

# Time Out

## Hong Kong

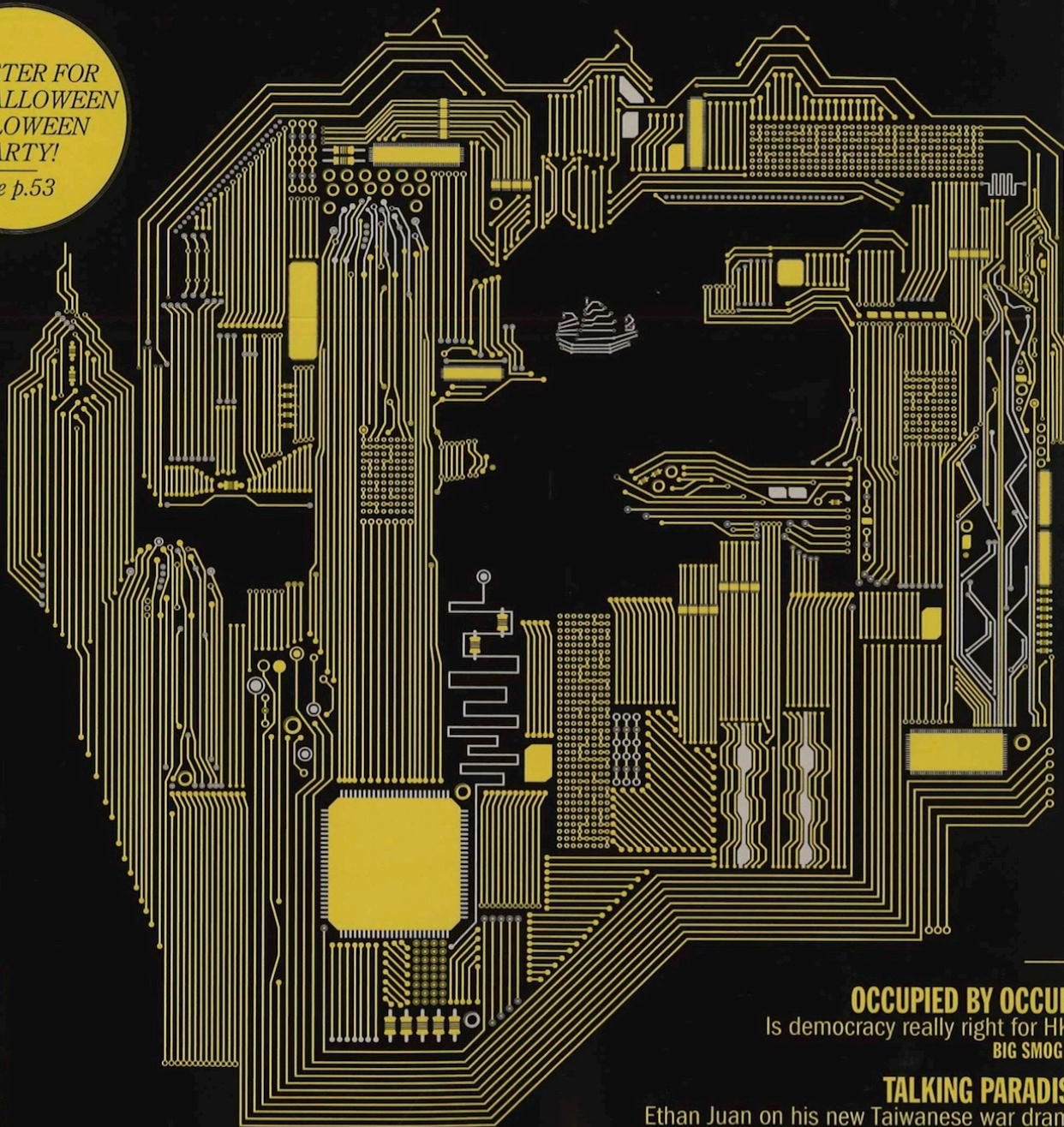
# HK TECH UNCOVERED

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# Art

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My land, your land  
Flying flags on artist  
James T Hong's organised  
'overtaking territories' trip



## Occupying islands

Ungoverned islands dotted around the Asia territory are the focus of Para Site and Spring Workshop's new show. Ysabelle Cheung speaks to co-curator **Cosmin Costinas** about ownership and land

**W**hat makes an island an island? Indeed, what makes a raw bit of land, barely discernible on a map – a territory – a commodity to seize and to conquer? These questions aren't exactly answered in *Islands Off the Shores of Asia*, a new group show by Para Site that evolved from their seminal exhibition last year, *Journal of A Plague Year*. Instead, they're met with further questions, inquisitive pieces of multimedia works from video to sculpture to painting to wall installation, by 11 artists. "While *Journal* was mainly about fear, and how it manifested itself in various forms, here *Islands* looks at fear in a more pan-Asian context," says Cosmin Costinas, co-curator of the show (the other is Inti Guerrero). "It was very clear that the most obvious manifestation of that fear in the present is in the disputed islands in Asia."

The show is held at Spring Workshop while Para Site are in the process of relocating from its old Po Yan Street location in Sheung

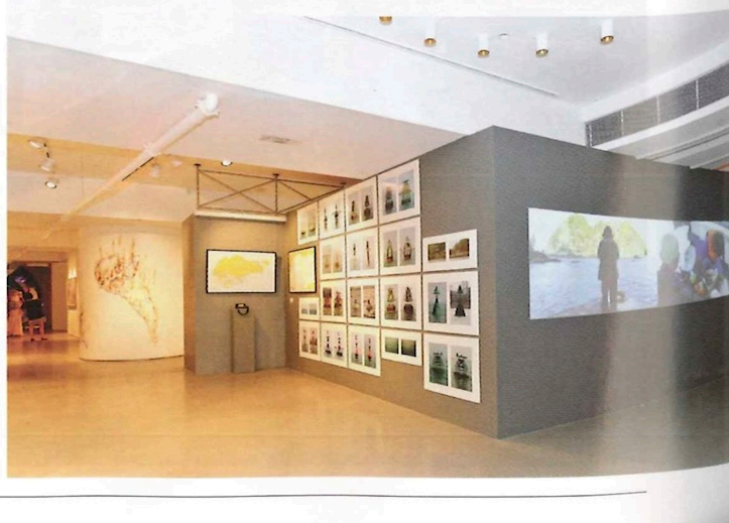
Wan to King's Road in North Point. Costinas mentions that Para Site and Spring had been in talks for a while and the timing of the show coincided with the moving. The space at Spring allows for an intriguing exploration of aforementioned topics, which would have, perhaps, not been possible at the smaller Po Yan Street space. "Every work is like an island in itself, so it creates an archipelago within the space," says Costinas. "You can navigate it in a non-linear way."

One of the residency living spaces has been converted into a dark screening room projecting Rosa Barba's video *Outwardly From the Earth's Centre* (2007), in which residents of a small Swedish island attempt to rope (literally, with rope) back in their homeland, which is drifting away at the rate of one metre a year. Further inside, the walls by the bathroom have been tagged, almost guerilla-style, with Howie Tsui's smoke, pigment and ink paintings, adjacent to his framed work *Retainers of Anarchy* (Taohua

*Island*), (2014). And further inside still is Singaporean artist Ming Wong's incredible tunnel installation *Windows on the World* (2014). As you walk into the Kubrick-esque 'tunnel' (fashioned out of wood and fabric), dotted with translucent portholes, the soft strains of Cantonese opera grow louder. At

the end of the tunnel, the vanishing point, a looped video is screened of Wong in spacesuit gear, tumbling and arcing through the air in his tunnel to the opera aria *Princess Zhaojun Crosses the Border*.

"Science fiction is a space where one can reimagine societies and identities, and extend an idea of the repercussions of that idea, on a society," says Wong of his creative response to the show title, *Islands Off the Shores of Asia*. "And the events of [Occupy Central] have called up so many ideas and questions. What is the future of Hong Kong? Utopian or dystopian? Who belongs to Hong



Kong? Who does Hong Kong belong to?"

Wong's references to science fiction, however, do not exactly dictate the work's response to the future. Instead it is tangled in the non-linear domains of past, present and future. Meanwhile,

**“It's very clear that the most obvious manifestation of fear in the present is in the disputed islands in Asia**

Taiwan-based artist James T Hong plays with the complex narratives and emotions of ownership and government in *A Chinaman's Chance (Dokdo and Senkaku)*, (2014). He also recently organised a boat trip in which participants 'took over' different islands by planting national flags (America, China, SAR Hong Kong, colonial Hong Kong, Japan, terra nullius) on territories. "There's an excitement, an irrational passion that comes when you're holding a flag," mentions Costinas. Other works respond in different ways. Alvaro Barrios' squares of uniform colours (red viewed

one way, blue viewed the other) references the war between Britain and Argentina in 1982, while Pak Sheung Chuen's stainless steel sculpture is an anti-monument to Hong Kong.

Indeed, the exhibition has been bathed in an eerily urgent, relevant light, considering the events of Occupy Central; Costinas mentions that all of the Para Site team has been protesting at various sites, and further explains that the very fabric of the non-profit's organisation ethos has always been to engage with Hong Kong society. "Our shows are connected to the reality of Hong Kong," says Costinas. "We always believe that art is not just for decoration or for social value but for response and reflection. When Para Site was created in 1986, it was a reaction to the lack of contemporary art in Hong Kong. It's very important for us to maintain that in the institution and to adapt that to the changes in time."

Costinas adds that it is all the more imperative that the city acknowledges the relevance of more spaces for reflection. As Para Site moves from Sheung Wan to a much larger, accommodating venue in North Point early next year, we can only hope that important spaces for contemporary art continue to be supported in this city.

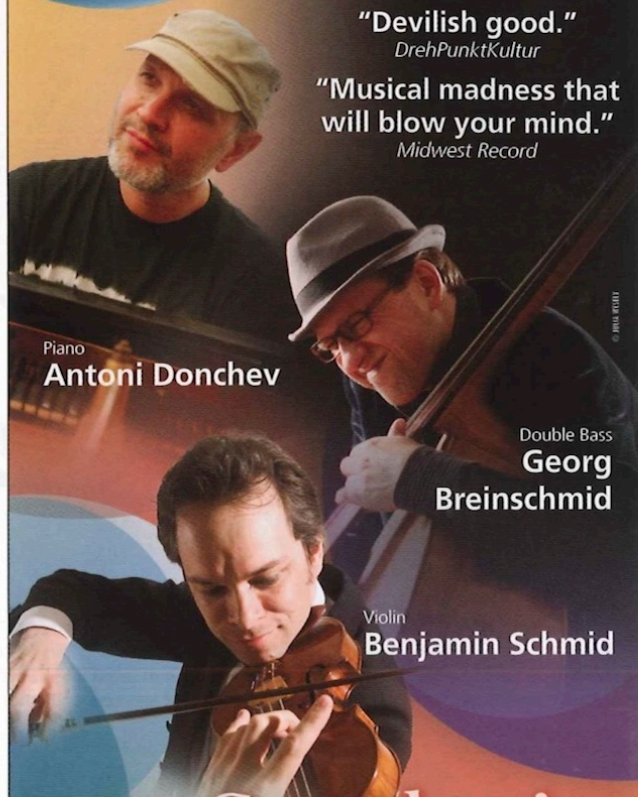
**Islands Off the Shores of Asia**  
Spring Workshop, until Sun  
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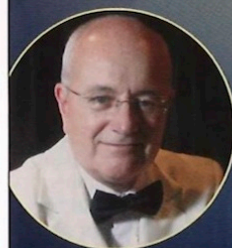
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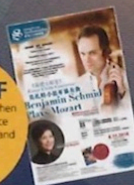
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