



48
HOURS

**REINVENTING
THE SANDWICH**

**HUGH JACKMAN
EXPLORES THE
DARK SIDE**

**A CLOCKWORK
ORANGE STILL
PACKS A PUNCH**

Power of one

ARTS PREVIEW EDMUND LEE | edmund.lee@scmp.com

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT Spring Workshop

The first condition on the legally binding confidentiality agreement that you must sign before entering "The Social Contract" is that you do not talk about the exhibition.

"The artwork is really the contract," curator Heman Chong says when we meet at Spring Workshop, the non-profit arts space in Aberdeen.

"That's what forces the audience to think – you're agreeing with the artists to do something."

Created by A Constructed World – the collaborative project run by the Paris-based, Australian duo Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva – the exhibition is the final Hong Kong programme in the "Moderation(s)" series, which is co-presented by Spring Workshop and Rotterdam's Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art.

The year-long collaboration's teaser event, which took place on August 18 last year, was a one-night listening party in which the audience was encouraged to "confess their guilty

pleasure" and reveal "the worst-case scenarios in their lives", Chong says.

The other end of the spectrum is now reached by "The Social Contract", which asks all participants to keep quiet about what they have seen.

"It's a bit paradoxical because, by making a contract, we want to make the project less intrusive; it allows people to have their own thoughts and not to be held accountable for them," says Lowe.

A Constructed World previously staged a less developed version of the project in Melbourne, Milan and Singapore.

"What we're creating is a space where, for the viewers, there's the freedom to not have to speak about what they're seeing," says Riva. "I think, in some ways, the secrecy of what's in the room has put undue emphasis on what may or may not be inside."

The duo started their self-published magazine *Artfan* in Melbourne in 1993, and in the decade that followed they regularly invited people who said they didn't know about art to write about exactly that.

Their current project, says Lowe, is "similar in reverse, because by not speaking it's very easy to not understand an exhibition".

He notes that not knowing is the norm for some artists.

"You've got Jackson Pollock and John Coltrane, who said: 'I don't know what I'm doing, I just move around'. But the audiences haven't really been allowed to play that part because they're always expected to know what they think."

For the uninitiated viewers who worry about not "getting" the works they're seeing, Lowe has some comforting words.

"There's no incorrect response to this work," he says. "If you come and you think, 'Argh, this has made me really anxious, the artists are d***heads', you're right. There's nothing that can't be said."

When you're alone, that is.

Spring Workshop, 3/F Remex Centre, 42 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen, Tuesday-Sunday noon-6pm. Ends December 15. Inquiries: 2110 4370

From left: curator Heman Chong with Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva of A Constructed World. Photo: Nora Tam

