

# “Fragmentation”: identity and the everyday with Lam Tung-pang – in conversation

Posted on 11/08/2017

## **Art Radar** speaks to the Hong Kong artist on the occasion of his inaugural solo exhibition in Beijing at Chambers Fine Art.

Curated by Abbey Chen, the exhibition, on view until 20 August 2017, showcases a variety of works that explore the fragmentation of identity and the every day in relation to socio-political issues.



Lam Tung-pang, 'Being disappeared – Disappeared Hong Kong Art (3)', 2013, fibreglass, cement, paint on wood and metal, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

As one of the founding members of the **Fotanian** movement in Hong Kong, **Lam Tung-pang** is known for works that draw inspiration from contemporary society. He creates art in different types of media, such as large-scale paintings and drawings on plywood.

Born in Hong Kong in 1978, Lam graduated from the Fine Arts Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2002, and subsequently received a scholarship awarded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council to study at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. He obtained his Master's Degree in Fine Arts there in 2004. In the following year, he won the Hunting Art Prize in London – the first Chinese artist to do so.



His works have been exhibited locally and internationally, including at Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco; Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester;

Shanghai 21st Century Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; **Hong Kong Museum of Art**, Hong Kong; **Tate Modern**, London; Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai. His artwork can also be found in collections such as **M+ Museum**, Hong Kong, **Burger Collection** and **KADIST Art Foundation**.

The exhibition "**Fragmentation**", featuring sketches, paintings and installation work by the artist with selections from his recent projects, is on view from 24 June to 20 August 2017 at **Chambers Fine Art** in Beijing. As mentioned in the press release, the noun 'fragmentation' in the title of the exhibition is defined as:

1. *the process or state of breaking or being broken into fragments.*
2. *"the fragmentation of society into a collection of interest groups"*

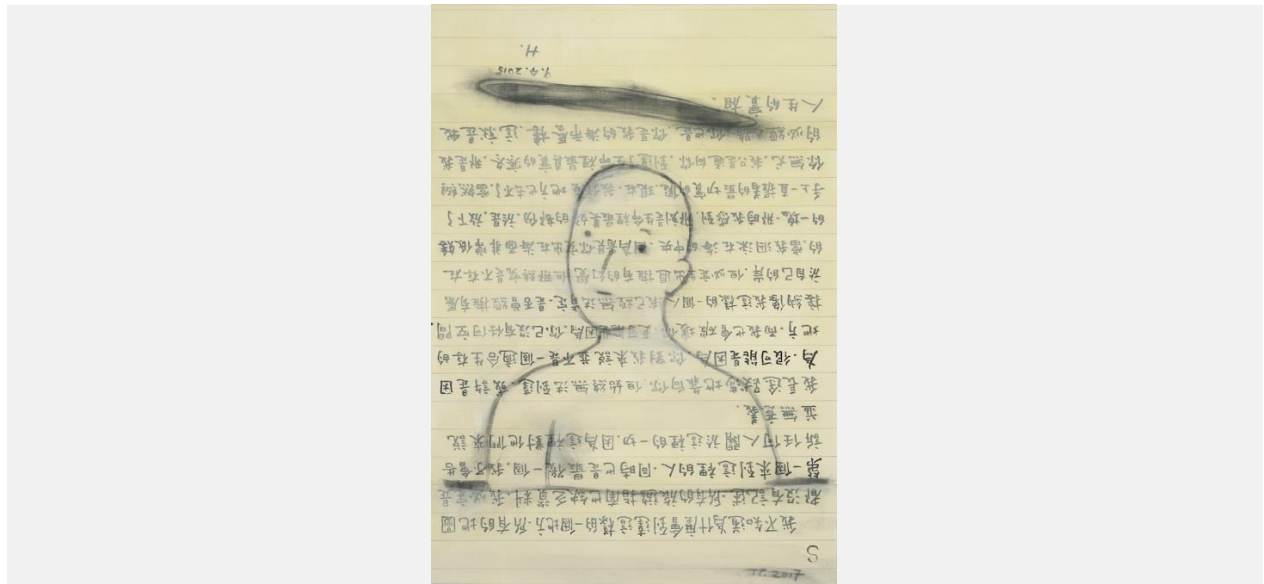


Lam Tung-pang, 'When the time comes – A group of landscape', works from "The Curiosity Box", 2013, newspaper, toys with packing and wooden frame, 2 1/4 x 6 x 6 in (6 x 15 x 15 cm). Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

In the current show, Lam uses fragmentation as a metaphor, especially in the context of Hong Kong. His work, *Disappeared HK Art 3*, alludes to the anxiety over the political tensions brought about by the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China. Due to the identity of Hong Kong as an ex-colony of the United Kingdom, the artist, like many other citizens, finds his identity fragmented.

*Disappeared HK Art 3* is a group of large fragmented fibreglass Chinese bowl placed on the ground in the courtyard. The bowls were originally part of an exhibition about farmers in Hong Kong's farmland; however, the exhibition was cancelled and the installations taken down just before it was set to open. Meanwhile, in his series "The Curiosity Box", the artist explores the notion of space and time during his artist residency in the United States and in Hong Kong. In the current exhibition in Beijing, notes from his travel journal are shown to reveal some of the artist's thought processes.

*Art Radar* spoke to the artist about his latest show at Chambers Fine Art, Beijing, to find out more about his views on the notion of 'fragmentation'.



Lam Tung-pang, 'Hon's Letter', 2017, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 39 3/4 x 28 in (101 x 71 cm). Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

## Identity: the Self and Society

**A person has multiple roles, e.g. family (as a son, brother, father), work (artist, researcher, member of certain artistic groups, etc), private vs public... How do you strike a balance between all these roles in everyday life?**

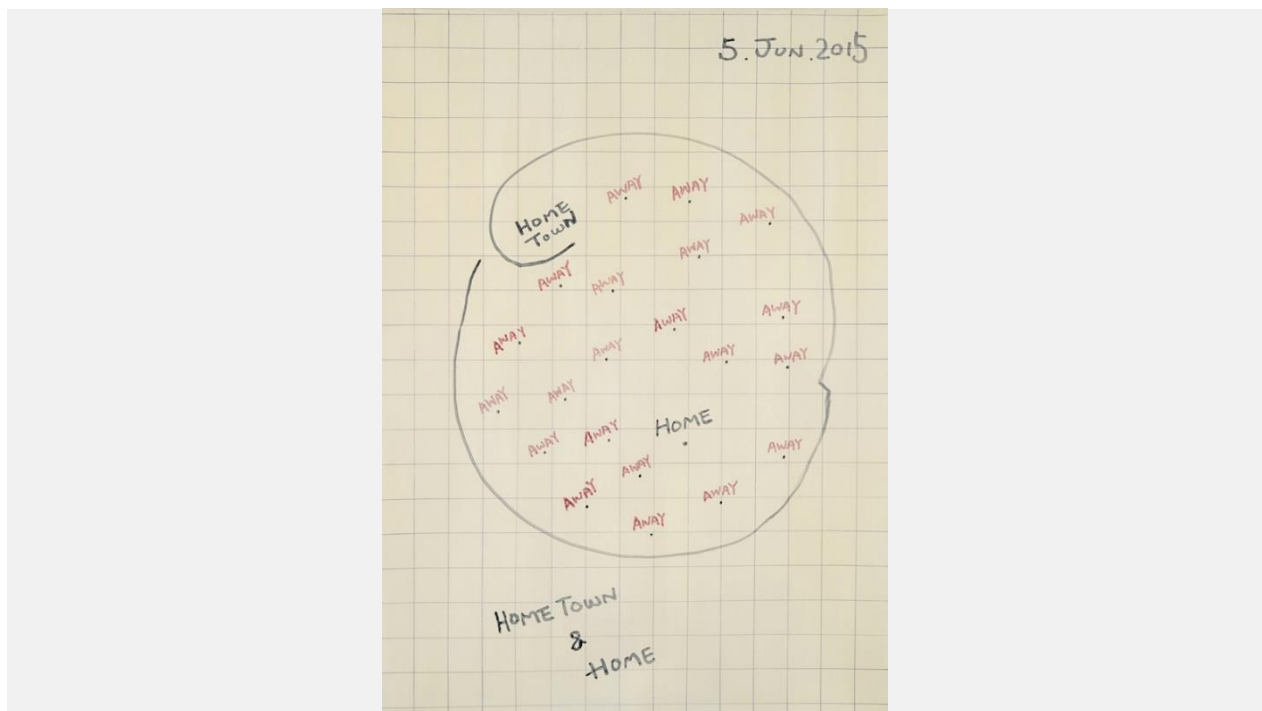
I think this is a life-long lesson; however, no matter who you are, you are human, and what makes a human a human is at the core of every role.



Lam Tung-pang, "Fragmentation", 24 June – 20 August 2017, Chambers Fine Art, Beijing. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

**As an artist from Hong Kong, how does fragmentation in society influence your artistic practice? Since 'fragmentation' has a negative connotation as in falling apart, do you see a possibility of reconciliation among people or are things getting worse? Do you feel optimistic or pessimistic about the city's future?**

I think the influence on my early practice comes from my Hong Kong art education when I was in college. It was about learning everything in a short time, covering both 5000 years of Chinese and Western Art practice and histories. What it means for me is that I 'learn nothing' but I'm also free to use everything. Then, in the recent 10-15 years, I find myself broken apart, then spending time to pick myself up piece by piece, restoring, but then I find my appearance has changed because there are cracks... In that sense, everyone has to find something to fill up the cracks... that's the situation or feeling I have towards my city. It's not easy to be optimistic but I don't want to be pessimistic either, I think things are happening between those gaps and that's the area that we should fight for.



Lam Tung-pang, 'Diary 20150605 20150605', 2017, acrylic on canvas, 39 3/4 x 28 in (101 x 71 cm). Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

## **Time and Space: Diaspora and Migration**

**Since history is not linear, and there are many perspectives, what do you think is an artist's role in providing alternative interpretations of the grand narrative?**

I think the grand narrative is based on many little personal perspectives. It's like a surface with thousands of lines that actually come from millions of dots. So actually, the grand narrative provides an "alternative interpretation" of personal history. I wish an artist's role would be to make sounds or provide viewpoints that don't belong to any system, but I think it's only a wish.

## **What is the role of spontaneity in your artistic practice?**

It's akin to transportation, making myself travel between different areas, physically or mentally.



Lam Tung-pang, 'House No. 602', 2017, UV direct inkjet printing on panel UV, 31 1/2 x 23 1/2 in (80 x 60 cm).

Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

## **Like many artists, you have lived in different cities and you travel a lot. What does 'home' mean to you, and in which city do you feel most at home? What role does fragmentation play in migration and diaspora?**

I moved houses and studios quite often when I was in my 20s and it made me sick, so I haven't really traveled much in the last 10 years. Somehow I don't really enjoy going somewhere for a show staying for only a few days, and I either just send my works or try to stay at least a few weeks to a few months.

Home means a place with family, so Hong Kong is my answer. Migration or diaspora or whatever comes from the result of resettling, and it means land and nationality are only a small part of the answer to who you are. You are connected and disconnected from everything, that's what fragmentation means to me.

**Valencia Tong**