

THE HILLSIDE

Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡

neither the West nor the East can be a determinate location

3 December 2022 – 26 February 2023

neither the West nor the East can be a determinate location, is a new multisensory exhibition by artist-curator Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡. Katherine grew up in Hong Kong, where their practice and research has become witness to its political transformation from a British colony to a post-colonial state.

To create this new exhibition, Katherine developed an engaged approach to archival research, interrogating and challenging the Western, Eurocentric frameworks which were imposed on Hong Kong by the British during colonial rule from 1841-1997.

The geographical and historical coordinates of Collective's site on Calton Hill were a starting point for the artwork displayed. The City Observatory sits on a designated meridian line and was built to house Transit telescopes. These telescopes were used to monitor passing celestial objects and to provide accurate time for sailors docked in the Port of Leith, facilitating accurate naval navigation and enabling the expansion of trade and empire.

The meridian, in European theory (the West), is conceived as an imaginary circle on the Earth's surface: from the North to the South Pole. In contrast, the meridian system in traditional Chinese medicine (the East) means Channel Network, a path through which the life-energy known as "qi" flows. The meridian line runs through the Hillside Gallery, where this exhibition is located, and continues across the globe towards the Hong Kong Observatory. It is visible from the gallery window, marked by a small stone bollard in the courtyard outside.

All of the sculptural works are purposefully placed on the ground, inviting visitors to re-engage with the land, the earth and nature. The composition of the works reference Shān Shuǐ (山水), traditional Chinese landscape painting. Shān Shuǐ is strongly related to Taoist imagery and beliefs – a practice rooted in forgetfulness, self-cultivation and harmonising with the natural world.

Central to the exhibition is *absolute truth*, which is part of a developing series including Katherine's earlier work, *absolutely clear* (text on bone china porcelain, 2016). Made from Yixing clay 宜兴泥, which was first mined from Lake Tai, Jiangsu Province, this material is used for tea sets and commonly exported to Europe. During the production process of the ceramics the artist embraced fluidity. The clay was accumulated, moulded and compressed, randomly capturing marks, such as the texture of the granite stone steps in Hong Kong, a leaf and a Hong Kong Dollar coin.

Both artworks integrate text and materials to unearth problematics in human communication systems, and sediment the toxicities and aggressions ingrained in colonial and binary thinking: *how can one be absolutely clear when the system itself is problematic? And what is the absolute truth in our postcolonial era when no language is neutral?*

Outstanding Payment addresses the seed of the recent political tension between China and Hong Kong. It also performs as a “debt collection” of the Opium War between China and Britain from 1839.

A framed work outside the gallery, *Life is too short*, is a thank you note made from recycled handmade paper. For Katherine, the gesture of crossing a line through the former exhibition title, represents learning from mistakes, and that changes are organically inevitable.

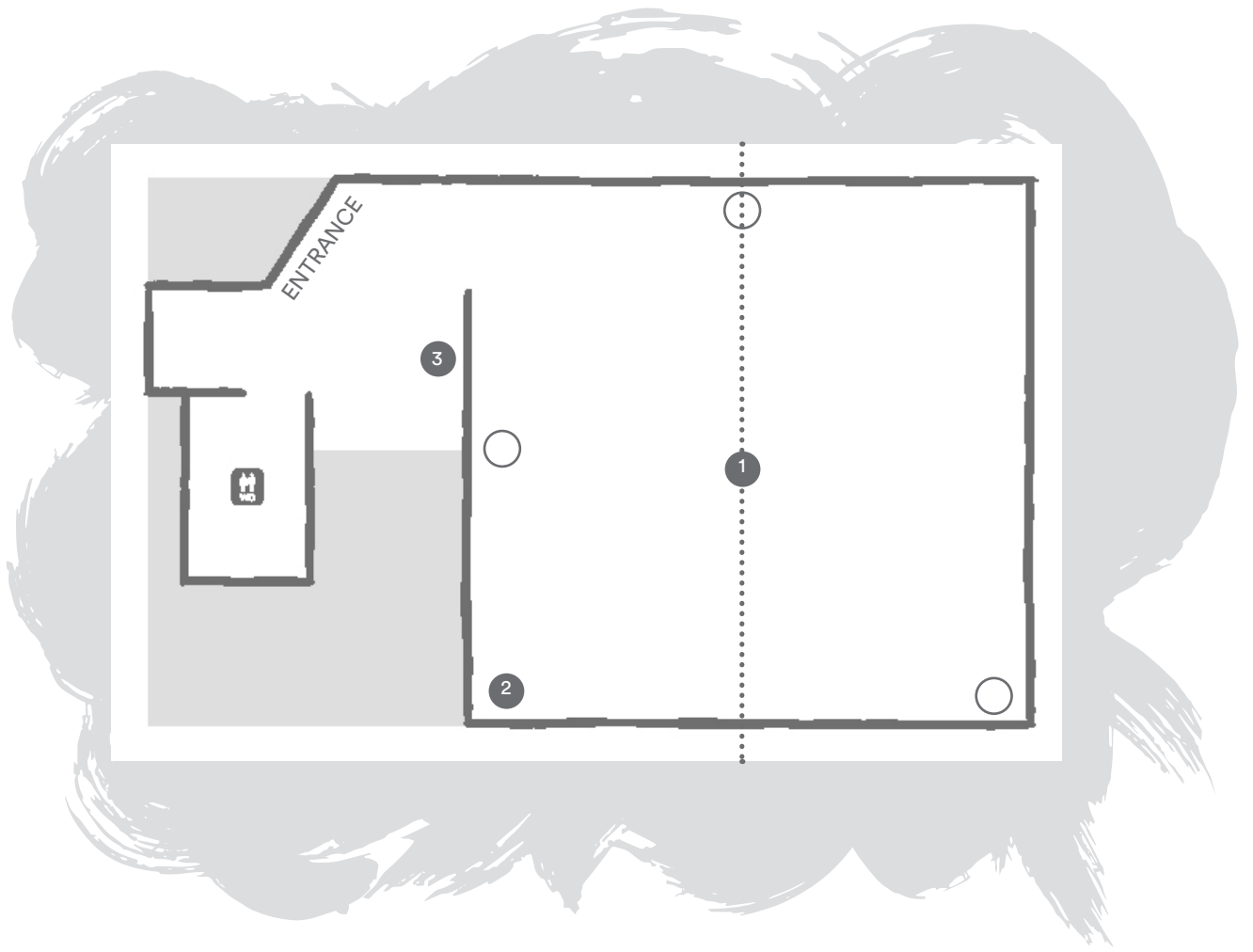
neither the West nor the East can be a determinate location is a reflective space in which visitors are encouraged to meditate, rest, reclaim strength and recharge resilience. It is a space repurposed to contemplate the unearned privileges we have as human beings on this planet and to ponder the chronic, racialised precarity, created specifically throughout the COVID 19 pandemic.

About the artist

Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡 is an artist-curator. Their practice spans across writing, curating, sculptural installation, poetic manifestation, sound, performance, and video. Katherine’s work lingers in between conversations of self and collective healing, contemplates notions of the cultural, socio-political, socio-linguistic construction of diasporic identities, and confronts the politics of power, gender(s), and race with a humorous touch. They are a former committee member at Transmission Gallery, Glasgow 2018-22 and guest curated the group exhibition, *breathe, spirit and life* 呼吸、靈魂與生命 at the Bluecoat, Liverpool 2022.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my mother, Jennifer, my big sis, J, auntie Susie, Alberta Whittle, Eoin Dara, my cat, leeloo, Pei Yee Tong, Richard Atherton, Jet Atherton, Clarinda Tse, Craig Hunter, Ambroise Leclerc, Soojin Chang, Roo Dhissou, Kiara Mohamed Amin, Thulani Rachia, Yuen Ka Lai, Dan Chan, Gloria Yam, Sherman To, Dorris (dodo) To, Amber Choy, Poey Yiu, JL Tsang, Monsha Wong, Chu Yee Ting, Wei Zhang, Wei Zhou, Calis Leung 梁程萬, Galvin Gao, Marie-Anne McQuay, Teresa Cisneros, Zandra Yeaman, Sam Mercer, James Hutchinson, Mina Heydari-Waite, Joey Simons, Camara Taylor, Stephanie Black-Daniels, Siobhan Carroll, Rachael Simpson, Liverpool East and South East Asian Network.



- 1 *absolute truth* (from the beginning of Earth – present), Yixing clay, plywood, rain water, leaves and sand from Hong Kong, HKD 0.20, dimensions variable
- 2 *outstanding payment* (1839 until expected payment date), Chinese tea ware, sterling silver, green tea leaves, hemp bag, incense, traditional Chinese incense holder, Chinese broom, dimensions variable
- 3 *life is too short* (2021 – 2022), handwriting on hand-made recycled paper, framed, 30.5 cm x 21.6 cm x 5 cm

..... meridian line

○ seating

About Satellites Programme

Satellites Programme is Collective's development programme for emergent practitioners based in Scotland. Satellites aims to support diverse practitioners to produce a new commission and includes a critical development programme of retreats, workshops, studio visits and group discussions, public exhibitions, events and publishing.

Practitioners are selected from an open submission by a new panel each year. The 2021/22 participants are Stephanie Black-Daniels, Mina Heydari-Waite, Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡, Joey Simons and Camara Taylor.