

International Design Workshop 2016 «Creative City — The City as a Living Laboratory»

Master of Arts in Design & Connecting Spaces Hong Kong

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Cities are extremely complex systems. Even when we try to analyse them, we can hardly grasp all of their aspects. Despite all their dysfunctional challenges, cities are the place where most people will live in near future. They offer great diversity, vitality, and in the best case, economic security. They bring together people from different cultural, social and economic backgrounds, with entirely different needs and behaviours. To ensure conscious and civic coexistence, it is necessary to consider, and at the same time question, the conditions typical of living in the city. This demands both careful analysis and holistic thinking. The process of understanding the various needs of city inhabitants requires a widely imaginative mind-set, and a practice of constant negotiation.

How can we as designers contribute to the negotiation of a common, public space, and construct a city based on holistic thinking, reaching beyond the sum of individual needs? In order to do so, we must engage with the process, collaborate with each other, and spark off the creative city. To promote the creative city, we need to identify existent potentials and strive for innovative approaches. So the first stage in building a creative city is to recognise and encourage diversity, to learn how to deal with complex structures, and to be ready to make a difference—for our ownfuture.

Based on this idea, this year's International Design Workshop focused on the concept of the «Creative City» from the perspective of different design disciplines. Our goal was to explore and experiment with the potential of various ways of thinking and working in design, and to apply it to the creative city. We selected the city of Hong Kong as a living laboratory for the workshop, and underwent an intensive one-week empirical confrontation with a — for us — foreign context. To be able to establish a closer relationship with the city, we invited three Hong Kong-based professionals — designers, researchers, and artists — to run individual workshops on the given topic.

Through these workshops we want our students to become acquainted with the city of Hong Kong from a more inclusive perspective — to learn from a different culture and urban reality, and to expand their knowledge of the city, as well as to consider the man-made environment from a broader perspective. We wish to motivate them to come up with new approaches and creative solutions by elaborating strategies and methods that stem from to their own design practice.

The city of Hong Kong as a laboratory to explore, and Connecting Spaces as the place to define and produce different concepts. The aim of the International Design Workshop is to offer our students the possibility to participate in an interdisciplinary and intensive programme, away from their own Master project and usual environment, in order to explore a particular topic with professionals from different backgrounds, and to exchange new strategies as well as methods related to design, arts and theory in a foreign context. The experience and knowledge gained should inspire and help them to come up with distinctive approaches for their own design project, and open up novel perspectives.

The International Design Workshop took place during the second semester of the Master of Arts in Design Programme 2016.

# Open Food City

Disrupting Food/Waste System with Creative Citizens

Lecturers: Dr. Yanki Lee & Albert Tsang

Students: Anais Gautier, Eleonora Lombriser, Alexandre Papaloizos, Andrina Cristina Sarott, Salomé von Rotz, Maria Weiss

Hong Kong is a city with great food, but also a city prone to waste. Every day, more than 3'200 tonnes of food waste is produced in the city. Can designers become critical agents proposing alternative solutions to citizens and question inappropriate social changes?

In this five-day design experiment, we are going to explore the Western Wholesale Food Market, one of the main sources of food waste in the city. By applying the action-research-methodology and methods of design interventions, we are going to develop new ideas to disrupt the existing system of wholesale business: over 500 stalls supplying vegetables, fruits, eggs and fish for 1.3 million citizens on the Hong Kong Island. As a result, a special event for all participants and community members will be organized to share the workshop's findings with the market.

<u>Dr. Yanki Lee</u> is founder and director of EXHIBIT at Golden Lane Estate, a social design agency in London focused on design research for social inclusion and innovation. A research fellow at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design of Royal College of Art and Architecture since 2000, she also founded the HKDI DESIS Lab for Social Design Research.

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<u>Albert Tsang Siu Yin</u> is a design researcher and teacher with focus on social design, particularly concentrating on participation through design, co-design, as well as action-research as a way of gaining knowledge. He is one of the founding members of the HKDI DESIS Lab for Social Design Research.

Open Food City—Disrupting Food/Waste System with Creative Citizens

Hong Kong is a city with great food, but also a city prone to waste. Every day, more than 3,200 tonnes of food waste is produced. As a team of design researchers, we have been working with environmentalists and community development experts since 2015, rethinking how the food waste system could be redesigned and be used to alleviate poverty. The specific question we are interested in is how designers can become «critical agents» to question complex social issues, unlock citizens' talents and propose alternative solutions to creative citizens. This was the question we wanted to share with the students from Zurich and that we invited them to explore collectively during their five-day design experience.

For the five-day design experiment, we invited students to spend their time in the Western Wholesale Food Market, one of the main sources of food waste in the city. The location became the living lab for students to experiment: over 500 stalls supplying vegetables, fruits, eggs and fish for 1.3 million citizens on the Hong Kong Island. The envisaged result was a special event for all community members.

#### Day 1: Introduction/Invitation and Immersing

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Instead of giving the students a design brief, we presented them with an invitation to investigate with us a location, which we have been researching for the past year. As a result we only got six students out of nine, some of them leaving or joining other groups. A possible explanation for this might be that the other two workshops, which were led by a designer/activist and an artist, offered completely new experiences to the students (such as new approaches in the discipline of fine arts or activism), seemed easier to handle in a city full of strangers. Experimenting with a new design methodology and intervening in the local community definitely sounds more challenging.

We went to the location, the Western Wholesale Food Market, the first task being to identify someone or something the students want to immerse themselves into. (Actually this was the original meaning of the word empathy when it first entered the English-speaking academic world, going back to the German *Einfühlung*). Some students looked confused, especially those who were looking for solutions for the market. Some were happy with the novel experience, but did not see it as related to their own design discipline or expertise. We were surprised that they did not take many pictures, which is what designers/researchers usually do when they first arrive at a location. At the end of the day, the students selected the items they wanted to immerse with: a fire alarm, a ginger, a truck and two cats.

## Day 2: Immersing through performing

After picking the «things» that had caught their attention, the students were brought back to our lab. There, we asked them to perform the «things» and guide the others to understand the market through the eyes of the selected characters. Students unfolded the characteristics of their «things» in order to re-create them, telling their stories of the market. Keywords were mapped while the students were performing:

- The Fire Alarm an excluded superhero of the market, protecting the market quietly
- The Ginger subtly exciting but everywhere
- The Truck stands for communication between the market and the outside world
- The Cats talking in their ways, daydreaming...

Everyone was very excited about the results and seemed full of ideas.

## Day 3: Ideating through doing

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We sent the students back to the market expecting that they would start to develop unique insights from their selected characters. This led to total confusion. The students started to make mind-maps. They totally forgot their immersing experiences and went back to the conventional design process that they were familiar with.

We intervened and asked them to help us set up a workstation with a designer-trolley from our lab. Instead of letting them sit and think, we forced them to go out again and immerse themselves into the market through their selected characters. The «Fire Alarm» student found a spot full of unused fire alarms and set up a chatting zone for workers to come to talk to her about the market operation system. The «Ginger» student walked around the market, bought sample gingers from different stores and started to make friends with storeowners through learning Cantonese. The «Truck» student followed different trucks, identifying the traffic routes within the market. Finally, the «Cats» went to talk to cat owners and mapped the daily routines of over 20 cats in the market.

Even though the students were right in the process of design actions, confusion was nevertheless prevalent. Our solution was to always encourage them and to tell them «just do it and don't think». We explained to them that being in a situation and to physically experience it is the key to understanding.

Day 4: Doing for ideating

Students were still confused. We decided to start the day with an explanation of the process/steps, relating the process to further design terminology or methodology, such as:

- looking for a new language for the designers/design researchers to create something together with citizens (co-design)
- immersing as a way of empathising with not only users, but also with complex system(s) and fabrics of community

The attempt to ask them to form a broader narrative with the things they selected did not work out. But students formed different groups quite naturally; this was particularly true for those who were able to find a way to further develop the innate idea of their «thing».

Day 5: Intervening their own design practice

Although the final form of an event/intervention had been explained to them on the first day, students did not really know what the expected end product was supposed to be. This was actually what we had intended with our vague brief, as we wanted to co-design the output with our students.

In the end, the students decided to make a «wish-you-luck» trolley, which was moved through the market and invited people to play DIY tools for making wishes. After two days working intensively in the market, students met a lot of community members and started to develop a sense of attachment to the place and

people. This is why they felt the urge to say goodbye to the community with a special design activity and wanted to leave some legacy of their presence by wishing everyone good luck.

All the students expressed their thanks for a highly reflexive week and came to the conclusion that the unusual methods applied had indeed made them think about their roles as designers, especially when tackling social issues. As one of the students remarked: the process made him turn around his usual design practice, which was «thinking before doing», and invert it, to become «doing before thinking». Another revelation from a student, which may seem trivial but in fact reflects a very important attitude change, was that she found that the people at the market actually did not have as many problems waiting to be solved as she had thought when she first arrived. All students agreed that the process forced them to work outside their comfort zones and to create innovative solutions that they will never forget.

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# Almost Utopia



Lecturer: Michael Leung

Special Guest: Leo Lin

Students:

Nikita Anders, Daniel Gonçalves Borges, Carla Caminati, Alice Dal Fuoco, Sabrina Montimurro, Alain Schibli, Patrik Toth, Aela Vogel, Anna Wiederkehr

Almost Utopia takes you off the beaten track to a selection of spaces and places that may alter your perception of Hong Kong as a high-rise metropolis fuelled by neoliberal capitalism. The journey takes participants to the «four corner» of Hong Kong, to autonomous, public and common spaces that have been created by different communities. Following a series of visits, from an independent coastal village to a grassroots fabric market, from an organic community farm to a beautiful neighbourhood, participants will collectively produce a zine publication. The workshop encourages participants to take time, absorb the different environments, form relationships, reflect and respond, in any creative medium.

Inspired by publications such as Inventing the Future (Srnicek & Williams), Invisible Cities (Italo Calvino), Strike! magazine (UK) and zine culture, participants will consider what utopia means (in a place like Hong Kong) and create multidisciplinary works and interventions that will be composited in a batch produced zine publication (printed in Connecting Spaces).

<u>Michael Leung</u> is a designer, beekeeper and urban farmer. He was born in London and moved to Hong Kong in 2009 to complete a Masters in Design. His work ranges from conceptual objects for the dead to urban agriculture projects such as HK Honey, HK Farm and HK Salt. Leung is a visiting tutor at the School of Design, Baptist University and at the Intercommon Institute, where he teaches Socially Engaged Art and Social Design, respectively. www.studioleung.com | instagram: studio\_leung

This year was the second time that I collaborated with Zurich University of the Arts Masters students in a five-day workshop in Hong Kong. Last year the workshop's name was «The Great Northern» and we focused on North Point – its history, context and many diasporas. This year the workshop's name «Almost Utopia» was inspired by places that I have visited and collaborated with in the past few years. Aside from lecturing on the Masters course at the Academy of Visual Arts, on other days of the week I would often find myself attached to places such as Pang Jai fabric market, Sai Wan Village and Ma Shi Po Village.

Such places are home to communities that welcome others and share knowledge openly in postcapitalistic ways. Since September 2015, I have been involved in the Pang Jai fabric market support group, a multidisciplinary group supporting the 39-year old fabric market. I owe this involvement to my past Hong Kong students, who decided to focus on the market for their interdisciplinary art projects in January 2015, in which they became acquainted with the 50 fabric sellers. A few months after the completion of their project a fabric seller called them, notifying them that the government had plans to relocate the fabric market at the end of 2015. A year of petitioning, protesting and creative programming resulted in the fabric sellers continuing (albeit indefinitely) at the same Sham Shui Po address.

My current class and I first came together at the fabric market. After meandering through the rows of fabric stalls, we all met at the south entrance. The fabric sellers were very generous, and offered us seats around the mahjong table, where together we ate moon cakes, oranges, grapes, dried pork, egg tarts, peanuts, dried plum sweets, crackers and drank mango juice into the evening. It was a spontaneous and memorable party.

On the second day, we visited Sai Wan Village, a 400-year old independent coastal village questionably «zoned» to my mind within the government's country park in 2013. One could argue, are country parks not a good thing for the environment? Of course they are, but indigenous villagers have their rights to the land, and should be given the respect and support to consider their village's future in an equitable and sustainable way. Tradition and history should not be repressed and left to deteriorate, as in the case of the village church school built in 1963, which has been abandoned to the elements and is crumbling away.

Befitting the name of the workshop, Almost Utopia, that day in Sai Wan Village, we had the beach, sea and waterfalls all to ourselves. I have been visiting this remote village for three years, and have never had the courage to make the 12-metre cliff jump into the natural waterfall pool. However, on that day, with the amicable peer pressure and support of the Swiss students, I jumped in twice, first from a comfortable height of 10 metres, and then from the full 12-metre high cliff, both jumps accompanied by encouraging countdowns from ten to one, and then cheering.

On the third day we visited Mapopo Community Farm in Ma Shi Po Village, Fanling. On that sunny day, we all put on straw farmers' hats and followed Kai Kai, a member from the farm, on her animated tour. After lunch we went up the pedestrian bridge that overlooks the fenced-off farmland adjacent to Ma Sik Road — a 7,000 square foot area of farmland that was a temporary site of resistance from April to June this year. I told the students the story and shared some personal insights. As we exited the bridge, we noticed some sparrow nests built in the crevices of Belair Monte, the gaudy and costly high-rise apartments that overshadow the farmland. It seems that nature always finds a way to survive in this city.

We stayed longer than expected at Ma Shi Po Village and I brought a smaller group to visit some abandoned houses and a row of heritage rural houses, which are now home to six security guards employed by Henderson Land Development Company Limited (the company acquiring the village for commercial purposes). From the gate we could see how the guards have made use of the courtyard to hang their laundry and enjoy al fresco dining. Despite the nature of their work and the identity of their employer, we imagined how idyllic it must be for them to live there, and plant vegetables in the small plots behind the houses. Seeing this pleasant communal housing, I recalled the friendly security guard who had offered to make us lunch, several months earlier.

In addition to the three heteropias above, we also visited Connecting Spaces, Mido Cafe, Tin Hau Temple, an «abandoned» building, my house, the Kubrick bookshop, a homeless community, Snow Mountain Cafe, Golden Computer Arcade, So Boring, Kai Fong Pai Dong, Moon Kee Store, Luen Wo Hiu Cooked Food Centre and Sam Kee bookshop.

Almost Utopia was a five-day workshop that brought students to public, common and autonomous spaces in Hong Kong. A collection of forty unique postcards, and an intervention on top of a neglected rooftop concluded the workshop. Twenty sets of postcards were printed and will be distributed to all the communities that we met on our journey — to Uncle Hung the storyteller, Margaret who bought us egg tarts in Pang Jai fabric market, the generous Café owner in Sai Wan Village with a cockney English accent, and the list goes on. In a high-rise metropolis fuelled relentlessly by neoliberal capitalism, in all these places we found community and survival, hope and utopia. Experiencing this unique layer of Hong Kong we feel that we are almost there — in Utopia.

To the Swiss students, thank you for a memorable week, and all the best with the Master projects.

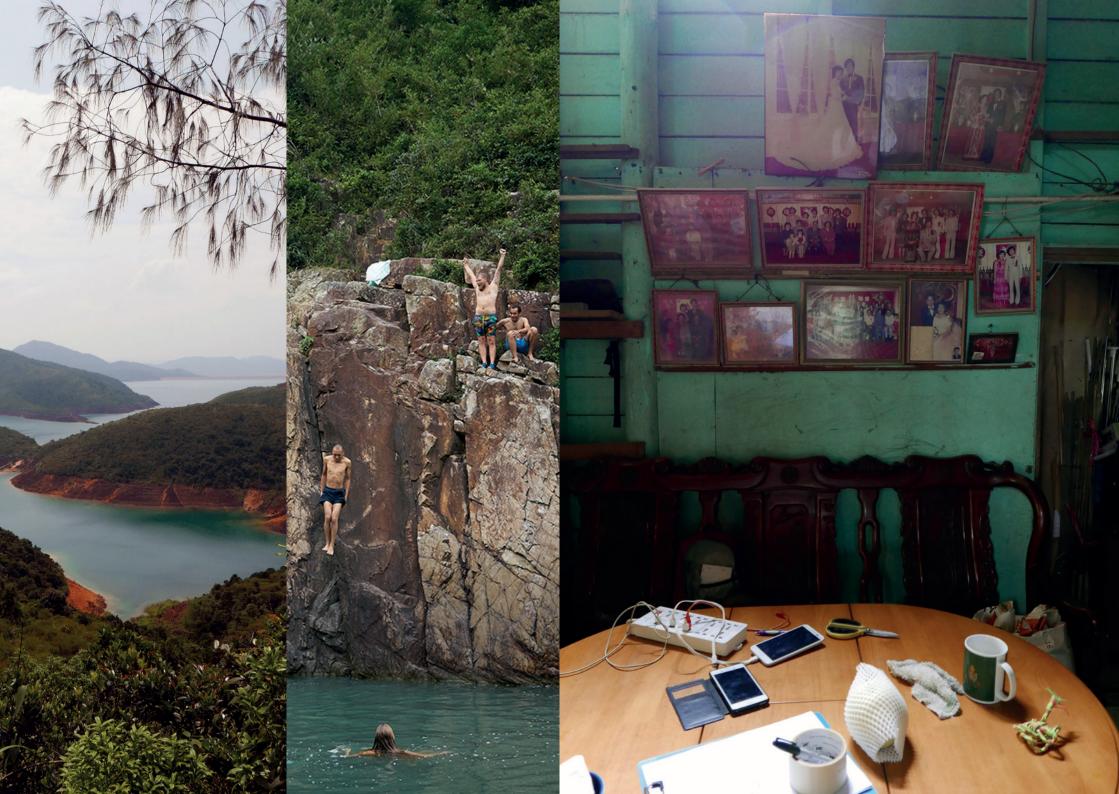
















Secret Emotional Installation

Lecturer: Dr. Kacey Wong

Students: Kevin Casado, Christian Fallegger, Mark Hintz, Till Maria Jürgens, Vera Kaspar, Lena Kraus, Raadiya Lüssi, Benjamin Moser, Francine Rotzetter, Christian Schmidhalter

Hong Kong, as a hyper-dense metropolis, is a city of Functionalism. Like a well-oiled machine, the city moves literally millions of people and goods each day, with its highly efficient, complex networks of streets, and its transportation system. In Hong Kong, as elsewhere, such urban systems are designed with only the practicality of movement in mind; a by-product has been the generation of a sense of alienation or coldness.

This workshop will focus on producing thought-provoking urban interventions within the streets and alleyways of Hong Kong. Treating the streets as both site and laboratory, participants will first learn, and then apply spatial observation skills, analytical skills and installation strategies. As a final project, each participant will create a secret installation near Connecting Spaces at North Point. The deliverable can be a design, an installation, or a performance-based work involving the physical body of the student. The objective is to activate the street space and the emotion of the everyday passer-by.

<u>Dr. Kacey Wong</u> studied architecture at Cornell University, received his Master of Fine Arts from Chelsea School of Art and Design and his Doctor of Fine Arts from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He is the founding member of Art Citizens, Street Design Union, Umbrella Movement Art Preservation, and former curator and member of Para/Site Art Space. Wong's experimental art projects investigate the space between people and their living environment, and the artist's and designer's role within social political causes. www.kaceywong.com

Pretend you are an alien from outer space visiting the planet called Hong Kong.

### Real meaning of travel

Visiting foreign places and understanding them is never easy; undertaking an art or design project in strange new lands is even more challenging. Language, food, culture, basically everything needs to be «re-learned» — and one must learn quickly. A philosopher once said: «If you have only one culture, you have no culture». That is to say, wherever we go during a journey, we use the memory of our hometown as a benchmark or make internal comparisons. So if you are from Switzerland, and visiting Hong Kong, wherever you go in there, you will see Switzerland in the back of your mind. This is why traveling to new places is always exciting and rewarding, because not only do we experience something new, but this experience ultimately informs us about our own culture and identity, helping us to understand what we are.

Creating Psychogeography

To help students better understand the city of Hong Kong, I conducted a one day walking tour, which included the following itinerary:

- Residential blocks near the Connecting Spaces: how do the local people live?
- A street market in Chung Yuen Street: how do locals shop for food, and prepare meals?
- Lunch at a Vietnamese restaurant: taste exotic food first hand.
- A tram ride from North Point to upper Central to extend understanding of Hong Kong's colonial history, by visiting Hollywood Road Park, where the British first set their flag, back in 1841, and by supplementing old YouTube footage taken in the area in the sixties.
- Man Mo Temple: to understand the religions of the locals.
- Cat Street: to get inspiration from antique stores.
- Dr. Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail: to get a glimpse of the 1911 revolution and understand the role of Hong Kong in the making of modern China.

- 71 Bar in Soho area: to enjoy cold beers, and to experience how local intellectuals hangout.
- Lin Heung Tea House: Final stop. Debriefing over delicious Chinese food and drinks. By that point, the students were totally exhausted from their jetlag, and overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of the new city. Their bodies and minds completely relaxed at the Tea House, and psychogeographical landscapes of Hong Kong slowly formed in their minds.

### Teaching Methodology

To enhance the students' experience in Hong Kong, I secretly employed Drift technique (dérive in French) from the Situationist International, when taking my students out for the tour. We embarked on a journey with few expectations and no idea when the tour would be over. The students just followed me to observe the city and its inhabitants from a bystander point of view. In other words, they pretended to be aliens from outer space visiting the planet called Hong Kong. Understanding the time limitations of the project, I reminded my students not to aim for a non-existent «perfect idea». I encouraged them to instead come up with the «stupidest idea» or «ugliest idea» first, the idea that doesn't work. This approach not only relieves students' autonomous pressure to achieve excellence, it also allows them to establish a baseline to get the project started right away. Once this conceptual lowest point was established, the students automatically made an effort to improve upon it, since they hated it. They improved their «bad idea» by transforming it, or avoiding developing ideas in that direction at all. In my view, this speeds up the process of improving students' projects.

Another method I encouraged them to try is called «fix it while you are running». I asked the students not to search for the perfect idea, but instead to come up with a mediocre idea, and to keep developing and improving it by up to 70%, leaving the remaining 30% open, and then to complete this remaining part while building the project. Many contemporary design schools completely neglect the importance of the fabrication process. When students fabricate their work with their hands, they constantly engage with materials and connections, and are challenged by them. This situation forces students to make important decisions, which alters the meaning of their work, and requires constant conceptual readjustment. The students' own limitations also cause mistakes to emerge, but the result can be great artistic ideas and resolutions if the student is conscious enough of, and alert to the possibility of these outcomes.

### Secret Emotional Installation

The design project of our group is called Secret Emotional Installation. The students were asked to install a hidden site-specific urban intervention type of artwork near the public streets of Connecting Spaces. The objective was to trigger an emotional response from passers-by. I took my students to my studio «Object Factory» in Ap Lei Chau, to use the tools available there for the fabrication of their artworks. I gave a lecture on the subject of Urban Intervention, and held a group tutorial to strengthen the students' concepts. After two days of brainstorming, most of the students had a fairly concrete idea to execute. The students made frequent visits back to Connecting Spaces to finalize the exact site locations of their work, and the mad race towards the Friday presentation deadline began. The final installations of the students' works were humorous and sensitive, encouraging passers-by to take a pause from their repetitive daily routine, allowing them to experience the city from a new perspective. All the artwork reflected the students' experiences during the walking tour, covering issues such as religion, signs, materiality, hygiene, and nature in the city.

### Travel and memory

Every time we visit a foreign place we visit it three times: the first time before the actual trip while doing research, the second time during the trip, and the third time in our memories of the trip, once we are back home. I was very happy to be able to work with such a formidable group of students, one that could both party hard and work hard. I wish the students all the best, and hope that they have fond memories of the Planet Hong Kong.























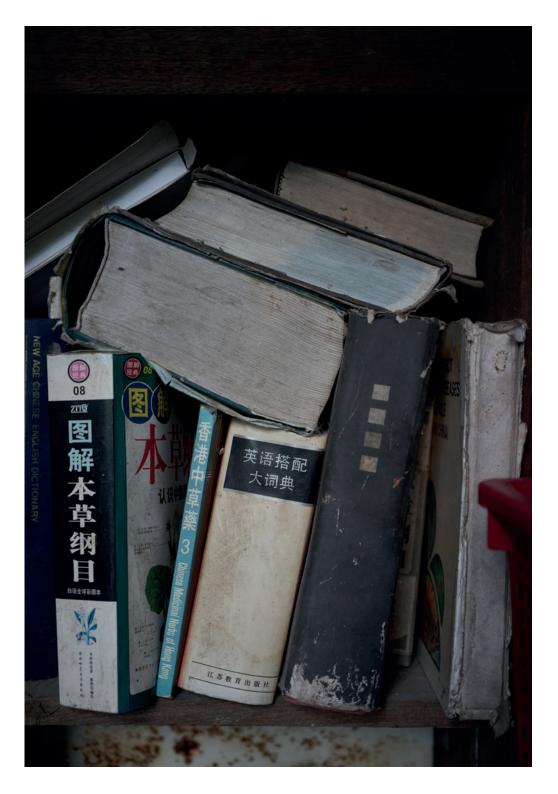
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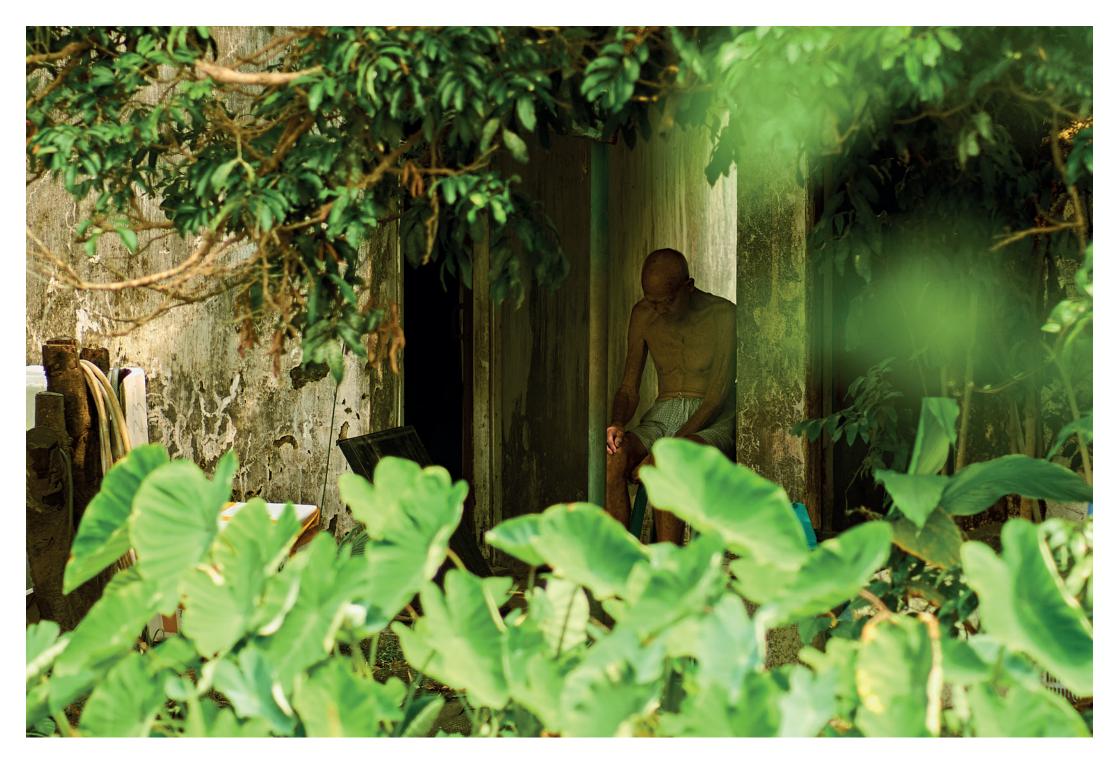












Imprint International Design Workshop 2016 «Creative City — The City as a Living Laboratory»

Publisher: Zurich University of the Arts, Master of Arts in Design

Lecturers: Dr. Yanki Lee, Michael Leung, Albert Tsang, Dr. Kacey Wong

Texts: Dr. Yanki Lee, Michael Leung, Albert Tsang, Dr. Kacey Wong, Karin Zindel

Proofreading: Sprachling

Concept and realisation: Karin Zindel, Research Associate, Master of Arts in Design

Graphic Design: Kevin Casado, Vera Kaspar, Lena Kraus

Typeface: Patron, Milieu Grotesque

Print: Speich, Zürich 100 copies

Collaboration and support: Nuria Krämer and the Connecting Spaces team

International Design Workshop: Professor Michael Krohn, Head Master of Arts in Design

## Photographs:

Nikita Anders, Daniel Gonçalves Borges, Carla Caminati, Kevin Casado, Christian Fallegger, Alice Dal Fuoco, Mark Hintz, Till Maria Jürgens, Vera Kaspar, Lena Kraus, Raadiya Lüssi, Eleonora Lombriser, Sabrina Montimurro, Benjamin Moser, Alexandre Papaloizos, Francine Rotzetter, Alain Schibli, Christian Schmidhalter, Andrina Cristina Sarott, Patrik Toth, Aela Vogel, Salomé von Rotz, Maria Weiss, Anna Wiederkehr

The Master of Arts in Design at the Zurich University of the Arts hosts an International Design Workshop every year with all Master students. This is the second time that the workshop has taken place in Hong Kong at the ZHdK Hub Connecting Spaces. www.connectingspaces.ch

With special thanks to: Patrick Müller, Nuria Krämer, Jessica Lam, Leo Lin



Zürcher Hochschule der Künste Zurich University of the Arts

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The Reynettes

Master of Arts in Design Zurich University of the Arts

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