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“A FICTIONAL RESIDENCY” IN HONG KONG

BY THE EDITORS



Participants of “A Fictional Residency” gathered in the amply furnished Spring Workshop, located in Wong Chuk Hang, an industrial neighborhood in Hong Kong. Courtesy Spring Workshop, Hong Kong.

This June, in the gleaming surroundings of Hong Kong’s Spring Workshop, Singaporean artist Heman Chong and Dutch novelist Oscar van de Boogaard led a four-day fiction workshop. The appointed participants of “A Fictional Residency” included visual artist Nadim Abbas, writer-director Enoch Cheng, journalist Doretta Lau and artist collective MAP Office. During eight-hour days, the writers nested with their laptops across the converted book warehouse and regularly convened to read drafts aloud. At the end of the week, their **short stories** were bound and published.

A postmark-sized book by Belgian artist Marcel Broothaers called *The Conquest of Space: Atlas for the Use of Artists and the Military* (1975), mapping dozens of nations’ silhouettes, served as the workshop’s prompt. Although the resulting stories are not examples of ekphrasis, they do often express feelings of being lost in space—telling tales of travel and displacement, of Hong Kong ghosts, of wilting maps, of alien visitors. Just as the surrealist geographies of Broothaers’s book distort conventions of cartography and traditional boundaries, so too did the “Fictional Residency” make the borders of contemporary art appear less fixed.

This ambiguity is familiar to the leaders of the workshop. Chong is an artist whose work exists at the intersection of visual arts and the written word. His projects include more than 180 paintings of invented book covers, collaborative performances memorizing texts and a seven-author, science-fiction novel. Van de Boogaard also blurs divides between visual and written traditions, publishing novels and plays, moonlighting as a curator, and transforming his body into a canvas. His left shoulder hosts a tattoo by the artist Douglas Gordon, a photograph of which the Guggenheim Museum in New York acquired in 2002. The duo agree that the fiction workshop’s wayward spirit bypasses the categorizations that usually divide their two disciplines. The project is part of the yearlong collaboration called “Moderation(s)” between Spring Workshop and Rotterdam’s Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art.

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