

# K2-02

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# Contents

- 3 Introduction  
Mary Knights
- 4 Follow *Follow*  
Stephen Loo & Michael Yuen
- 14 *K2-02*  
Ross Gibson
- 17 Acknowledgements

# Introduction

Playful and challenging, *K2-02* is the result of an interdisciplinary collaboration between Stephen Loo and Michael Yuen. Loo is an architect and academic, Yuen trained as a composer and creates installation-based work using a combination of abstract sounds, images and experimental interactive technologies.

*K2-02* is one of a series of research based exhibitions that engages external scholars to participate in the SASA Gallery's exhibition and publication programs. The external scholar for this exhibition is Professor Ross Gibson, Sydney College of Arts, University of Sydney. Gibson is a writer and film-maker whose interests include art and communication in cross-cultural situations, particularly in Australia and the Southwest Pacific. His recent work includes *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland and Remembrance + The Moving Image* (editor), a video installation *Street X-Rays*, an interactive audiovisual environment *BYSTANDER* (in collaboration with Kate Richards) and the interactive work *'Conversations II'* which was part of the 2008 Biennale of Sydney program. As well as writing an essay for the catalogue, Gibson has travelled to Adelaide to participate in events associated with the exhibition.

The SASA Gallery supports a program of exhibitions focusing on innovation, experimentation and performance. With the support of the Division of Education, Art and Social Sciences and the Division Research Performance Fund, the SASA Gallery is being

developed as a leading contemporary art space publishing and exhibiting high-quality research based work, and as an active site of teaching and learning. The SASA Gallery showcases South Australian artists, designers, writers and curators associated with the South Australian School of Art and the Louis Laybourne-Smith School of Architecture and Design in a national and international context.

The SASA Gallery has received immense support towards the development and implementation of this exhibition and catalogue. The catalogue has been printed at Cruickshank Printers. The excellent wine served at the opening was supplied by Perrini Estate.

Mary Knights  
Director, SASA Gallery

# Follow Follow

## Stephen Loo & Michael Yuen

In June 2008 a version of *Follow* was created in downtown Shanghai. I hired fifty people to follow me for a day as I went about my usual activities. The crowd was under no special instructions other than to follow me. When we stopped the group swelled to a hundred at times as bystanders joined in. The crowd temporarily blocked

streets and sidewalks as we progressed through the city. It was a pilgrimage, a protest, bought stardom, a human roadblock, a labour strike, a fanatical pack, a mob and a march. *Follow*, for me, is foremost a public action resonating throughout a city. It is the hiring of a crowd's services.

My work with public space began with an interest in the life of streets and cities through my sound installations: the way cities move, breathe and change through the day. As well, at this time I had the happy fortune that my sound installations did not fit easily within the visual art framework of galleries and museums. *Follow* is part of this continuing exploration of public space. It is an intervention and disturbance stemming from my

want to experiment in the street. In this way, *Follow* is the extension of the sound and light installation *Flash*, which is a single giant burst of light and gong of sound resonating for days in public space. In an instant everything can be

Under no special instruction other than to *follow*, the crowd came to be because of a social contract that binds without announcing what it bounds. The exchange is purely economic: 80 Chinese Yuan for the mere presence as human beings. Through word of mouth – small announcements, Chinese whispers – the

social contract emerges seemingly without origin, as minute gestures unite in what Erin Manning calls pre-acceleration,<sup>1</sup> or the a-perception of the potential of common movement, causing disturbances within the urban refrain that somehow manages to build and swerve the smooth flow of the large city.

"According to the Epicureans, matter falls endlessly through the void, but every now and then, without warning, at no

regular interval of time or space, these bits swerve from their downward path, bump into others, and so form the assemblages that make up the physical world as we know it."<sup>2</sup> Here, they are an assemblage of corporealities with the potential to block, strike, and resonate, but also to disperse, diffuse and disappear. The *public* appears in space; a common appearance of human beings that de-functionalises designed space. The hired crowd has an evacuated citizenship (other than one bound by an simplistic monetary exchange), which paradoxically by its appearance alone manages to evacuate the hierarchical

transformed.

Shanghai critic Rebecca Catching wrote:

Yuen's work demonstrated China's amazing ability to create spectacle out of nothing. Puzzled

drivers watched as the *Follow* entourage filled up intersections, and it swelled in size throughout the day as curious onlookers joined the massive human flock."<sup>3</sup>

*Follow* is the first work I have put myself into. In that past, with my attraction to computers where decisions are seemingly given over to random number generations, I have been deliberately removed allowing only unconscious residues of myself to appear.

So many acts in everyday life in China are small pieces of civil disobedience.

Spending time in Asia's megatropolises surrounded by the lights and sounds of new Asia forced me to make a new kind of work from my sound installations. It is

difficult to make public sound and light work in the visual and sonic overload of cities like Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong. *Follow* grew out of the impossibility of making public sound work in noisy cities. At its first attempt, it was an opportunity to *sketch* in public space. I have done a series of followings beginning in Seoul, then Adelaide and now Shanghai.

stratification of the city.

As it appears in the streets, the crowd suspends order at that instant purely because of its appearance; it is an event that evokes pure empathy of itself as an event. Michael Yuen's experiment with a crowd in the street is public, not because of the crowd or the street being inherently public, but because it is an experiment that

generates a public: curious onlookers and their resulting puzzlement.

The result is a traffic jam of consciousness for no particular cause; fibrillating between frustration and release, anticipation and disappointment or satisfaction, instant gratification and deferred understanding – the sheer plainness of the event and the depth of deception.

The crowd is frequently deemed political by the State by virtue of its form and not its intention, and this is certainly the case in China. But remember, the crowd in *Follow* was formed for the inane reason of the promise of a bit of money. Can this teleology be construed as political? What is

this space opened up by the event of the crowd, the absurd appearing together of human beings? Is this space already inscribed by politics, or can it be made political? We ask with Jean-Luc Nancy, "Is Everything Political?"<sup>4</sup>

Conventional wisdom has it that there are about 450 million bicycles in China.<sup>5</sup>

The followers were never told I am an artist though some might have guessed. There are numerous reasons one might hire a crowd unrelated to art; so, this distinction seems unnecessary and leads to excusing the work as merely an artist's excesses. In Seoul

a bemused café owner and her staff – unaware of who I was – asked to pose with me for photos.

This not uncommon scene demonstrated the power of the action on a street level without the need for prior knowledge.

To explain why I think the actual *form* of the crowd, rather than any common intentionalities of its individual members, or intentionality inferred from the form of the crowd, is political, allow me a cycling analogy. (Michael wrote, unexplained, the word "peloton" in the margins of a draft of this essay.) The peloton is the large main group of cyclists bunching in the centre of a road race using the slipstream to reduce drag. The form of the peloton emerges from slight adjustments by each rider responding to the complex behaviour of riders around him or her. The thing about the form

of the peloton is that it can only arise when the front riders relinquish their lead, slipping off to rejoin the pack at the back, leading to a fluid situation where the centre of the peloton appears to push through its own leading edge. The riders who slip back do so not entirely in an act of selfless

giving, but an intentional giving: at the front they are exposed to higher loads, and they need to slip off the back to balance energy conservation with tactical manoeuvring (move back at the wrong time and you will not have sufficient time to reach the front near the finish line). Also, there are teams in road racing: here the issue becomes the tactical arrangement of giving so that the strongest rider arrives in the right place at the right time to shoot for the finish.

Derrida never lost sight of Cixous's speed in *H. C. for Life, That is to Say ...* which begins with the letter 'v' which begins "vitesse" (speed) and "vie" (life): "life in life (a life which is no more death than the opposite of death,

a life which does not  
know death).<sup>6</sup>

The peloton is a dynamic gathering of a crowd that continually self-adjusts by the enactment of intentions of its members. The value of the intentions (to give (way) and drop back) however, cannot be measured with reference to what is received (an opening to move back to the front) because of the emergent nature of the form of the crowd. The behaviour of members of the crowd, led by irreducibly complex interactions of exhaustion, curiosity, boredom, distraction, determination, failure, and mimicry, gives an openness of being by virtue of not having been inscribed by an overarching (political) teleology. This condition 'gives' – as the event of being is given; Heidegger interprets *Ereignis* (The Event of Being) as *es gibt* (it is / is given) – the capacity and desire for crowd members to fall back, or surge ahead,

or wander. The gift given in this circumstance is not framed by an economy of exchange because it cannot be made present: once the gift is recognized as the gift, it is no longer a gift because its being made present becomes an obligation which demands reciprocity. "The gift, like the friendship from which it derives, has the character of an excess (*hyperbole*) such that it cannot be measured by any calculation of its value."<sup>7</sup>

The crowd in *Follow*, ironically the common presence of human beings as an appearance in a radical self-organizing motility, is a gift of itself to itself that arises

from the refusal to accept determination.  
The space of the crowd is the space of  
deferral: an opening up of time for delayed  
reciprocation that is no longer simply a  
return and therefore escapes the relations of  
a simple exchange. The gap

which opens between intention and action  
is the bases for Rancière's productive  
'disagreement':

"politics is about wrong names -  
misnomers that articulate a gap and  
connect with a wrong."<sup>8</sup>

For Derrida, the gift can never be present,  
but is coextensive with a forgetting.  
The gift is nothing,  
organized by a perpetual  
deferral,

the prerogative in

Aristotle's *potentia*

to not-

be.

lost (in) the crowd

At the end, the crowd must be paid. The exchange of money for the activity was essential. On an important level, *Follow* involves purely a business transaction in which I am

paying for the service of being followed. This was not an exercise in exploitation, and in Shanghai everyone was paid a fixed fee negotiated as fair. Each person was paid 80 RMB for five hours work.<sup>9</sup>

Helene Cixous writes about writing her not taking place, her permanent availability.<sup>10</sup>

In Shanghai, when we began to pay the crowd a large group of people emerged also wanting money. An onlooker disgruntled by being refused payment called the police. Arriving late on the scene, police told us they had heard reports

I was giving away money on the roadside, which was illegal.

*Follow* reflects on Eyal Weizman's ideas of architecture as the flow of power and his criticism of the restricted movement of people in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>11</sup> By their sheer mass my crowd could redirect foot and car traffic as well as test the city's infrastructure by passing people through it. Here,

I also enjoy the connection to Claude Lelouch's earlier morning non-stop high-speed daredevil drive through Paris to produce the film *C'était un rendez-vous* (1976). As Lelouch's car with a camera mounted on the front speeds through red lights, into oncoming traffic and around blind corners, it asks us to fundamentally rethink our cities by testing them at their limits. This rethinking of cities is a major concern of mine.

The ability for us collectively to stop traffic and block laneways was a beautiful assertion of one's will onto public space and a display of power especially within the context of Shanghai amidst pre-Olympics security. With Beckett-

like absurdity, the work temporarily re-routes the city. It is a small village moving through a city – a community within a community. This action component of *Follow* draws on the spirit of the

conceptual art in the form of Chris Burden or Vito Acconci's actions and Tehching Hsieh's one-year performances. Yet, the size of the crowd and the use of money positions *Follow* within a reflection on contemporary Asian mega cities.

While the work is foremost an experiment in public space, it can be read as a consideration on money – as it questions monetary, leadership and employment relationships. Monetarily, I am interested in what non-material things an artist can buy such as illusions to religious cults like Buddhist influenced extremist cult Aum in Japan, stardom created from nothing and stemming of labour shortage. In Shanghai, *Follow* found its way into mainstream television news coverage on Shanghai TV. The act of exploitation is of

no underlying interest, and indeed considering the work in this light is exoticisms of these cities and their labour forces.

Within the context of today's Chinese overheated art scene, *Follow* has been read with another focus. It draws attention to the use of money to create hyperinflation in art where speculative art investments build upon other speculative investments. Therefore, one can now talk about the speculative art Beijing real estate market. And, *Follow* can be judged against the large numbers of cheap unskilled and skilled labour that underpin large parts of the Chinese contemporary art world.<sup>12</sup>

There are other contemporary examples of artists employing others in their work such as Ai Wei Wei's project for Documenta XII sending 1001 ordinary Chinese citizens

The promise of payment obligates the participant in the crowd to work. However the correspondence between material worth of the gift (after all it seems like free money as there is nothing asked to be done for it) and the counter gift (impossible to measure

because there is no brief other than to follow; and there is really no obligation to follow) is ambivalent. The work maintains a misalignment of the economic worth of the material reality in the work, by making irreconcilable a finite monetary sum with the infinite possibilities for action, if not inaction. The affectual and cognitive dimension of misrecognition is to me the ethico-aesthetic work of *Follow*.

The exchange of money, in reciprocity, usually guards against the fear of loss of something already in possession. In *Follow* this condition is made ambiguous. In agreeing to give – the promise of money at the beginning of the work obligates the crowd to give – but what needs to be given in return, is unqualified. If anything, the money is recompense for the gift of the self, in its openness (as the 'loss' of self) owing to an absence of an imperative to function, or ratio for action.

The return gift, or more accurately 'work' in exchange, is uncertain. The 'practice' that emerges in such an asymmetrical relation of energy and capital that defy an

to Kassel or Santiago Sierra's hiring of workers to perform tasks in a criticism of capitalism such as paying prostitutes to be tattooed or Liu Ding's hiring of thirteen painters from the Dafen painting village near Shenzhen to

paint during the opening of the 2005 Guangzhou Triennial. These works rely on our understanding of the absurdity of the action and in the first two examples our empathy for those employed. In Ai Wei Wei's case, it is our happiness for those that might never have attended Documenta and in Santiago Sierra's our pity for the evoked iconic prostitute.

In this tradition, *Follow* creates an economy. As they move through the city, the crowd needs to eat and drink. At the head of this economy is the artist. The act of following reveals a culture of the consuming

public based on money, stature and leadership. The monetary interaction in the work redefines what can be bought and sold.

*Follow* in Shanghai was with the assistance of Zendai MoMA and the Australia-China Council. It was part of the Intrude: Art & Life 366 public art program.

exchange logic are, following Bourdieu, "acts of cognition" (recognition and misrecognition, hesitation and conclusion, of worth), socially constituting a subjectivity that takes form to become the

objective reality of the crowd as an unavowable community.<sup>13</sup> What emerges is a new public whose absolute presence in a work opens up a space; admittedly one predisposed to taking photographs and videos (of what exactly?) as a concession to doing something for the money, or believing something worthwhile is happening.

*Follow* creates an economy – an oikos (home) – that is political; not in the common sense of a 'political economy'; but politics where the self-sufficiency of human beings is shown for its incommensurability (of value, of ontology), an articulation of a

non-unity, the non-figure, therefore a space-opening, of the human being as the public being. *Follow* is political because it spaces.<sup>14</sup>

Michael's text about his work *Follow* is based on a public talk given at Zendai Museum of Modern Art and was commissioned for the December 2008 issue of *Broadsheet*.

Endnotes:

1. See Erin Manning, "Grace Taking Form: Marey's Movement Machines" in *Parallax*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (London, Taylor and Francis, 2008): pp. 82-91 (87)
2. Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): pp. 99-100
3. Rebecca Catching, *That's Shanghai*, September 2008
4. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Is Everything Political? (a brief remark)" in *Project Muse*, Philip M Adamek (trans.), (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2002) at [http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/new\\_cen\\_ennial\\_review/v002/2.3nancy02.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/new_cen_ennial_review/v002/2.3nancy02.html). To Nancy, everything may be political only if 'everything' is not total or totalised but de-territorialized.
5. "China Rises" blog entry by Tim Johnson, the Beijing bureau chief for McClatchy Newspapers. [http://washingtonbureau.typepad.com/china/2007/05/more\\_on\\_electri.html](http://washingtonbureau.typepad.com/china/2007/05/more_on_electri.html)
6. Jacques Derrida, *H. C. for Life, That is to Say ...* Laurent Milesi, Stefan Herbrechter (trans.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006): p. 96
7. Robert Bernasconi, "What Goes Around Comes Around" in Alan D Schrift (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997): p. 267
8. Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identity, and Subjectivation" in *October*, Vol. 61, *The Identity in Question* (Summer, 1992): p. 62
9. At the time of writing 80 China Yuan Renminbi was approximately 17 Australia dollars or 12 American dollars.
10. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays" in *The Newly Born Woman*, Betsy Wing (trans.) (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)
11. See Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land* (London: Verso, 2007)
12. See Pauline Yao "In Production: Contemporary Art in China" in *Timezone 8* (China 2008)
13. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Logic of Practice" as published in Alan D Schrift (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997): p. 215. Bourdieu states that misrecognition produces a new logic of the gift that blurs the economic and the non-economic, and therefore becomes part of the social realm.
14. This argument comes from Jean-Luc Nancy's explanation of politics, and the necessity to move from an economical model of politics, which relies on commensurability and thus equivalence and exchange). The concept of a 'political economy' comes from the notion that the 'well being' in the home (*oikos*), interpreted commonly as the self-sufficiency of the human being, or the consistency of and confidence in the (e)valuation of human life as a totalism (for example as part of nature, or an assured place in the 'world'), is extended to the *polis*. Therefore 'political economy' in capitalism generally becomes enacted as the sustenance of wealth creation rather than of well being in the *polis* as it is in the *oikos*. See Jean-Luc Nancy, "Is Everything Political?"

# The Given World

Ross Gibson

Architects might call it 'negative space', the two-thirds of the gallery that Stephen Loo and Michael Yuen have given back to the landlords (the University of South Australia) for the duration of their exhibition at the SASA Gallery. As a result of their paradoxically decisive passivity, everything that is not present gives shape and significance to the other space -- the 'positive' space -- which is the slender fraction of the Gallery that the artists have actively chosen to use.

So you can see already that tricks are at play. And it's real play that you can apply your energies to, not just something flippant. For there is some definite use envisaged in the artists' decision not to be useful, not to take full and explicit advantage of all the displayed privileges that usually go with winning the right to exhibit in a desirable and competitively esteemed venue.

Questions about inaction and vacancy occupy your mind when you ponder what Loo and Yuen have actively not done here. The nothingness of their gesture grows big in the mind and becomes something more hefty than just a gesture. The artists are making an almost-not-there show of abjuring the governed space of the institutional gallery, giving it back to the owners, politely calling their bluff, throwing them a riddle and working a new hustle in a system where usually you grab everything you can. When you think about it, evacuity of the idea is downright compelling.

Seeing nothing in the idea at first, you might say it sucks. But on pondering the vacuum that Loo and Yuen make for you as you approach the show that they proclaim to be *really there* on the far side of the absence, in the smaller installation space, you notice that the larger space has become attractive in the way it hauls your body and your mind along to the other place. This puts the emptiness into a whole other category: two-thirds negated and one-third engaged, the entire Gallery is a zone of provocation crossed with intrigue and promise, garnished with some sly humour.

Drawn into the Gallery like this, you keep trying to grasp the significance of the non-space. You see nothing and try to parse the insignificance that underwhelms you at the same time as it overwhelms the entire space that has been set aside and scheduled for this particular show called *K2-02*. Declaring its institutional name by nominating its place in the large logistical compendium that is a university campus, the *K2-02* show is like one of those mesmerising ruses that is sometimes set up in a political contest, where a complete deal gets designed cunningly so that all options are already imperceptibly slanted well before negotiators arrive at the table. Set up like this -- as some shenanigan that is both less and more than it seems -- the surrounding, negative space is a blithely managed context of non-assertion that paradoxically shapes the result even before you can get inside the the zone where you would expect to be doing the real business.

A quick story might make this feinting clearer. I once saw a television interview with the German philosopher and media activist, Alexander Kluge. Whenever a question touched on issues in such a way that Kluge fundamentally disagreed with the premise and intention of the question, he charmingly, politely, passively declined to answer. He just sat there inert, albeit attentive. Opting out of the talk-show system that thrives on rhythm, noise and repletion of apparent information,

Kluge simply took the fuel out of the machine. He did this obviously. It was breath-taking and fascinating to see. He made himself into a forceful negative space warping all expectation by making arhythmic time, and thus he explicated and simultaneously obliterated the meanings that were set up and intended by the surreptitiously hostile interviewer.

The exhibition is a bit like that interview. Hiding obviously in plain sight, the unoccupied and wasted space made by the art show named *K2-02* is an idea so not-there and so perverse that its negativity gets positively stamped on your thinking. The tricky gift offered by this non-space -- the idea of giving the room named *K2-02* back to the forces from whom it has been so hard-won in the past -- this paradoxical inaction-idea has a power out of all proportion to its immateriality and inanity. Not inept, not jejune or naive, it's actually an elegant and forceful idea. An idea of space made absent and time made wasted by its unscheduled laxity.

Here's another story brought to mind by the *K2-02* show. I recall the moment -- the most potent instant in an entirely engrossing pageant -- when Muhammad Ali held his hand back and clearly chose NOT to hit George Foreman as Foreman let go of consciousness and headed toward the canvas in Round 8 of their 'Rumble in The Jungle' in Zaire in 1974. Ali's decision to do nothing in that decisive moment was a proclamation of his trickster supremacy. I remember watching it live in a university bar and hearing the entire beery hall gasp, laugh then applaud the way you would at a magic show.

The Rumble was also the occasion of a differently brilliant and vacuous scam, namely Ali's drawn-out and bewildering choreography of inaction, which he dubbed the 'rope-a-dope' manoeuvre. Using the disengagement and intentional passivity that define the rope-a-dope, Ali spent

several rounds just leaning limply backward and hauling all Foreman's aggression out so that Foreman poured his destructive power exhaustingly into the ether rather than into Ali's endangered person. It was ugly, clumsy and brilliant, because could believe that Ali, the consummate showman and aesthete, would choose to be so leaden. Only in the exhausted aftermath did Foreman understand what had been done to him -- NOTHING! Ali did nothing. Ali became a vacuum and Foreman surged into it. Negative space.

These two astonishing ruses of passivity -- plainly poetic in their creativity and audacity -- are why so many artists, from Norman Mailer through to The Fugees and the brilliant writers of the West Wing TV series, have been fascinated by the Rumble in the Jungle.

Now, it's a ridiculously long way from the bloodsport in the Kinshasa Stadium to a quiet little gallery in Adelaide, but both theatres of non-assertion operate with the same logic. And as we've seen, real smarts can lurk inside something ostensibly ridiculous.

Two words have chimed through my essay already: 'trickster' and 'gift'. Attending to these special words, some readers might have discerned a theme: my text is written in dialogue with the writing of Lewis Hyde, whose two quite wondrous investigations of creativity -- *Trickster Makes this World* and *The Gift*<sup>1</sup> -- help us see into the ruses and transformations that play in Loo and Yuen's use of the SASA Gallery. Hyde's writing is full of bracing moments of definition, where seemingly familiar notions get spun around so that you can see them from a fresh perspective. For example, Hyde reminds us that the word 'art' derives from linguistic roots concerned with connection, joints and border conditions. Hence we have terms like 'articulate', 'artifice' and even

'arthritis' (which is, of course, a condition in a joint). An artist can make a connection and define a distinctive frame, saying 'this is inside my art while all that is outside'. The artist thereby establishes a contentious difference or line or demarcation between a given, natural phenomenon and a made, cultural artifact. Think of Marcel Duchamp. The cunning articulator. Think of his obsession with conjunctions, his fascination with what can happen where readymade normalcies meet in an unaccustomed proposition. Think of that mysterious but compelling quality that Duchamp said he always sought: the 'infra-ponce' (or 'infra-thin') epiphenomenon or non-event that lurks inside a Duchampian artwork. Think of the irony and befuddlement and exquisite sense of designed banality that Duchamp can assemble.

Every artist can be a trickster like this, presenting objects, intentions and circumstances in ways that overturn common sense. An artist can intervene in an ordinary scene to articulate some proposition around which your everyday understanding might turn until a revelation emerges on the other side of the frame that joins the habitual world to the artistically refreshed world. Along these thin lines of conjunction, an artist can help us see things anew.

One of the most compelling and tricky turns an artist can perform is the act of gift-giving. Occurring as it always does along some connective meld, art is a transaction. But art is different from commerce, Hyde observes, because an artwork generates its true worth only so long as it continues to connect the larger world to the people who engage with the challenges, stimuli and surprises inherent to the artifact. Whenever an artwork gets locked away because of its monetary or commodity value, it tends to lose its social or gift value. In a move of trickery that can be wondrous when done well, the artist can generate a particular type of wealth (which Hyde

deems 'erotic') by receiving the gift of tradition, then aligning it to individual talent and training to produce something new which is then paid forward to the world in the form of a fresh gift thrown into widespread circulation. In this act of giving, the trickster can stir a society's defining energy, the trickster can generate new psychological and social urges out of the tension that arcs between having and availing, between containing and releasing, managing and transmogrifying, wasting and growing. When art moves us it also moves the world, granting energy and increase to the factors in the world that encourage vitality and ingenuity to emerge rather than contract. The artful impulse is generative, it is the opposite of the hoarder's anxiety. Hyde is blunt about this: "Anything contained within a boundary must contain as well its own exhaustion."<sup>2</sup> When artists plough their processes and products back into the world, they offer gifts back to humanity's ever-increasing common wealth of culture and memory, which is where all artists' first inklings of their own creative abilities necessarily come from. Thus art makes a join and a turn that can be understood as a feedback loop insinuating everyone into a connection between past culture and the burgeoning world. Artists pay their gifts forward in this dynamic, and with their trick of giving it all away they take part in a wealthy world of increase, an ingenious world that refuses exhaustion.

Giving a big portion of the SASA Gallery back to the parental institution of Uni SA, Loo and Yuen work an artful, additive, trickster move that shifts preconceptions about authority and permission, about right behaviour and accepted values. Politely giving the Gallery back, but doing so mysteriously and wittily too, they cause re-definitions and re-negotiations about the place of artistic programs within institutional systems and within the city. With the gift of emptiness, Loo and Yuen offer a frame with which to contemplate

all the presumptions that govern habitual experience within institutionalised patterns.

All these ideas rise up from the negative space in K2-02. Now you get to the tiny positive space. What does it have for you? Here the artwork is revealed to be a ceremony of some kind. It seems to be nothing more than a garment that gets offered to you. It's almost nothing, almost immaterial. An attendant gives you a clean shirt which you sense has been washed and offered to strangers several times already in the recent past. Then you are turned around and sent -- subtly disguised and re-charged -- back out again to the world. You wear now a trickster's guise and carry a trickster's intent, ready to redraw yet again the boundaries that distinguish ordinary existence from the creative performance of moment-by-moment ingenuity.

In other words, having negotiated the trickery of the negative space, having made it to the other side of the framing division between useless space and used space, you get an artful role.

It's like something you've earned. It's like an infra-mince initiation.

Accepting this shirt, which is a ruse made material, you take it to the world, knowing by now that Loo and Yuen's project has given you a sly and portable frame with which to examine and re-articulate the ordinary world, to make the world anew at every moment.

It's a big idea -- that art joins you to the everyday world of habit, power and compromise -- and

when you first find this idea refreshed for your delectation in the SASA Gallery, it's almost nothing, but at the join between the K2-02 and all the institutions, rules, habits and permissions that bind the room in space and time every day, there's a thin trick you can find that helps you reframe and refocus so that, moment by moment, you might re-make the given world.

#### Footnotes

1. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, London: Vintage: 1998, p.189
2. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, London: Vintage: 1998, p. 20

"The increase does not appear until the gift moves to the third party."

*Note how the K2-02 situation is one of returning the gift -- kula ring style -- keeping the energy in circulation rather than locked up -- get the impulses moving...*

See: Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, London: Vintage, 1998, and Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: mischief, myth and art*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998.

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