied, the latter ill-fated flock destined for literal and metaphorical consumption.

Key's *Great Wall* (1998) aptly illustrates the necessity and inevitability of subjective and cultural reinvention and transformation.⁶ Appropriating the well-known monument and symbol to challenge the integrity of the culture it appears to contain, Key's wall is a temporary and incomplete structure of comparatively modest scale, dissecting the space with 'bricks' cast from take-away cartons. Two Kingdoms, 'United' and 'Middle', are displaced, with those dispersed to their margins commemorated by the throwaway-made-monumental. The ambiguous boundary demarcates not China, nor a 'Chineseness' intact, but the shifting territories, relations and permeable interfaces between native and emigrant, host and immigrant. Inside out and outside in, the 'majority-minority', 'same-other' view across the wall – an opaque looking-glass – is disorientating; dislocation becomes a shared predicament.

These simple acts, droll and disarming – pragmatic, preposterous, and exquisite marriages of convenience / food – find popular cultural symbols hybridised, the proverbial rendered both familiar and unfamiliar via unexpected transpositions, reversals and inversions. Preconceptions are played out to their (il)logical conclusions, uprooting certainties, upturning orders – yet provocations and animosities are diverted with a subtle, defensive, deprecating humour.⁷ Masking mutual vulnerabilities and saving face, 'integration' is enacted, assimilation a sly simulation of harmonious hybridity – jesting, jousting, 'passing' to get by. With a sensitivity to the immigrant's experience of perpetual double-taking, of reading and walking between and beyond oppositional lines, 'West' and 'East' are invoked in pleasurably deceptive union, belying the complexities and aspirations of the displaced. These are powerfully evoked by

Wok/Satellite Dish (1996), in which the former is positioned on an interior wall to resemble the latter. Food and utensils become globalised commodities, objects and means of cultural exchange and transmission. If mobility is expressed through the acquisition and display of technologically advanced goods, the wok provides both surrogate and vehicle for such ambitions. Recalling the sometime Hong Kong-Chinese slang for those perpetual migrants of a certain class and wealth, 'commuting' between continents as 'astronauts', *Wok/Satellite Dish* suggests, with pathos, a less affluent subject in orbit, and the loneliness of long distance flights.⁸ Elsewhere, the terrestrial realities of life in a new not-yet home are summoned up by *Window 39* (1998), in which a wallpaper of Home Office tickets line the walls of a waiting room. Recalling the days-long queues annually endured over a decade by Key as a temporary resident seeking to extend his stay in Britain, the backdrop of slow queues and stalled journeys is a reminder of the bureaucratic landscapes of migration.⁹

'British Chinese' (or not), A Brief and Belated History

Over the last decade, the dominance of the take-away as a recurring motif in 'British Chinese' art and culture has affirmed its centrality in the consciousness and experiences of both host and immigrant communities. Work by artists Julie Fu, Phillip Lai, Kwong Lee, Yeu-Lai Mo, and Mayling To, and in the performing arts by theatre companies Yellow Earth, Mulan, and BiMa Dance Company, have all drawn on the sights, sounds, and paraphernalia of the industry in their articulations of British and Chinese cultural exchange and con/fusion, mix and bend.¹⁰ However, the concern of many 'British Chinese' artists emerging in the 1990s – among them Erika Tan, Tony Ward, and of course, Key – exceed questions of 'British-Chinese-ness' and references to take-aways. Intelligently and often playfully engaging wide-ranging discourses from anthropology and

linguistics to martial arts and video gaming, these artists take on the stubborn hangovers of Sinophobias and -phillias past, and the seemingly inoffensive, ever-entwined flip sides of Orientalisms cast repeatedly anew. Such operations and manoeuvres are frequently undertaken from positions of ambivalence, bringing questions of the artists' own complex positionings and plays of 'sameness-otherness' into view.

With the hindsight afforded by 'black art' in Britain since the 1980s, and the prevailing apoliticism of the 1990s, the mobilisation of the term 'British Chinese' has, unsurprisingly, been highly contentious. A novelty for some, a wearisome label for others, each invocation seems to trigger attempts to articulate an affiliation or otherwise to the term in tandem and apart. That a complicated and variable neither-one-nor-the-other identity could be so concisely framed might be satisfying or discomforting; swept into a collective-national-ethno-category, swept under the weight and weightlessness of a name that proffers the impossible – a seamless suturing of languages, cultures, generations and geographies. Inaugurated with the establishment of the British Chinese Artists' Association (BCAA) in 1991, the term gained currency over the ensuing decade, which saw a proliferation of 'Chinese shows' riding the waves of historical and political momentum in a hitherto uninterested climate.¹¹ As the Hong Kong handover loomed, so nostalgia for losses past and imminent grew, provoking a spell of interest in 'all things Chinese'. While timely group shows were effective in generating a degree of exposure, they also promoted unease over the celebratory rhetoric by which diverse 'traditional' and 'contemporary' artists were frequently (sometimes hastily) brought under the same indiscriminate umbrella – irrespective of differences in practice, politics, generation, history or geography.¹²

Such criticisms were voiced in a series of discussions and events over the same period, which registered a growing resistance to the category 'British

Chinese'.¹⁰ As an unwieldy catch-all that has undoubtedly been useful in supporting artists of Chinese origin living and working in Britain, recurring disputes over notions of 'origin' and 'Chinese-ness' insist on the impossibility of encompassing the experiences and demands of disparate constituencies in one label. Only recently have earlier generations of artists begun to be recognised in this context – through the examples of Lesley Sanderson, a Malaysian-born artist of mixed English and Chinese parentage who began exhibiting in the 1980s in a number of 'black art' shows, and the late Li Yuan Chia, who migrated from China to Britain, establishing his own museum and practising as an artist for some forty years.¹⁴ If 'British Chinese' works to raise the profiles of certain artists, it does so with the risk of reinforcing lines of difference. With 'British Chinese', 'British', and 'Chinese', proving continual sources of "division, derision and dissatisfaction", how might a disparate history, or histories, be productively and critically imagined?¹⁵

Of mutability

Key's one-time readiness to identify with 'British Chinese' has since been replaced by hesitancy; rather than abandon the term altogether, he deploys it with caution.¹⁶ This wariness is shared by a number of artists of Chinese descent based in Britain, whose commonality lies less in an indubitable, unwavering 'Chineseness' (or for that matter, 'Britishness'), than a desire to subvert such a notion; to assume instead its complex fabrications and ultimate instability. As is true of many a 'British Chinese', Key's history departs from the dominant paradigm of 'British Chinese' immigrant experience, arriving in the early 1970s not from Hong Kong into the catering trade, but from South Africa, via South China, Mauritius and Canada, into the profession of interior design.¹⁷ This convoluted trajectory points to the existence of narratives marginalised

within already marginalised narratives, its 'transgressions' alerting us to the wider historical and cultural contingencies between 'majorities', 'minorities', and diasporas, usually perceived as discrete and coherent entities occupying equally discrete territories (with segregated cultures and heritages in tow). Key's childhood and youth, negotiating a volatile grey space between 'black' and 'white' (his legal status in South Africa determined negatively – not 'white', nor 'colored' but 'non-white'), attest to the necessary complexities and contestations of race, ethnicity and identity, while the region's tumultuous history provides a forceful reminder of the violence and recrimination that fears of difference can engender.

Successive generations of migrations bring mutations of name in response to shifting socio-cultural frames and idiosyncracies of language and place: last-names become first-names, and first-names last; English names are given or adopted, and Chinese names dropped. Westernisation and assimilation eventually appear complete, at least on paper. For some, 'Chineseness' remains as an atemporal, immutable if somewhat elusive element, arguably affirmed by birthplace, kinship, language and culture. For others, voluntary or forced relocations and dispersals of family and community make notions of heritage difficult in unevenly bi- or multi-linguistic and cultural environments. Together with perpetual information flows, and fluctuations of political and geographical borders, the idea of an indisputable 'essence' becomes untenable. For the 'host', such contradictory views are often wilfully held in balance. The migrant is expected to assimilate and lay the ghost of her or his 'Chineseness' to rest, yet also to demonstrate an authentic 'otherness' on request, constructed out of the sum of various derogatory or exoticising clichés.

A Culinary Poetics?¹⁸

The idea that 'Chineseness' might be both timeless and disposable, an occasional party trick, is intimated by a number of critics appraising Key's work, the artist's nominally invisible ethnicity making any mention of it particularly notable. A recent group exhibition exploring the use of food across religion, culture, history, and art, finds one reviewer introducing Key by his nationality/ethnicity, his 'Chineseness' noted inconsequentially.¹⁹ Such seemingly unremarkable yet habitual distinction of those outside the norm of an unspoken 'white ethnicity' reaffirms the latter's continued hegemony like a reflex, whose oddity begins to register when the reverse is imagined and all the artists in the show, excepting Key, are systematically qualified as 'white'. Another critic summarises the work as "Warhol pop and Koons-pap given an extra-ironic immigrant twist".²⁰ Here, the experiences and conditions of migration and diaspora are reduced to a clever signatorial flourish, an ethnic embellishment, while the work itself is distinguished as a witty but mere addendum to the post/modernist tale. Happily falling back on old Orientalist constructions, yet another concludes, "The East accommodates itself to life in the West".²¹

Aside from the persistent privileging of a Western canon that resists the possibility of other histories of artistic and cultural production in which the familiar 'greats' are denied centre-stage, such readings gloss over the ambiguities of Key's practice. Checking the irony, symbols of 'Chineseness' are nevertheless taken at face value. Certainly, Key's wit and lightness of touch – a distinct 'culinary poetics' – effect immaculate fusions and pleasing miscegenations, whose apparently effortless syntheses hint at a liberal, multicultural idyll. Recent works shift the accent by applying such a poetics to the 'host' nation, deploying items of 'English' food to raise questions of

Indigenelty. *Pork Scratchings* (1999) takes a local Walsall Industry as Inspiration for a taxonomy of said bar-snacks, with the resultant collection exhibited in the town's museum. *Chips with Everything* (2000), an Installation at Portsmouth's Aspex Gallery, finds sacks of growing potato plants positioned before a table as if waiting to be processed by 'immigration' (the homely spud was Imported from Peru in the sixteenth century). *Shopping Trolley (with cable ties)* (2002), an arresting, bristling embodiment of obsessive behaviour, speaks more widely of the culture and psychology of consumption, with food and trade as therapy, liberation, bondage and entrapment.

The presumed staples of diet, tradition, and culture harbour sometimes bloody histories of production, import and export, their routes and crossings simultaneously constructing the 'foreign', and confounding as much as confirming the 'native'. If Key's Ironic citations point towards an ambivalence that risks occasional oversight – the very success of aesthetic forms and pleasurable puns overriding ambiguities – these later works confront the short-sighted recognition of both naïve and knowing subjects, by explicitly turning the exoticising eye back onto itself. 'Othered' by that eye, 'Englishness' becomes quaint and mysterious, its norms arcane, its eccentricities impenetrable, an 'essence' reduced to tired clichés and archaisms; the 'West' is accommodated to life in the 'West', an exotic wonderland it turns out, in which no one really lives. **Susan Pui San Lok**

Inglorious Food

- 1 Chinese people began to appear in British ports such as Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool and London from the late eighteenth century, mostly male, mostly seamen comprising "a lowly, hardworking [community]". Hugh Baker, "Branches All Over: The Hong Kong Chinese in the United Kingdom", *Reluctant Exiles?*, ed. Ronald Skeldon (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1994) p.292.
- 2 As epitomised by the popular fictional villain Fu Manchu, the creation of writer Sax Rohmer, which appeared in popular fiction and a succession of B-movies from the 1920s to the 1960s. See Jenny Clegg *Fu Manchu and the 'Yellow Peril': The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire: Trentham Books, 1994), p. ix.
- 3 The number of restaurant proprietors and managers in Britain rose from thirty six in 1951 to some seven thousand in 1984, with growth slowing down since the 1970s. Baker, op.cit., p.295.
- 4 "In Hong Kong, residents are designated as "British-Dependent Territory Citizens" (BDTC) in the remnant corner of the empire, with limitless rights of travel but no rights to reside in Great Britain. When Hong Kong reverts to mainland China rule, these same residents will be called "British Nationals (Overseas)" (BNO), with the conditions of domicile and travel unchanged." Ai-hwa Ong, 'On the Edge of Empire: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora', *Positions*, 1993, volume 3, part 1, p.748.
- 5 Anthony Key, artist's statement (2002), unpublished.
- 6 Both works appeared in the group exhibition, 'Empire and I', curated by Alana Jelinek of independent arts organisation Terra Incognita, for Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, 1999.
- 7 See Sigmund Freud's essay, 'Humour', in *Art & Literature*, ed. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1988), pp.426-433.
- 8 Ai-hwa Ong, op.cit., p.761.
- 9 Artist's statement, 2002, unpublished.

- 10 See for example Yellow Earth theatre company's *Behind the Chinese Take Away* (1997), directed by Erika Tan and founder and artistic director, David K.S. Tse; BiMa Dance Company's *Chinese Takeaway* (1997), choreographed by founder and artistic director, Pit Fong Loh; and Mulan Theatre Company's *Takeaway* (1998), by Stephen Clark, directed by artistic director Paul Courtenay-Hyu. For a brief discussion of Yeu-Lai Mo's practice, see my essay, 'Towards a Chinese British Isles or 3333, Point 3 to Infinity: On Mileage and 'British Chinese' Art', 2002, in volume 5, issue 1 of the same title, at <http://www.chinese-art.com>.
- 11 BCAA was established as a result of the Arts Council of England funded Chinese Artists Forum in the same year.
- 12 Group shows included 'Links 96' at Manchester's Chinese Arts Centre and Yang Sing Restaurant (1996), 'Far from the Shore' at the Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, London (1998), and 'Another Province' at Watermans Arts Centre, London (1998). See also my essay, 'A to Y (Entries for an Inventionry of Dented 'I's)', in a forthcoming issue of *Third Text*. The text is drawn from a paper presented at 'Shades of Black: Assembling the Eighties – A Trans-Atlantic Dialogue on Afro-Asian Arts in Post-war Britain', a conference organised by Aavaa (African and Asian Visual Artists' Archive) at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, April 19-22, 2001, documentation of which is also forthcoming.
- 13 One of the earliest public debates that set out specifically to address 'British-Chinese Culture and Contemporary Art', was organised in 1995 by the Chinese Arts Centre in Manchester's then-Exhibition Officer, artist Kwong Lee, as part of a series of discussions relating to the British Art Show 4.
- 14 I discuss Sanderson's work in the aforementioned 'A to Y (Entries for an Inventionry of Dented 'I's)'. Gilane Tawadros notes the lack of recognition for such artists in her preface to *Ten Thousand Li*, exhibition catalogue (Liverpool: Liverpool School of Art & Design / CAIR, 2002) p.5
- 15 Report on the day seminar, 'A New Vocabulary for Chinese Arts?', at The Place, London, in October 1998, organised by BCAA, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, and Pit Fong Loh, founder of BiMa Dance Company and director of the 'Re:Orient' Dance Season, for which the seminar was the closing event.

- 16 See for example my text, 'Anthony Key', *in Empire and I*, exhibition catalogue (London: Terra Incognita, 1999).
- 17 Interview with the artist, 11 June 2002, unpublished.
- 18 I used this expression in indirect reference to Key's work for the press release for 'numbersix', a group show with Key, Yeu-Lai Mo, Erika Tan, Mayling To, Tony Ward, and myself, at TS2K, London, in 1998. For an account of this project, see my essay, 'Throw: Six and Two' in *Towards a Chinese British Isles or 3333, Point 3 to Infinity: On Mileage and 'British Chinese' Art*, <http://www.chinese-art.com>, 2002, volume 5, issue 1 (guest editor)
- 19 Neal Brown, 'Walt and See (What's for Dinner?): Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne', *Frieze*, November-December 1997, issue 37, pp.87-88.
- 20 Robert Clark, *The Guardian Guide*, February 20-26, 1999, p.6.
- 21 Laura Cumming, 'Making a meal of it', *The Guardian*, Tuesday August 19, 1997, p.12.

A–Y (Entries for an Inventionry of Dented 'I's)

susan pui san lok

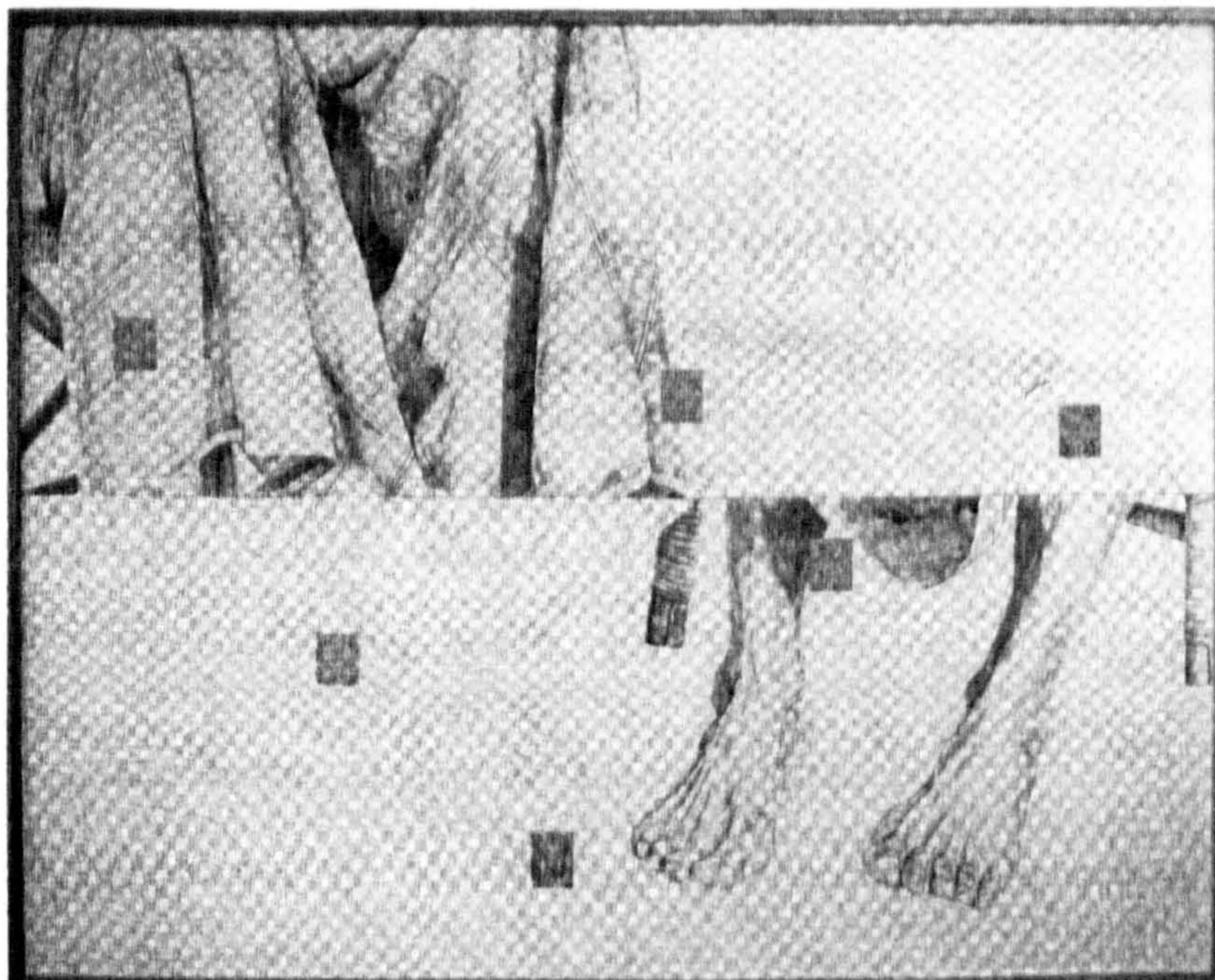
ASIAN FLEW

A dense configuration of lines make tangible the delicate creases and soft folds of a pair of wide trousers; abruptly emptied of volume, they fall barely delineated towards sandal-clad feet. At the same point but in converse rhythm, the edge of a just-visible flowery sarong skirt hanging loosely over bared feet acquires a sudden richness of tone and texture. Rectangles of colour interrupt upper and lower planes, their patterns monochromatically echoed in the fabrics of the clothing. On the former, a cartoon-like stereotype of a moustachioed coloniser sporting dark glasses and white hat repeats, while the latter picks out several flowers in bright, flat colours.

Feet point to concepts of travel, journeying and movement across land.¹ Respectively bare and shod, they might hastily be read as oppositional signs of primitivism and civilisation, the 'he' of the title representing the progressive masculine subject of exoticised narratives of colonialism, the unacknowledged 'she' an embodiment of supposedly backward feminine territories, orientalist and colonised. Simultaneously present and absent, these figures occupy different spaces, are literally split; can the one come into visibility only at the cost the other? In the title of Lesley Sanderson's *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990)², it is he who has undertaken the 'fabulous' – extraordinary and fictionalised – journeys to the subtropical climes inferred by their mode of dress; what and where is her part in the stories and their telling? Already relegated to a past tense, this temporal lapse adds an ambiguity to their relationship, now not so easily polarised. Separated and subdivided within the same frame, they nevertheless share a posture, an attitude, appear to collude in their anonymity. To what tall tales, what undisclosed, unreconciled narratives, fabulous and sedate, are we in turn invited/intruding upon or denied?

Between the 'bold omissions and minute depictions'³ are mere hints of/at uncertain histories. Despite the intimacy – we are sat like children

1. Jane Beckett, 'Displacements', in *These Colours Run*, exhibition catalogue, Wrexham Library Arts Centre, 1994, p 14.
2. Lesley Sanderson, *He Took Fabulous Trips*, 1990, pencil and acrylic on paper, 77 × 97 cm.
3. Trinh T Minh-ha, 'Bold omissions and minute depictions', in *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991, pp 155–66.



Lesley Sanderson, *He Took Fabulous Trips*

before adult feet – incommensurable distances prevail; proximity does not bring with it the truths and identities of strangers. Who is speaking? Who is spoken or spoken to? How do we listen to and translate these silences? Whom does it ‘help’ to describe the artist, as ‘Malaysian-born, British-based, of Chinese and English parents’, who might in turn be identified as the subjects or sitters for this work? Scant biographical details gesture towards a narrative of identity as a deceptively straightforward unified and dualistic equation – ‘Malaysian-British’, ‘Chinese-English’. However, simple consideration of the mere ordering of these terms (which should come first?) stirs questions of origins, ‘home’ and belonging into an unsteady brew of identities, nationalities and ethnicities. How do the untold stories of travel and migration of *He Took Fabulous Trips* relate to the axes of difference that constitute the artist’s brief biography and the narratives by which her work has been framed? How in particular might they be negotiated not only in relation to the critical and curatorial frameworks of the ‘Black Art’ of a dis/assembled 1980s but also to the so-called ‘British-Chinese’ art that began to emerge in the 1990s?

‘Black’/‘British’/‘Chinese’ – on the page they alternate neatly, fairly and squarely between forward-slash swing-doors, though the meanings, histories, cultures and geographies evoked and disputed are not of course by any means even or discrete. In the 1980s, Sanderson’s inclusion in a number of so-called ‘Black Art’ shows in Britain is indicative of the historical mobilisation of ‘Black’, to cite Stuart Hall, ‘as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain’ and of ‘provid[ing] the organising category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different

4. Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, Routledge, New York and London, 1996, pp 441–9.
5. *Transforming the Crown: African, Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain*, The Bronx Museum and Studio Museum, New York, 1997–98.
6. As Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer have stated, the category 'black' was, in a particular historical moment, 're-articulated ... as a political term of identification among diverse minority communities of Asian, African and Caribbean origin, rather than as a biological or racial category'. Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, 'De Margin and De Centre', first printed as the Introduction to *Screen*, 29:4, 1988, pp 2–10; reprinted in Morley and Chen, eds, 1996, pp 450–64. Such an identification is reinforced in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) by Paul Gilroy, for whom the precarious doubling of 'black' in its politicised and racialised usage invokes the 'commonality' of 'people ... of African, Caribbean or Asian descent' referenced by the same 'central, irreducible sign of their common racial subordination'. Gilroy makes reference to the experiences of indentured Asian Americans but by and large refers to African, Caribbean or Asian peoples.
7. The rise of so-called 'Asian Cool' in 1990s Britain and the hierarchisation of migrant or 'hybrid' subjects in diaspora is discussed by Ali Nobil Ahmad in 'Whose Underground? Asian Cool and the Poverty of "Hybridity"', *Third Text*, 54, Spring 2001.
8. 'In both instances, such terms have engendered intense semantic ambiguity

histories, traditions and ethnic identities'.⁴ A decade on, Sanderson was featured in *Transforming the Crown*, an exhibition of 'African, Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain' in the United States;⁵ the effacement or displacement of the term 'Black' by several others nonetheless invokes the same groups and communities with which 'Black' continues for many to be identified.⁶ Interestingly, where Sanderson figured under 'Black' in one context and moment, she became 'Asian' in another – a reminder of the instability of both signifiers, notwithstanding the lesser degree of contestation and debate around the latter – again indicative of the narratives implicitly privileged by discourses around 'Black Art'.⁷ It is worth noting, then, the different ways in which the 'Asian' in 'African, Asian and Caribbean' is broadly understood on either side of these waters. In a North American context 'Asian' includes Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese – peoples from 'Central', 'East', 'South East' and 'South Asia', whereas in Britain 'Asian' is usually only taken to mean people from the India subcontinent (– where, by the way, are Asias 'North' and 'West'? Where do 'Near' and 'Far' coincide?). The suggestion that the use of 'Black' in Britain might be politically analogous to 'people of colour' in the United States must be considered with caution,⁸ for while the two seem to refer to the same groups and terms of definition, meriting comparison in terms of the intensity of the debates that have arisen around both, those who might come into visibility under one broad stroke risk invisibility under the other.

If 'Black' can be 'Asian' but 'Asian' is not always 'Asian', 'Chinese' – among others – does a disappearing act. As the third largest 'minority' in Britain, 'Chinese' has often been positioned as the 'unspoken and invisible 'other' of 'Black' as well as 'White' aesthetic discourses.⁹ Uncertainties around the relationship between 'Black', 'Asian' and 'Chinese' are evidenced by moves made by arts organisations and curators to address the emergence of a new generation of artists by shifting existing parameters or inventing them anew. At least one regional funding body has expanded the category of 'Black' to include 'Chinese'; another has distinguished between the 'Chinese, East and South East Asian' while awarding them a collective category of their own. Meanwhile, two recent large-scale exhibitions at London's Hayward and Whitechapel galleries, respectively *Cities on the Move* (an international show whose over-ambition is reflected in its lengthy subtitle, 'East Asian Art, Architecture and Film Now'), and *000zerozerozero*, 'a celebration of British Asian culture', (fail to?) raise again the question of boundaries – this time, who/where is 'East Asian', 'British Asian'? With some but by no means all the artists migrating from one context to the other, what and when are the slippages between?

Just as 'Chinese' begins to come into visibility as a category distinct from or within 'Black', the same and other designatory bodies begin to express distaste for so-called 'single ethnicity' projects – not necessarily a bad thing, though cynics might say that they simply turn up as 'multi-ethnicity' projects. What merits concern is that the term 'Chinese' should be dismissed or subsumed without adequate consideration for how it has been mobilised, what it might signify and for whom. From the mid-1990s, the countdown to the return of Britain's erstwhile colony, Hong Kong, to Chinese sovereignty was accompanied by a colonial nostalgia manifested in the vogue – in culture, couture and cuisine – for 'all things

and ideological anxiety as the racial mythology of colour is put under erasure, cancelled out but still legible, in a deconstructive logic that depends on the same system of metaphorical equivalences and differences.' Julien and Mercer in Morley and Chen, eds, 1996, p 462, n. 16.

9. Theoretical discourses too; a case in point is provided by a day conference organised by the Asia Pacific Cultural Studies Forum, a postgraduate student body at Goldsmiths College, University of London (June 1999). On the theme of 'Dislocating the West and the Rest', speakers were invited to consider among other things the relation between Cultural Studies and Asian Studies. When a member of the audience questioned the omission of a Chinese representative on any of the panels, or any reference to China in the discussions, his complaint was dismissed with the assertion that 'China was not in Asia'. Elsewhere, Rachel Garfield notes the 'levelling of ethnicities' by 'Black'/'White' dichotomies (again defining 'Black' as a subject of African descent) in her discussion of Jewish identities and positionings in 'Ali G: just who does he think he is?', *Third Text*, 54, Spring 2001, pp 63–70.

10. The year 1997 also marked the fiftieth anniversary of the partition of India into two Dominions, India and Pakistan, the trend for things Chinese thus coinciding with a wider interest and nostalgia for the East, as illustrated by Madeleine Bunting's 'Let's wear our frills with pride', *Guardian*, 5 April 2000, cited in Ahmad, op cit, p 80.

11. See for example *Tradition and Modernity: Contemporary Chinese Painting*, British Museum, 1996, *Reckoning with the Past*, Fruitmarket Gallery,

Chinese'.¹⁰ For a short time, exhibitions of Chinese art seemed to proliferate in a hitherto disinterested climate. Some drew poorly considered distinctions between the 'traditional' and the 'contemporary', others consisted of hastily thrown-together surveys that offered uncritical juxtapositions of works by artists brought together irrespective of differences in practice, politics, generation, history or geography, superficially united by a casual reference to 'the Chinese diaspora'.¹¹ For what audiences and by whom were these spectacles of 'Chineseness' being presented?

'The Chinese diaspora' needs to be thought of less as a means of unifying disparate elements than as a 'loose paradigm' whose emergence inevitably magnifies the already present difficulties of describing, interpreting and understanding 'China' and 'Chineseness' as coherent and unified entities.¹² As such, it should occasion the bringing into relief, rather than levelling out, of historical dispersals and cultural differences, not only beyond but also within its borders, reflected for example in the multiple 'mutually unintelligible forms of speech' covered by the abstract notion of a single Chinese language.¹³ As Ien Ang says, 'The view from the diaspora has shattered the convenient certainty with which Chinese studies has been equated, quite simply, with the study of China . . .'; – the same might be said of the equation of 'Chinese art' with 'art from China'. If '[b]eing Chinese outside China cannot possibly mean the same thing as inside', it is also worth remembering that being Chinese inside China no more means the same. Not only does it 'var[y] from place to place, molded by the local circumstances in different parts of the world where people of Chinese ancestry have settled and constructed new ways of living', such that we may acknowledge 'many different Chinese identities, not one',¹⁴ these many identities and subject positions are emphatically on the move. Unsettled, resettled, they/we are determined not by locale per se, but as much through journeys and traversals, literal and metaphorical, small and large, tame and fabulous. It is these that are suggested by both the title and image of Sanderson's work, invoking between broad caricaturistic strokes and sober details both generalised and heterogeneous narratives; the subtle complications and twists to a tale or tales that involve movements – geographical, cultural and linguistic – in at least two directions, and the contingent negotiation of the ambiguities of positioning between 'traveller'/'tourist'/'coloniser'/'emigrant'/'colonised' and 'migrant'. Fanciful stories of adventures 'East' come into tension with those less heard of migrations 'South', 'North' and 'West', towards such equally fabulous destinations as 'England'.

At different times, 'England' has presented for many like and unlike the young Salman Rushdie in Bombay 'as wonderful a prospect as Oz'; and like the 'Kansas' of the film, is 'no more real'. Through an imaginary land the 'Yellow Brick Road' winds a precarious passage; here it might resonate with the racialised stereotyping of Chinese as the 'Yellow Peril',¹⁵ as well as the immigrant-as-sojourner's hopes of returning home, and the laborious work of reinventing and building a way of life overseas. For the majority of first-generation Chinese immigrants arriving in Britain from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s, England's postwar and post-austerity interest in 'exotic' foreign cuisine opened up an economic niche – the restaurant and takeaway trade – which saw its greatest boom in the 1970s, and with which Chinese immigrants in

Britain continue to be identified. Exceeding this over-simplistic yet dominant frame of reference, *He Took Fabulous Trips* offers an oblique glimpse into unfathomed archives, its blanks and omissions pointing to the narrative gaps, complexities and departures in so many ongoing, fragmented stories of the so-called 'Chinese diaspora' that, in Britain – behind and beyond the one-dimensional 'public face' – might also be stories of 'not-Chineseness', 'not-Britishness', 'not-Blackness', 'not-Asianness'.

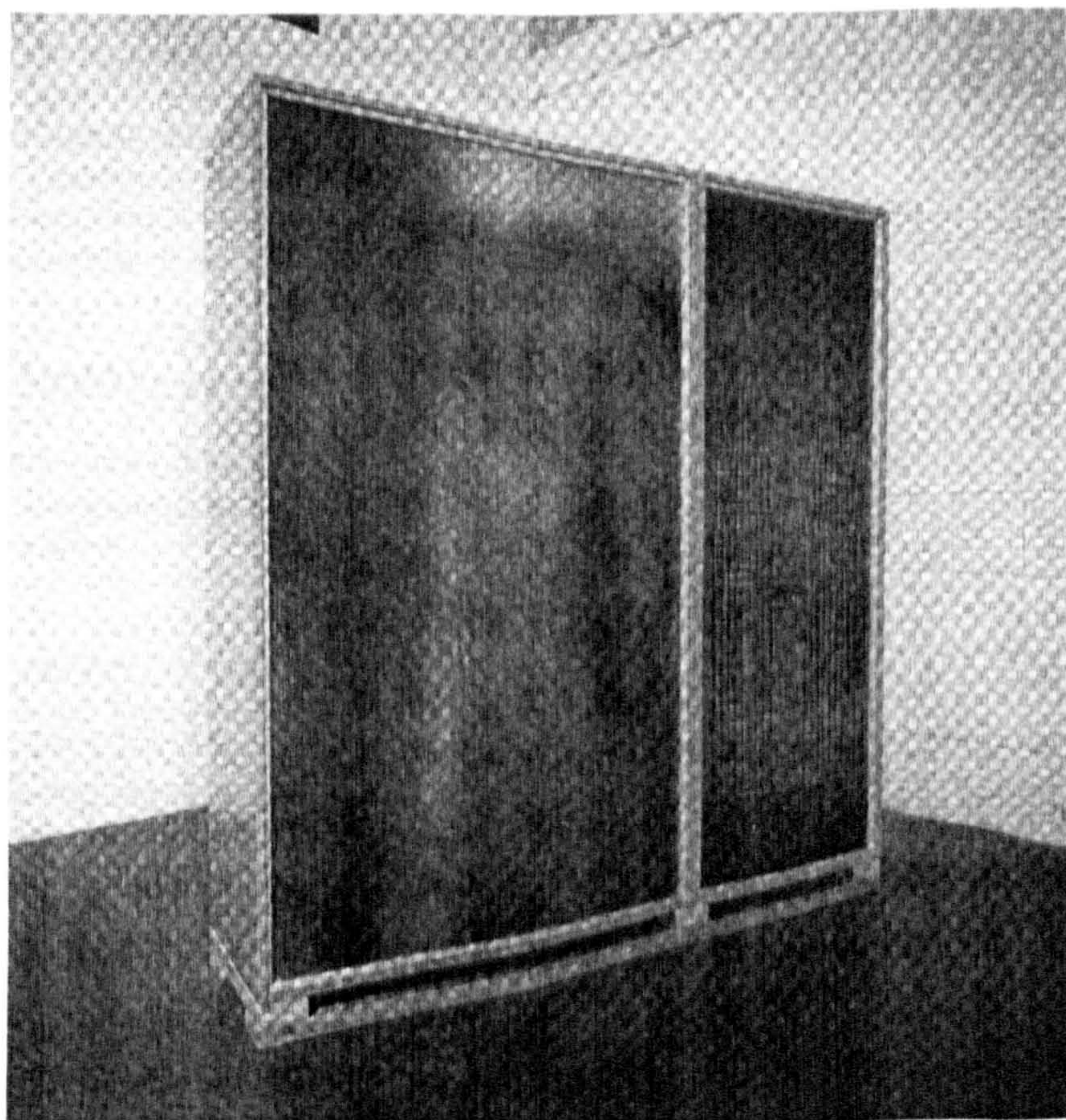
From bare feet and sandals to 'ruby slippers' and 'home'; Rushdie writes:

... the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that 'there's no place like home', but rather there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began.¹⁶

For Sanderson, this not-home might be Malaysia, signalled in a more recent work, *Fabrication and Reality* (1998)¹⁷ by the stylised doubled form within a double image of Kuala Lumpur's landmark Petronas Twin Towers, further twinned with a meticulously rendered yet indeterminate expanse of skin. Made in collaboration with Neil Conroy, Sanderson's

Edinburgh and touring, 1996, *Far from the Shore*, Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, 1998, *Another Province*, Watermans Arts Centre, London, Brewery Arts, Cirencester, 1998; notable exceptions include *I Am Not What I Am*, Camerawork, London, Angel Row, Nottingham and Leeds Metropolitan University Gallery, 1996, and *numbersix*, TS2K, London, 1998, a discussion of which can be found in Diana Yeh's 'Ethnicities on the move', *Critical Quarterly*, 42:2, pp 65–91.

12. Ien Ang, 'Can one say no to Chineseness? Pushing the limits of the diasporic paradigm', in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*, ed. R Chow, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2001, pp 281–300.
13. Rey Chow, 'Introduction: On Chineseness as a theoretical problem', in Chow, ed, 2001, p 8.
14. Ang, op cit.
15. See Jenny Clegg *Fu Manchu and the 'Yellow Peril': The Making of a Racist Myth*, Trentham Books, Staffordshire, 1994.
16. Salman Rushdie *The Wizard of Oz*, BFI Publishing, London, 1992, p 57.
17. Lesley Sanderson and Neil Conroy, *Fabrication and Reality*, 1998, graphic on paper, carbon paper, MDF, wood, viewing device in the rear of the piece, light, 61' x 59' x 16'.



Conroy and Sanderson, *Fabrication and Reality*

18. Lesley Sanderson, *These Colours Run*, mixed media installation, 1994.
19. After Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an elaboration of her reference to 'the academic/intellectual/artistic hybrid', displacing the divisional, diagonal stroke with a hyphen, marking thus a conjunction, division, a break in sense, an omission. Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, New York and London, 1993, p x.
20. 'Alongside each utterance, one might say that off-stage voices can be heard . . . in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is lost in the vast perspective of the already-written) de-originate the utterance . . .' Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, Hill & Wang, New York, 1974, cited in Kaja Silverman *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, p 50.
21. Ang, op cit.
22. "Kitemark" n. An official kite-shaped mark on goods approved by the British Standards Institution; kite n. 1 a toy consisting of a light framework with thin material stretched over it, flown in the wind at the end of a long string. 2 any of various soaring birds of prey esp. of the genus *Milvus* with long wings and usu. a forked tail. 3 *Brit. slang* an aeroplane. 4 *slang* a fraudulent cheque, bill, or receipt . . . 6 *slang* a letter or note, esp. one that is illicit or surreptitious. 7 (in *pl.* the highest sail of a ship, set only in a light wind. 8 *Archaic* a dishonest person, a sharper; mark n. 1 a trace, sign, stain, scar, etc., on a surface, face, page, etc. 2 . . . a written or printed symbol . . . b a numerical or alphabetical award denoting excellence, conduct, proficiency, etc . . . 3 . . . a sign or indication of quality, character, feeling, etc . . . 4 a sign, seal, etc., used for

practice too has split and doubled, her already hybrid positionings further multiplied, literally irreducible to one. Based in Sheffield in the north of England, which 'half' is 'Eastern', 'Western' or 'Northern'? Which part is 'Asian', when 'Asian' can be 'Chinese' and 'Chinese' can be 'Black' but 'Black' might not be 'Chinese' and 'Asian' is not always 'Asian' and 'Chinese' is not, in any case really/but just happens to be 'Chinese', that is, 'White' in disguise, or if 'Chinese' is not 'Black' or 'White' but 'Yellow' – the 'New Black' or a jaded 'Off-White'? All such variations – so reasonable and ridiculous – threaten to return us to categories and the spectre of essentialism, even, as the title of another piece by Sanderson goes, 'These Colours Run',¹⁸ and, as the Vietnamese-American-postcolonial-feminist-artist-intellectual-filmmaker-theorist-hybrid¹⁹ Trinh T Minh-ha has said, 'categories always leak'. Geographies and boundaries too – this dialogue may be 'Trans-Atlantic' but its implications are also 'Pan-Pacific' (or perhaps 'Trans-Pacific-Atlantic'?).

In the face of the apparent redundancy of terms, the question for a new generation of so-called 'British Chinese' artists and other imaginary groups is not, perhaps, of the relevance or effectivity of 'playing the race card' – a seemingly inappropriate, crude and outdated turn of phrase which nevertheless undeniably persists – but rather of how the moment, and with it the game of alignments, differentiations and possible tactics, has changed. As 'de-originated' subjects,²⁰ yet time and again mistaken for some 'other' and an 'elsewhere', it is necessary to claim careful contingency to so many historical, cultural and political legacies of the marginal, and yet to insist upon the indiscretion of unnatural denominations. Ien Ang again: 'If I am inescapably Chinese by descent, I am only sometimes Chinese by consent. When and how is a matter of politics.'²¹ Given the right timing, as an opening – though never closing – gambit, is it possible to play a 'false hand'? To consent, sometimes, to several names, always at least and not-quite 'yellow and british and asian and white and chinese and black . . .', never curtailed to the one?

CHINGLISH

M ji ni deo yeo gei do yen xig gong dung wa le? Ngo nim nei dei ting deg qed ngo m hai boon dei yen a o? Ting deg qed ngo ge lun dun/Essex yim a o? ¶¶

'Y(B)B(AA)C(YRWBW/M)A—?'

Why be a 'Y(B)B(AA)C(YRWBW/M)A—?' Somewhere inside or between, attempting to enter/disrupt/bypass partitioned terrains, we might (fail to) identify those subjects struggling or juggling, to differing degrees, with or against some such awkward, ill-tasting mouthful of a Name-In-Capitals (– or no caps?) as: Young (Black-) British (-Anglo-Asian-) Chinese (-Yellow- Red- White- and- Blue- Wo/Man) Artist. An over-sized kite-mark²² of identity – a stamp of approval validating the object's attainment of often contradictory criteria, authenticating the goods as 'good'; (be they physical bodies, or the intangible labours, desires and fears invested/inflicted therein and upon), confirming fidelity

distinction or identification. b a cross etc, made in place of a signature by an illiterate person s a target, object, goal, etc . . . ' *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 9th edn, ed. Delia Thompson, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998.

23. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, Verso, London, 1993.
24. 'Despite our desperate, eternal attempts to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak.' Trinh, T Minh-Ha, *Woman Native Other*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1989, p 94.
25. 'Within the trajectory I am following then, modernism serves as the symbolic order which encompasses and defines all the activities I am concerned with, and the concept of nagging and its repetitive nature can be perceived as an intervention that takes place in relation to linear concepts of progress which serve as modernism's most fundamental informing values . . . the nagging, plaintive voice with its circular and repetitive qualities serves in some way to interrupt or disrupt or even slightly agitate the surface of modernism's commanding direction . . . ' Irit Rogoff, 'Tiny anguishes: reflection on nagging, scholastic embarrassment, and feminist art history', *Differences*, 4:3, 1992, pp 38-65.
26. Bettina Aptheker's expression, 'to pivot the center', is cited in Elsa Barkley Brown, 'African-American women's quilting: a framework for conceptualising and teaching African-American women's history', *Signs*, 14:4, 1989.
27. The premium placed on youth deserves further discussion and unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this paper.

to the label on the box. A kite, a mark – a precarious toy of skins spun and sewn, stretched and pinned to a light frame of words and cast into short-tempered cross-currents; a thing that flies, trailing fraudulent letters, sign, stain and scar of a dishonest person, signature-seal of a subject untrue.

What is this untidy (upper or lower case?) name/category of 'unfinished identities',²³ 'leaking'²⁴ its subject(s) left, right and centre, up, down and under? A random sequence compelling endless shifts and expansions? Cut up into manageable pieces – easier to get one's mouth around, easier to swallow – we might be able to discern some of the more familiar variations along the often invisibly gendered, colour-coded themes of nationality and ethnicity: 'Young British Artist', 'Black British', 'Anglo Asian', 'Chinese Woman Artist'. We could abbreviate it, but the immediate acronym – YB(BAA)C(YRWBW/M)A? – is somewhat dysfunctional, clearly as much a twister for the tongue as the expanded designation it might displace.

Not outside the parentheses but in-between, the words 'British' and 'Chinese' (or 'chinese' and 'british'). The focus of the question? What she's getting at? Losing and regaining focus, there is no thing to get – no object or condition to understand, possess, obtain or contract – only something to get at, to hint at and taunt. How might we criticise, undermine, bully and nag²⁵ at 'British' and 'Chinese' as signifiers in tandem, near-newly wed? The idea of a focal point eludes, deludes. 'Pivoting this imaginary centre',²⁶ another perspective reveals the point to be a line, a wave, a vocal dis/chord – sounding and silencing the speaking (now major, now minor) of 'British' and 'Chinese'. Mindful of forgetting – I am for getting no thing, no fixed object/event, but for remembering my/your partiality, my/your imbrication in the making/unmaking of (claims to) knowledges; the specificity of experiences and *ligature* of histories, languages, generations and cultures; between speech and silence, the trajectory and possibility of their mutual un/translation in transit/transition, risking erasure under all-naming no-names. Whether speaking (of) a protracted/protracting 'Black-) British (-Anglo-Asian-) Chinese (-Yellow- Red- White- and- Blue- Wo/Man-)ness', or a contracted/contracting 'British-Chinese-ness', what, in each practice or tactic of naming, is at stake?²⁷

Some of us, sharing like motifs though not, perhaps, like motives, may appear to be searching for the same, but are in fact looking for same-ness – homogeneity, fixity and unity. How does one counter the risk of reading/hearing '-ness' as *an essence*, its acronymic 'condensation' as 'distillation' – the subject 'purified' – even as the name-chain refuses it? If upper-case letters suggest Proper Names and generic representative types, each standing alone in a sequence of seemingly steadfast and stalwart natural/ised Monoliths, what happens if we divest them of their Capital(s), unpack and lower their cases, displace Proper with improper names? Made variable, capricious, as adjectives that name only in part, transitorily, that modify and describe, that *transform* the subject, and situate her/him erratically, emphatically *in process* – to think/speak/read/imagine '(black-) british (-anglo-asian-) chinese (-yellow-red-white-and-blue-wo/man-) ness', or '(blue-anglo-black-) chinese (white-asian-yellow-) british (-red wo/man-) ness', or 'british-born-south-eastern-northern-southern-bred-london-based-hongkong-chinese-english-broken-cantonese-ness', may

allow us to refer not to the permanently essential, but to the *make-shifting* provisional.

As pivotal, provisional terms contingent to history and geography, they must throw and be thrown into hyphenated-motion, in tandem, in continua with/as the subject at stake.²⁸ Played tactically, in/appropriately, as oxymoronic acronyms with meanings borne not in or on the skin but as sometime adornments, accessories to performance, or crimes of fraudulence/inauthenticity, these are words to bear or bare tentatively, in speech-marks, for they can hook like burrs, and kite-mark you. *Akron* (end) *onoma* (name)²⁹ – (end)names not to end with, nor articulate with finality an object or purpose, but rather – for *akron* also carries the meaning ‘tip’ – to lean towards, hint at, a subject-becoming, beginning-again.

28. ‘*adjicere* adject- throw to, add, attribute . . .’
Thompson, ed, op cit.

29. Ibid.

A-Y(Entries for an Inventionry of Dented ‘I’s) was presented at *Shades of Black: Assembling the Eighties – A Trans-Atlantic Dialogue on Afro-Asian Arts in Post-war Britain*, a conference organised by AAVAA (African and Asian Visual Artists Archive) at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 19–22 April 2001.

F. 'Cruel/Loving Bodies,' *Cruel/Loving Bodies*, exhibition catalogue (Shanghai: Duolun Museum of Modern Art, 2004) pp.60-64

Cruel / Loving Bodies

susan pul san lok

I.

To slash, to stroke, to cut, to caress; a line leans fine and spare, a hair-like split. Chasing a chasm between cruelty and love (- a phantasm, a haunting divide?), a stance or position is struck.

砍、击、割、摸；如发一般的线斜挂在细致与多余之间。在残酷与爱(一是幻象，还是萦绕心头的割爱?)的峡谷追逐，是阵式还是位置被陷落。

Words ill-match the tense, shifting weight of forced embraces, viewed intimately from a distance. ove taken, amassed, ove given, for someone or other own good; drip-fed, slow-spooned, dished out, knlfed-in, LOVE YOU TO DEATH Do you feel the same?

文字不成句子，熊抱迫得转移重心，从距离之中亲密地观看。「爱」被接纳、累积；「爱」被付出，只为别人还是自己的好处；点滴地喂养、用匙中灌注、碟往刀来，「我爱死你」你是否也感觉同样?

Words rush and halt, an apology after acts blunt and reticent: she strips, they strip back, dress up, overdress, breaths corsetted, holding in, holding out.

欲言又止，鲁顿与无言的行动过后的歉意：她脱、他/她们穿上、穿戴、还穿过了头，呼吸被束腰，止著，释放。

II.

Skin slips into view. At a border - a wonder - a kingdom symbolically walled from the rest of the world, a woman half-bares her body, a breach at a barrier. Not stilled nor impassive, she walks semi-naked, displeasing eyes used to teasing below-counters / through peep-holes / in mirrors, now averted wide-shut with contempt: outrageous exposure of willful flesh, a gesture self-gratifying, self-ratifying.

皮肤溜滑成景观。在一条边界上——一个惊讶——国度以符号的方式被困困于世界之外，一个半裸的女人，冲击城墙。不是凝止或无动于衷，她半裸走过，不满的眼神里已经习惯了打量/窥伺/镜子里，以观照逃离大千世界；无法无天的坦露，固执的肉体，一个自我满足、自我肯定的姿势。

III.

Skin comes up close, a surface of feathery granite, the grain of a voice, ventriloquised. Porous, elusive, defying the frame, a landscape locks into a dyad. A cheap wardrobe-husk braces body and birth-place, a strange, dense expanse and emblem-home: Asia-as-landmark, Malaysian twin towers made toy-like and flimsy. An eye-hole punctures the boxed body shells, and eyes peer into the blue. Mere daydream, inside and out.

无孔不入，表面呈羽毛状的花岗岩，声音的砂砾，呀呀学语。浸漏的、溜手的、越过框架，风景被锁成一对一双。便宜的衣柜支撑著身体与出生地，一个陌生、密集扩散与标志的家：亚洲-地标，马来西亚双子塔变成玩物与拷贝纸。入箱的躯壳被打上孔眼，眼睛窥伺蓝色。只是白日梦，里里外外。

IV.

Doubled up in double happiness, s/he captured, enraptured, enraged. Wrapped up, in arms, their faces-for-hands are tied. A two-headed monster, an everyday creature looks out from pretty coloured strings, now mummified.

now bandaged, now blind and mute behind cartoon mouths and eyes. Whose wound in need of covering, whose broken skin, dirtied? Clipped by the ears for wrong-doings, conjoined by choice and reparation, the double-dealing, double-faced, double-hearted, double-tongued speak from the belly, venter loqui:

在双喜里乘双，人/女也被捉住、狂喜、激怒。包裹着，在臂膀、手以脸捆绑。一双双头怪，平平无奇的生物从彩带中张望，现在变成木乃伊，被包扎，又盲又哑的躲在卡通纸的口里眼里。是谁的伤口需要掩盖，谁被撕裂的肌肤，被污蔑？因为犯错而被夹耳朵，选择与补偿夹迫，双重交易、互为表里，一心二用、自相矛盾的从肚子里说出来，venter loqui:

chinesejapanesedirtykneeswhataretheseheadsshoulderskneesandtoeskneesandtoes
chinesejapaneseheadsshouldersdirtykneeswhatarethesekneesandtoeskneesandtoes

V.
Skin itches. A woman implores you, for one-night only, to scratch. Her stage is a battleground in want of opponents - aggressors or defenders, your choosing. Sometimes eight-legged, the woman-arachnid desires and repels, othertimes playing and pleading devotion. Sunflowers shed salty tears, pungent sobs hammered helpless into wood. Watched and heard, scratched and sniffed by a game and solemn audience, she makes up a hard, damp, sweet-smelling bed, and sleeps.

肌肤痕痒。一个女人哀求你，只是一晚，为她搔痒。她的舞台是一个等待敌人的战场——侵略与抗拒，是你的选择。有时八条腿，女人织成欲望与拒人千里的网，有时又馅谄奉媚。太阳花遮盖了泪，以辛辣的吸泣锤打进木头。看见与听见，被游戏和观众搔抓和抽鼻，她造了一铺坚硬、湿漉漉与香甜的床，沉沉睡去。

VI.
Sleep and needles pin a soft-sculptured dog to a foam-topped, glass-encased plinth. She sews and stuffs the look-alike-imposter, a cult cartoon character made inanimate. Doubling the double, a celluloid fiction aspiring to fiction: by day, a mild-mannered dog-janitor, by night, a would-be superhero with kung-fu kicks, his crime-fighting success sealed by a feline side-kick. The fur-deep hybrid of dubious heritage dreams Chinese-Black-American dreams. Lovable, laughable, the butt of an old joke: haha, there is no real you; but it's funnier if you don't know it?

睡魔与针把一具毛娃娃狗钉在一个封有胶盖的玻璃座上。她缝合与充填了这几具可乱真的假货，一个邪典卡通公仔变成瘫痪。加倍成双，胶卷虚构渴望成为虚构：日里，温文尔雅的狗杂差，夜里，功夫英雄的疑梦，疾恶的成功以猫腿存封。深藏在皮毛里半信半疑的杂种遗孤，做着华裔—黑种—美国梦。可爱的、可笑的、老话题旧笑柄：哈哈，这里没有真实的你；只是，若果你蒙在鼓里，会更加惹笑。

The pleasure and pain-staked hero, more impotent than omnipotent, is a copy, a dummy - an idiot and surrogate for her aggressions / affections, a sometime victim / bully. Eyes closed, blacked out in black, she lays him to rest, a curative / injurious love / hate dying, awaiting a fairytale ending.

快感与痛交相煎熬的英雄，比全能更加无能，原是一只复制品，一个傀儡——一个傻瓜与她的侵害/交感，有时是受害者/恶霸的替罪羔羊。闭上眼睛，在漆黑里暗然，她把他躺下，一种治疗/伤害的爱/害怕死亡，在等待一个童话故事的终结。

VII.
Fake fur, fake skins. Skin slips inside another: an awkward, ill-fitting costume, a pantomime panda. He peruses shop windows and collects stuffed toys - his own untrue image. Idols in miniature, nation-symbols endangered, embodied, preserved. Covetous, lonely, he caresses, and assaults, cutting, mutilating, he pulls insides out, to find only synthetic filling.

假发肤。皮肤卷进皮肤——一个笨拙，衣不称身的服装，一双哑口无言的熊猫。他在橱窗巡视与收集毛公仔——他失真的形象。微缩的偶像、国族象征濒临绝种、遁成肉身，被受保护。垂涎、孤独，他抚摸、然後动武、剪开、残害。他把里面的都掏出来，只找到合成纤维的心。

VIII.
Still faithful, still chaste, the terracotta women advance, veiled in clay. Recalled from dust, they collect,

recollect each solitary sacrifice. Shored up to sustain the great and good, exemplary deaths, hers and hers, adorn his and his memory. In silence, in solitude, in suicide, they submit their deference and protest.

仍是一样的忠诚、贞坚，红泥塑成的女人向着前，以泥盖面。从尘土里记起，她们收集、再收集彼此孤独的献祭。充撑着伟大与善，死亡的例子，她的、她的，装饰着他与他的梦。在沉默里、在孤独里、在自杀里，她们把自己交予屈从与抗议。

IX.

She cannot see so she casts no final glances, makes no final call. She cannot write, so no note remains. All are provided for, all, but one, have grown and flown. She shrinks with age and illness. Miles on, miles on, she wakes, she walks, she eats, she rests, never properly sleeps - something, always something keeps her from this place. The radio chats with urgency, and favourite operas cycle through the comic-tragic. Pains worsen and dull, and worsen, each killer dose quickening unbidden ghosts who will not, will not leave. Today she is tired, her complaints are the same and we don't know what to do. Useless distracted daughter's daughters, love mismatching duty, hearts failing. More doctors, more drugs? She laughs and hugs with her soft body and papery hands, she strokes and stares, and later, she protests.

她目不能视，所以也就不能作最後一瞥，不能作最後的呼喊。她不能书写，所以没有留下任何纪录。什么都有，为了所有的唯一，羽翼已丰，扬尘而去。她因为年老和疾病日渐萎靡。千里复千里，她衰落、她前行，她吃喝、她休息，却不得安枕一有时，总是有时令她不安於室。收音机胡诌着急忙的讯息，与至爱的戏曲演着悲欢离合。痛苦加剧又乏味，再加剧，所有的杀人者都会快刀斩乱麻，只有不请自来的催命鬼还赖着不走。今日她倦了，她的抱怨没有两样，而我们也无能为力。除了是狂躁女儿的女儿们，错爱的责任，心虚胆怯。更多的医生，更多的药石？她笑，然后用软弱无力的身体与皮包骨的手臂拥抱，她突然一击，然后紧盯着，再迟一点，她抱怨。

译者按：语言的不可言传，所有翻译都是一次重新的书写。(翻：梁宝山)

susan pui san lok

Is an artist and writer based in London. She received her MA in Feminism and the Visual Arts from the University of Leeds in 1996 and is currently completing a combined practice/theory PhD in Fine Art at the University of East London. Selected recent exhibitions include The Translator's Notes, Café Gallery Projects, London (2003); No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith: A Night of Video, The Central Space, London (2002); New Releases, Gallery 4A, Australia (2001); Cities on the Move, Hayward Gallery, London (1999); and solo shows at Stuff Gallery, London (2000) and East London Gallery (2000). She has contributed essays, articles, and reviews to Third Text, Parallax, and the forthcoming books Discerning Translation (eds. Mieke Bal and Joanne Morra), Art Education: Explorations in Identity, Power and Regulation (eds. Paul Dash and Dennis Atkinson, forthcoming), and Shades of Black: Assembling the Eighties (eds. David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom and Sonia Boyce, inIVA, London / Duke University Press, 2004).

骆佩珊

居于伦敦的艺术家及评论家，1996年女性主义与视觉艺术硕士毕业于Leeds大学，正在当讲师于Middlesex大学。近年展览包括：The Translator's Notes, Café Gallery Projects, London (2003); No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith: A Night of Video, The Central Space, London (2002); New Releases, Gallery 4A, Australia (2001); Cities on the Move, Hayward Gallery, London (1999); 与个展于Stuff Gallery, London (2000) and East London Gallery (1998)。论文及著作曾于Third Text and Parallax等期刊发表。

List of Illustrations

Figures

- 1-2. Lesley Sanderson, *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990), pencil and acrylic on paper
3. Lesley Sanderson, *Self-Portrait as a Chinky* (1984), oil on paper
4. Lesley Sanderson, *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), pencil on paper
- 5-6. Anthony Key, *Free Delivery* (1998), wood, map, printed flags
7. David Hammons, *African American Flag* (1990), dyed cotton
8. Sung Ho Choi, *American Dream* (1988-1992), acrylic, newspaper, wood, glass jars, suitcase
9. Yukinori Yanagi's *Union Jack Ant Farm* (1994), ants, coloured sand, Perspex
10. Vanley Burke's *Flying the Flag* (1968), black and white photograph
- 11-12. Anthony Key, *Three Lions On A Shirt* (1996), football shirt and badges
13. Gu Wenda, *United Nations: Hong Kong Monument: The Historical Clash* (1997), ink, rice paper, hair
14. Mayling To, *NFS flag – Second Time Around* (1998), acrylic, cotton
- 15-16. Gonkar Gyatso, *Soft Touch* (2003), Tibetan brocades, shirts, needles
17. Anthony Key, *Yellow Peril* (1997), soy sauce bottles
18. Anthony Gormley, *Asian Field* (2003-4), 192,000 clay figures
19. Hongtu Zhang, *Mai Dang Lao* (2003), mixed media
20. Hongtu Zhang, *Kekou-Kele* (2003), mixed media
21. Anthony Key, *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), ketchup bottle, soy sauce
22. Anthony Key, *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997), chopsticks
23. Anthony Key, *Hong Kong Shanghai Bank* (1996), takeaway cartons.
24. Anthony Key, *Trojan Horse (Foo Dog)* (1999), takeaway cartons
25. Anthony Key, *Great Wall* (1999), cast bricks
26. Anthony Key, *Culture to go* (2002), takeaway cartons, audio tape, plastic bag
27. Anthony Key, *Wok/Satellite Dish* (1996), wok
- 28-29. Yeu Lai Mo, *Wok-Wave* (1994), open etching on iron wok; *My Mother's Moulds* (1994), stainless steel shelf, dish cloths set in plaster
- 30-31. Yeu Lai Mo, *Yeu Lai's House* (1997/2000), mixed media installation
32. Yeu Lai Mo, *Food Jars I – III* (1998), mixed media
33. Yeu Lai Mo, *Food Jars IV – VI* (1998), mixed media
- 34-35. Yeu-Lai Mo, *Foodscapes I – III* (2000), mixed media
36. Yeu Lai Mo, *Service, Licking, Kissing* (1997), video, 5 mins looped (still)
37. Yeu Lai Mo, *Untitled Sound Piece* (2002), framed colour photograph, headphones, CD player
38. Yeu Lai Mo, *Service I* (1997/2001), Inkjet print, mixed media

List of Illustrations

39. Anthony Key, *Pork Scratchings* (1999), pork scratchings
40. Anthony Key, *Chips with Everything* (2000), potato plants, table, lamp, chair
41. Anthony Key, *Trespassing* (2000), noodles, MDF reel
42. Michael Landy, *Closing Down Sale* (1992/2002), mixed media installation
43. Sylvie Fleury's *ELA 75/K, Easy. Breezy. Beautiful (No.6)* (2000), trolley, pedestal
44. Anthony Key, *Shopping Trolley (with cables ties)* (2002), trolley, cable ties
45. Lesley Sanderson, *Self Portrait – Larger than Life* (1990), pencil on paper
46. Lesley Sanderson, *Negative* (1988), pencil on paper, laser copies, red signature stamp
47. Lesley Sanderson, *Reproductions* (1991), mixed media
48. Lesley Sanderson, *These Colours Run* (1994), mixed media.
49. Lesley Sanderson, *Can't See the Wood for the Trees* (1992), pencil on board, monoprints
- 50-52. Conroy/Sanderson, *Fabrication and Reality* (1998), pencil on paper, carbon copy paper, light, lens, timber
- 53-54. Conroy/Sanderson, *Fabrication* (1998), pencil on paper, timber wedge constructions, neon lights, speakers (view and detail)
55. Conroy/Sanderson, *Here We Are* (2003), photo light boxes
56. Lesley Sanderson, *Time for a Change* (1988), oil on canvas
57. Yeu Lai Mo, *Geisha* (1994), colour cibachrome print
58. Yasumasa Morimura *Portrait (Van Gogh)* (1985), colour photograph
59. Yasumasa Morimura, *Portrait (Futago)* (1988-1990), cibachrome
60. Yasumasa Morimura, *To My Little Sister: for Cindy Sherman* (1998), colour photograph
61. Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (US, 1975), video, b&w, sound (still)
62. Yeu Lai Mo, *Pointing, Service, and Spitting* (1997) cibachrome photographs
- 63-64. Erika Tan, *Passing — Slipping Between the Boundaries Unnoticed* (1995), installation with three monitors (details)
- 65-66. Erika Tan, *Travels with Pup* (1996), series of photographic prints (details)
- 67-68. Erika Tan, *Guarded Proximity* (1997), slide projection and sound (installation views)
69. Lorna Simpson, *Guarded Conditions* (1989) colour Polaroids, plastic plaques, plastic letters
- 70-73. Erika Tan, *Chintz* (1997) / *From China to Chintz* (1999) / *East* (2000), installations with sound, video, lighting, wallpaper, tea chests, tea, lavender essence, P.I.R detectors, bird cages (details)
- 74-76. Erika Tan, *Sites of Construction – Rubik's Cubes / Floorgame* (1996), installation
- 77-78. Erika Tan, *Boatrace* (1998-2000), installation and event
- 79-81. Mayling To, *Death of Hong Kong* (1998), Installation with MDF, carpet, rug, TV, lamp, suitcase, books, ornaments, paper, photographs, wire, fabric, polyester, foam
82. Mayling To, *A Cute Puncture* (1998), wood, foam, fabric, polyester, acupuncture needles
83. Mayling To, *Repertoire Dog* (1999), fabric, polyester, plastic guns
84. Mayling To, *Punchbag* (1996-7), mixed media
- 85-86. Glenn Ligon's *Skin Tight: Muhammed Ali Text* (1995), punchbag and text piece

List of Illustrations

87. Mayling To, *Making Of* (2001), video, colour, 1 min 20 sec loop (still)
88. Mayling To, *Fight Sequence* (2001), video, colour, 1 min 20 sec loop (still)
89. Mayling To, *Living* (2001), video, colour, 8 mins 20 secs (still)
- 90-91. Mayling To, *The Stranger* (2002), video, colour, 11 min 25 secs (stills)
92. Lesley Sanderson, *Accessories* (1988), pencil on paper
- 93-94, 100. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (installation views)
- 95-96, 101-104. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (projection stills)
97. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (screengrab)
105. Xu Bing, *A Book from the Sky* (1988), installation with books and printed scrolls
106. Wenda Gu, *The Mythos of Lost Dynasties* (1984-1997), installation with ink, rice paper, hair
107. Warren Leung Chi-Wo, *Vis(i)ta* (1996-7), wood, zinc plate, mirror, iron, liquid light
108. Tsang Tsou Choi, ongoing street calligraphy, undated
- 109-110. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), installation with digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (installation views)
111. susan pui san lok, *Unravelling* (1994), installation with wood, photocopies, emulsion (details)
- 112-113. susan pui san lok, *Un* (1996-7), laser copies, emulsion, ink, tracing paper, acetate, frames (details)
114. susan pui san lok, *Untitled (Walls have Ears)* (1998), China marker and endorsing ink on walls (details)
115. susan pui san lok, *Untitled (Transit)*, installation with doorstop, Dictaphone, speakers
- 116-117. susan pui san lok, *Untitled (Remains)* (1998), installation with light bulb, paper
- 118-120. susan pui san lok, *Witness* (1998), installation with till rolls, sound, light, lasercopies, photograph corners (details)
121. susan pui san lok, *Monumental Bargain* (1998), ninety seven T-shirts, ink, plinth, barriers
122. susan pui san lok, *97 Proofs* (1998), paper, permanent marker, endorsing ink, plastic frames
123. susan pui san lok, *My He/Art / Your Sleeve* (2000), badges, chocolate, glass bowl, table, cloth, postcards, stand
124. susan pui san lok, *Space 1999* (1999), MDF, paint, doormat, brass, glass, salt, paper, card, lights, mirror
125. susan pui san lok, *Wall* (2000), paper, coins
126. susan pui san lok, *Susan's Room* (2000), doors, plaque
127. susan pui san lok, *Susan's Room and Someone Special* (2000), polaroid
- 128-129. susan pui san lok, *Mobile* (2000), shoes, hanger
130. susan pui san lok, *Susan's Room* (2000), doors, plaque

List of Illustrations

131-132. susan pui san lok, *Take Me Away* (2000), spikes, paper

133. susan pui san lok, *Wait (Walk / Don't Walk)* (2000), artificial grass, foamboard.

134. susan pui san lok, *Wall* (2000), paper, coins

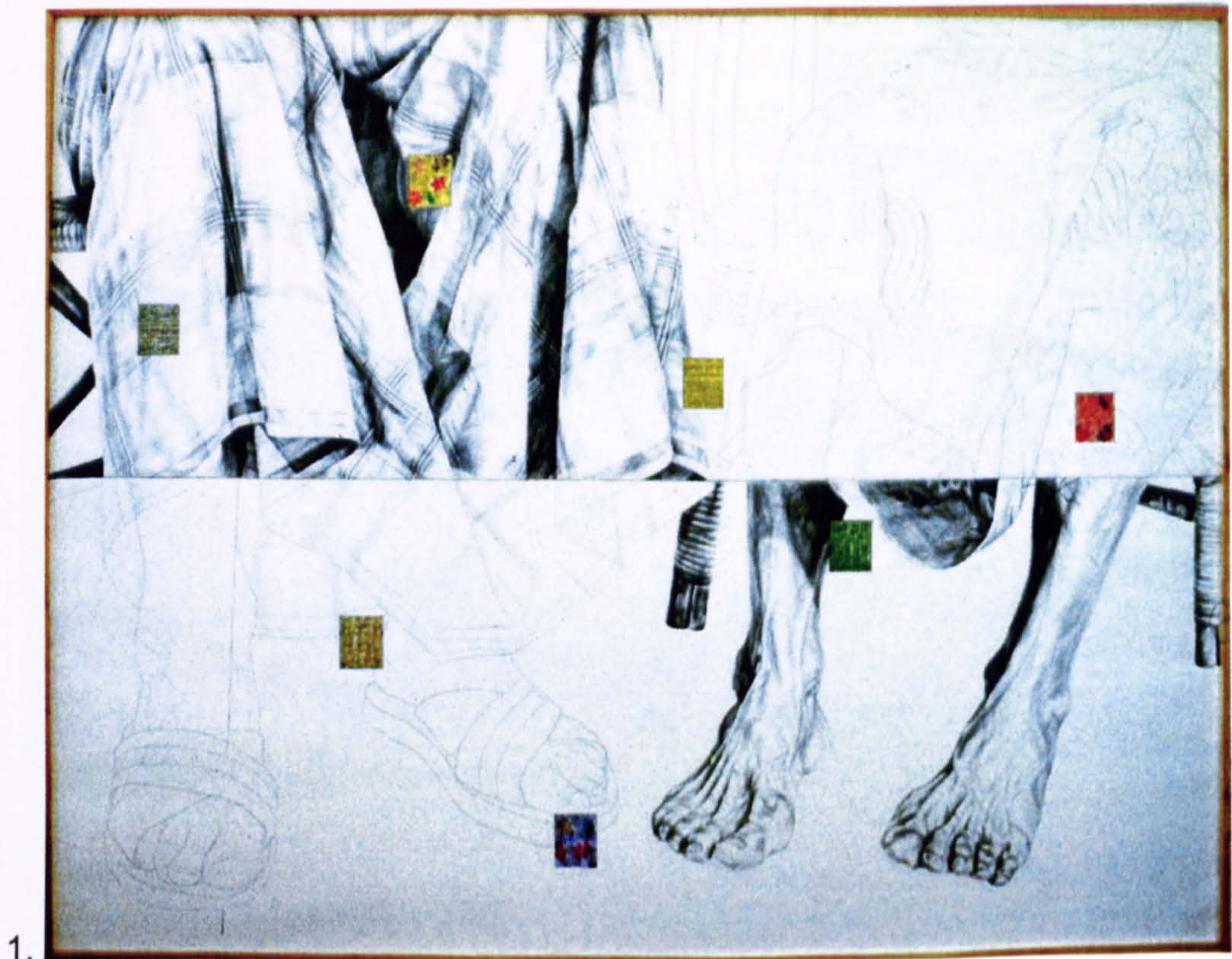
135. susan pui san lok, *Protection* (2000), coat-stand, hat, scarf, badges, sign

136-141. susan pui san lok, *FCHKUK* (2000), installation with sound, tissue paper, fabric, spikes, bucket and spade (details)

142-145. susan pui san lok, *Elements of Drawing Blind* (2001), performance and installation with acetate, permanent marker, overhead projector, blindfold, dictaphone

146-148. susan pui san lok, *Notes On Return*, 2003, DVD sound and video installation, 9 mins 38 secs (stills)

Illustrations



Figs.1-2. Lesley Sanderson, *He Took Fabulous Trips* (1990), pencil and acrylic on paper (view and detail)



3.



4.

Fig. 3. Lesley Sanderson, *Self-Portrait as a Chinky* (1984), oil on paper

Fig. 4. Lesley Sanderson, *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), pencil on paper



5.

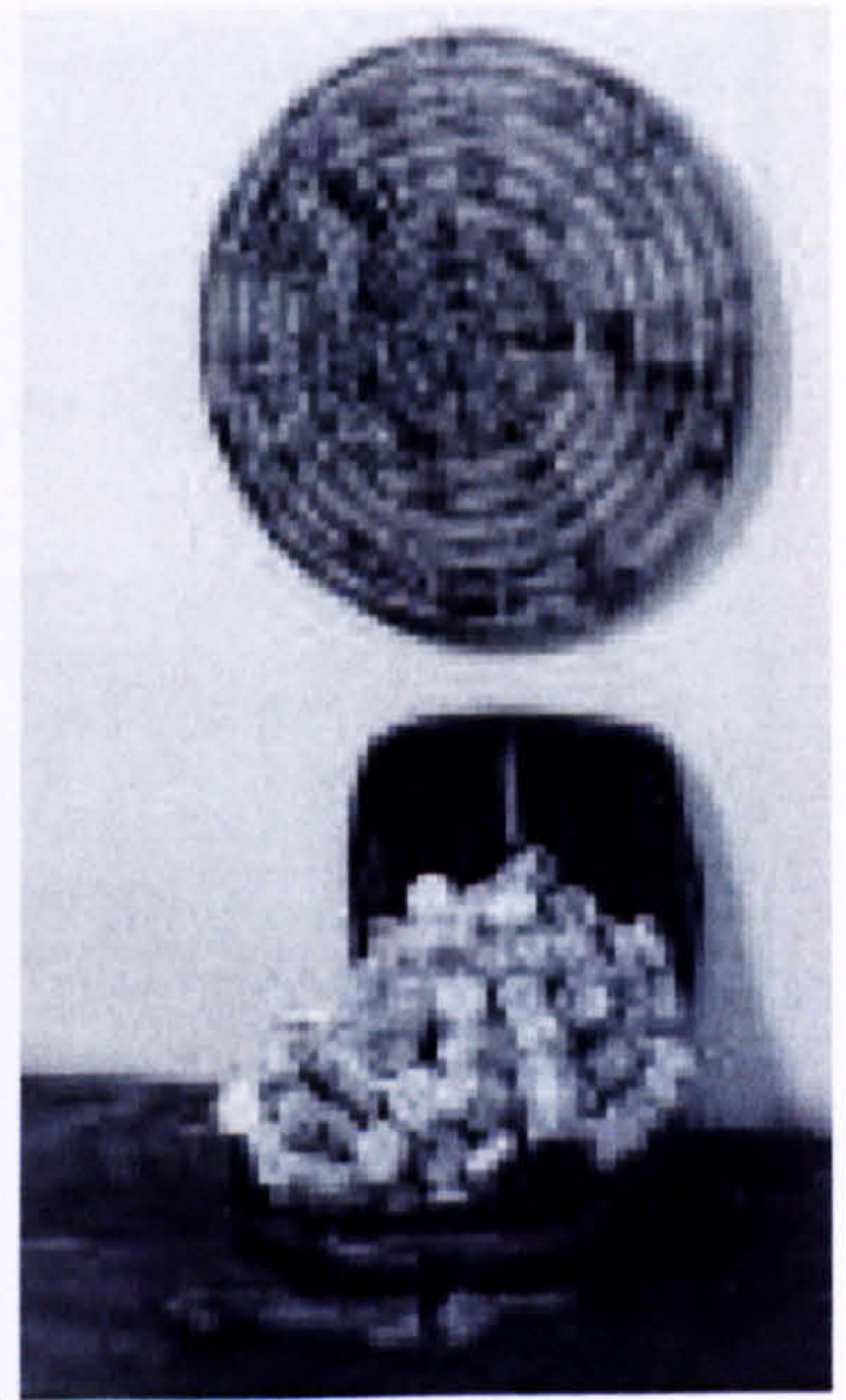


6.

Figs. 5 Anthony Key, *Free Delivery* (1998), wood, map, printed flags (detail)
Figs. 6. *Free Delivery* (1998)



7.



8.

Fig. 7. David Hammons, *African American Flag* (1990), dyed cotton

Fig.8. Sung Ho Choi, *American Dream* (1988-1992), acrylic, newspaper, wood, glass jars, suitcase

Fig. 10. Valerie Bickel's *Party On* (1992). Acrylic on paper, 1992



Fig. 9. Yukinori Yanagi's *Union Jack Ant Farm* (1994), ants, coloured sand, Perspex
Fig. 10. Vanley Burke's *Flying the Flag* (1968), black and white photograph

11.



12.



Figs.11-12. Anthony Key, *Three Lions On A Shirt* (1996), football shirt and badges

13.

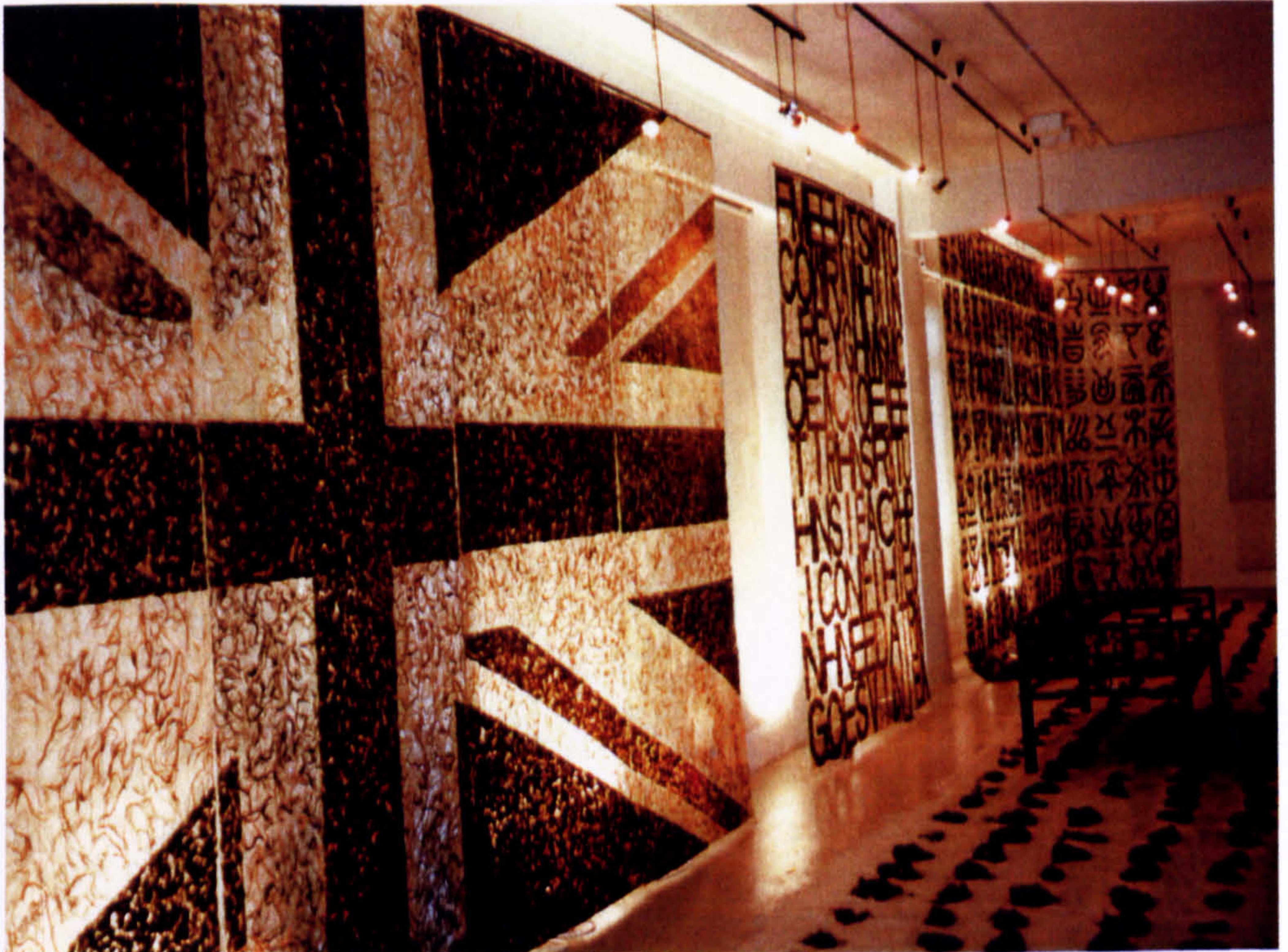


Fig.13. Gu Wenda, *United Nations: Hong Kong Monument: The Historical Clash* (1997), ink, rice paper, hair



Fig.14. Mayling To, *NFS flag – Second Time Around* (1998), acrylic, cotton

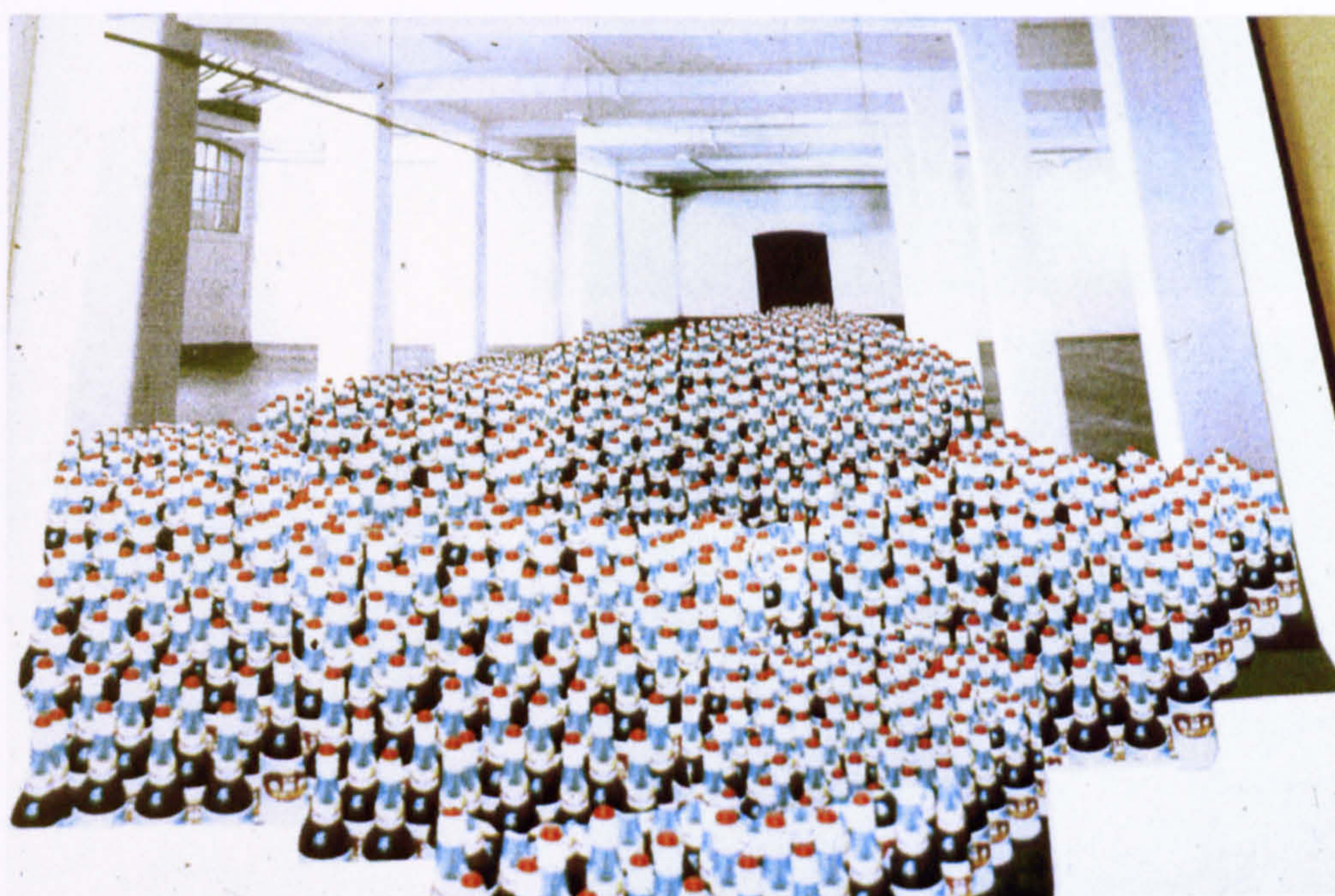
15.



16.



Figs. 15-16. Gonkar Gyatso, *Soft Touch* (2003), Tibetan brocades, shirts, needles



17.

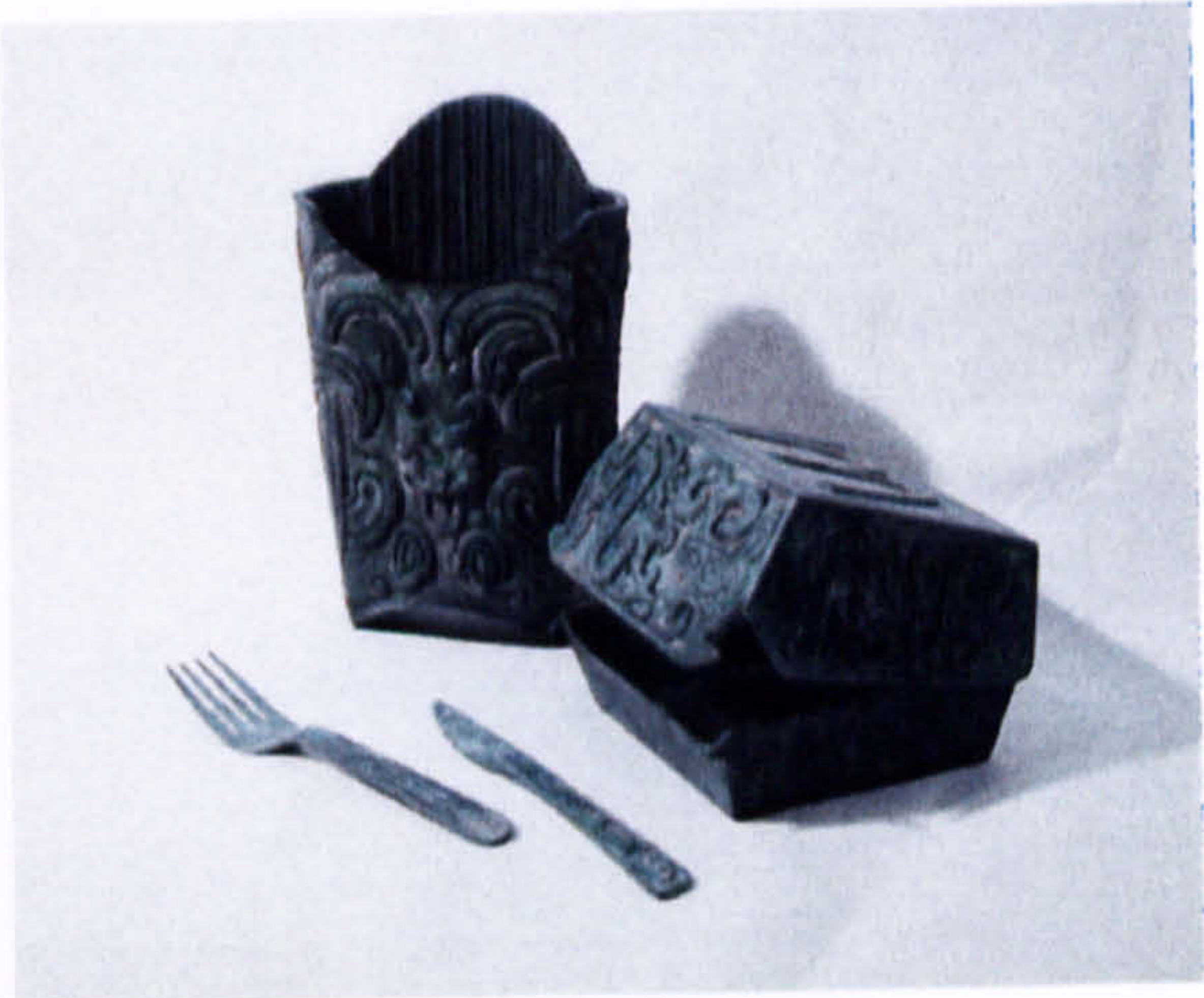


18.

Fig.17. Anthony Key, *Yellow Peril* (1997), soy sauce bottles

Fig.18 Anthony Gormley, *Asian Field* (2003-2004), 192,000 clay figures

19.



20.



Fig. 19. Hongtu Zhang, *Mai Dang Lao* (2003), mixed media
Fig. 20. Hongtu Zhang, *Kekou-Kele* (2003), mixed media



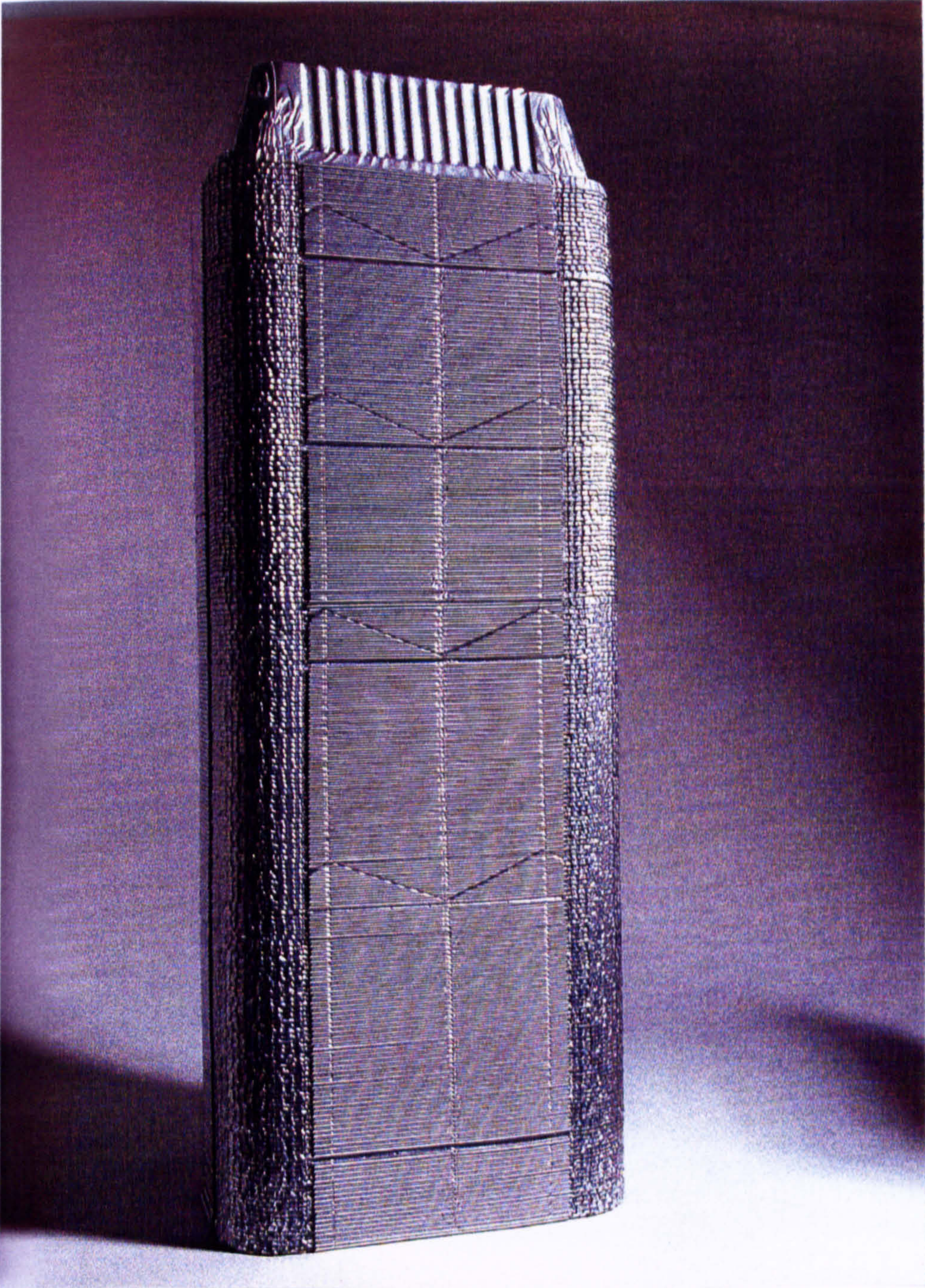
21.



22.

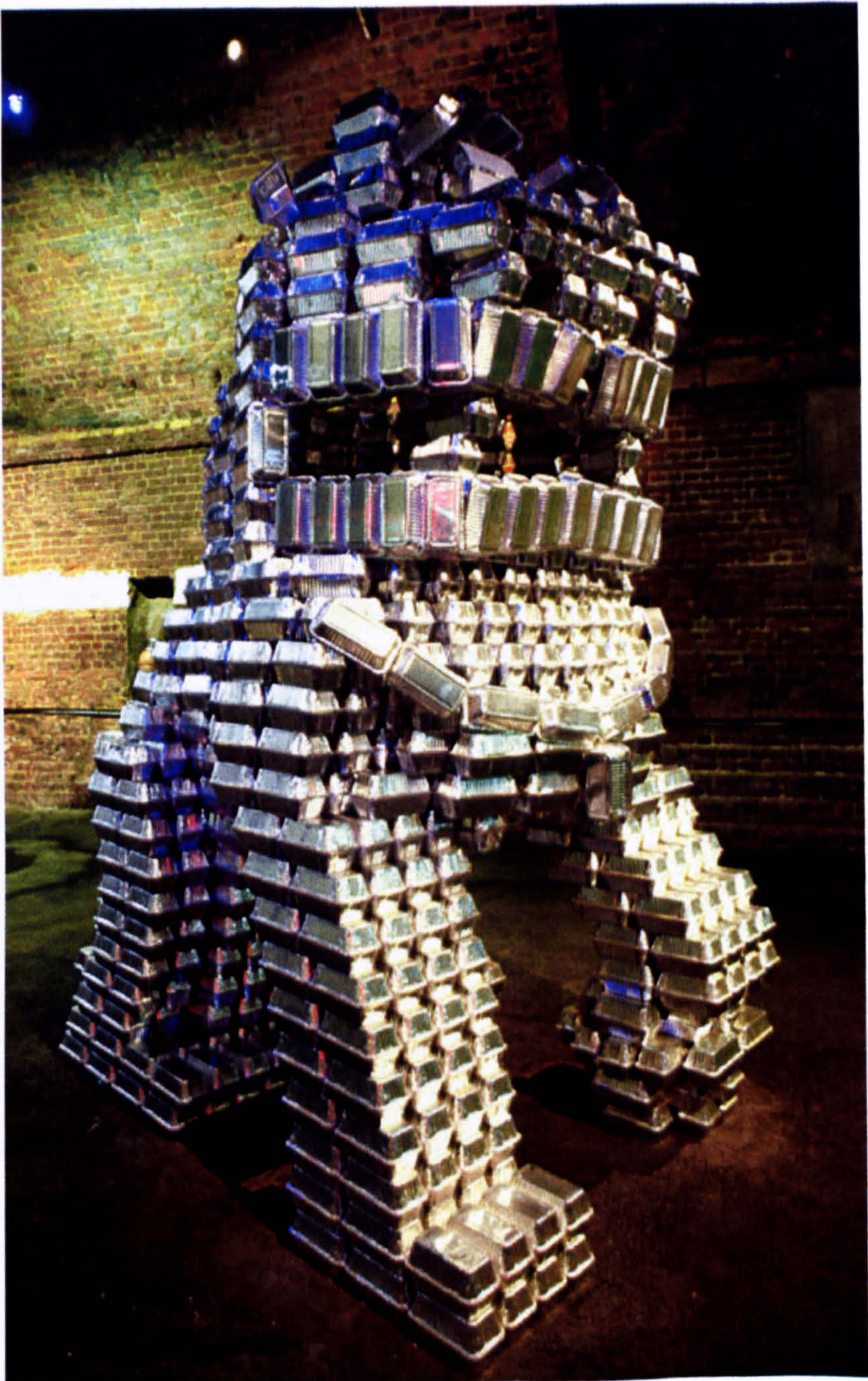
Fig. 21. Anthony Key, *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), ketchup bottle, soy sauce

Fig. 22. Anthony Key, *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997), chopsticks



23.

Fig. 23. Anthony Key, *Hong Kong Shanghai Bank* (1996), takeaway cartons.



24.

Fig.24. Anthony Key, *Trojan Horse (Foo Dog)* (1999), takeaway cartons

25.

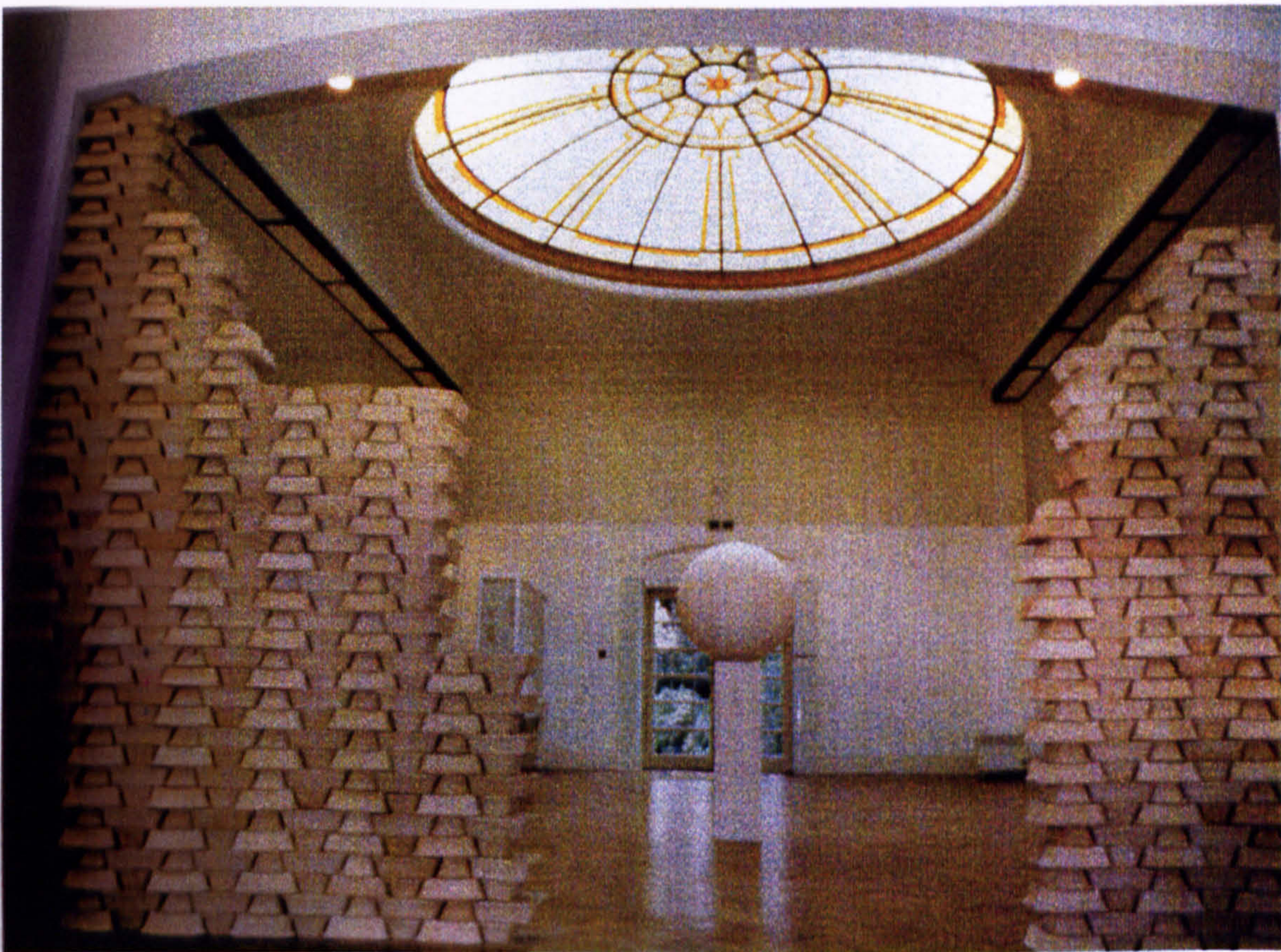


Fig..25. Anthony Key, *Great Wall* (1999), cast bricks

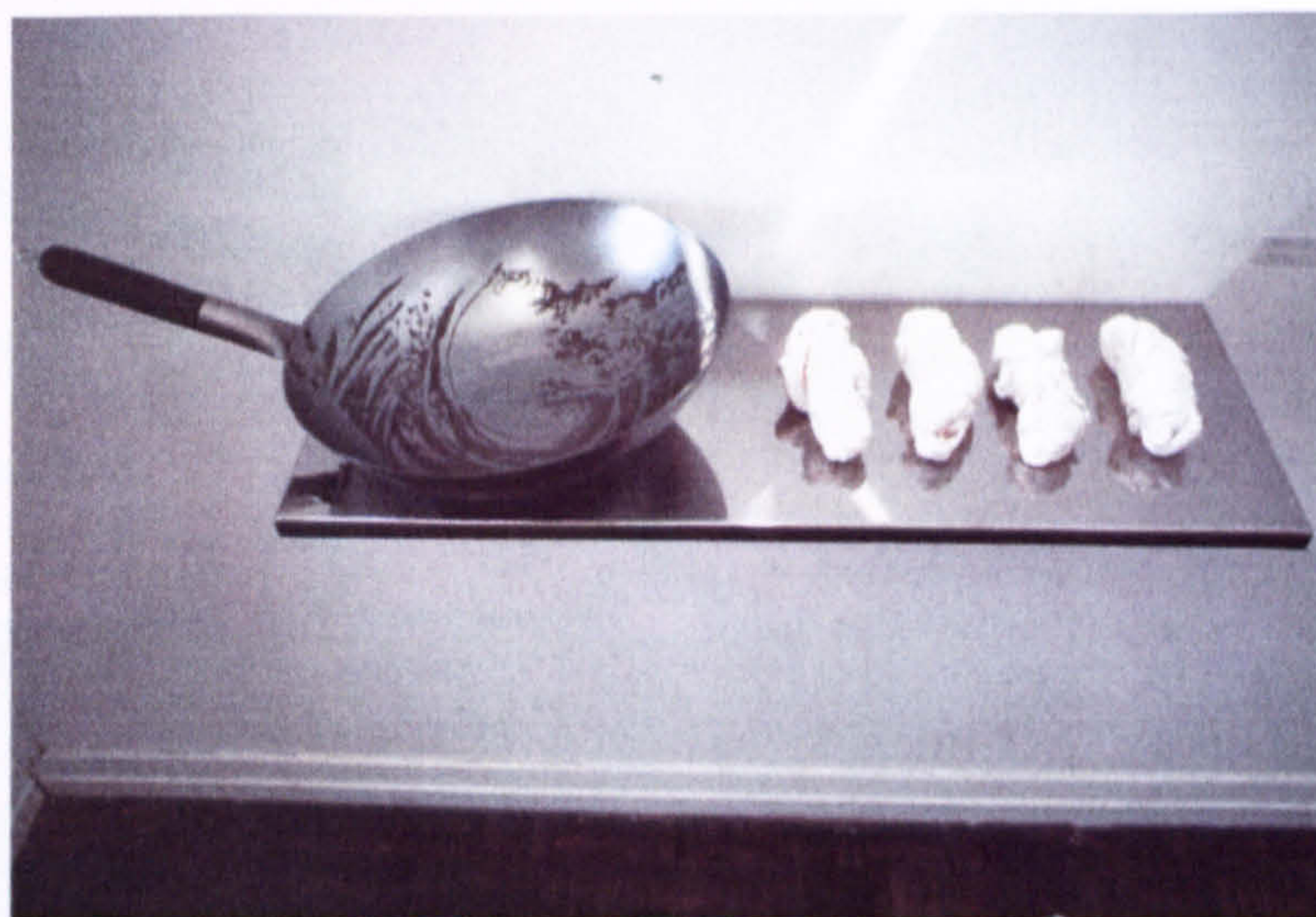


Fig. 26. Anthony Key, *Culture to go* (2002), takeaway cartons, audio tape, plastic bag



27.

Fig. 27. Anthony Key, *Wok/Satellite Dish* (1996), wok



28.



29.

Figs.28-29. Yeu Lai Mo, *Wok-Wave* (1994), open etching on iron wok; *My Mother's Moulds* (1994), stainless steel shelf, dish cloths set in plaster



Figs.30-31. Yeu Lai Mo, *Yeu Lai's House* (1997/2000), mixed media installation

32.

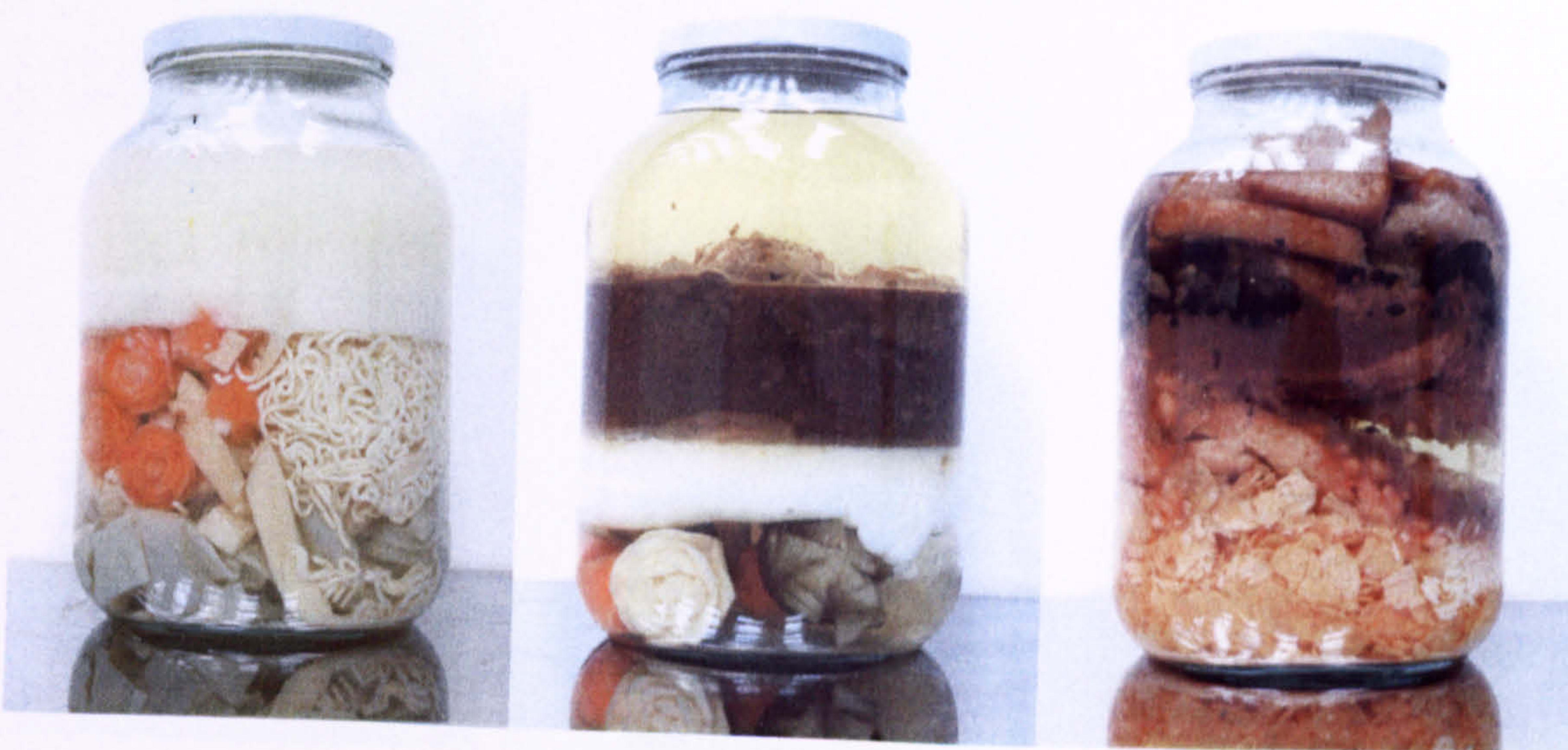


Fig. 32. Yeu Lai Mo, *Food Jars I–III* (1998), mixed media



33.

33. Yeu Lai Mo, *Food Jars IV – VI* (1998), mixed media

34.



35.



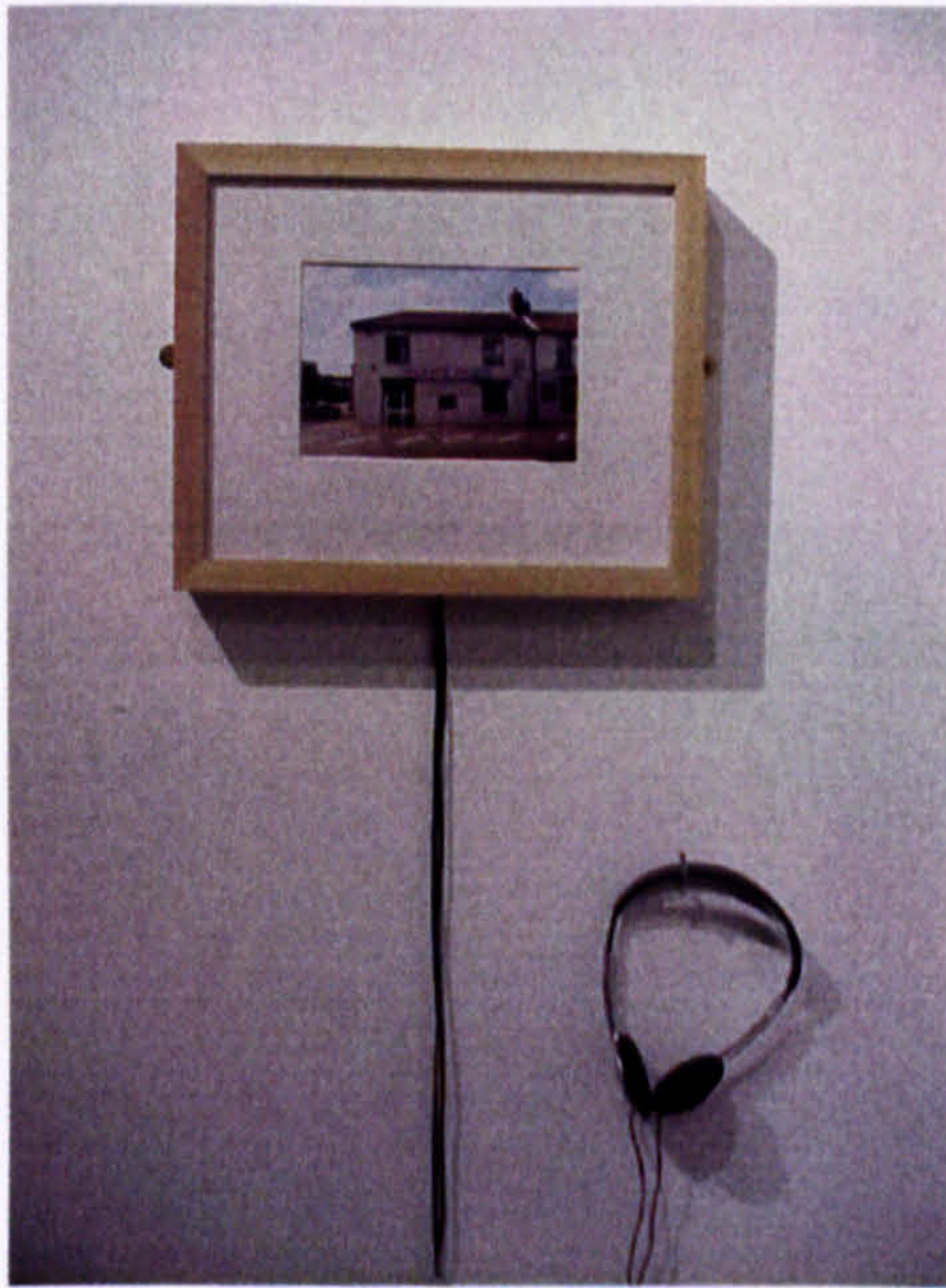
Figs.34-35. Yeu-Lai Mo, *Foodscapes I – III* (2000), mixed media installation (view and details)

36.



Fig. 36. Yeu Lai Mo, *Service, Licking, Kissing* (1997), video, 5 mins looped (still)

37-38.



Figs. 37-38. Yeu Lai Mo, *Untitled Sound Piece* (2002), framed colour photograph, headphones, CD player; *Service I* (1997/2001), inkjet print, mixed media



39.

Fig. 39. Anthony Key, *Pork Scratchings* (1999), pork scratchings

40.



Fig. 40. Anthony Key, *Chips with Everything* (2000), potato plants, table, lamp, chair



41.

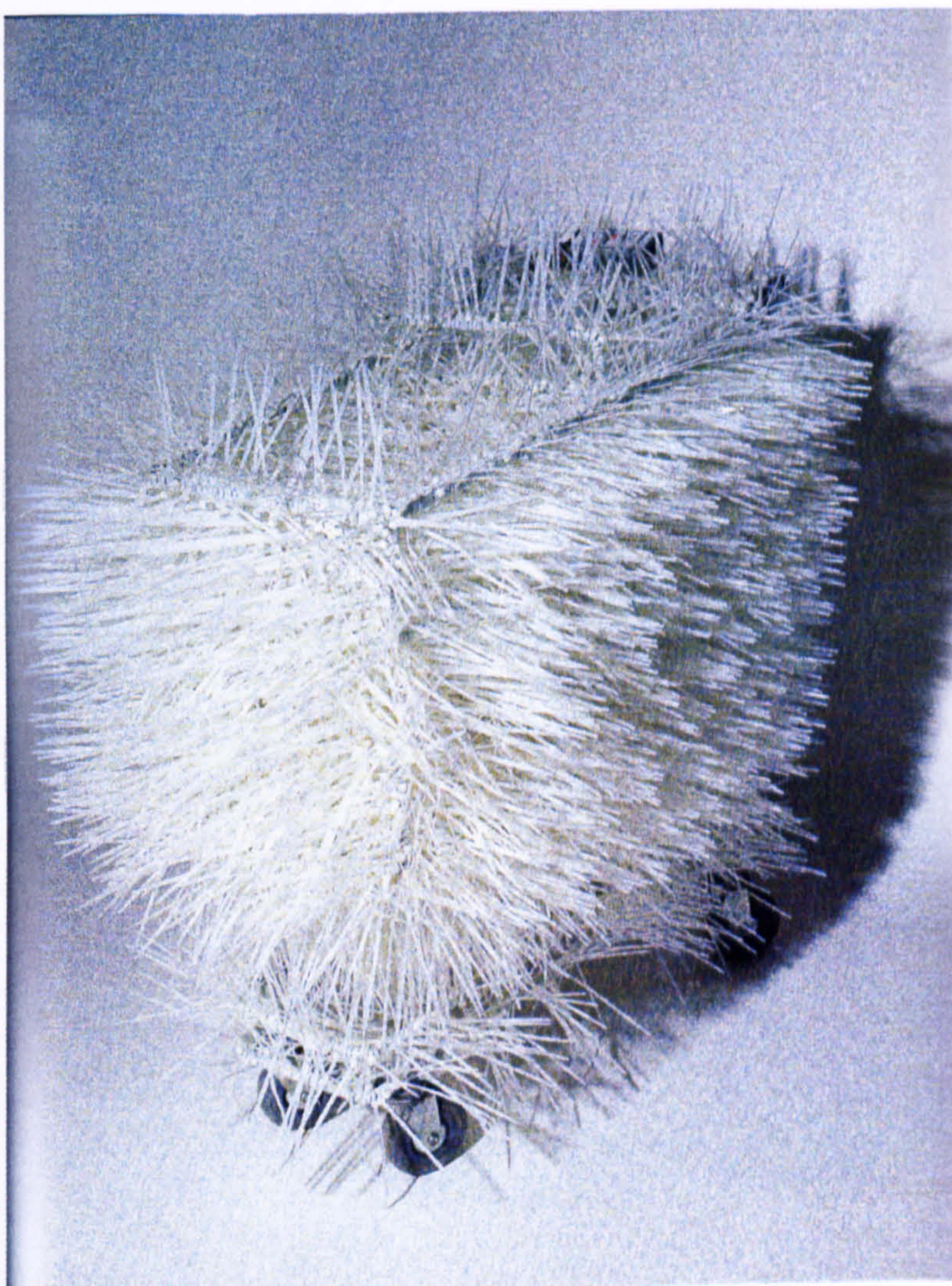


42.



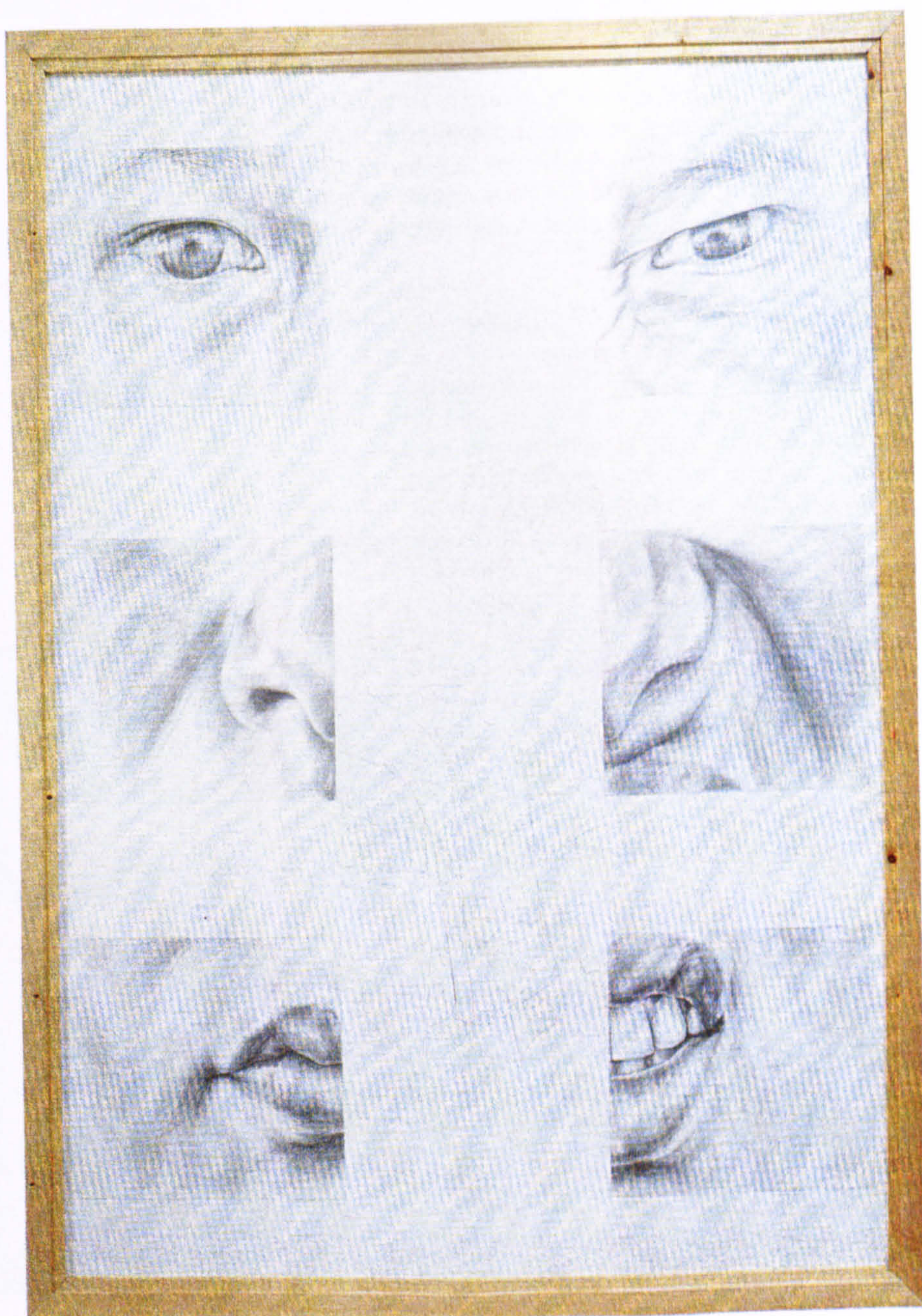
43.

Fig.41. Anthony Key, *Trespassing* (2000), noodles, MDF reel.
Fig. 42. Michael Landy, *Closing Down Sale* (1992/2002), mixed media installation
Fig. 43. Sylvie Fleury's *ELA 75/K, Easy. Breezy. Beautiful (No.6)* (2000), trolley, pedestal



44.

Fig. 44 Anthony Key, *Shopping Trolley (with cables ties)* (2002), trolley, cable ties



45.

Fig. 45. Lesley Sanderson, *Self Portrait – Larger than Life* (1990), pencil on paper

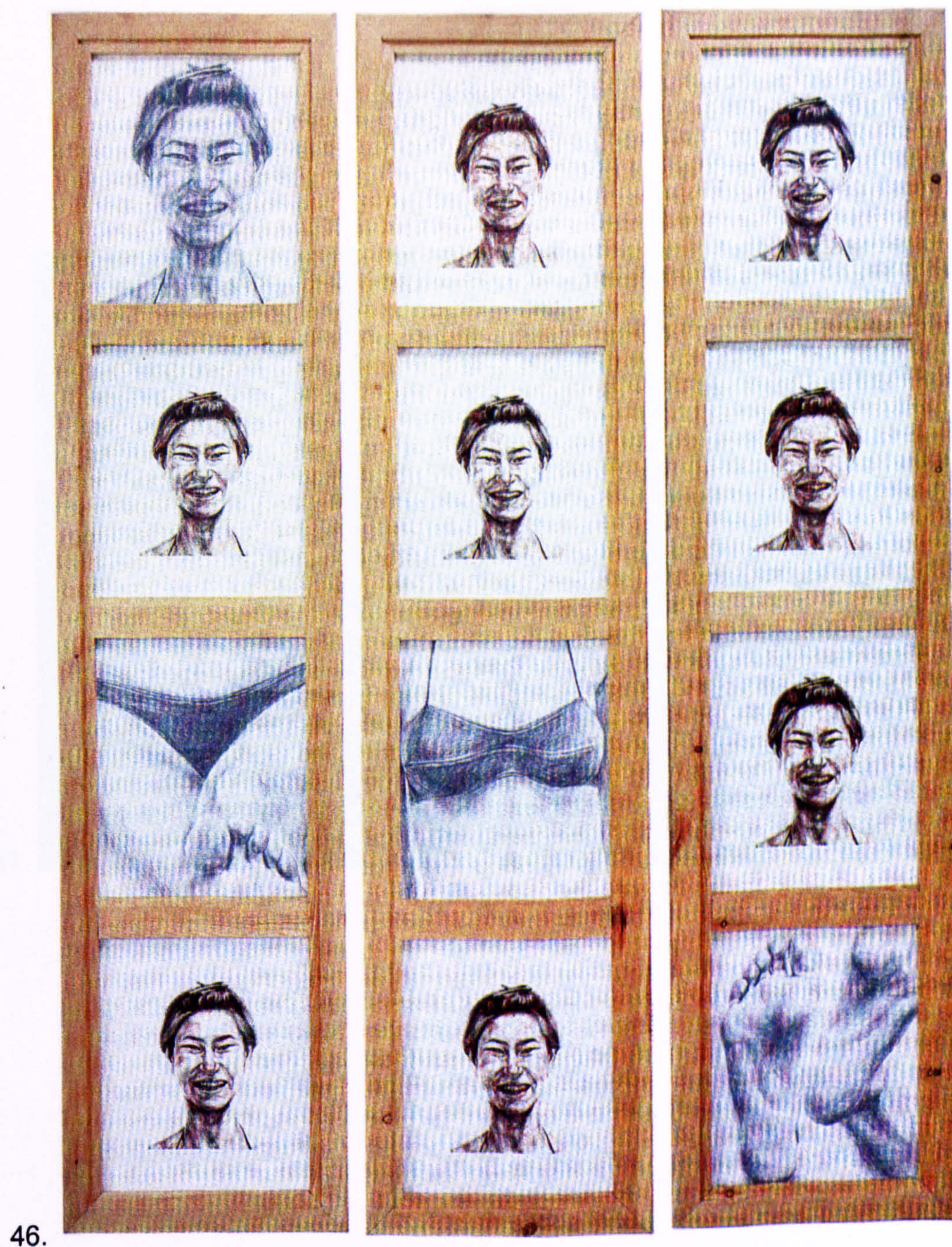


Fig. 46. Lesley Sanderson, *Negative* (1988), pencil on paper, laser copies, red signature stamp



Fig. 47. Lesley Sanderson, *Reproductions* (1991), mixed media



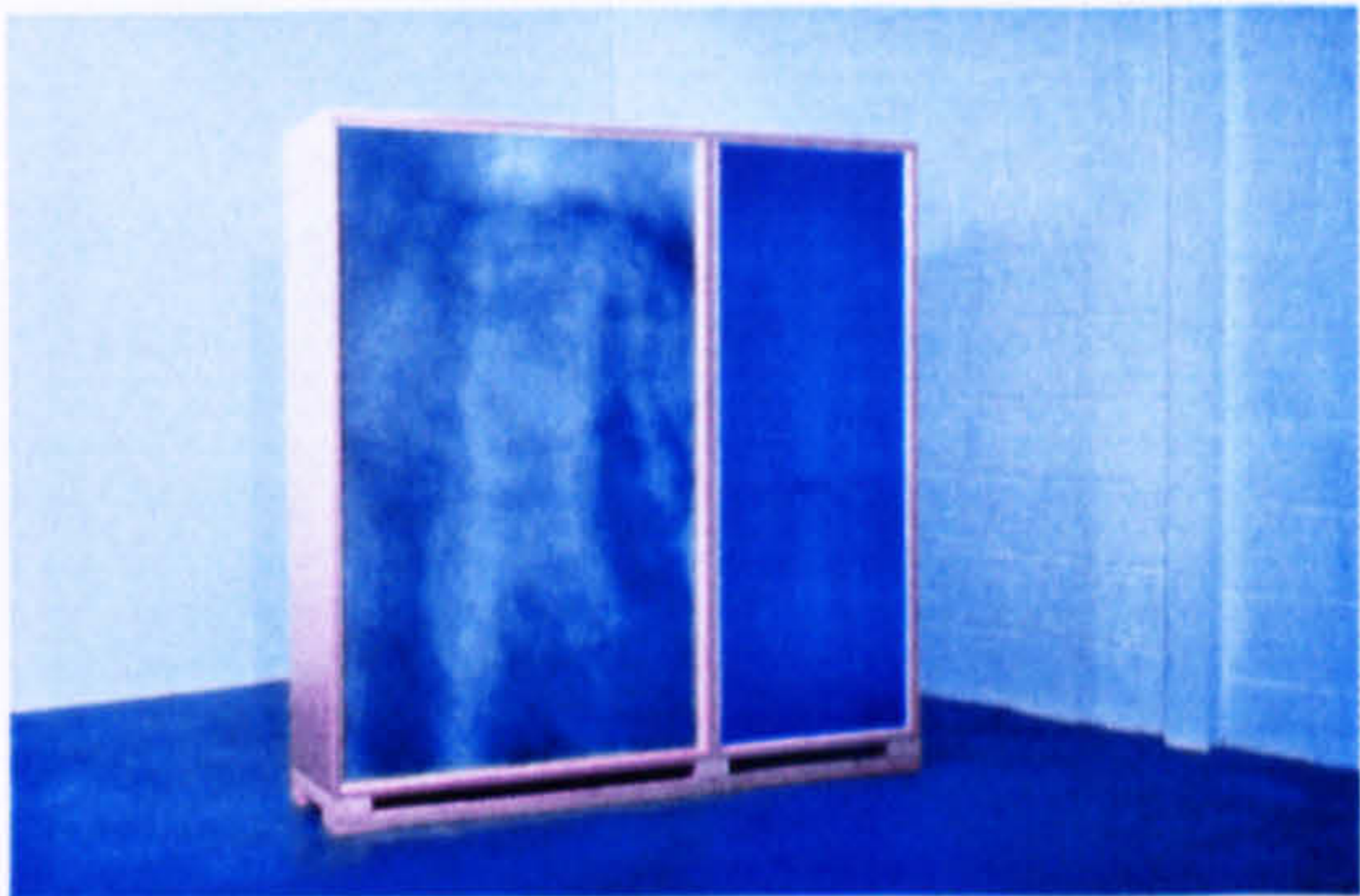
48.

Fig. 48. Lesley Sanderson, *These Colours Run* (1994), mixed media.

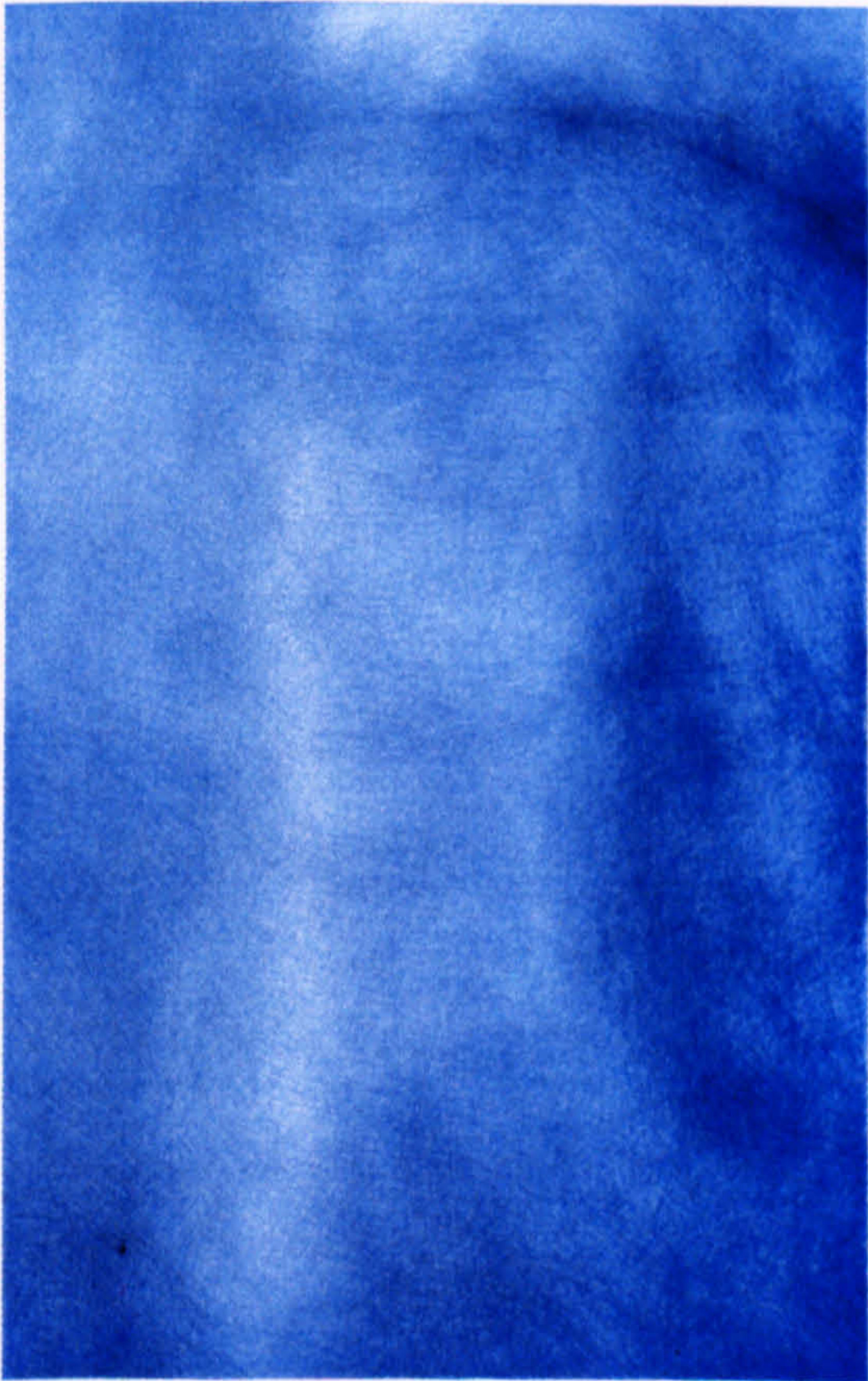
49.



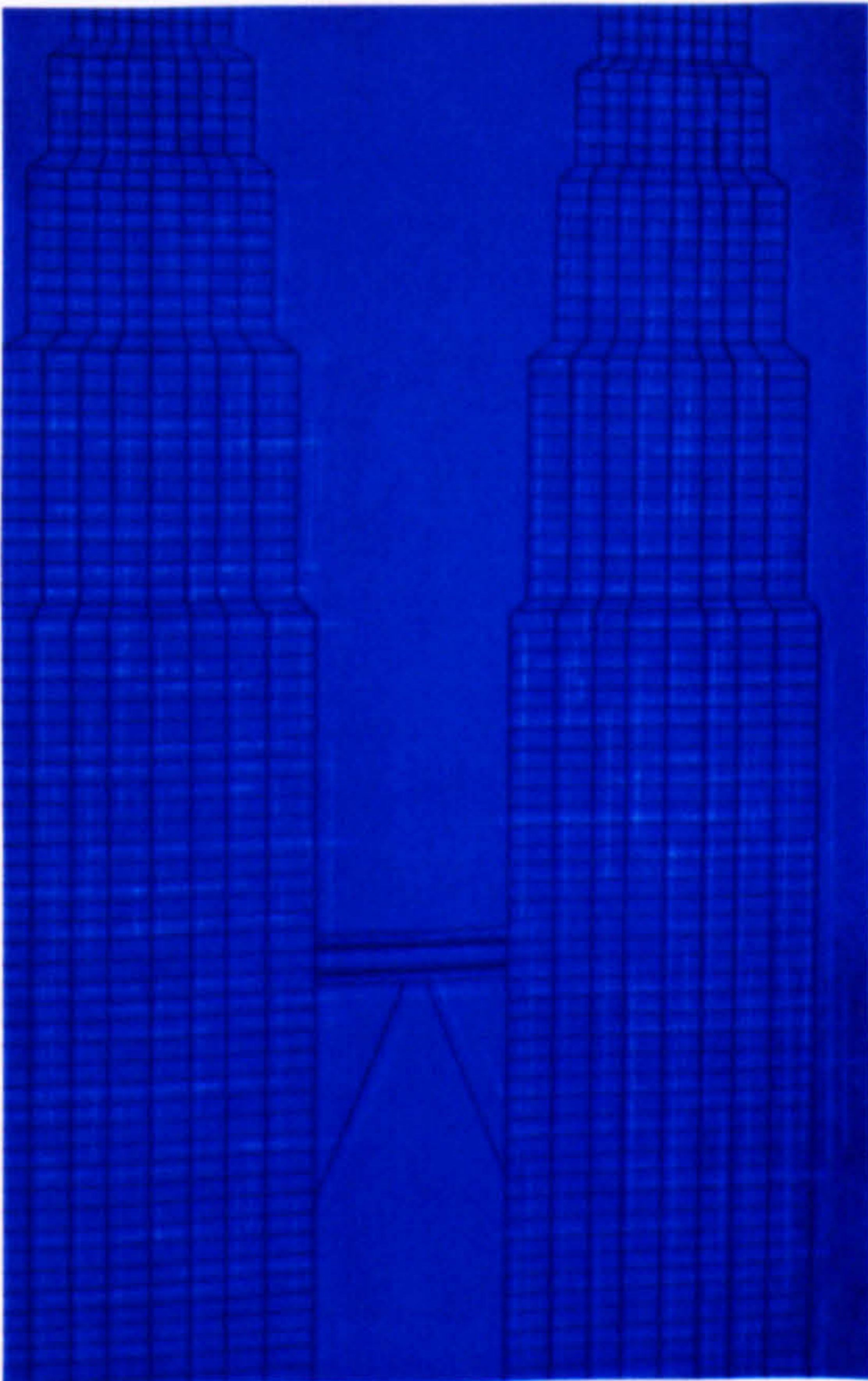
Fig. 49. Lesley Sanderson, *Can't See the Wood for the Trees* (1992), pencil on board, monoprints



50.



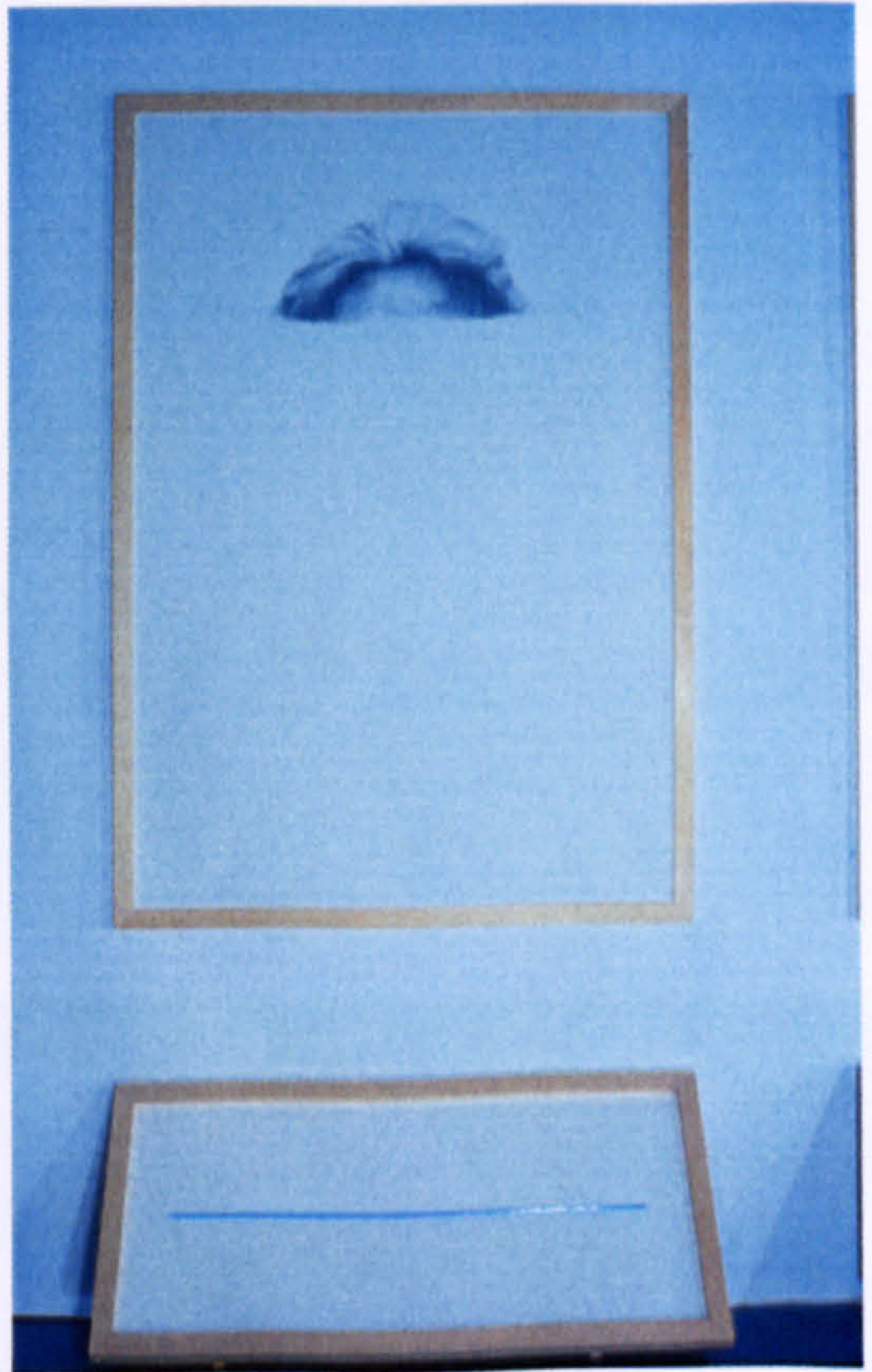
51-52.



Figs. 50-52. Conroy/Sanderson. *Fabrication and Reality* (1998), pencil on paper, carbon copy paper, light, lens, timber (view and details)

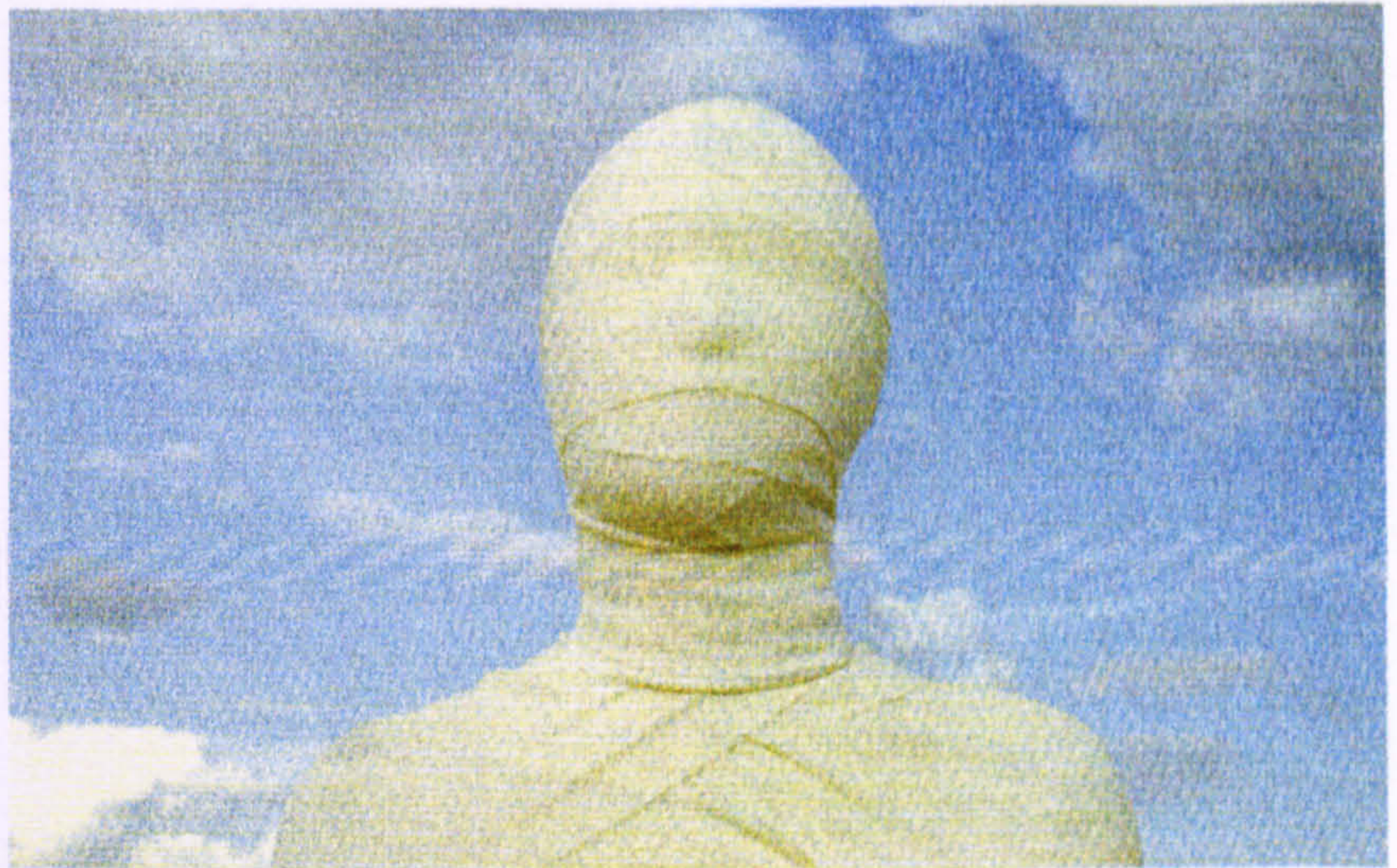


53.



54.

Figs. 53-54. Conroy/Sanderson, *Fabrication* (1998), pencil on paper, timber wedge constructions, neon lights, speakers (view and detail)



55.

Fig. 55. Conroy/Sanderson, *Here We Are* (2004), photo light boxes



56.



57.

Fig. 56. Lesley Sanderson, *Time for a Change* (1988), oil on canvas

Fig. 57. Yeu Lai Mo, *Geisha* (1994), colour cibachrome print



58.



59.



60.

Fig.58. Yasumasa Morimura *Portrait (Van Gogh)* (1985), colour photograph

Fig.59. Yasumasa Morimura, *Portrait (Futago)* (1988 – 1990), cibachrome

Fig.60. Yasumasa Morimura, *To My Little Sister: for Cindy Sherman* (1998), colour photograph



61.

Fig. 61. Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (US, 1975), video, b&w, sound (still)



62.

Fig. 62. Yeu Lai Mo, *Pointing, Service, and Spitting* (1997) cibachrome photographs

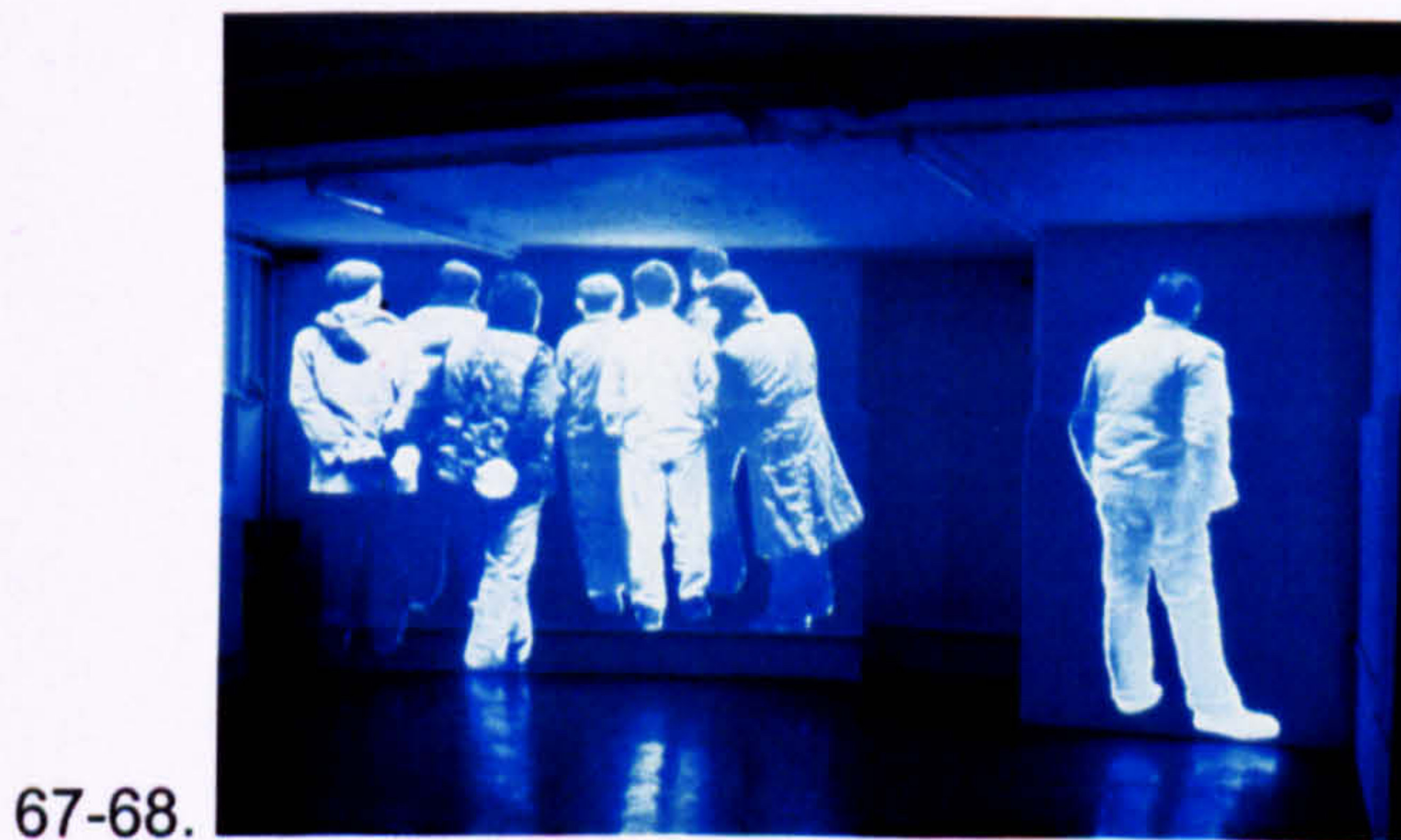


63.



64.

Figs. 63-64. Erika Tan, *Passing — Slipping Between the Boundaries Unnoticed* (1995), installation with three monitors (details)



Figs. 65-66. Erika Tan, *Travels with Pup* (1996), series of photographic prints (details)

Figs. 67-68. Erika Tan, *Guarded Proximity* (1997), slide projection and sound (installation views)

Lfig.69 Lorna Simpson, *Guarded Conditions* (1989), colour Polaroids, plastic plaques, plastic letters

70.



71-72.

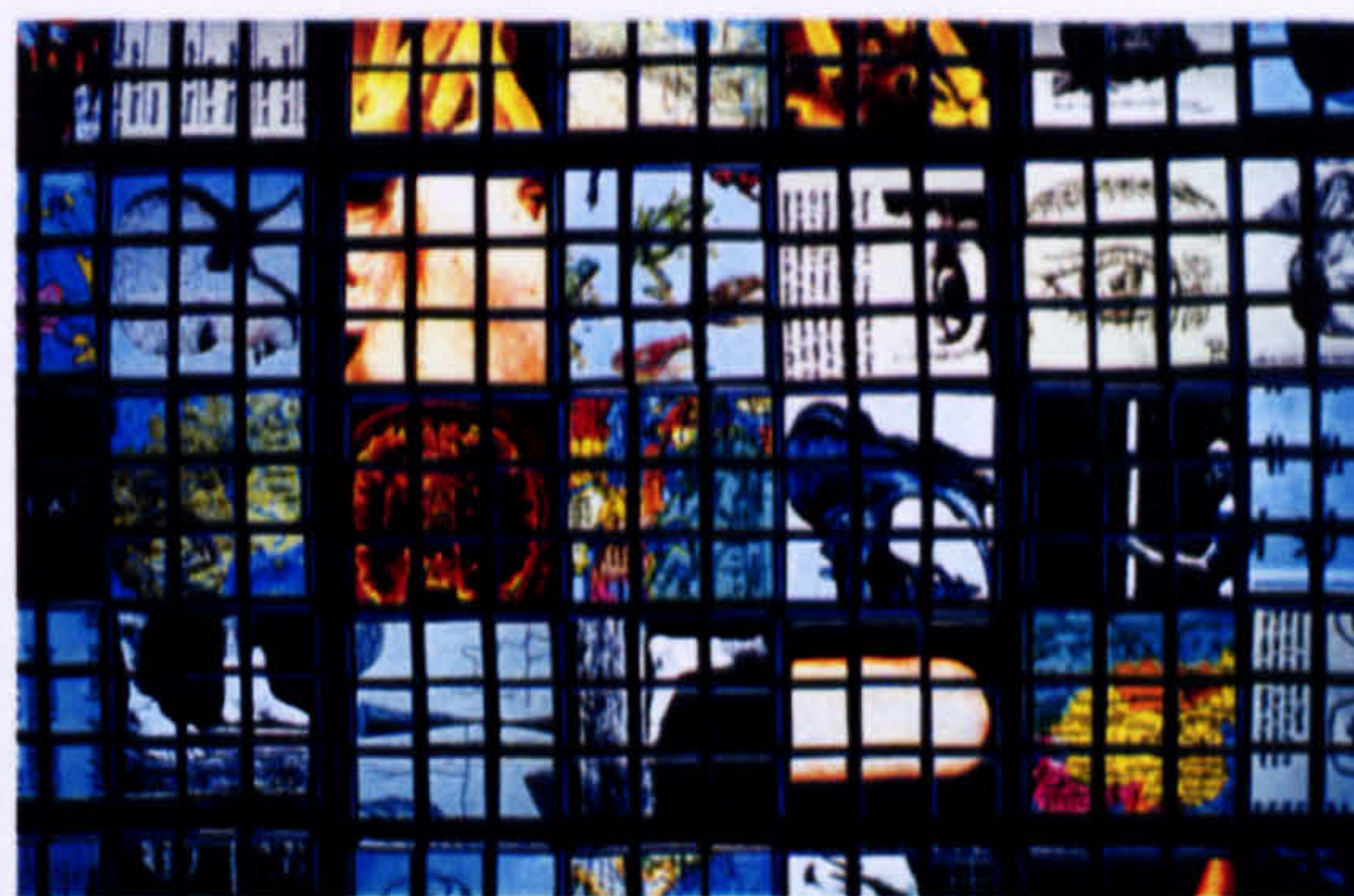


73.



Figs. 70-73. Erika Tan, *Chintz* (1997) / *From China to Chintz* (1999) / *East* (2000), installations with sound, video, lighting, wallpaper, chests, tea, lavender essence, P.I.R detectors, bird cages (details)

74.



75.



76.



Figs. 74-76. Erika Tan, *Sites of Construction – Rubik's Cubes / The Body / Floorgame* (1996), installation

77.



78.



Figs. 77-78. Erika Tan, *Boatrace* (1998-2000), installation and event



Fig. 79. Mayling To, *Death of Hong Kong* (1998), installation with MDF, carpet, rug, TV, lamp, suitcase, books, ornaments, paper, photographs, wire, fabric, polyester, foam



80-81.

Figs. 80-81. Mayling To, *Death of Hong Kong* (1998), installation with MDF, carpet, rug, TV, lamp, suitcase, books, ornaments, paper, photographs, wire, fabric, polyester, foam (details)



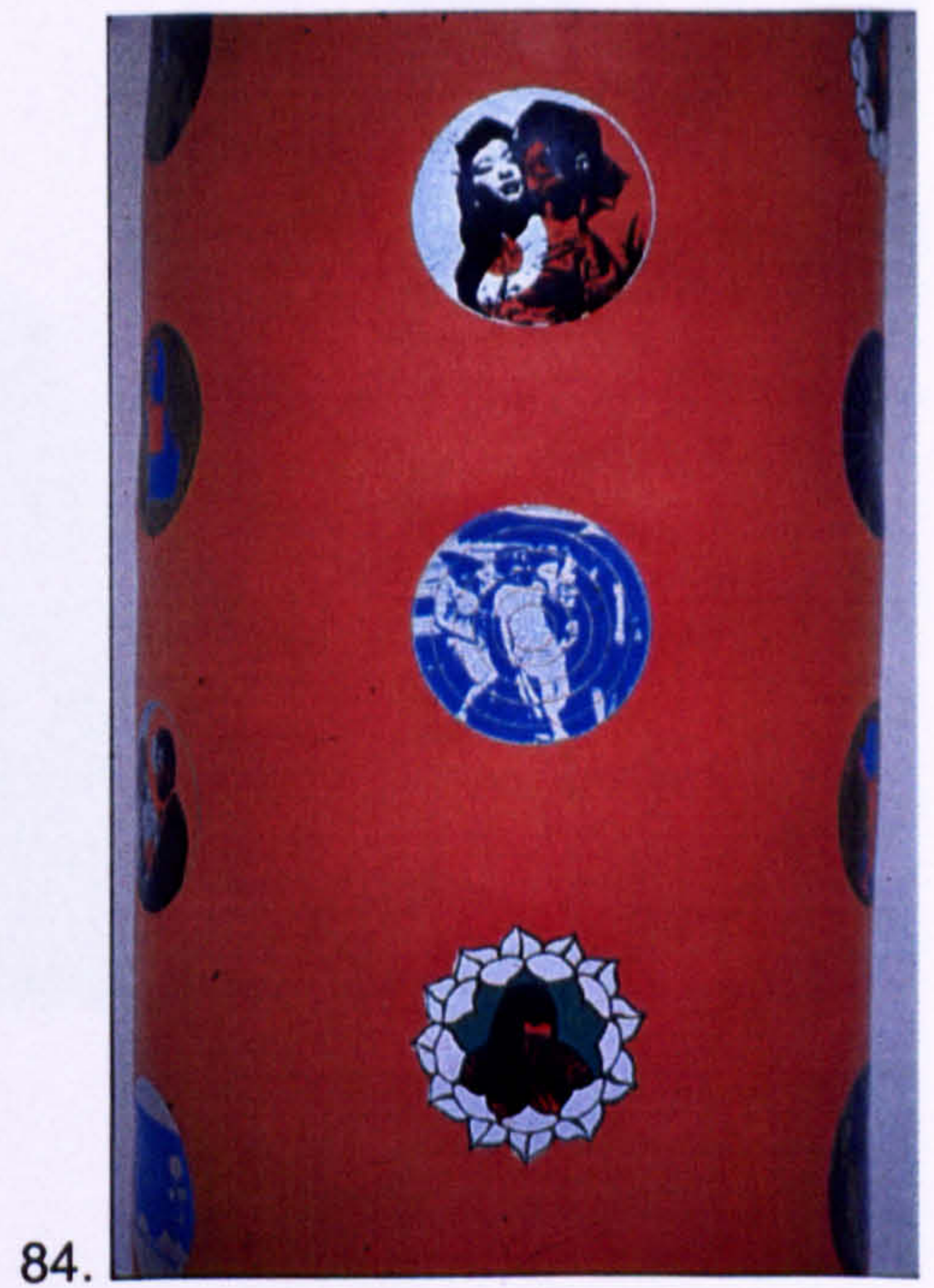
82.



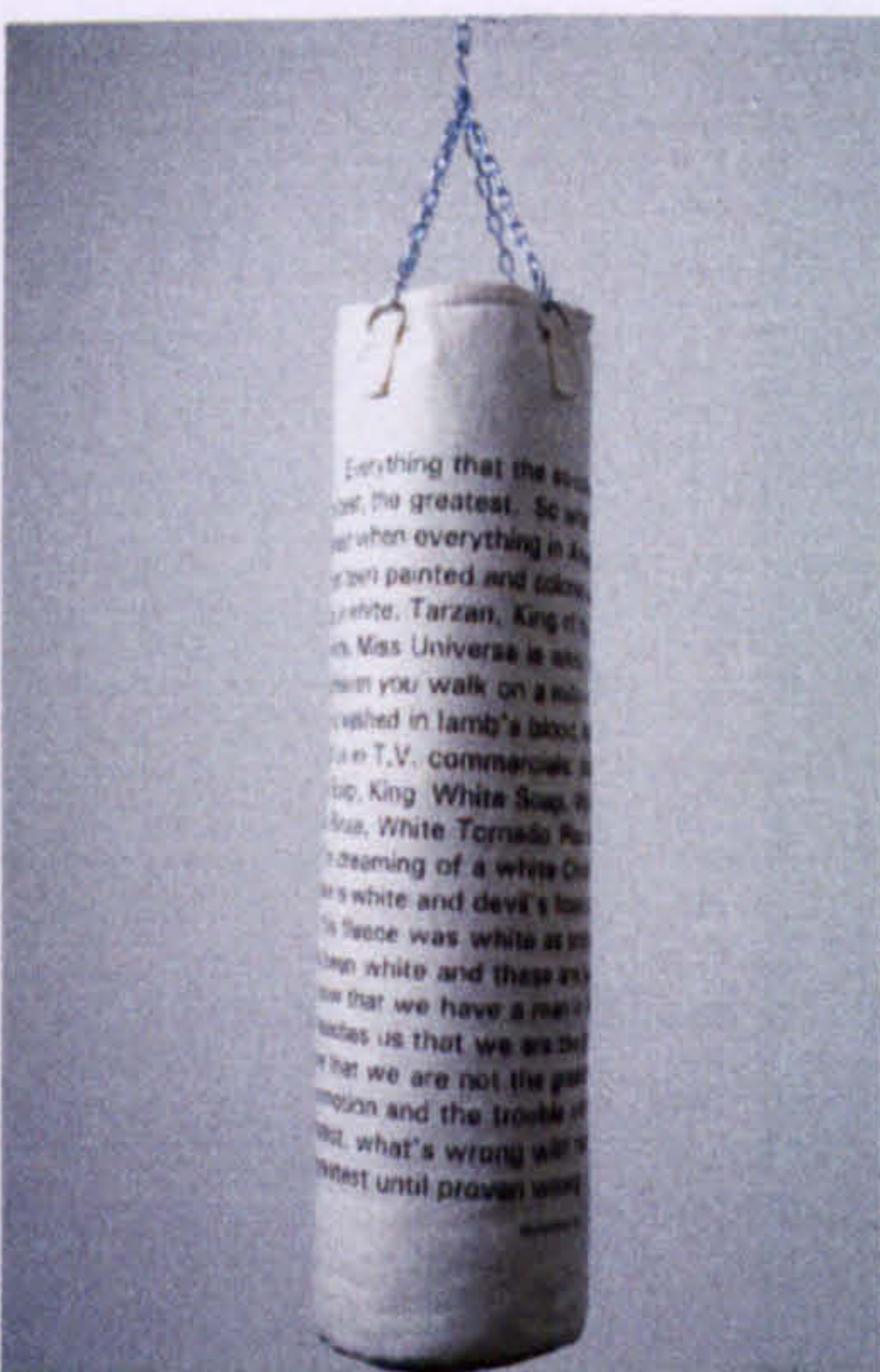
83.

Fig. 82. Mayling To, *A Cute Puncture* (1998), wood, foam, fabric, polyester, acupuncture needles

Fig. 83. Mayling To, *Repertoire Dog* (1999), fabric, polyester, plastic guns



84.



85-86.

Fig. 84. Mayling To, *Punchbag* (1996-7), mixed media

Figs. 85-86. Glenn Ligon's *Skin Tight: Muhammed Ali Text* (1995), punchbag and text piece (installation shot and detail)

87.



88.



Fig. 87. Mayling To, *Making Of* (2001), video, colour, 1 min 20 sec loop (still)

Fig. 88. Mayling To, *Fight Sequence* (2001), video, colour, 1 min 20 sec loop (still)

89.



90.

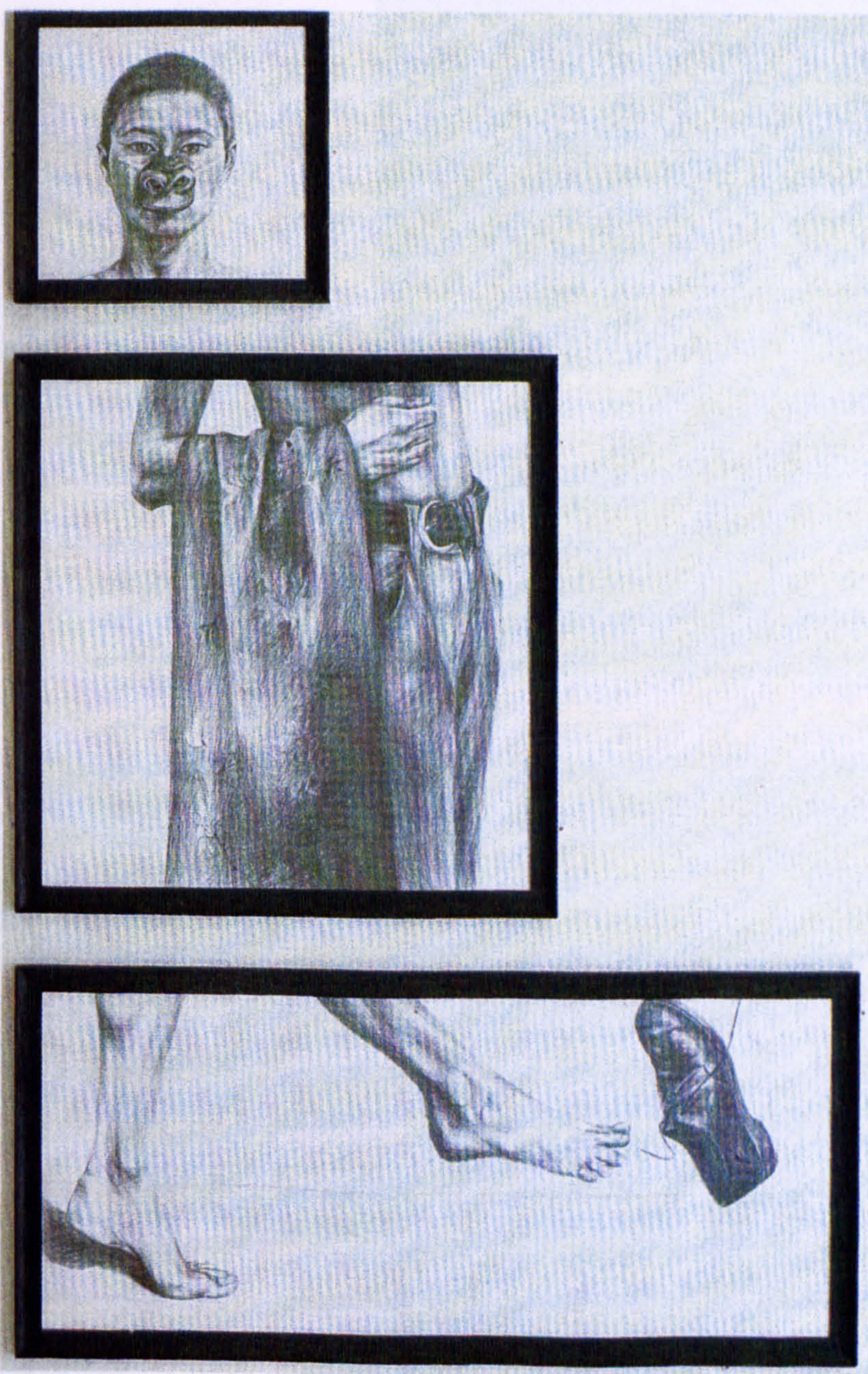


91.



Fig.89 Mayling To, *Living* (2001), video, colour, 8 mins 20 secs (still)

Figs. 90-91. Mayling To, *The Stranger* (2002), video, colour, 11 min 25 secs (stills)

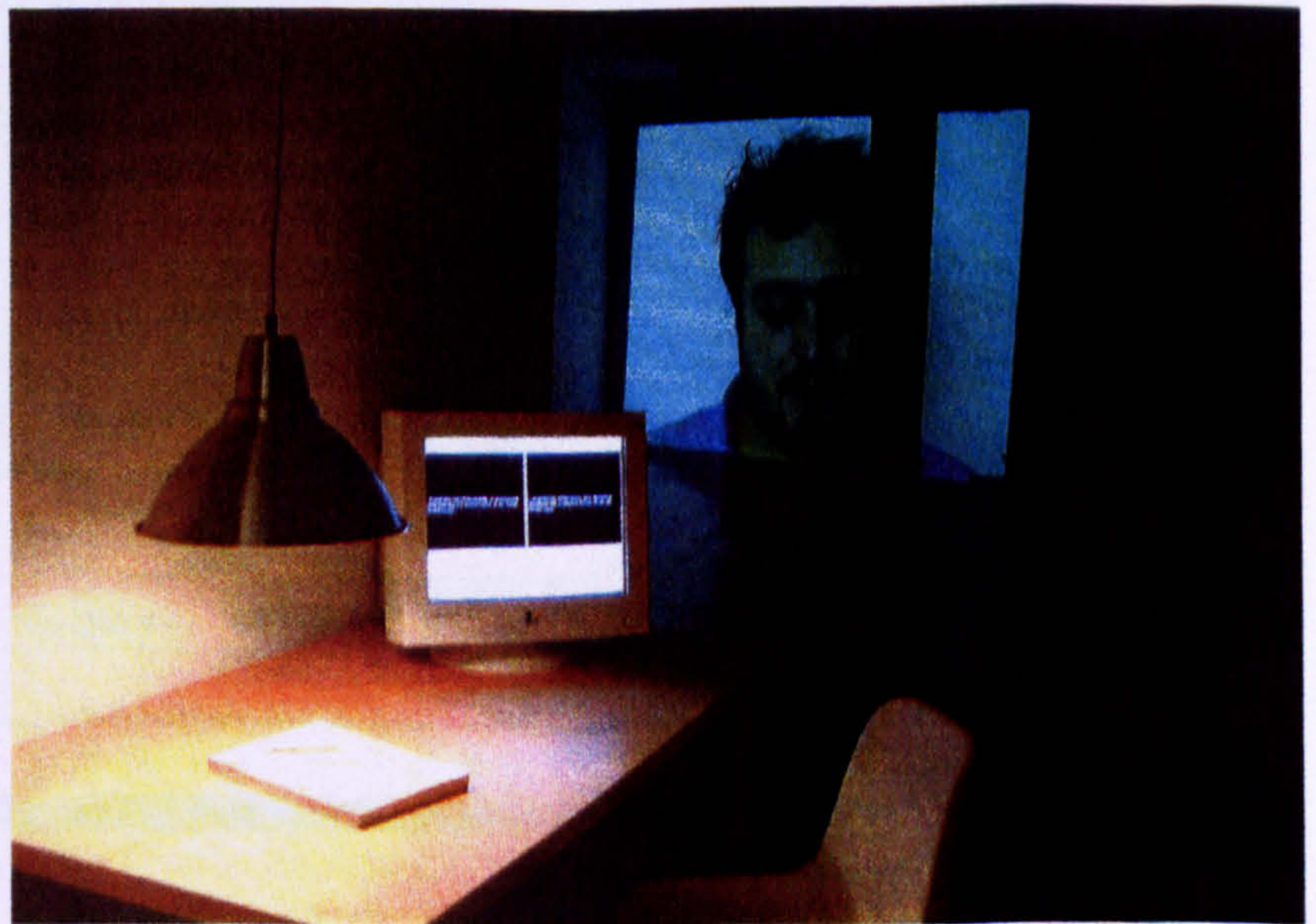


92.

Fig. 92. Lesley Sanderson, *Accessories* (1988), pencil on paper

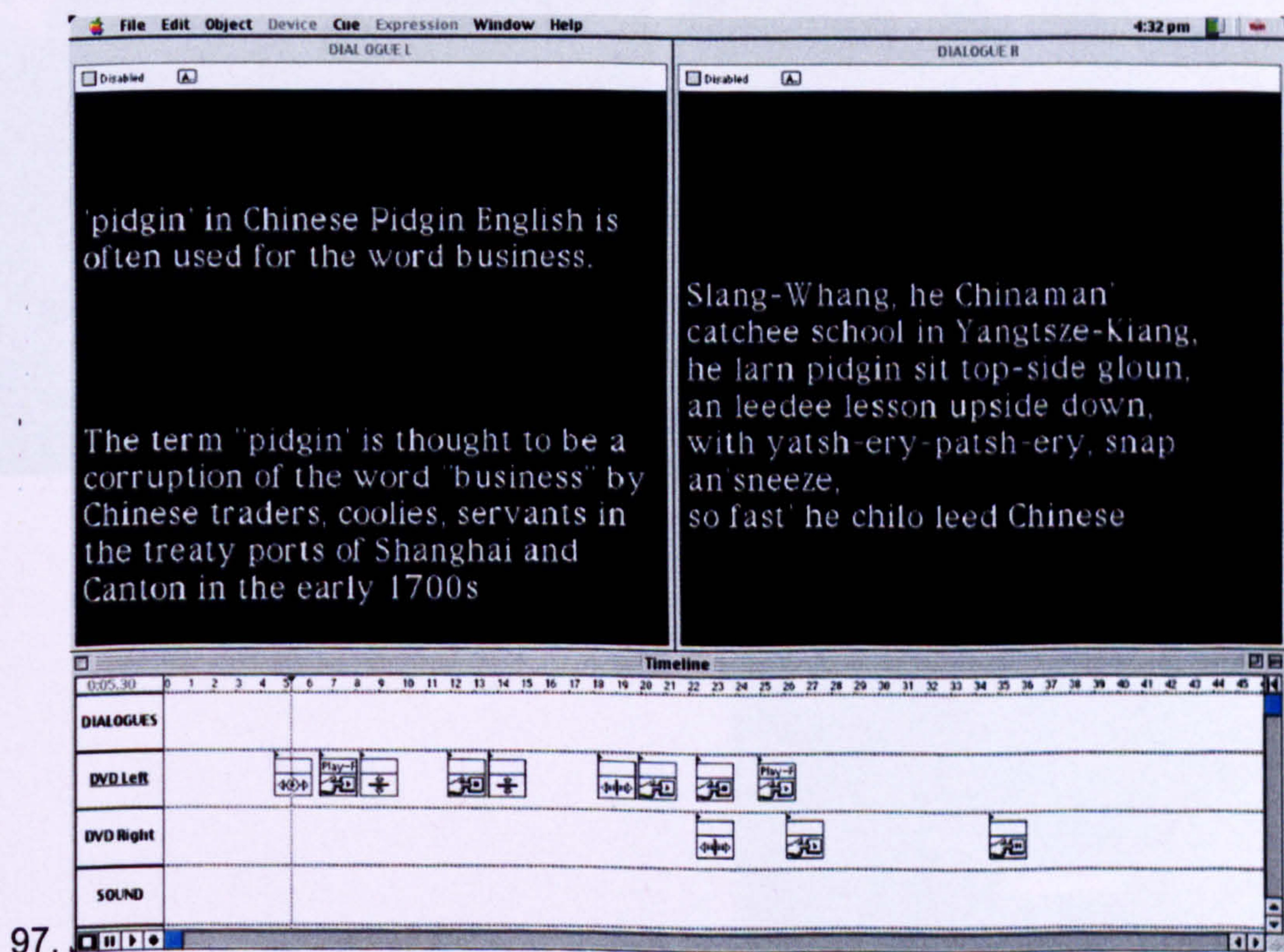
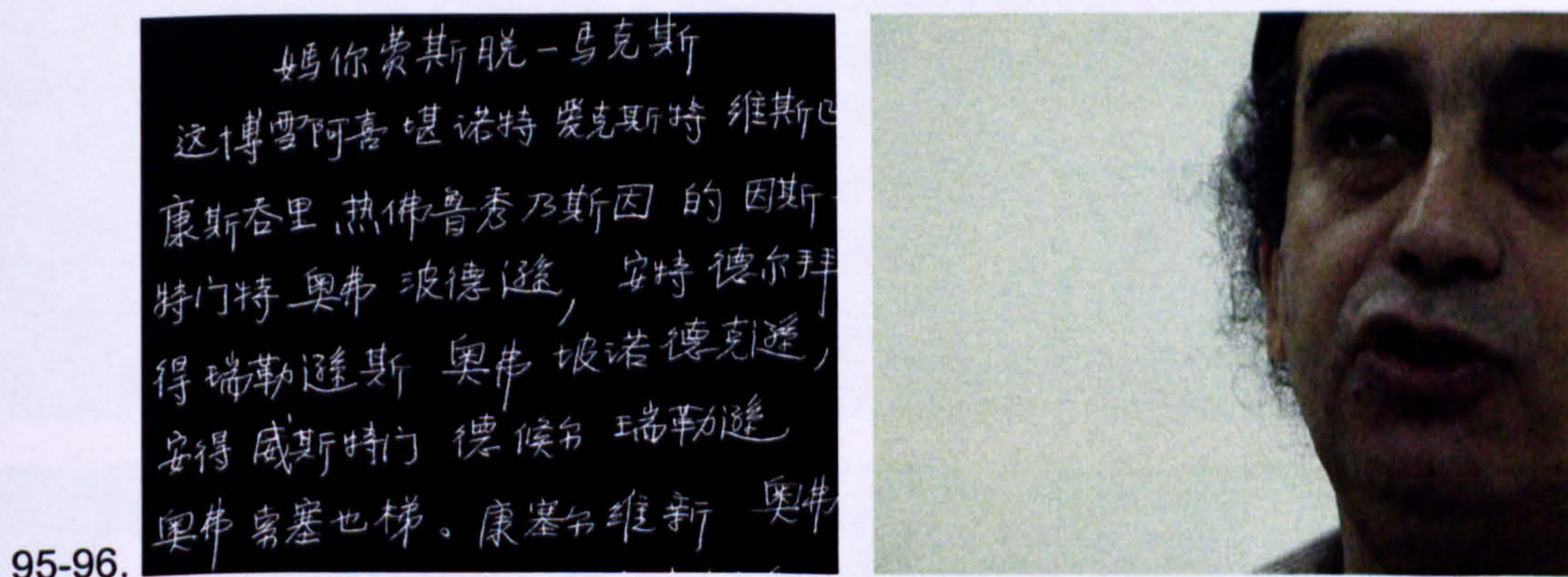


93.



94.

Figs. 93-94, 100. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (installation views)



Figs. 95-96, 101-104- Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (projection stills)

Fig. 87. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (screengrab)

98.

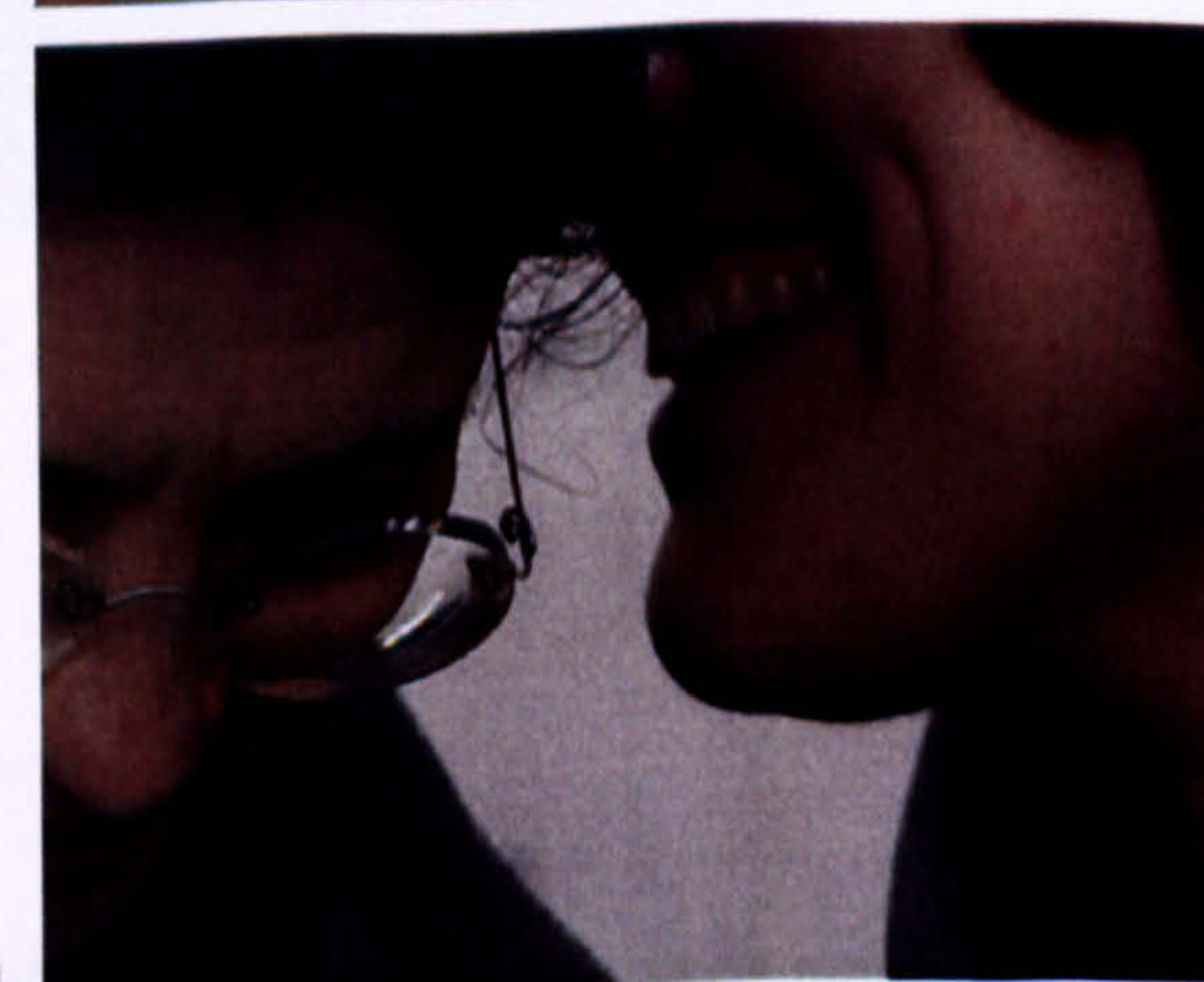
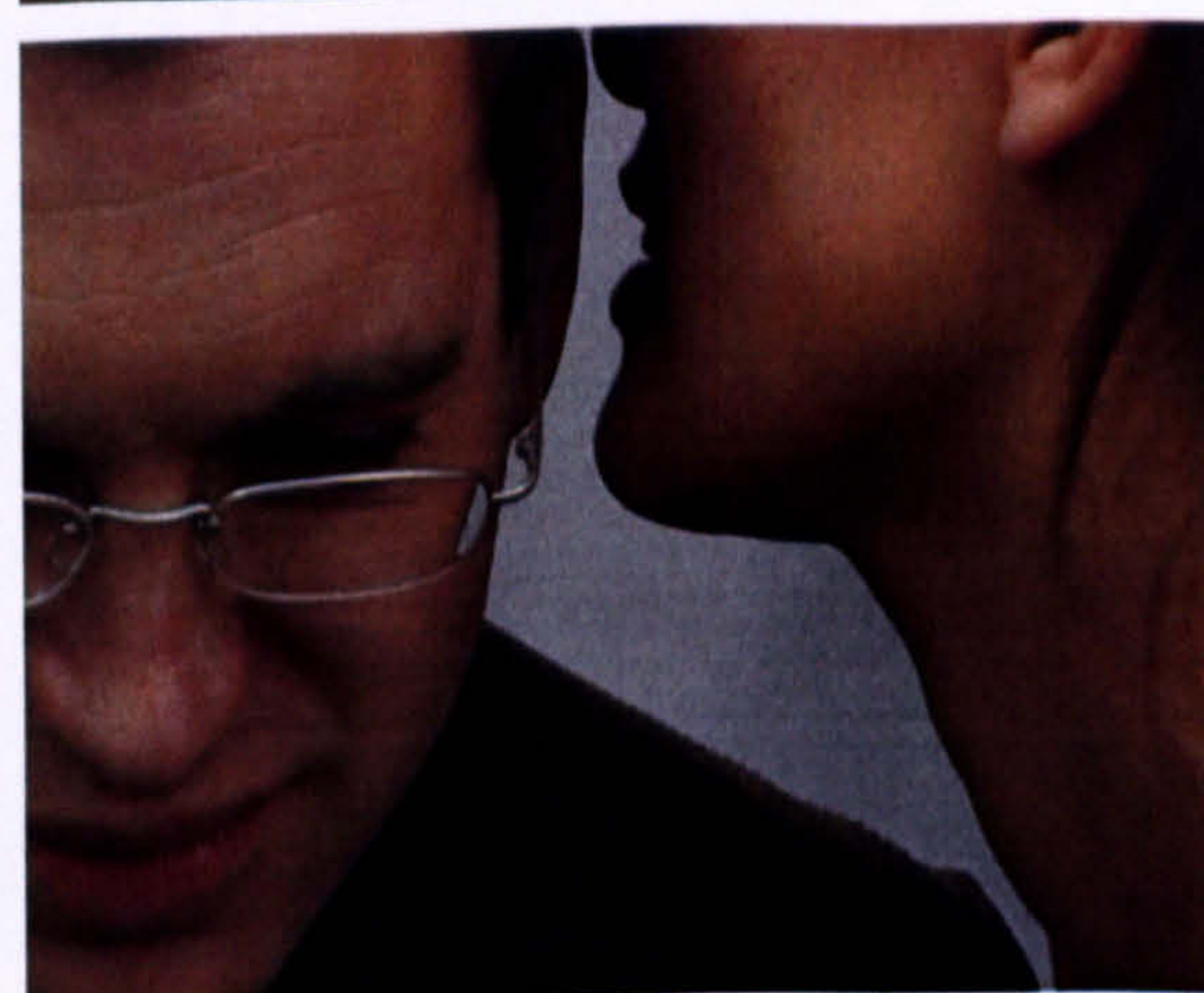


99.

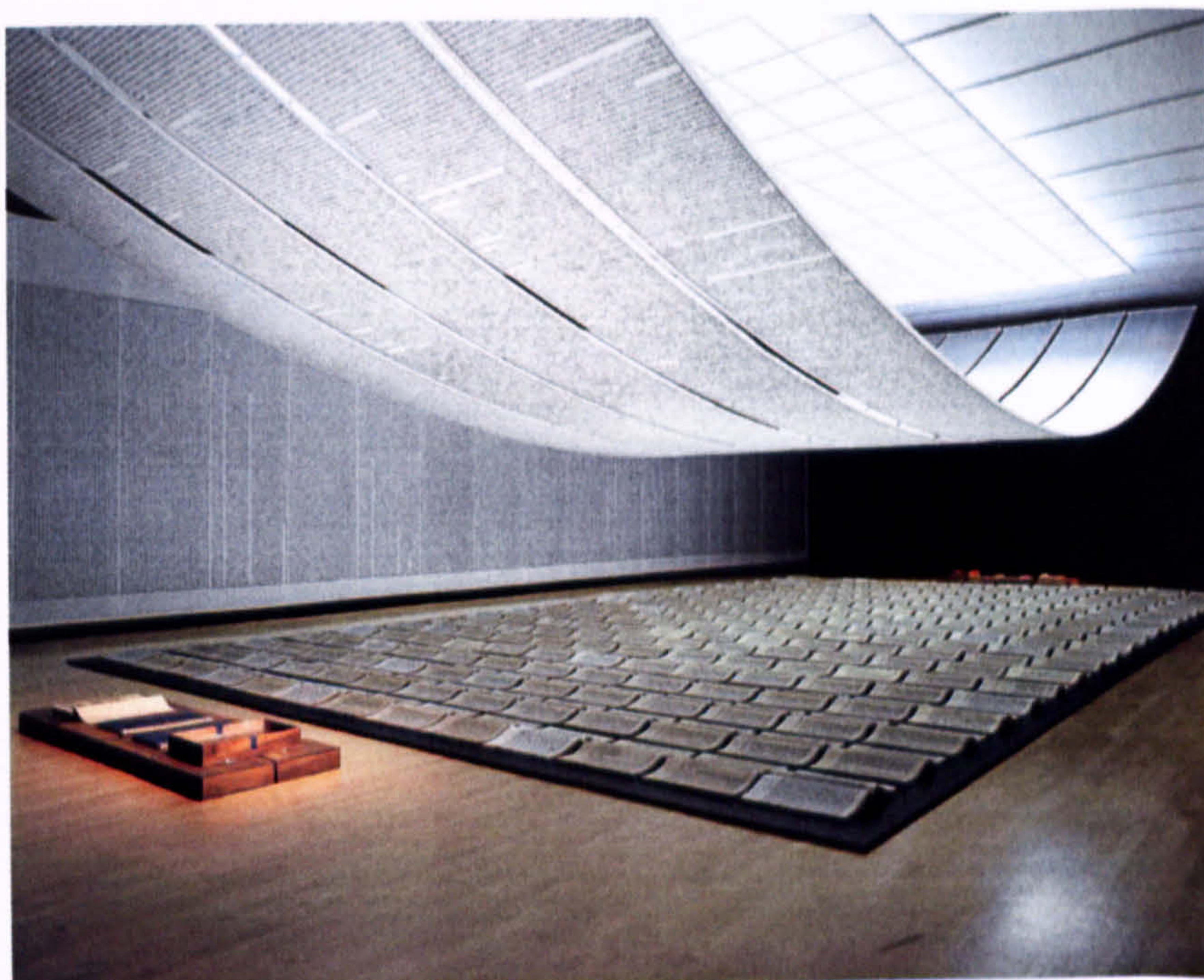


100.





105.



106.



Fig. 105. Xu Bing, *A Book from the Sky* (1988), installation with books and printed scrolls

Fig. 106. Gu Wenda, *The Mythos of Lost Dynasties* (1984-1997), installation with ink, rice paper, hair

107.



108.

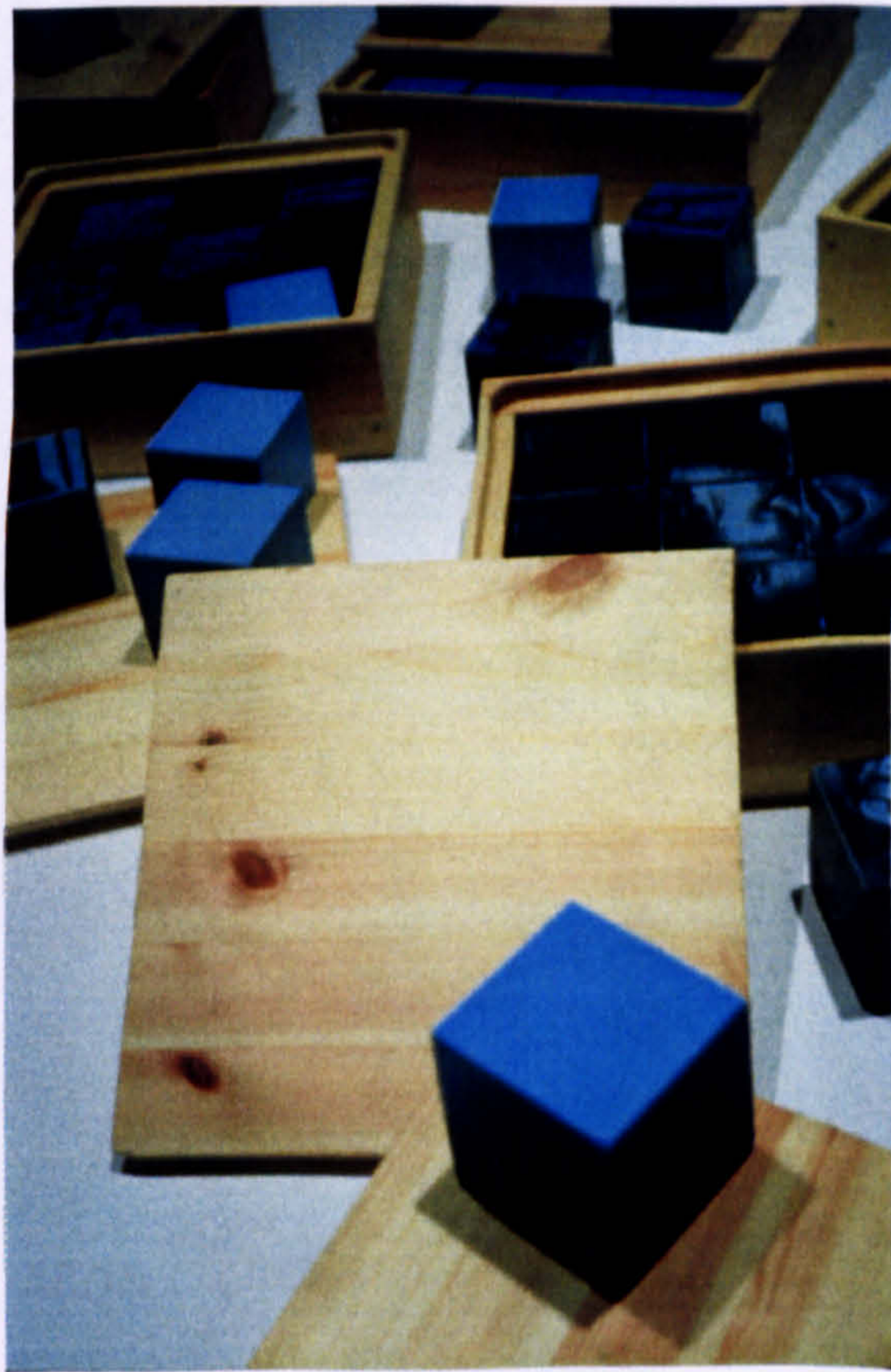
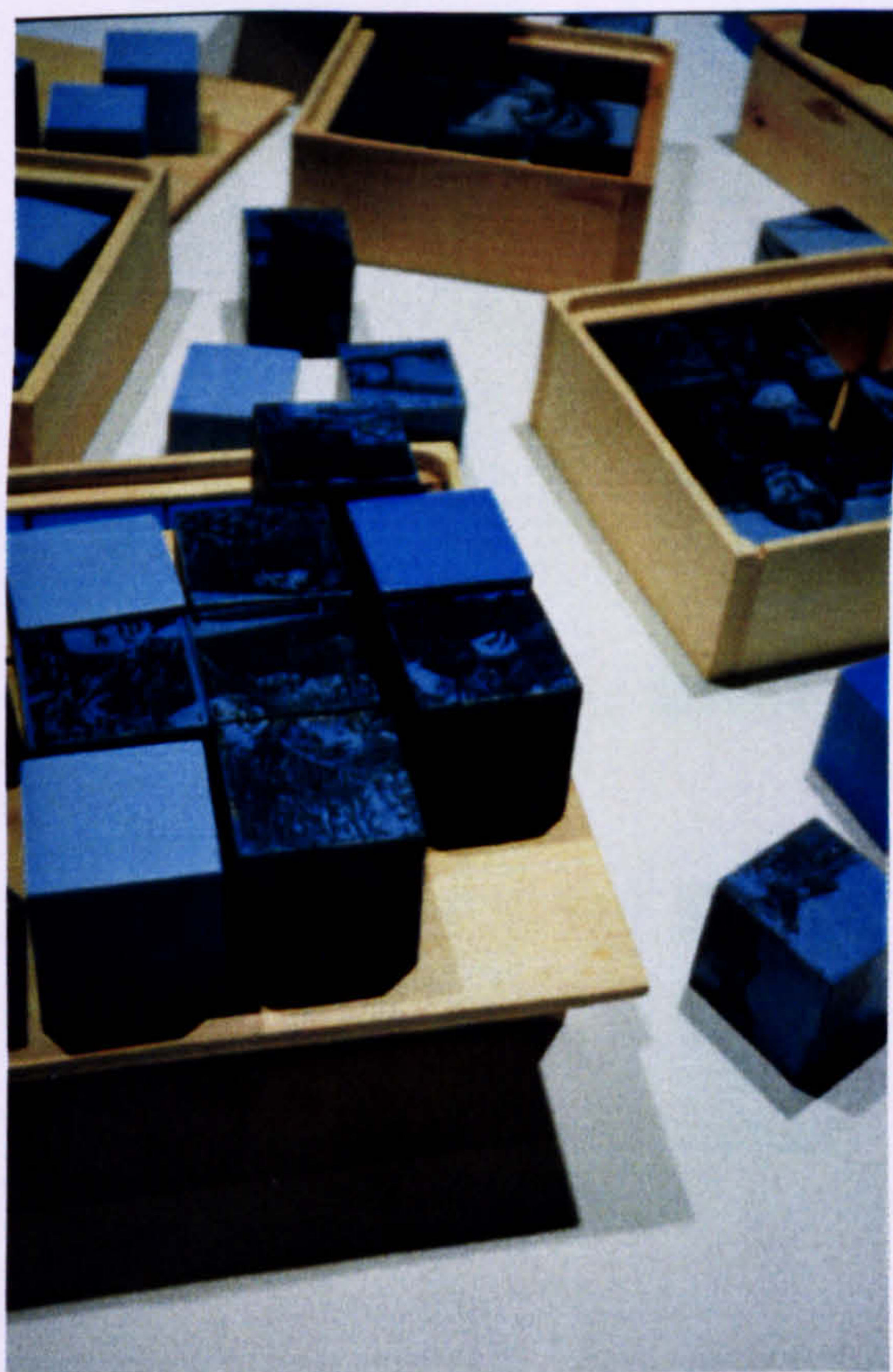


Fig. 107. Warren Leung Chi-Wo, *Vis(i)ta* (1996-7), wood, zinc plate, mirror, iron, liquid light
 Fig. 108. Tsang Tsou Choi, ongoing street calligraphy, undated

Illustrations



Figs. 109-110. Erika Tan, *PIDGIN: interrupted transmission* (2002), installation with digital projections, speakers, monitor, table, lamp, chair, book (installation views)



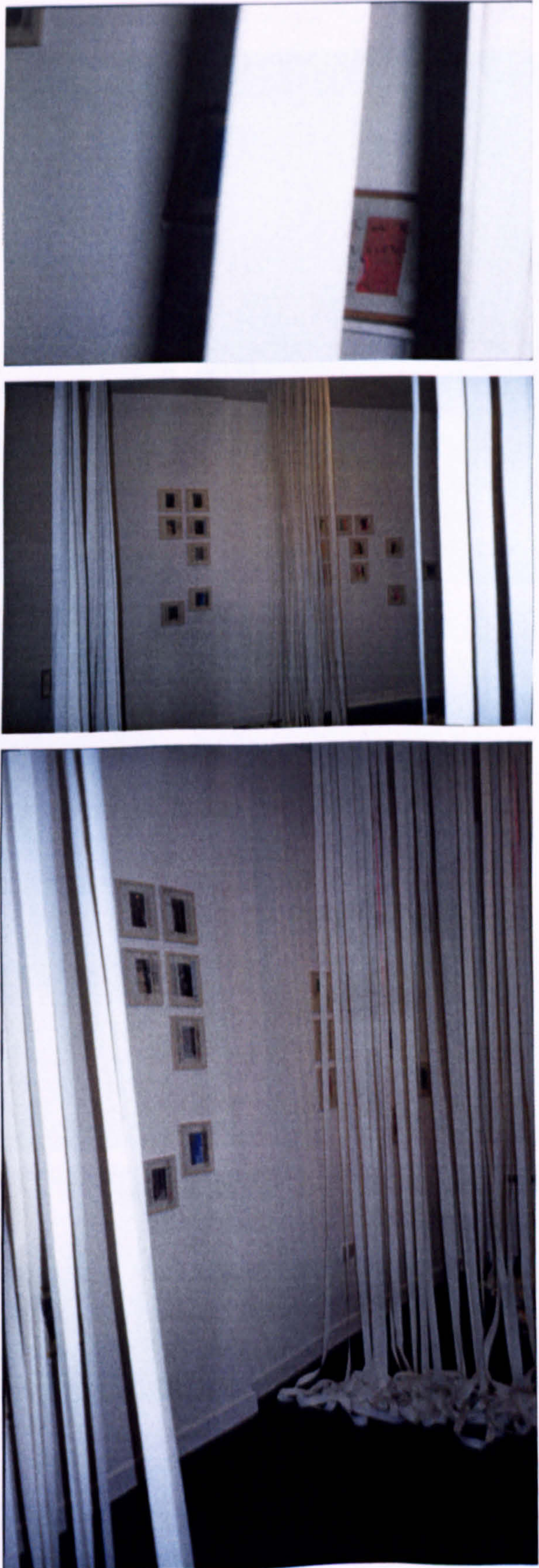
111.

Figs. 111. susan pui san lok, *Unravelling* (1994), installation with wood, photocopies, emulsion (details)



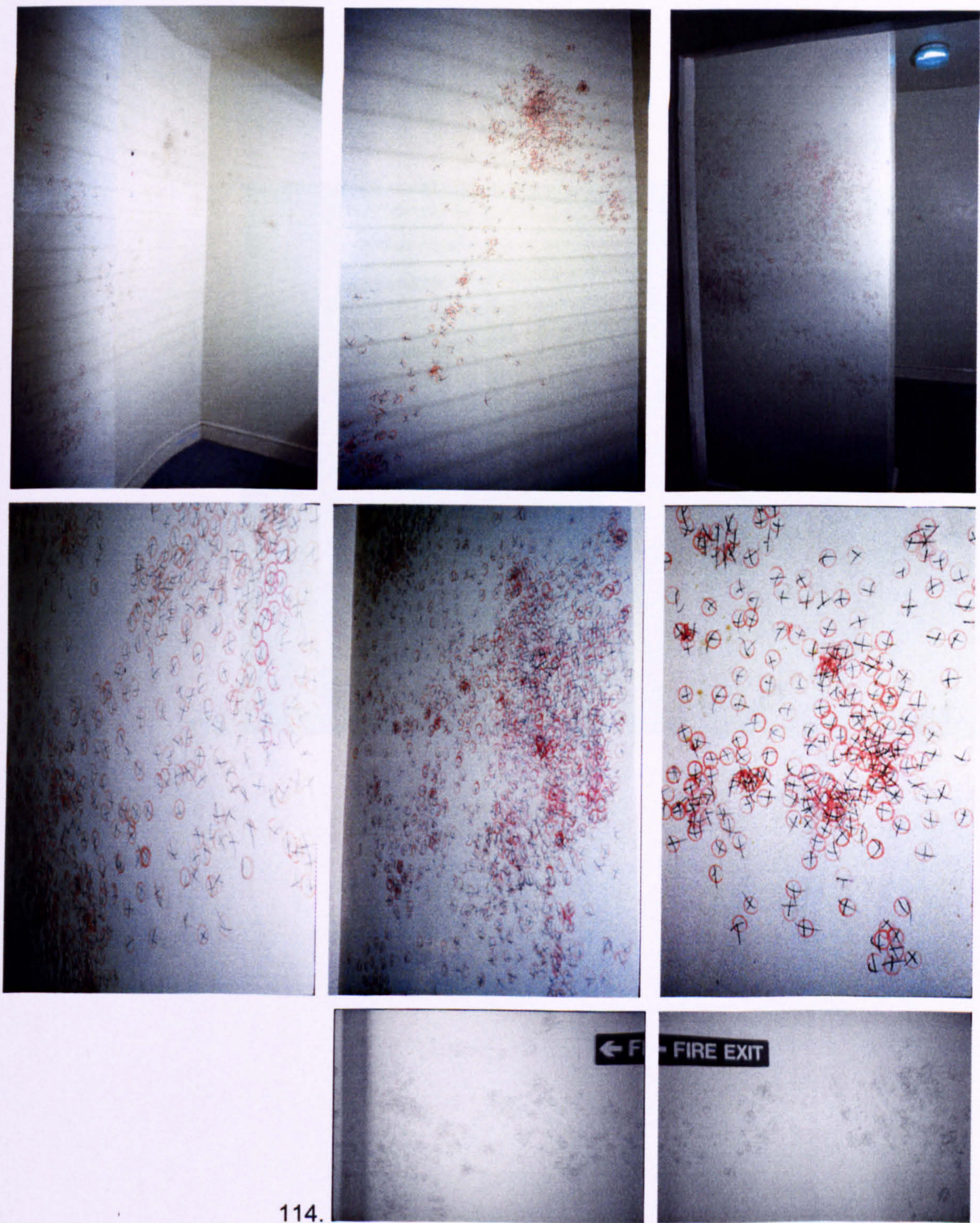
112.

Fig. 112. susan pui san lok, *Un* (1996-7), laser copies, emulsion, ink, tracing paper, acetate, frames (installation details)



113.

Fig. 113. susan pui san lok, *Un* (1996-7), laser copies, emulsion, ink, tracing paper, acetate, frames (installation details)



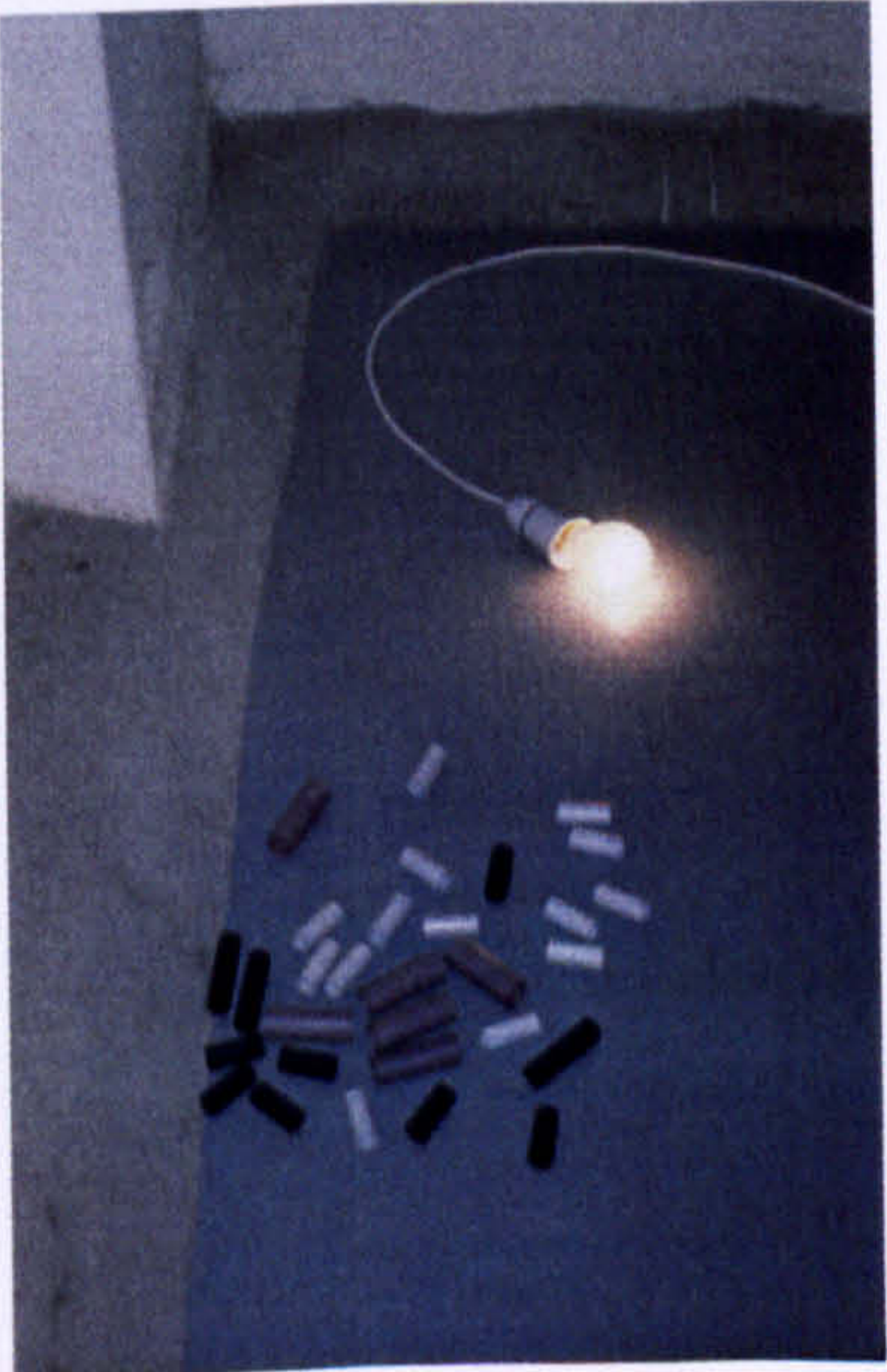
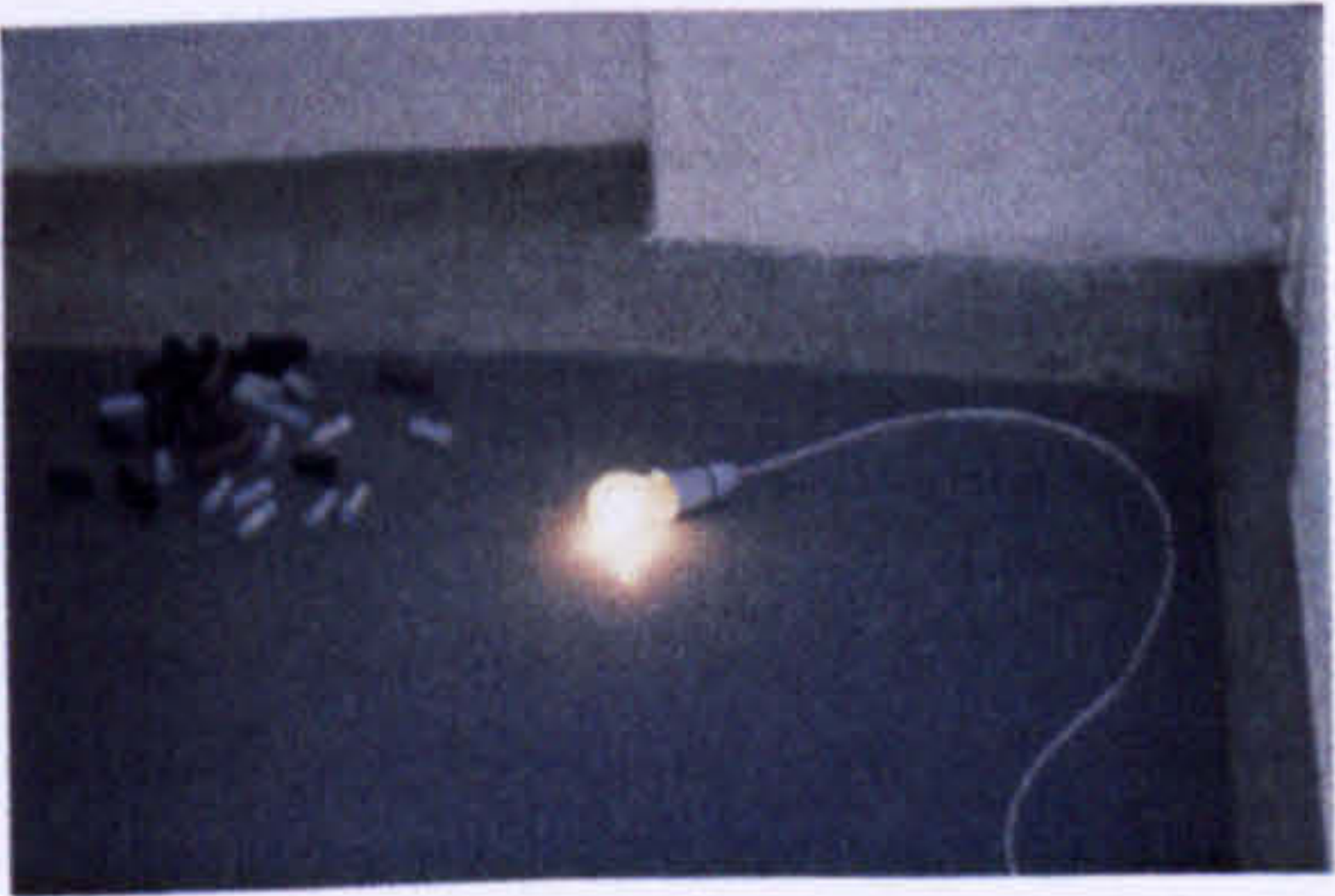
114.

Fig. 114. susan pui san lok, *Untitled (Walls have Ears)* (1998), China marker and endorsing ink on walls (details)

115.



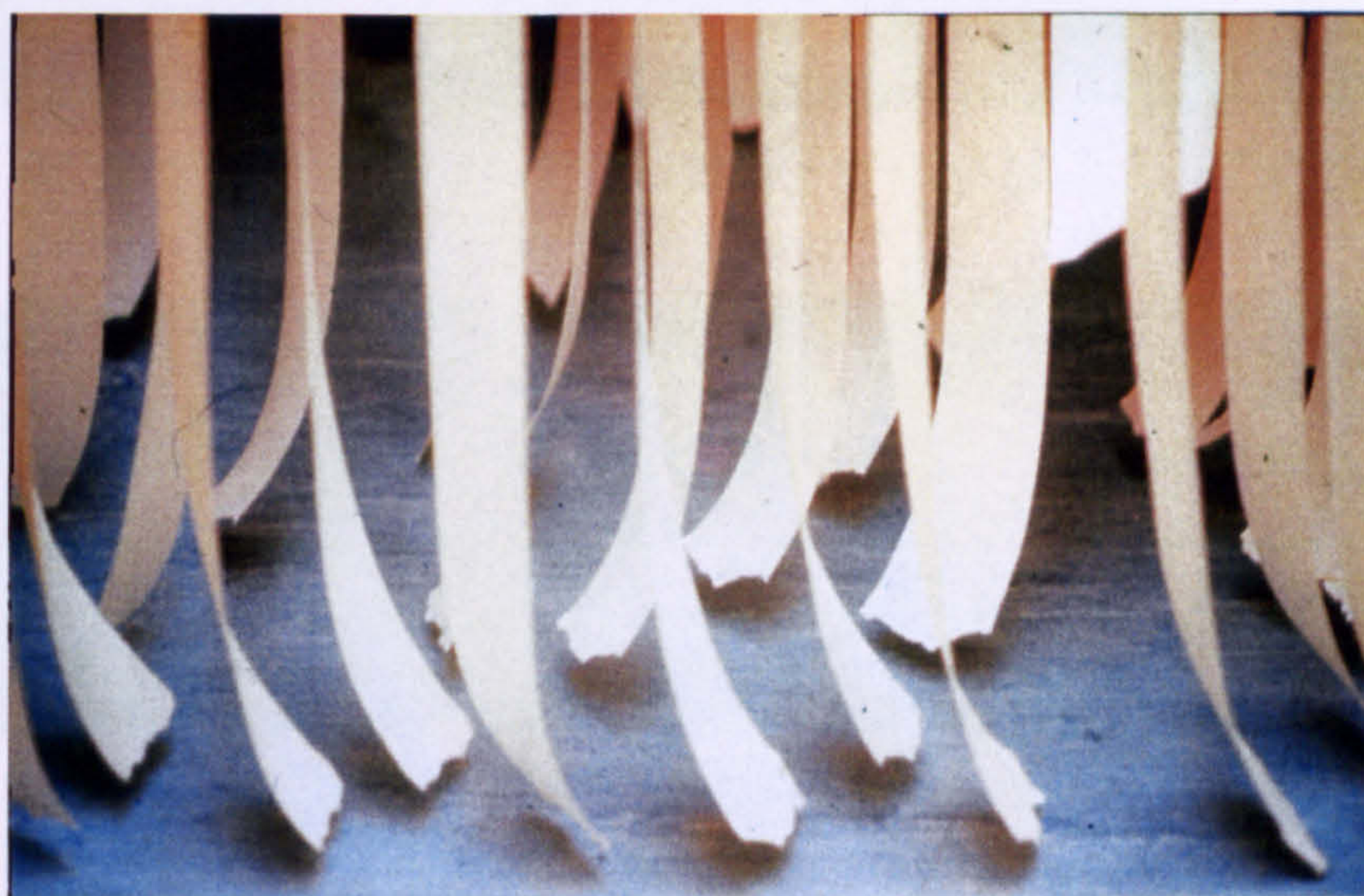
Fig. 115. susan pui san lok, *Untitled (Transit)*, installation with doorstop, Dictaphone, speakers



116.

Figs. 116-117. susan pui san lok, *Untitled (Remains)* (1998), installation with light bulb, paper

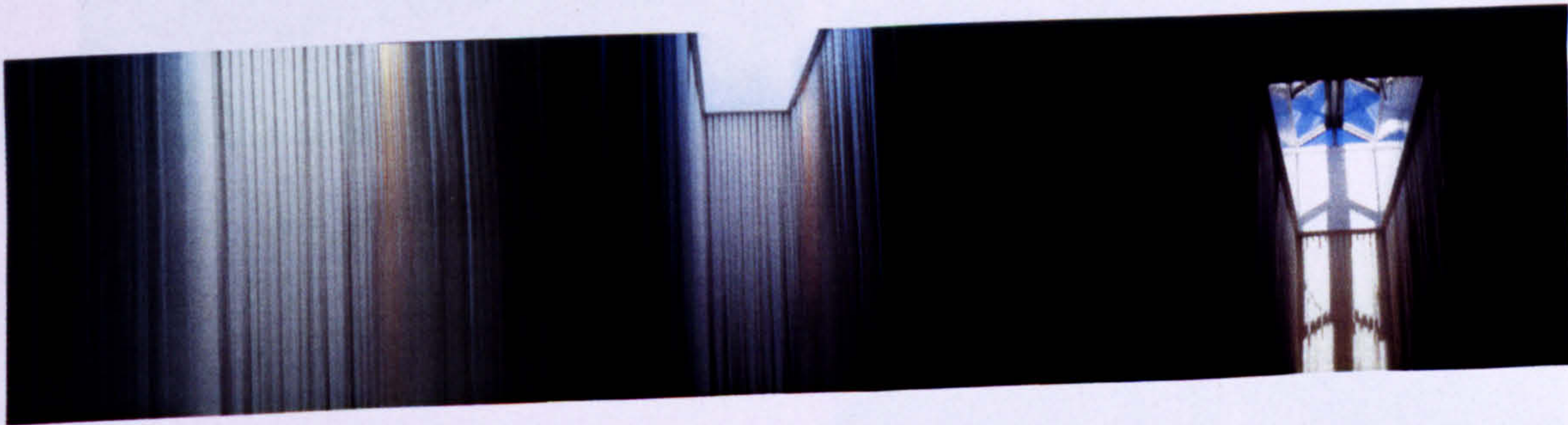




118.

Figs. 118-120. susan pui san lok, *Witness* (1998), installation with till rolls, sound, light, lasercopies, photograph corners (details)





121.



122.



Fig. 121. susan pui san lok, *Monumental Bargain* (1998), ninety seven T-shirts, ink, plinth, barriers

Fig. 122. susan pui san lok, *97 Proofs* (1998), paper, permanent marker, endorsing ink, plastic frames



123.

Fig. 123. susan pui san lok, *My He/Art / Your Sleeve* (2000), badges, chocolate, glass bowl, table, cloth, postcards, stand

124.

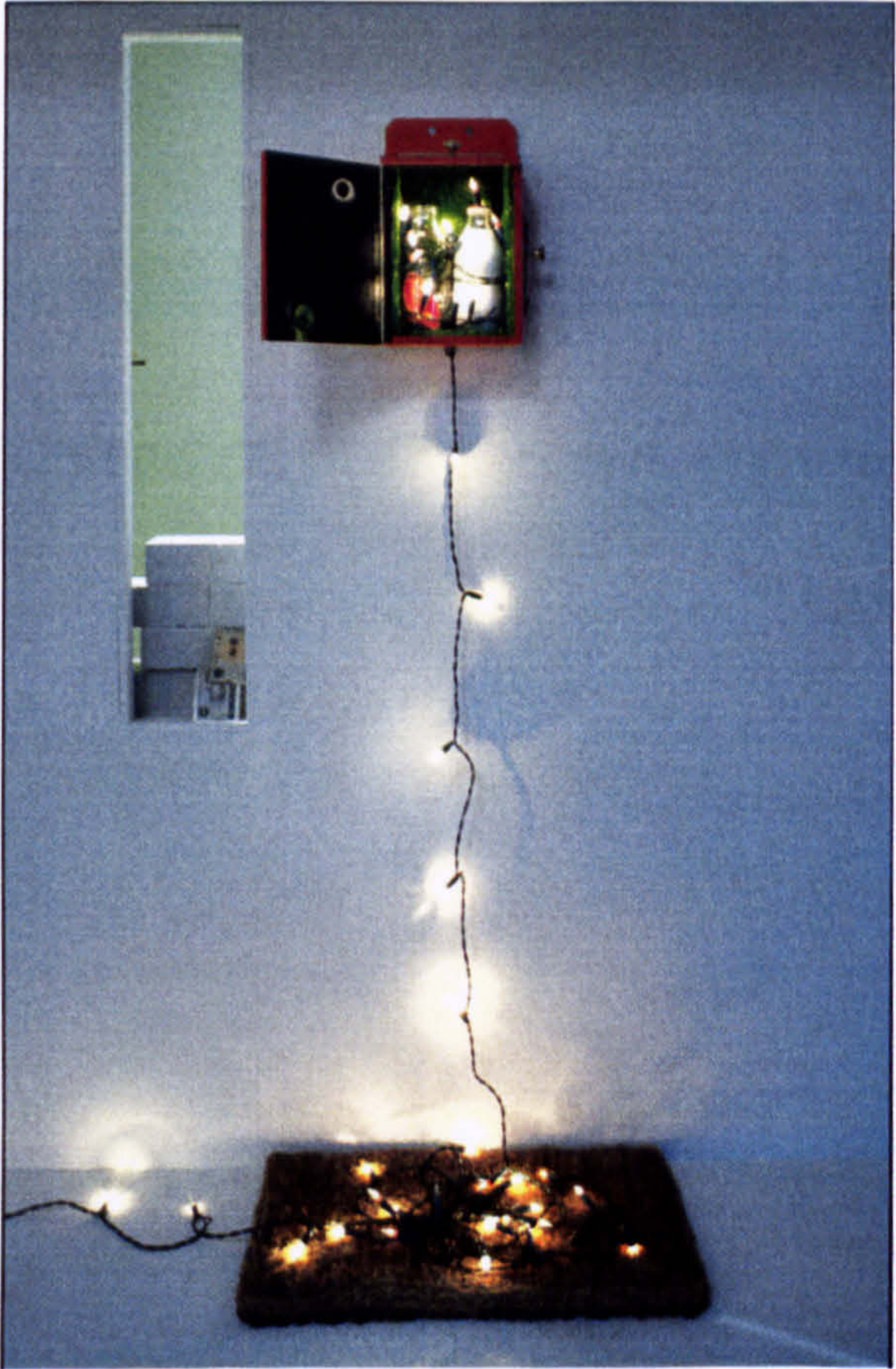
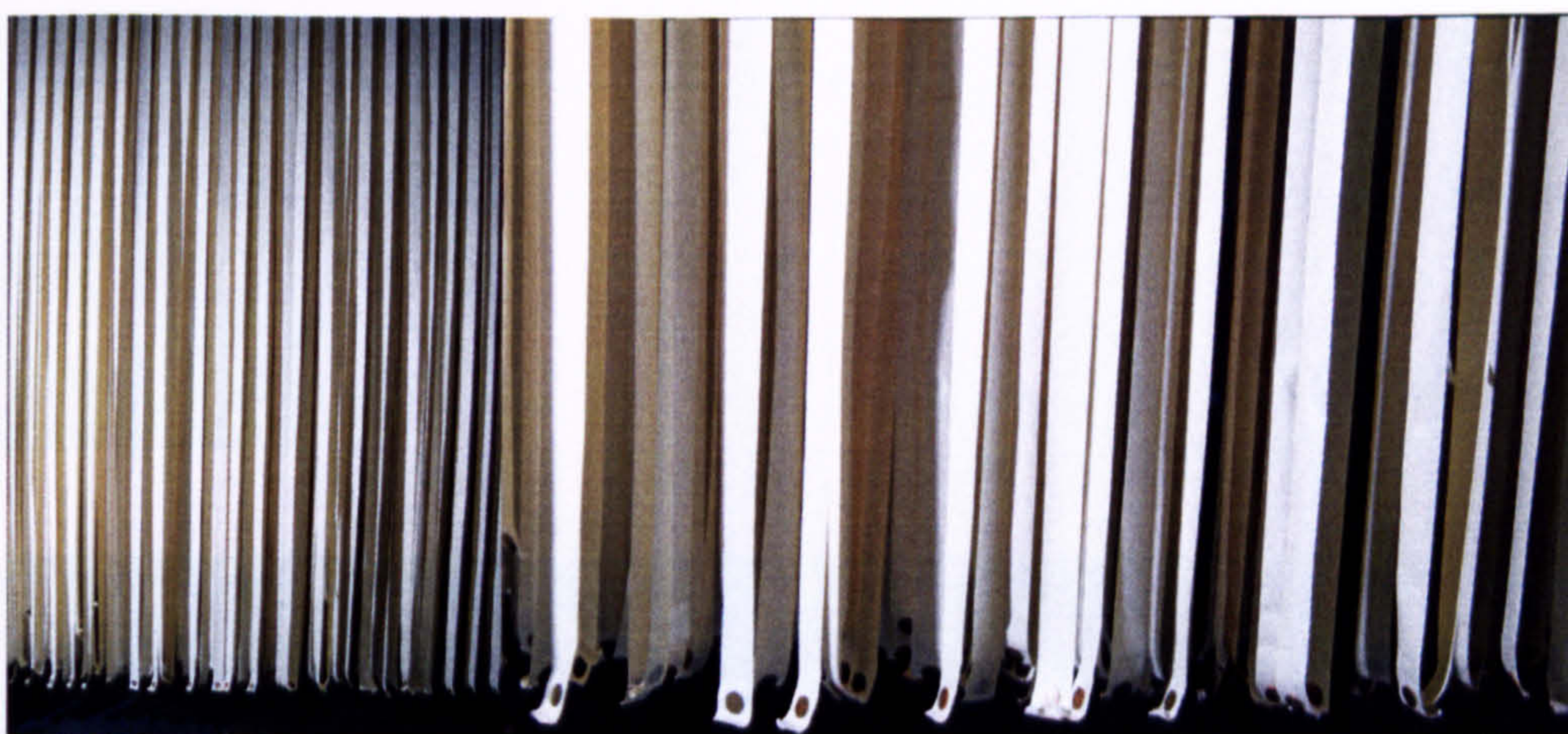
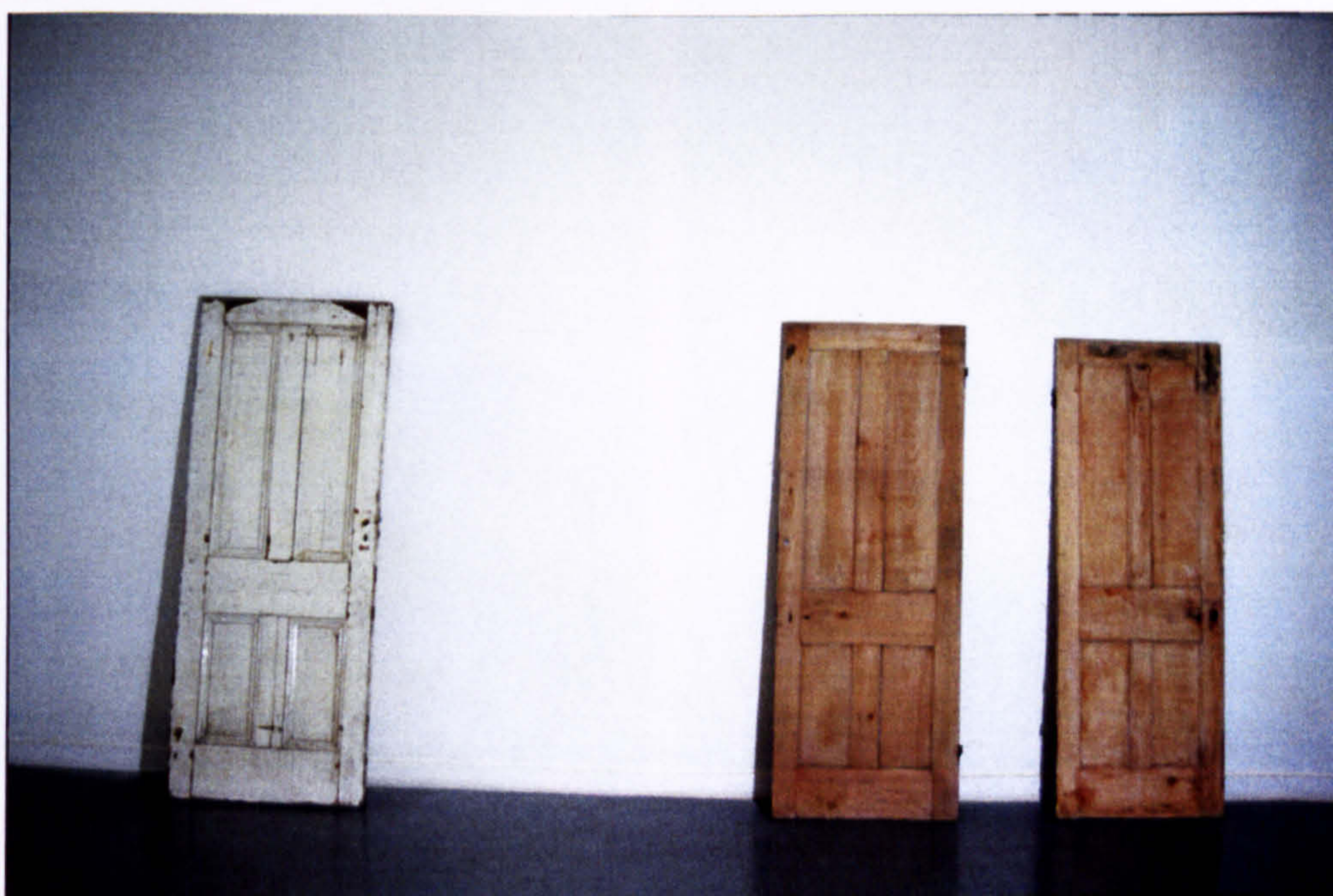


Fig. 124. susan pui san lok, *Space 1999* (1999), MDF, paint, doormat, brass, glass, salt, paper, card, lights, mirror

125.



126.



127.

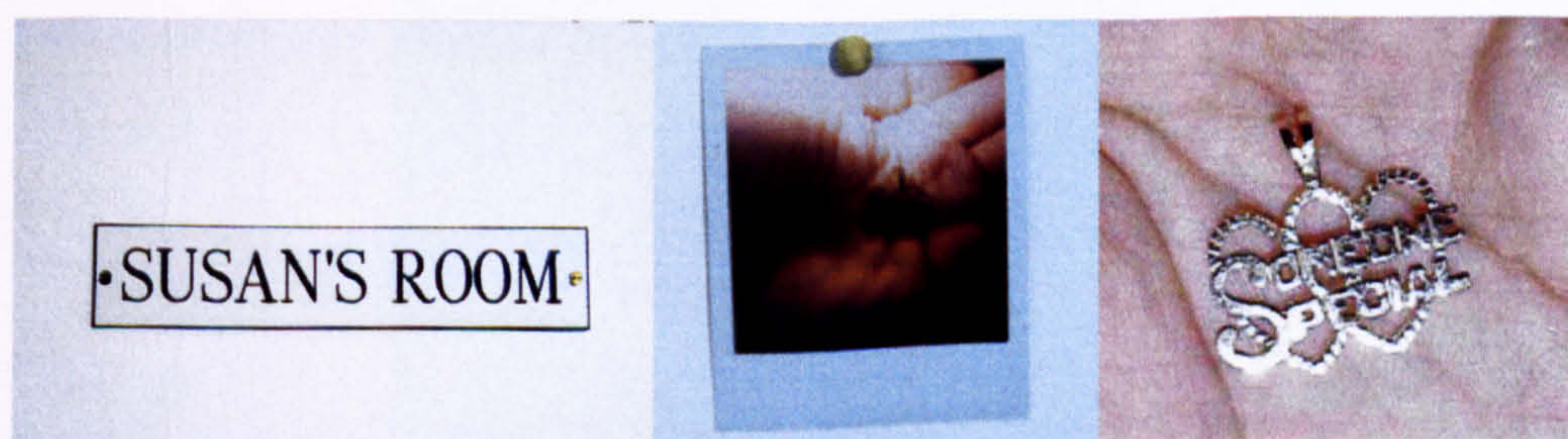
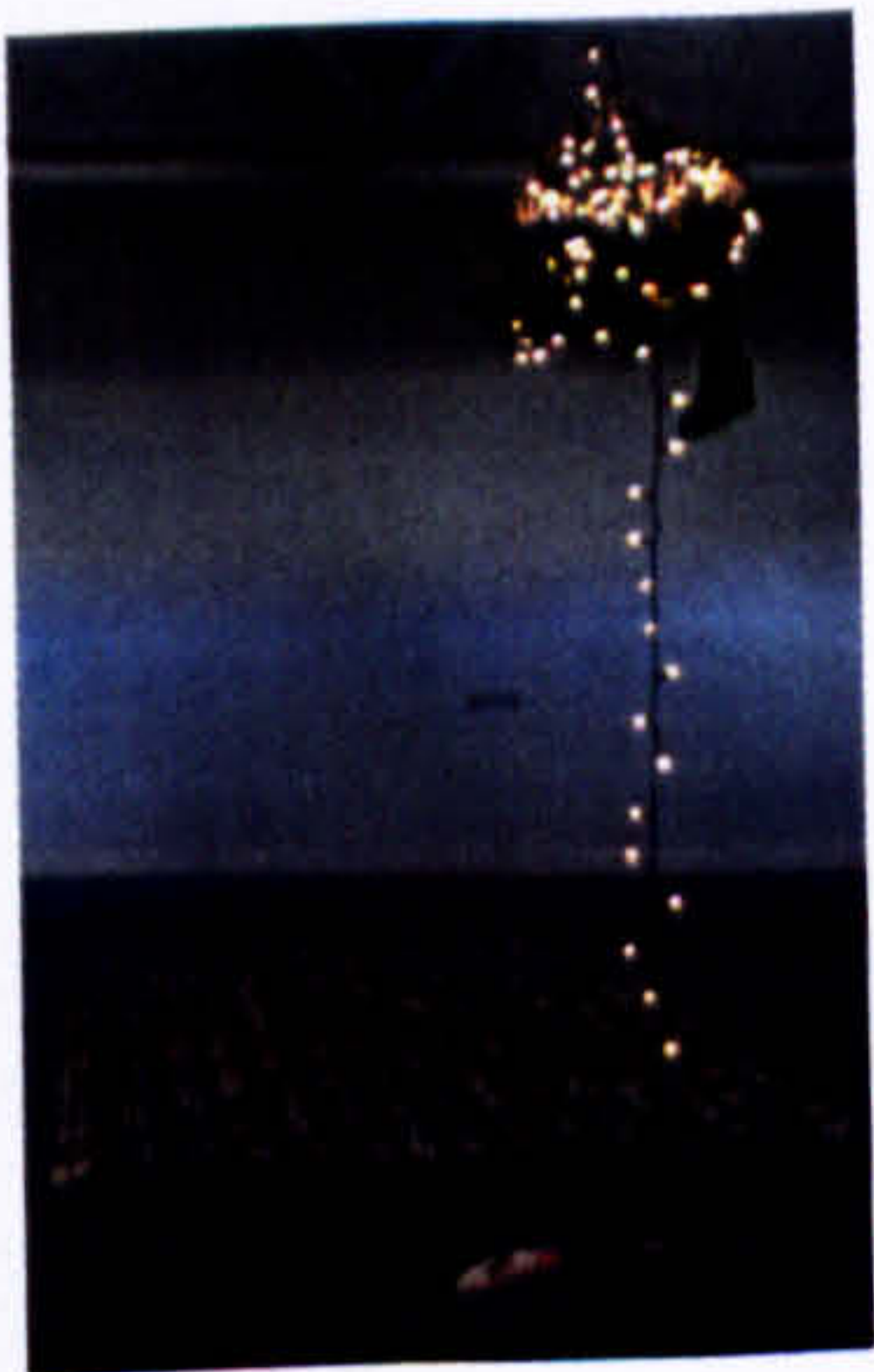


Fig. 125 susan pui san lok, *Wall* (2000), paper, coins

Fig. 126. susan pui san lok, *Susan's Room* (2000), doors, plaque

Fig. 127. susan pui san lok, *Susan's Room* and *Someone Special* (2000), polaroid

Illustrations



128.

Figs.128-129. susan pui san lok, *Mobile* (2000), shoes, hanger



129.



130.



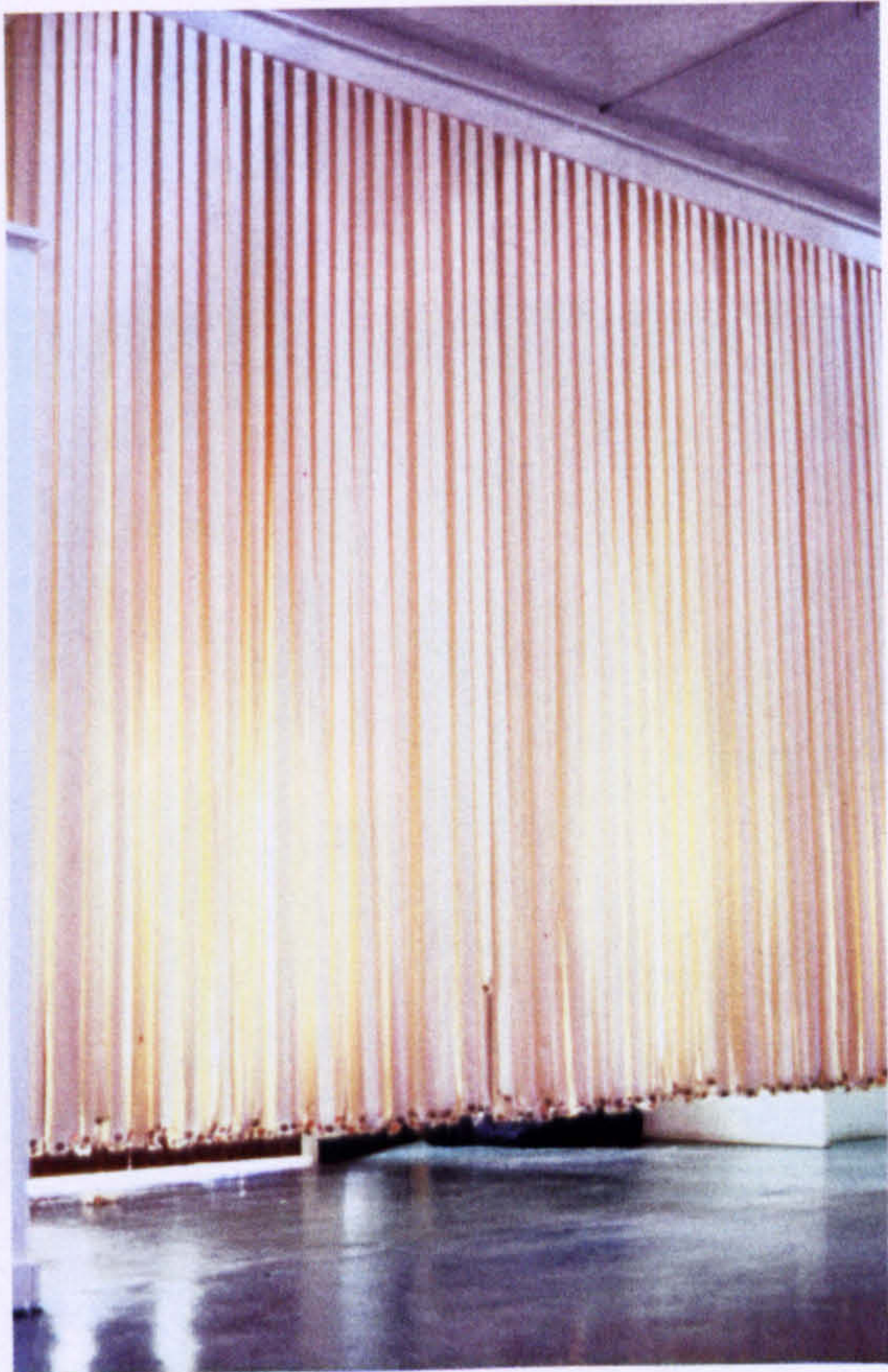
131.

Fig. 130. susan pui san lok, *Susan's Room* (2000), doors, plaque
Fig. 131-132. susan pui san lok, *Take Me Away* (2000), spikes, paper





Fig.133. susan pui san lok, *Wait (Walk / Don't Walk)* (2000), artificial grass, foamboard.



134.

Fig. 134. susan pui san lok, *Wall* (2000), paper, coins



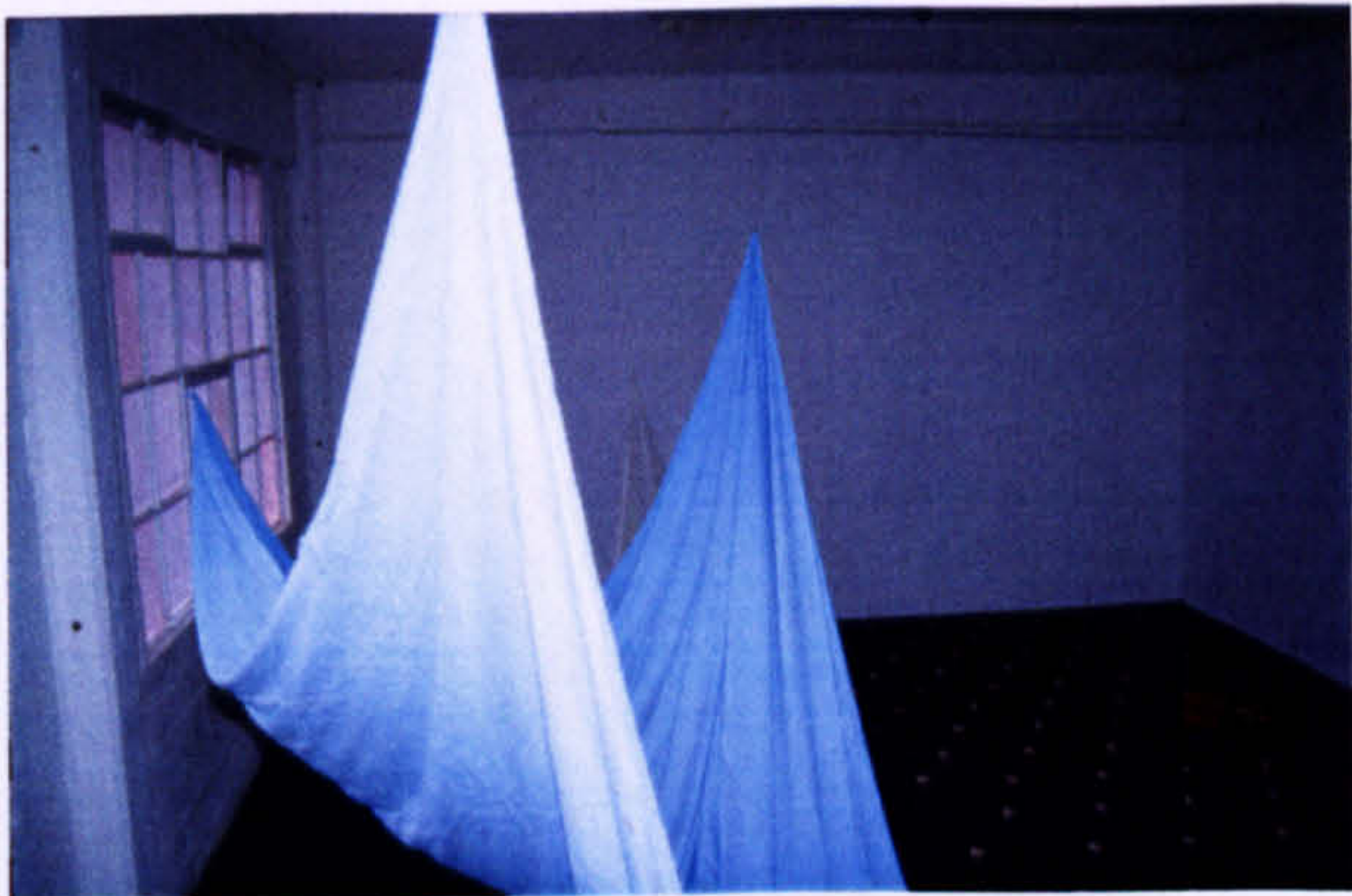
136.

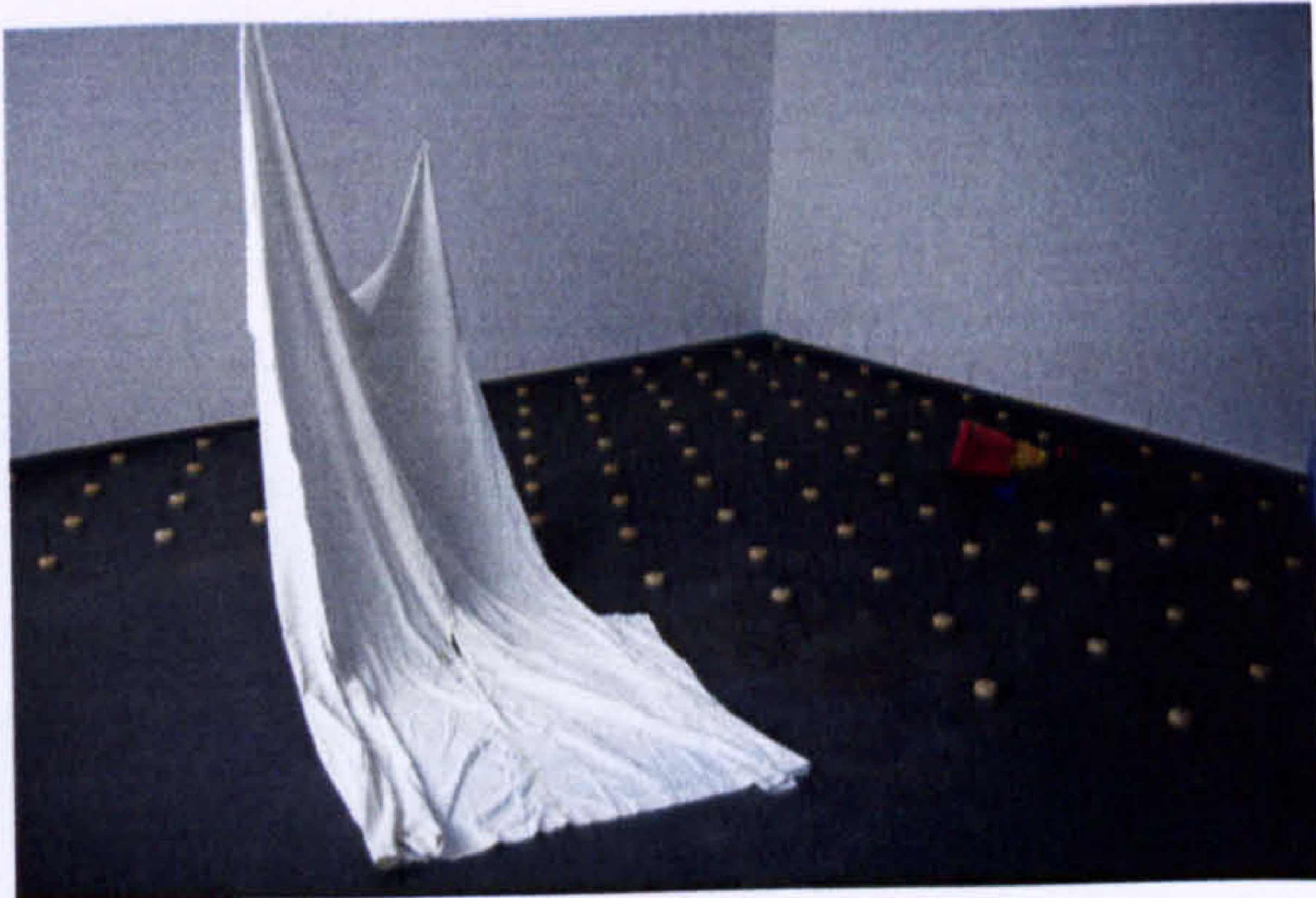


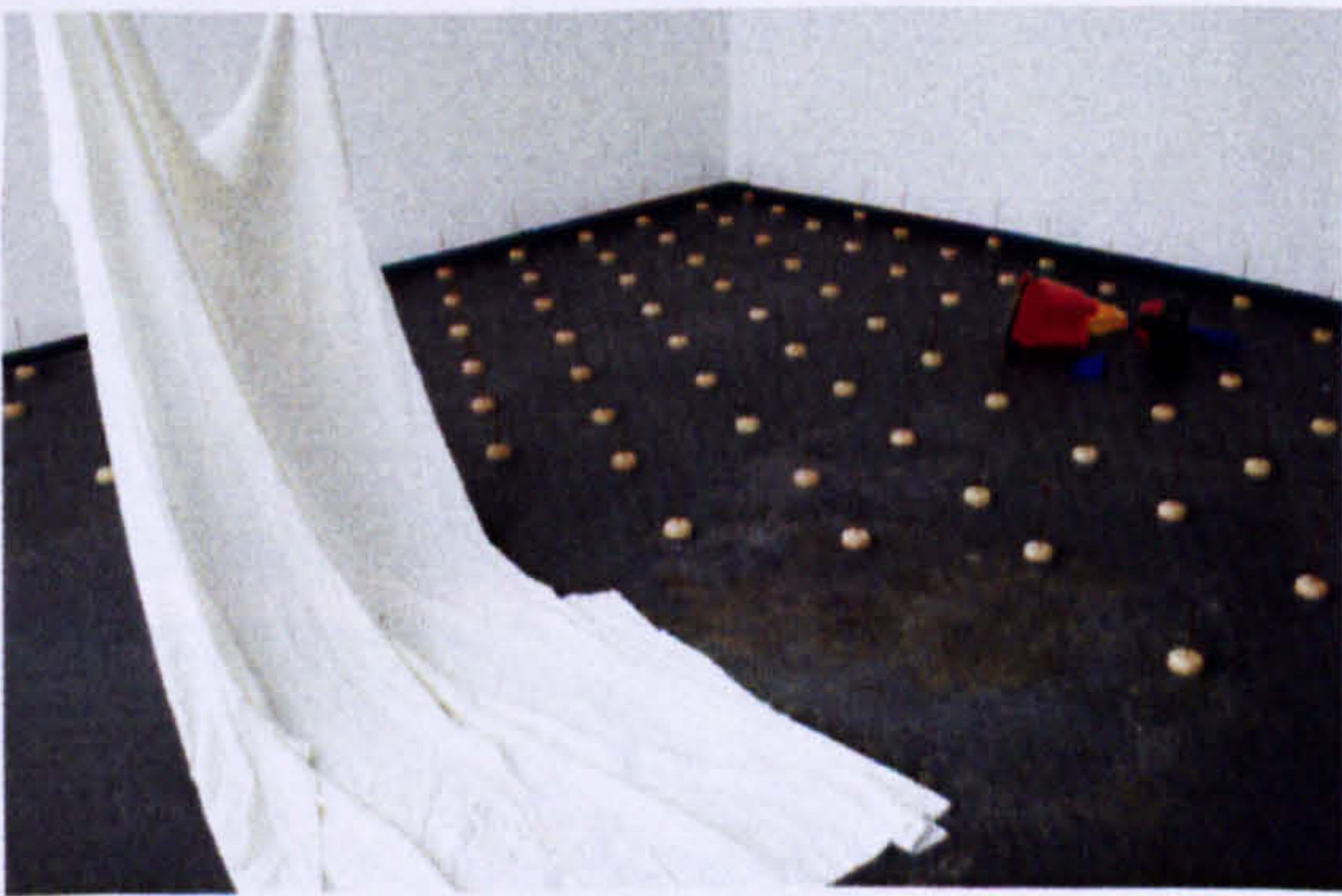
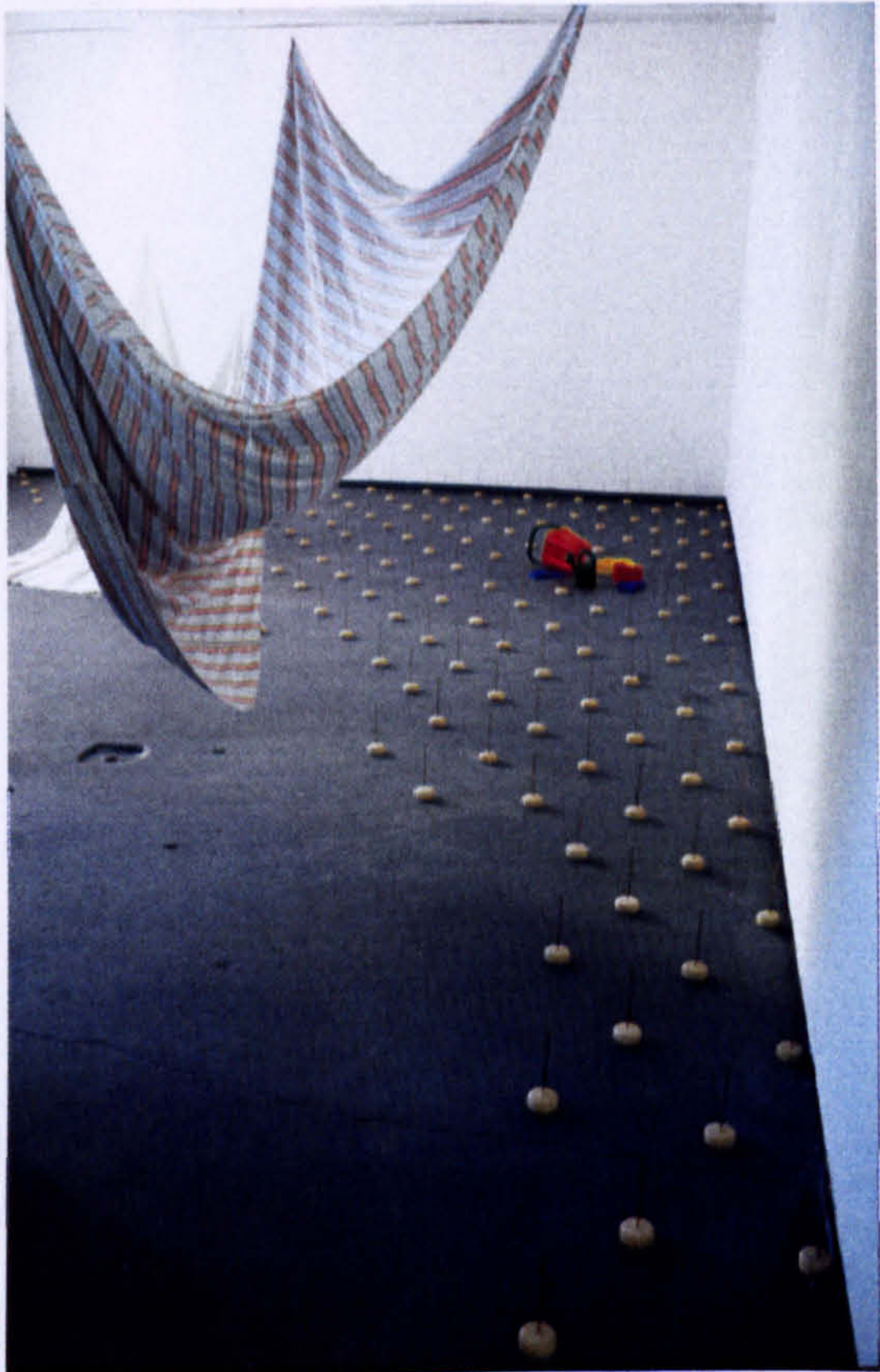
137.

Fig. 135. susan pui san lok, *Protection* (2000), coat-stand, hat, scarf, badges, sign

Figs. 137-139. susan pui san lok, *FCHKUK* (2000), installation with sound, tissue paper, fabric, spikes, bucket and spade (details)





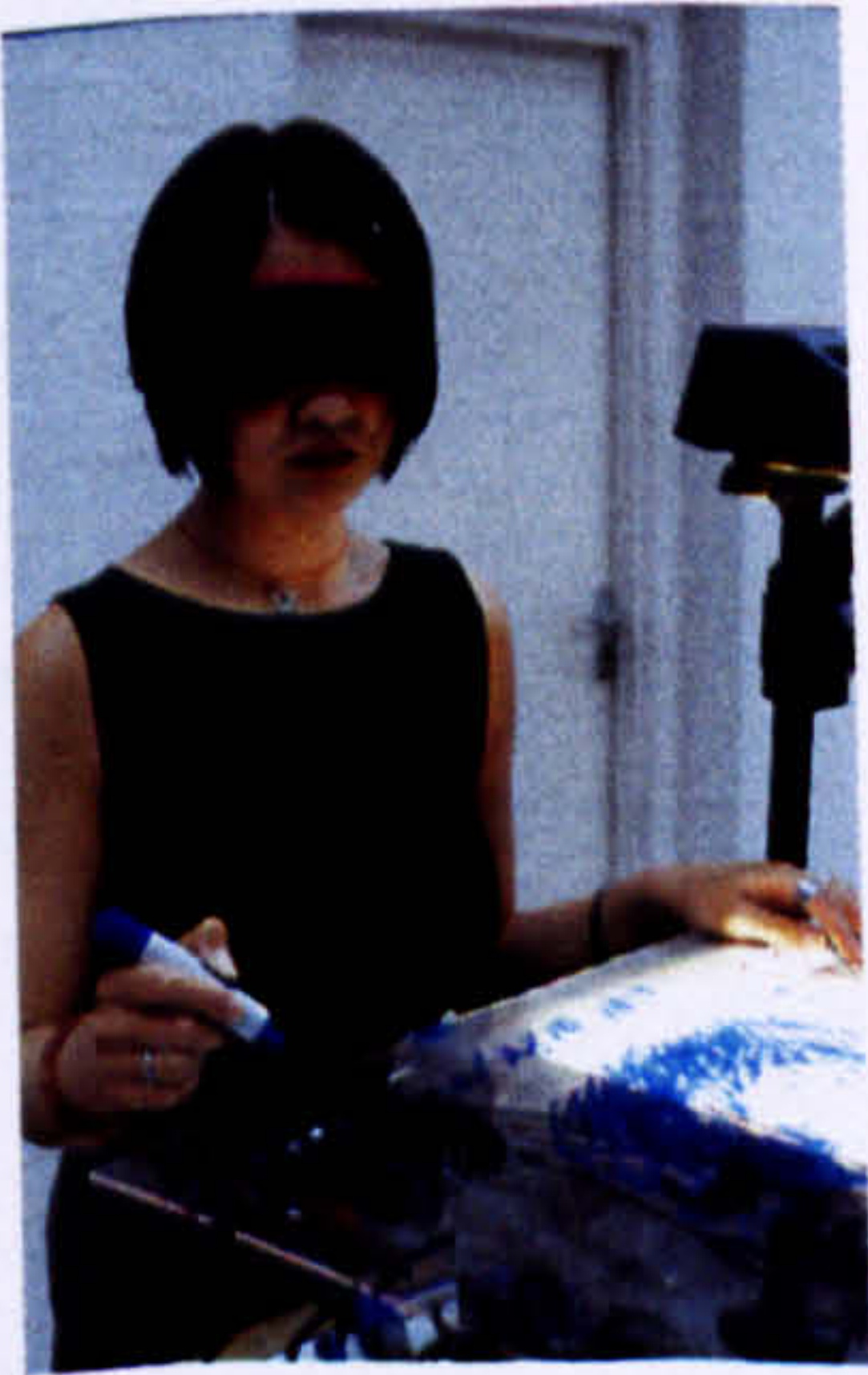


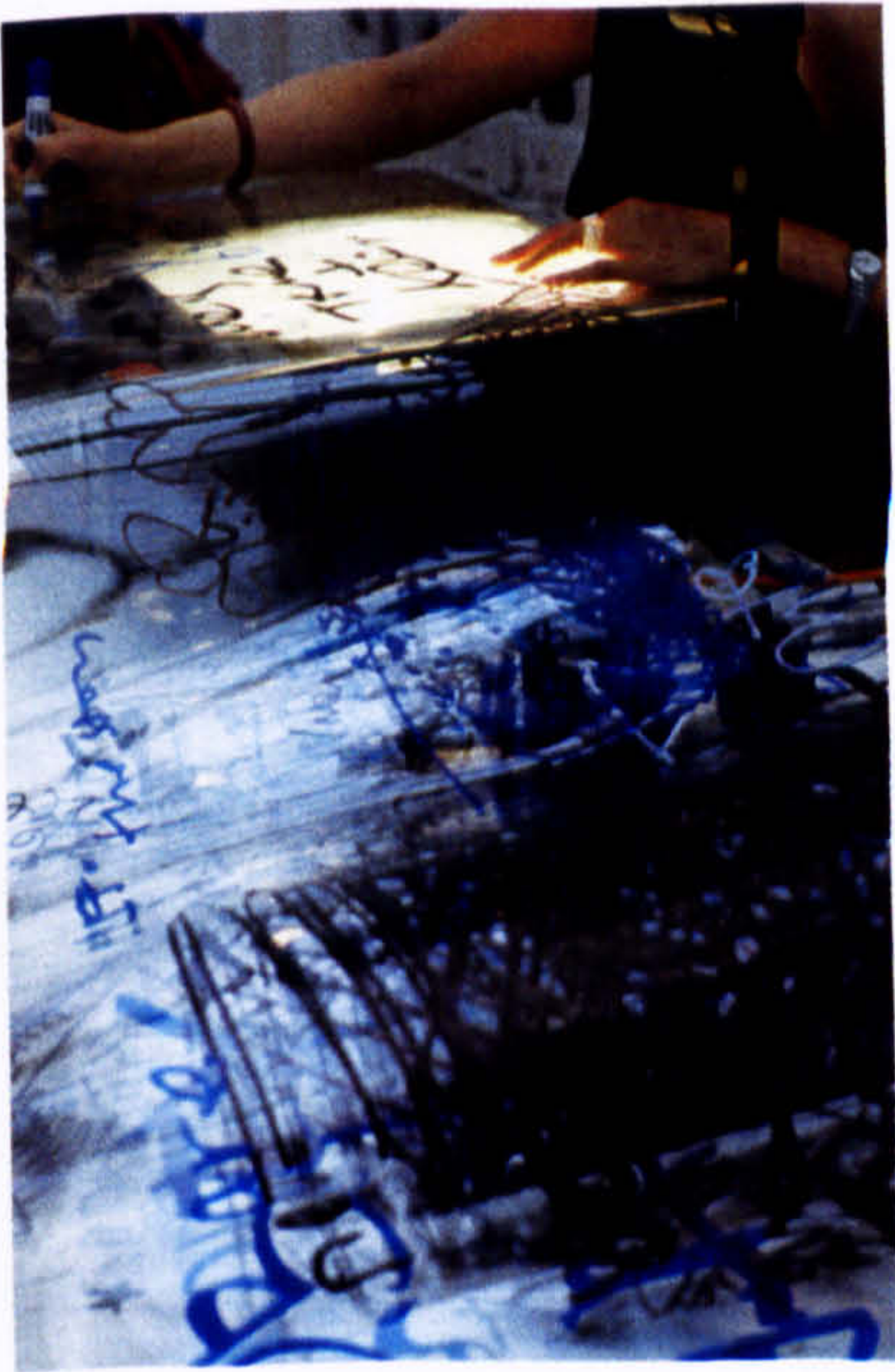
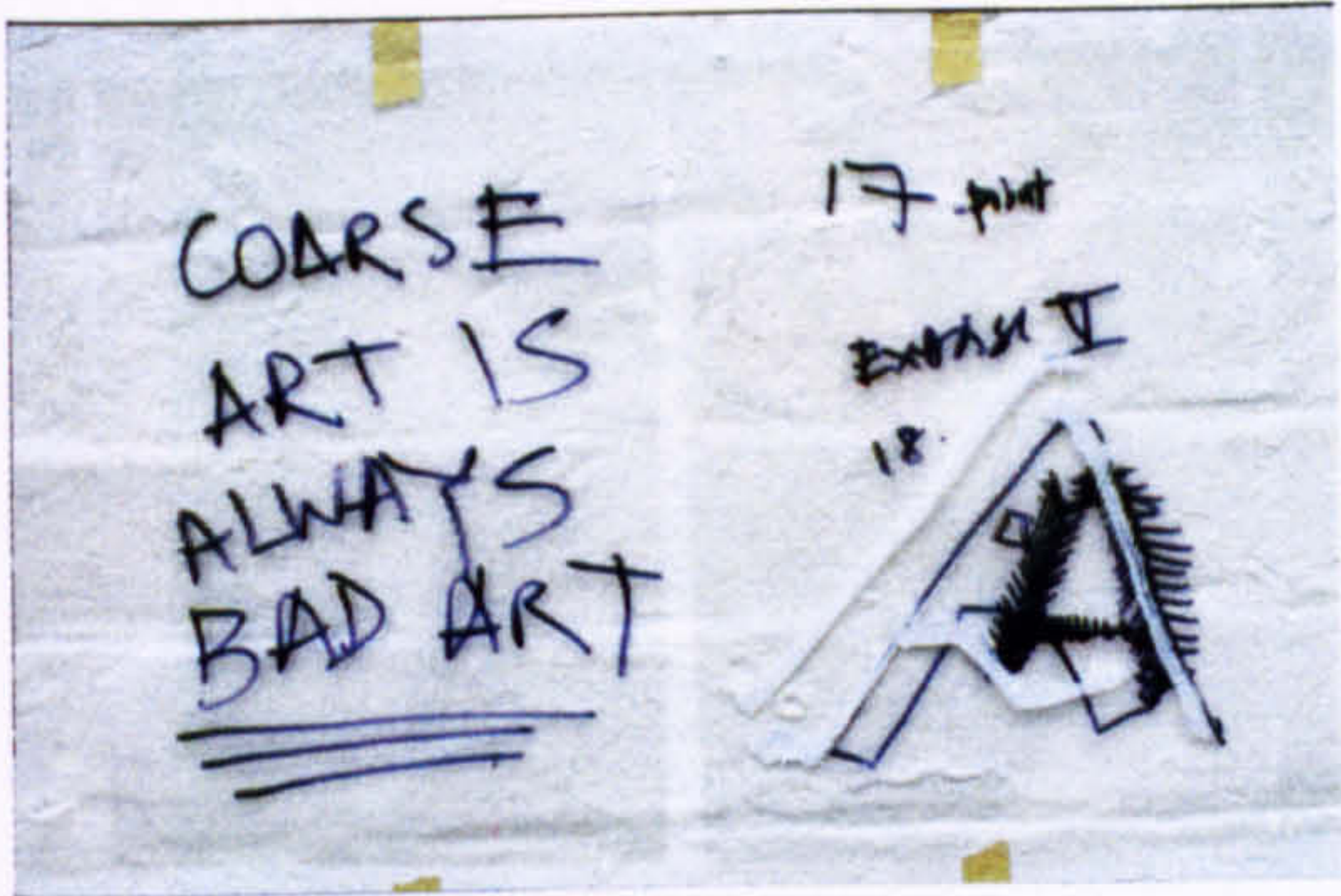


142.



142-145. susan pui san lok, *Elements of Drawing Blind* (2001), performance and installation with acetate, permanent marker, overhead projector, blindfold, dictaphone









146.

Figs.146-148. susan pui san lok, *Notes On Return*, 2003, DVD sound and video installation, 9 mins 38 secs (stills)

