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## Artists Weave Stories In "A Fictional Residency"

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Courtesy Spring Workshop

"A Fictional Residency" participants (left to right): Christina Li, Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix of MAP Office, Doretta Lau, Oscar van den Boogaard, Enoch Cheng, Heman Chong, Nadim Abbas.

in words and images equally and simultaneously.

Van den Boogaard takes inspiration from swimming for his fictional works. He also has an intimate relationship with contemporary art, as a curator as well as being the human canvas for **Douglas Gordon's** "Tattoo (for Reflection)." The work of art lies permanently on Van den Boogaard's left shoulder.

As the leader of "A Fictional Residency," Van den Boogaard used **Marcel Broodthaers'** surrealist book "The Conquest of Space. Atlas for the Use of Artists and the Military" to inspire participants. The thumb-sized booklet has silhouettes of countries, one on each page, all rendered to a similar size. "It is a surrealist take on territory, a weird dreaming on the representation of space and how this can become fiction," says **Heman Chong**, the curator of "Moderation(s)" who is himself an artist, writer, and participant of the workshop.

Other participants include curator Christina Li who was invited to be a witness (her observations can be read [here](#)), Hong Kong artists **Nadim Abbas**, **MAP Office**, filmmaker **Enoch Cheng**, author and journalist **Doretta Lau**, each invited for their distinct talents and range of viewpoints. "It was like assembling a team of superheroes," says Chong. Each person had to accomplish one short story within four days, constantly negotiating between their artistic practices and the task of writing. The "Atlas" presented common ground from which all could depart on their writing journeys as the booklet was basically a text-free, visual representation of a narrative of geo-politics that is nonetheless in a book format.

"I used to have this very clear line between what I thought was text and what I thought was visual arts, but in fact what I create as an artist is in itself a kind of text. You're creating meaning," says Abbas who adds that he used the same creative process to write fiction as he usually does in creating his visual artwork. For "A Fictional Residency" Abbas wrote a short story about a guy who discovers a cat underneath his table and tries to kill the animal. It turns out that the cat is an alien and the protagonist himself might also be an alien. The punchline, however, isn't in the story. "I can't be in the same room with cats for too long without being hospitalized. I'm allergic to them," says Abbas.

The "Moderation(s)" project began as a way to facilitate dialogue between creative minds across the globe and across disciplines. "A Fictional Residency" explored not only the merging of the visual arts and literary media, but also forced the participants to share ideas and influence one another in a group working environment, which is a rare situation in today's contemporary art climate.

by Zoe Li

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**HONG KONG** — The line between art and literature blurred when six artists and writers sat down in a room together to create fiction. The four-day workshop titled "A Fictional Residency" took place in Hong Kong earlier this month as part of "Moderation(s)" the year-long collaboration between Hong Kong's **Spring Workshop** and Rotterdam's **Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art**. The print version of the book launched on June 29 at Spring during the staging of the play "Lucia Melts" by Oscar van den Boogaard, while a PDF version is available [here](#).

"I really believe there is no division between literature and visual arts," says Van den Boogaard. The Dutch author led the writing workshop, observing that artists and writers deal



“In the world of contemporary art, it is so competitive and industrialized that every artist has become a brand in itself,” says Chong. “While I’m not going against it, I’m just trying to propose that there can be other processes on top of this.”

Workshop participants had to periodically read aloud to the group what they had written. There were subconscious infections happening between the artists and writers, with chunks of symbols and details moving from one story to another.

“Everyone was very generous with their ideas. This is key to what contemporary discourse could be about. It is generosity as a method for producing art. It is idealistic, but much more interesting,” says Chong.

