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09 2012

Published on the 15th of every month

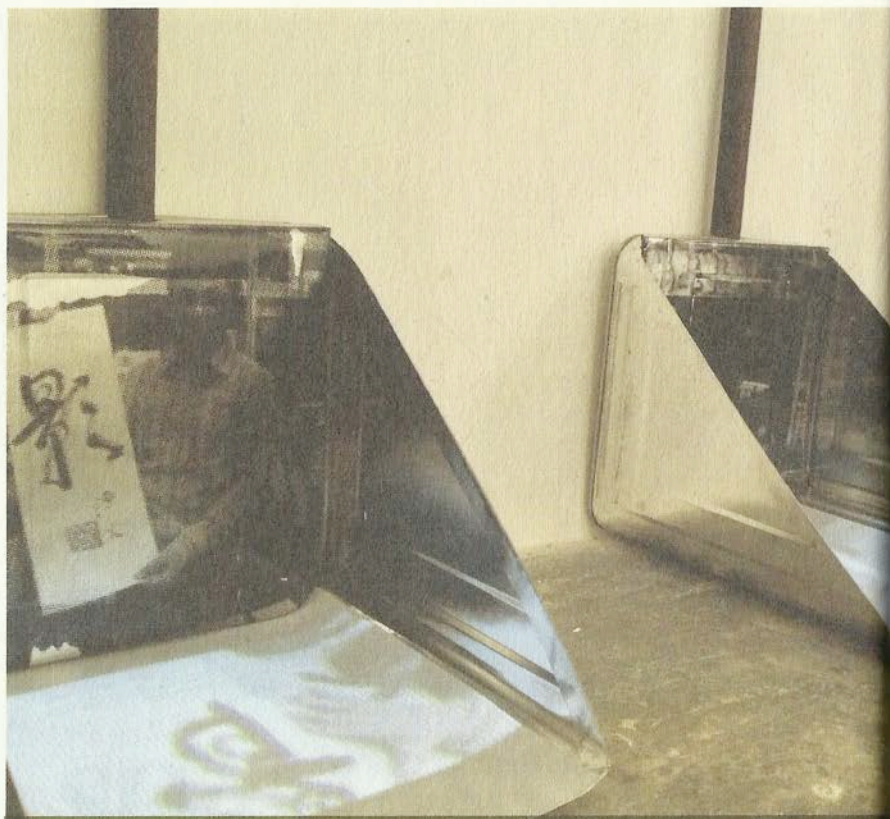
visual art news, exhibition, feature, interview, review

What's in the M+ Collection?

a.m.

p o s t:

Installation with silk screened images,
video projection and audio.



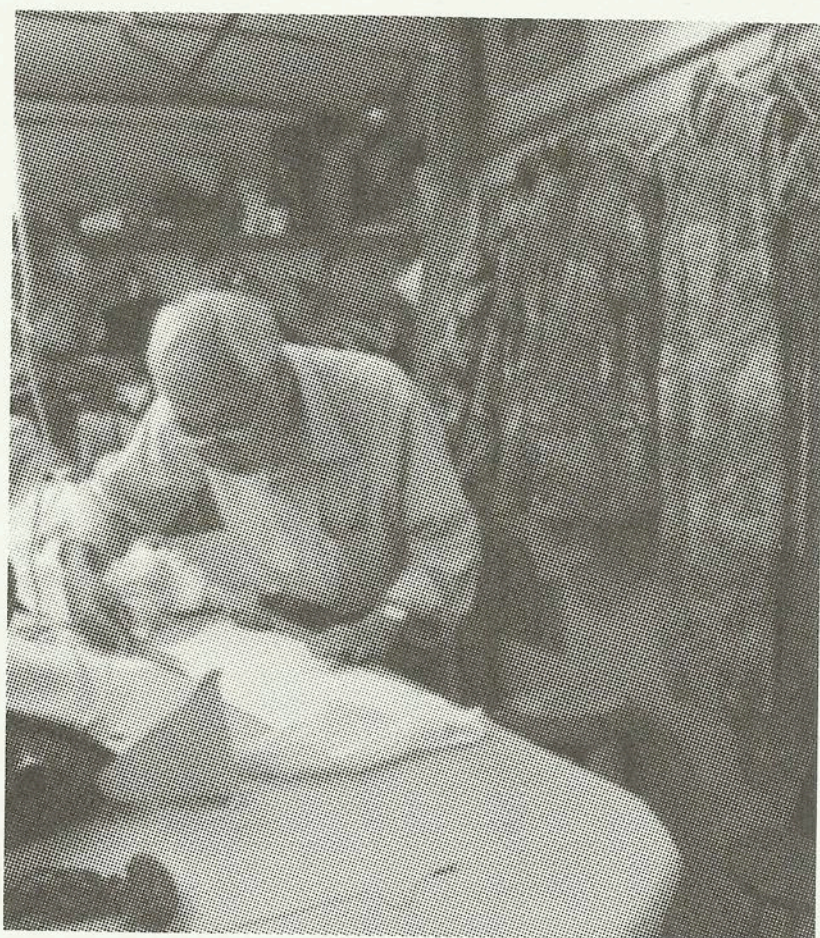
Words by Rachel Smith // Photo courtesy of the artist and Karin Weber Gallery

Estranged Gestures by Tricia Flanagan
13 August – 7 September 2013
Karin Weber Gallery
G/F, 20 Aberdeen Street, Central

exhibition
002

ESTRANGED GESTURES

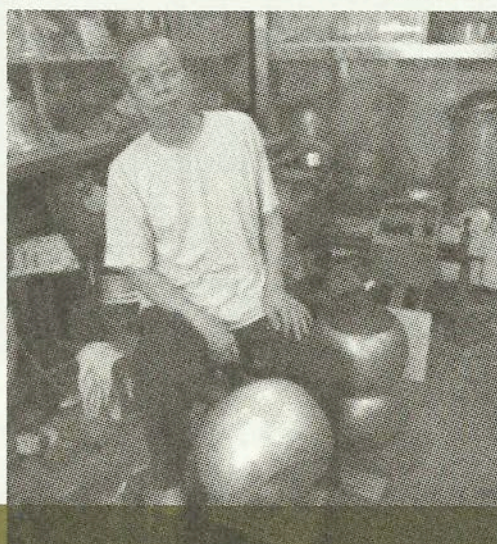
In view of the location of this exhibition and the ever-present threat to small businesses, including independent art galleries, from the corporate take-over of Hong Kong's Central district that risks becoming a uniform landscape of designer 'bling', this show could not be more prescient.



Chinese tailor,
hand screenprinted oil
on archival 180g Canson C grain paper,
42x29cm, 2013



Brassworker,
hand screenprinted oil
on archival 180g Canson C grain paper,
42x29cm, 2013



Handmade brass teapot



Tricia Flanagan is an accomplished artist and academic who is currently assistant professor at the Academy of Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University. Here she is taking on the dual roles of anthropologist and curator to bring together a selection of local craftspeople and invite the audience to consider the role of hand making in the digital age. This is not simply a case of asking whether objects that incorporate a direct connection to their creators are intrinsically more appealing but rather a far more fundamental question of what it means to be human.

The exhibition invites viewers to pause for reflection, to consider the risks of what might be lost to future generations who are in danger of losing touch with the essential core of humanity, making by hand. Clearly computers are creative and offer seemingly unlimited opportunity for interaction and innovation yet there is also a pressing need for hand skills as the Baptist University's notion of "haptic interface" suggests. Where individuals in the past used their brains and their hands to solve problems, hands are now being delegated to the role of mere keyboard operators.

New technology has always terrified commentators as far as back as John Ruskin and William Morris, yet this does not mean that their views are outdated or solely relevant to Britain, as this exhibition demonstrates. The craftspeople represented here are witness to the fact that they are mostly members of a vanishing breed, soon to be delegated to the history books. However, Hong Kong is still a place where small workshops exist and where it is possible to find printing and metal work, for example, that is made by skilled workers so it is also a great place to contemplate the nature of craft in 2013.

Flanagan's thoughtful presentation and her inclusion of the recorded words of the makers themselves into the installation, thus giving them their own voice, will bring this project to a larger audience through the fine art context. Her photographs of the subjects and their work create tangible portraits that can be bought by the viewers enabling them to participate in the global narrative of humanity's movement from analogue to digital. There are also many others in Hong Kong who celebrate the role of craft in forming not only the fabric of the environment but also in shaping the psyche of wider society, ranging from school teachers to designers. Anthropologist, Henry Glassie, suggests that, "material culture is culture made material; it is the inner wit at work in the world. Beginning necessarily with things, but not ending with them, the study of material culture uses objects to approach human thought and action." The viewer is inspired by this show to view all demotic objects with new eyes and perhaps preserve something made by hand as a relic for the future.



Vintage qipao

