



# ASSEMBLE : HONG KONG IN HELSINKI

Saturday 16 November 2024, 2pm - 5pm  
HIAP Gallery Augusta, Suomenlinna, Helsinki  
Free Entrance

Curated by Angelika Li

2pm : Doors open with installation by  
Oscar Chan Yik Long on view

2:30pm : Ikebana performance by Hedy Leung

3 - 5pm: Screening programme of works by  
Luke Ching, May Fung, Law Yuk Mui,  
Leung Chi Wo, Lo Lai Lai Natalie,  
Ellen Pau, Angela Su, Yim Sui Fong

Presented and supported by HIAP, Helsinki.  
Supported by PF25 cultural projects, Basel.

Donations welcome for collective fundraising  
in support of Ukraine.

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Programme and Curator's Notes



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Curated by Angelika Li

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HIAP Gallery Augusta, Suomenlinna, Helsinki  
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2pm  
Doors Open. Installation 'We All Cope Differently'  
by [Oscar Chan Yik Long](#) on view

2:30pm  
Ikebana Performance  
'Assemble' by [Hedy Leung](#)

3pm - 5pm  
Screening Programme

[May Fung](#) 'She Said Why Me' (1989),  
8 mins

[May Fung](#) 'Image of a City' (1990),  
11 mins

[Law Yuk Mui](#) 'On Junk Bay, The Plant'  
(1990-present), 2 mins 56 secs

[Ellen Pau](#) 'Diversion' (1990),  
5 mins 30 secs

[Ellen Pau](#) 'Song of the Goddess' (1992),  
6 mins 50 secs

[Luke Ching](#) 'Pixel' (2014),  
43 secs

[Lo Lai Lai Natalie](#) 'Weather Girl. Halo Daisy'  
(2016), 6 mins 32 secs

[Yim Sui Fong](#) 'Black Bird Island' (2017),  
6 mins 32 secs

[Lo Lai Lai Natalie](#) 'Cold Fire' (2019-2020),  
10 mins 18 secs

[Leung Chi Wo](#) 'My Random Diary' (2020),  
18 mins 23 secs

[Angela Su](#) 'This is Not a Game' (2021),  
11 mins 16 secs

[Luke Ching](#) 'Easy to Learn Cantonese -  
Auf Wiedersehen' (2023), 1 min 10 secs

'Assemble: Hong Kong in Helsinki' is a special programme curated by Angelika Li as part of her curator-in-residency at the Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP) on the historically significant island of Suomenlinna. The programme showcases ten Hong Kong artists, featuring a new ikebana performance by Hedy Leung (London) and an installation by Oscar Chan Yik-Long (Helsinki), alongside video works by Hong Kong-based artists Luke Ching, May Fung, Law Yuk Mui, Leung Chi Wo, Lo Lai Lai Natalie, Ellen Pau, Angela Su, and Yim Sui Fong, presented in Angelika's 'Homeland in Transit' (2019-ongoing) exhibition series, and marking their debut presentation in Finland.

Metaphorically exploring hydrological cycles — water, clouds, and wind — the works reflect on notions of memory, colonial ideology, identity, boundaries, disappearance and displacement. They navigate challenging landscapes while contemplating human conditions, resilience and healing. These artists, representing different generations and practices, offer unique narratives, insights, and re-imaginings of Hong Kong through their individual lenses. These topics interweave with experiences and voices from other parts of the world, assembling ideas and exchanges that build solidarity and shared understanding with the Helsinki community on the historically significant island of Suomenlinna. Notably, Chan, Ching, and Su are HIAP and PF25 alumni, adding a meaningful layer as their works return to Helsinki in this collaborative context.

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## Installation & Performance

[Oscar Chan Yik Long](#) – ‘We All Cope Differently’ (2016/2024), site-specific projection of ink painting

Chan revisits an old ink painting that visualises his deepest fears about the future of humanity. This dark vision, once a personal expression of his anxieties, now feels unsettlingly prophetic, having been transformed and blown up into a projection covering the gallery surface. Within the chaotic scene, otherworldly beings appear psychologically unhinged, each absorbed in its own frantic way of coping, isolated and disconnected from the whole. These figures embody a fractured response to crisis, mirroring how humanity might become self-absorbed and divided when faced with overwhelming challenges. Despite this, Chan conveys a paradoxical optimism: we can still move toward a brighter future through small, meaningful acts of care. As he says, “I hope everyone is taking care of the flowers and plants around them, those places within our reach where we can make a difference.” The work’s forest backdrop hints that, for Chan, nurturing and giving back to nature represents a shift from the excessive, self-centered lifestyles he fears have contributed to today’s crises, and that by coming together, we can still avert the catastrophes he once feared. Chan’s projection sets the stage for Hedy Leung’s new ikebana performance ‘Assemble’ (2024), which shares ideas of collectivity, renewal, and hope.

[Hedy Leung](#) – ‘Assemble’ (2024), ikebana performance, installation, found materials from Suomenlinna

‘Assemble’ brings together not just materials, but also energy, ideas, and reflections—in the spirit of the art of ikebana, where the present moment is given life. Reclaimed and readily available materials are assembled like flowers in an ikebana arrangement. Each piece finds new purpose, creating a harmonious whole. Just as no moment repeats itself, each material carries its own history, but when brought together, they form a new narrative. The act of assembling—whether it be physical materials or collective thoughts—creates a space for transformation, renewal, and togetherness. Disparate elements come together in a way that transcends their individual existence, merging into a composition.

## Screening Programme

1. [May Fung](#) – ‘She Said Why Me’ (1989), 8 mins

The narratives of disappearance and the cityscapes linger with a strong sense of frustration and self-searching in ‘She Said Why Me’ (1989) in which a blind-folded female protagonist starts her journey from a Tin Hau temple where traditionally fishermen in Hong Kong worship and pray to the deities for protection in the waters. The artist uses the temple as a form of attachment to her heritage. Interwoven with historical footages with focal points or quasi surveillance on women, the protagonist transits into the modern cityscape of Central finding her way along the monuments that represent the colonial era. At one point, she loses her blindfold yet she still moves like a sleep-walker. When she comes to realise her blindfold is no longer there, she starts running aimlessly, but from what and where to? Seemingly lost with a sense of displacement and despair, the woman acts as the artist’s outlet of emotions, vents out her emotions and frustrations about her gender, cultural identity, the transformation of our city during this self-searching process. At the pivotal junction on Queen’s Road Central, she turns and stares back sharply at the camera with anger and fear: ‘Why me?’ She then finds her way, though blindfolded, back to where she came from. That leads us back to the sea, the notion of water. (‘Video Talks, Basel, 2020’, Basel/Berlin, 2020)

2. [May Fung](#) – ‘Image of a City’ (1990), 11 mins

With rapid urbanisation in Hong Kong since the 1970s and an influx of migrants from China, how do we perceive the changes of our city and our own identity? May Fung is one of the most influential video artists at the forefront of experimental practice for over three decades in Hong Kong. Her work often interweaves local history, cultural landscapes, politics and poetics. Her two works ‘Image of a City’ (1990) and ‘She Said Why Me?’ (1989) offer images of Hong Kong through a time tunnel from the 1967 Hong Kong riots to the 1989 Tiananmen Square



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protests with footage drawn from the Hong Kong Government Record Service. Cityscapes marked with architectural references that reflect the parallel worlds of both Chinese and British, the artist channels out her emotions and memories along the pivotal transformations or negotiations between the two worlds in one city. The anxiety and frustration expressed in the works have become self-fulfilling prophecy. What the footages depict keep resurfacing through our timeline, as seen in the recent movements in Hong Kong and other parts of the world. Recordings of scholar Ackbar Abbas' lecture on the notion of 'culture in a space of disappearance' guides us through 'Image of a City' (1990): "Hong Kong...has never ceased being a port, a door, a threshold, a passage way. It is a space in transit. Everything is provisional, temporary and ad hoc." Overlapping the voice of Abbas in the video is Margaret Thatcher's speech on 'one country, two systems. Abbas described Hong Kong as "not so much a place as a space of transit," whose residents consider themselves as transients and migrants on their way from China to the next place. What is disappearing? Is it something visible or intangible? Is it our heritage and identity or sense of belonging? Is it the memory of our past or our imagination of the future? ('Video Talks, Basel, 2020', Basel/Berlin, 2020)

### 3. [Law Yuk Mui](#) – 'On Junk Bay, The Plant' (1990-present), 2 mins 56 secs.

Moving from Victoria Road to the opposite side of the Victoria harbour of Hong Kong – we find Junk Bay, now known as Tseung Kwan O (TKO). The earliest inhabitants of the area can be traced back to the 13th Century and major settlements dated back to the late 16th Century when small fishing villages were formed. With its geographical advantage, shipping industries emerged in the 1960s until 1982 when the local government kicked off the development of TKO as a new town which saw a chain of humongous reclamation constructions. Notably, the government never addressed the old name 'Junk Bay'.

(['Video Talks', Basel, 2020](#))

### 4. [Ellen Pau](#) – 'Diversion 兩頭唔到岸' (1990), 5 mins 30 secs

Reimagining the 1960s Victoria Harbour swimming contests as absurd metaphors with dark humour, 'Diversion' was created a year after the June 4, 1989 incident, reflecting Hong Kong's immigration surge. It eschews specialised editing equipment, using a unique technique: recapturing images from a television screen. Merging footage from diverse sources, such as government newsreels of swimming contests, educational swimming videos, and staged sequences featuring a burning newspaper adorned with a goat-head motif descending a stairwell, the film becomes a personal reflection of collective memory. ('Video Talks', 2023)

### 5. [Ellen Pau](#) – 'Song of the Goddess 似是故人來' (1992), 6 mins 50 secs

This work pays homage to the celebrated Cantonese Opera duo, Yam Kim-fai and Pak Suet-sin, known for their roles as lovers, often with Yam dressed as a male, earning her the title 'The Silver Screen Lover.' They never married but instead lived together for most of their lives. When Yam passed away in 1989, Pak organized her funeral, accompanied by a banner that read, 'I would die a hundred times to bring you back to me.' In this video, the duo's film 'The Emperor Lee' (1968), which also served as their curtain call, merges with their real-life story, weaving a narrative that explores themes of enduring love, the boundary between reality and illusion, the interplay of past and present, and the connection that persists even when physically separated. In 1991, a year after Yam's death, it marked the end of the criminalisation of homosexual acts in the colonial Hong Kong.

(['Video Talks', 2023](#))

### 6. [Luke Ching](#) – 'Pixel' (2014), 43 secs

'Pixel' (2014) is a video by Luke Ching about the annual Tiananmen candlelight vigil which took



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place annually on June 4th between 1990 and 2019 at Victoria Park in Hong Kong. To the artist, a droplet of wax represents a candle, which becomes a cluster of pixels. Every year on June 4, the media focus much attention on the resolution of the Victoria Park image: behind each candlelight was a holder of flesh and blood. In this video, the pixel of a candle extinguishes with a trace of smoke. According to the report of South China Morning Post on June 4, 2020, the organisers estimated the vigil was attended by millions since 1990. For the first time, the vigil was banned in 2020. ([‘Through the Clouds’, Murrhardt/Berlin/Basel, 2021](#))

## 7. [Lo Lai Lai Natalie](#) – ‘Weather Girl. Halo Daisy’ (2016), 6 mins 32 secs

What is a halo cloud? In the format of weather reporting narrated by a cheerful female voice, Lo Lai Lai Natalie shares her records of emotions in ‘Weather Girl. Halo Daisy’. It is her repertoire to deploy a lighthearted approach with superficially soothing trivial imagery to engage the viewer on heavy content, often of social and personal issues in the real world. The volume and temperature of sweat, tears and emotions can be detected in this video. Farming is a therapeutic process for the artist and she often sets a camera randomly in the field while she is at work. By chance the natural phenomenon of the halo cloud was captured. The clouds look calm on the surface, yet with the fierce undercurrents, the phenomenon is formed with a ring of rainbow in the everchanging conditions. ([‘Through the Clouds’, Murrhardt/Berlin/Basel, 2021](#))

## 8. [Yim Sui Fong](#) – ‘Black Bird Island’ 黑鳥島’ (2017), 6 mins 32 secs

From 1989, we fast-forward to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong. Yim’s ‘Black Bird Island’ stems from her interview with a former Hong Kong pigeon seller Mr. Leung Kam Hung and the history of the official handover celebration that the Regional Council of Hong Kong organised where thousands of pigeons transported from the Chinese border were released at the Sha Tin Sports Ground. Due to severe

rainstorms, most birds could not return to their homeland and were stranded. The artist creates a fiction with friction comprising multiple layers of social commentary based on two observations: a field study of the sky-coastline shaped by pigeon colonies since the handover in 1997 where the birds were being observed; and an encounter with a young girl being bullied where the bird becomes an observer. The jump-cuts bridge the story of the pigeons in Hong Kong, and through their lens into the psychological state of the society at the time. ([‘Through the Clouds’, Murrhardt/Berlin/Basel, 2021](#))

## 9. [Lo Lai Lai Natalie](#) – ‘Cold Fire’ (2019-2020), 10 mins 18 secs

The level of emotion is intense in Lo’s ‘Cold Fire’. One might be fascinated by the mysterious beings rippling through the sensuous shapes formed by smoke, clouds, or water. In the next scene, the viewer is brought onto a plane with safety cards and a window view of clouds, eavesdropping on conversations about a mixture of fear of plane crashes, life, and death... Through the fermentation process to the revelation of the mysterious being – i.e. the fire used for fermentation – the cold fire represents the resilience and solidarity of people, yet by no surprise, people do get hurt from it. The artwork is a reflection on the human experience, including the fragility and strength of life, and the complexity of emotions that come with it. ‘Cold Fire’ invites the viewer to engage with these themes, to contemplate the mysteries of life, and to find meaning in the moments of uncertainty. ([‘Through the Clouds’, Murrhardt/Berlin/Basel, 2021](#))

## 10. [Leung Chi Wo](#) – ‘My Random Diary’ (2020), 18 mins 23 secs

‘My Random Diary’ by Hong Kong artist Leung Chi Wo, investigates the difference between collective and individual memory. The concept of this exhibition chapter is inspired by the ideas expressed in this work. In Leung’s practice, he often draws from references and archives,





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especially newspaper archives with history as a subject matter. He seeks to capture the temperature and atmosphere of past scenes, and most of his works act as a tracker in the city, tracing the threads of history and memory. 'My Random Diary' is a notable example of this, which juxtaposes adapted diary entries of unrelated events from various news archives with photos taken during the artist's site visits to locations of covered violent events. The diary entries begin with the bombing at the Hilton Hotel on Garden Road on August 22, 1967, and continue with news covering the death of journalist Lam Bun by arson, and beyond. The randomness of the entries is not solely due to the artist's chance encounters with scenes of violence but also the inclusion of celebratory events that happened on the same day exactly fifty years ago. The resulting diary creates a vivid and almost schizophrenic record of the city's anxiety and intensity [...].

(['Random Diaries', Zurich, 2023](#))

11. [Angela Su](#) – 'This is Not a Game' (2021),  
11 mins 16 secs

This video by Angela Su examines the interrelation between human consciousness and technology by interweaving fictions and historical facts from film footage and games from different eras to construct a speculative dimension that may very well be truth, reality, or post-truth. The video takes us through various pivotal historical moments, starting from the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian uprising against Russian occupation in 'The Chess Player' (1917), followed by 'Chess Fever' (1925) showing real chess tournaments from Moscow. The game of chess was used as a political tool for training and preparing for war, and also as a way to demonstrate the countries' intellectual prowess and superiority over the other [...] The inclusion of films 'War Games' (1983) and 'Project X' (1987) suggests that these themes of war and competition involving technology intensified during the Cold War era. Jumping through time, the artist cuts to 'Heung Shing Online', which launched in Hong Kong in 2019 during the Anti-ELAB movement. HS is not a conventional game but a strategy guide for the protest, with the terminology and organisation

of information resembling that of a video game. At the same time, scenes from the infamous 1995 'Hong Kong 97' game cohesively edited into the video establish the link of the perceptions, if not scepticism, on Hong Kong's stability now and then [...] to a glimpse into the future, imagining the 2029 release of 'BiTMP' (Bioport Training and Mentoring Programme), a wargame simulation using bioport technology and artificial intelligence designed for rebels and revolutionaries [...]. The European premiere of 'This is Not a Game' was presented by [PF25 cultural projects](#) in Basel in May 2022 which inevitably prompted reflection on Russia's invasion of Ukraine (unfortunately still unresolved at the time of this programme in Helsinki). The video underscores how humans have been manipulated as political tools by authorities. With advancements in technology and information distribution, the notion of a game extends beyond the realm of warfare and into political resistance and social movements. It invites viewers to reconsider the concept of 'game' and its multifaceted nature in our society today.

(['Video Talks', Basel/Münchenstein, 2022/](#)  
['Random Diaries', Zurich, 2023](#))

12. [Luke Ching](#) – 'Easy to Learn Cantonese: Auf Wiedersehen – Farewell - 再見' (2023), 2 mins 16 secs

'Easy to Learn Cantonese' is an ongoing art project that was first conceived by Luke Ching during his artist-in-residency program at New York's P.S.1 in 1999. The project was later brought to Fukuoka Asian Arts Museum's artist-in-residence program in 2006, with Mei Cheung participating as the Cantonese tutor in both versions. Over the past twenty-four years, the project has attracted more than five hundred participants, and the artist finds it increasingly relevant today, especially given the recent wave of emigration from Hong Kong. For this new version, he taught the phrase 'Joy Gin' (farewell) to new friends met during his residency with PF25 in Basel. In Cantonese, 'Joy Gin' means "to meet again" and is especially poignant given the current circumstances.

(['On the Ground', Basel, 2023](#))

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