

Lee Kit

08.08.16



View of "Lee Kit: Hold your breath, dance slowly," 2016.

Lee Kit is a Hong Kong-born, Taipei-based multimedia artist who represented Hong Kong at the 2013 Venice Biennale. His first solo museum exhibition in the US, "Hold your breath, dance slowly," is currently showing at the Walker Art Center and features a selection of recent works. Here, Lee discusses his three-week residency in Minneapolis, the politics of his practice, and Every Colour You Are, 2016, the site-specific video and painting installation that he produced for the exhibition, which is on view through October 9, 2016.

HONESTLY, I COULDN'T FEEL AMERICA. Of course I've read the news. I know a lot of things about America. I know they are very racist. For example, in Minneapolis, I was only walking on the street and people called me a Chinese pig. But I knew about their racism already so I wasn't surprised. Apart from that, I liked Minneapolis. It was quiet and I lived by the river.

When I created the show at the Walker, I was thinking about something called impersonal love. I am much more interested in politics than in art, but I usually don't show my political stance in my artworks. I try not to. I don't believe in political art, but I believe the practice of art can be political. Art cannot change everything. It's very simple.

Why is it that nobody talks about love, but they usually talk about hate? Politics is a constellation of feelings for me. For example, I hate CY Leung. I want to kill him. He betrayed Hong Kong. He's selling out. If we remain under the rule of this current government, there can be no better future for Hong Kong. I tend to be very pessimistic. Some people get me really angry, but I can still talk about it so causally. I want to grab that distance, to understand what I'm feeling. That's why I make art.

Taipei is like a cocoon from which I can see Hong Kong more clearly. So I can see what I should contribute as a citizen and as an artist.

The first thing I did was design a space for the Walker. It's a white cube, no walls. All the entrances are exactly the same size and same height—thirty-five inches wide—like an entrance to a small apartment. It can be quite dark, because I didn't use any spotlights. I hate spotlights.

The rhythm of the exhibition is mellow, brainwashing. With all the projectors, people can't escape their shadows. When they try to escape, it looks like they're dancing slowly. This is love. I think about my first love in this way, so the mood of the show is nostalgic.

A new work, *Every Colour You Are*, presents two videos projections that overlap, along with four so-called paintings that spell out the title of the work, which is also a song by David Sylvian. I replaced the "You" with a black piece of paper I picked up on the street in Minneapolis, so now the canvases read "Every Colour [blank] Are." The video projections are constantly changing because the films are not synchronized, so every day will be different and random. I shot the footage in New York years ago. The museum said they could synchronize the videos, but I said no. Coincidences are important to me.

I'm a painter and I'm not a painter. I'm always something in between. I'm a painter because I care about color, I care about texture and composition. If I use video projection, I need to finish the installation in the exhibition space, because the whole space is a canvas for me. I'm not calculated, but I'm always calculating. I'm a control freak, but the best way to control is not to control.

Don't be a star. No spotlight. No hero. That's my philosophy.

— As told to Samantha Kuok Leese