

# KADIST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 23, 2014



Lygia Pape, *Divisor* (1968 - 2013). Photograph and façade print of a street performance, performed in Central, Hong Kong, 2013.

## *A Journal of the Plague Year*

Two-venue exhibition, co-presented at Kadist SF (3295 20th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110) and The Lab, San Francisco (2948 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103)

Press Preview: Wednesday, April 1, 5-6pm (starts at Kadist and continues at The Lab)  
Opening Reception: Wednesday, April 1, 6-9pm

Dates: April 1 – May 9, 2015

Gallery hours: Wednesdays – Saturdays 2-7pm, or by appointment

Artists: Ai Weiwei, Asco, Bernd Behr, Natalia Sui-hung Chan, Oscar Chan Yik Long, Yin-Ju Chen, George Chinnery, Megan Cope, Sergio de La Torre, Dung Kai-cheung, Larry Feign, James T. Hong, Rustam Khalfin, Henry Kiyama, Irene Kopelman, Firenze Lai, Lam Qua, Dorothea Lange, Lee Kit, Len Lye, Gabriel Leung, Ma Liuming, Paul McCarthy, Fionnuala McHugh, Moe Satt, Josef Ng, Yoshua Okón, Pak Sheung Chuen, Lygia Pape, Para/Site Art Criticism Class 2003, Anand Patwardhan, Raymond Pettibon, Shooshie Sulaiman, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Adrian Wong, Ming Wong, Ricky Yeung Sau-churk, Samson Young, Zuni Icosahedron/Mathias Woo & Edward Lam

# KADIST

Kadist Art Foundation and The Lab co-present *A Journal of the Plague Year*, a touring exhibition that shifts its center of gravity under the influence of magnetic forces in each location on its itinerary. Nevertheless, each iteration departs from and remains strongly connected to an exploration of the events that affected Hong Kong in the spring of 2003: the most significant airborne epidemic in recent years—the SARS crisis—coupled with the tragic death of pop figure and pan-Asian icon Leslie Cheung.

Stemming from its colonial past, Hong Kong has internalized a history of epidemics and representation as an infected land waiting to be conquered from nature, disease, and oriental habits in order to be made healthy, modern, and profitable. Culminating in the discovery of the bacteria causing the plague during an 1894 epidemic in Hong Kong, these narratives contributed to a dubious association of the disease with Asia, and heightened the infamous “yellow peril” racist discourse in Europe and America at the time. For example, the 1900-04 plagues epidemic in San Francisco’s Chinatown (part of the same epidemic wave affected Hong Kong) together with the virulent racism in California further intensified the association between disease and Asian populations.

*A Journal of the Plague Year* navigates disparate but interconnected narratives in order to contribute to a critical discussion about recent history, the implications of which extend beyond Hong Kong and beyond the realm of medicine. Through the contributions of artists, shown alongside historical artifacts and pop-culture ephemera, the exhibition confronts fear of contamination (both physiological and cultural) and the projections and prejudices that emerge from societies that encounter alterity. The exhibition also gathers documentation of a selection of performances that have destabilized mechanisms of hatred and politics of differentiation, which are based on dehumanizing the body of “the other,” such as the representation of immigrants as pests, as a disease that sickens the homogenous social body. Each of the performance pieces places the fragile but individualized human body on the frontline at various moments of historical transformation and rupture and in different corners of the globe: the identity struggles of Chicano communities in the US in the 1970s; the highly insecure Hong Kong of the 1980s, foreshadowing its handover to Mainland China; China itself during its traumatic post-Tiananmen years; Singapore and the last chapters of the Lee Kuan Yew era; Kazakhstan at the dawn of nationhood and after the fall of the Soviet Union; and finally, Myanmar amidst its current transformation, under the specter of a possible democracy and growing rejection of Muslims.

California and San Francisco were deeply affected by the Western world’s anti-Chinese immigration prejudices, through the history of Chinese immigration in relation to the Gold Rush, the 19th century railway construction in the Western United States, and the subsequent Chinese Exclusion Act. These events make this exhibition highly relevant in a context that has not entirely moved beyond the stereotypes of its past centuries, even as it finds itself ever more deeply entangled in an emerging Asia-Pacific geopolitics of power. The exhibition thus visits and revisits the traces of such prejudices in California today and their contemporary cultural significance, while considering a wider picture of immigration in the US and its current processes of othering.

Curators: Cosmin Costinas and Inti Guerrero  
Research Collaboration: Marie Martraire and Xiaoyu Weng

# KADIST

## **ABOUT KADIST:**

Kadist Art Foundation encourages the contribution of the arts to society, conducting programs primarily with artists represented in its collection to promote their role as cultural agents. Kadist's collections and productions reflect the global scope of contemporary art, and its programs develop collaborations between Kadist's local contexts (Paris, San Francisco) and artists, curators and art institutions worldwide. Each year Kadist hosts international artists in San Francisco and Paris for extended residency periods. While traditional residency programs are organized in the style of a retreat, removing the artist from the commotion of urban life, the Kadist residency places artists squarely within the heart and history of the urban experience. Each resident is assisted in the production of a new work for public presentation. Exhibitions take place either at Kadist's own venues, or in partnership with another area art institution. Kadist residencies seek to bring international perspectives into conversation with local audiences, histories and culture.

## **ABOUT THE LAB:**

The Lab is a catalyst for artistic experimentation. Its projects ignite critical dialogue amongst individuals, organizations, and communities. The Lab supports diverse and underserved artists, providing them with essential resources, time, and space to develop work that takes risks and pushes the boundaries of the non-profit platform. As a site of constant innovation and iteration, The Lab's programming exposes the elements of art making and transforms the creative process here and abroad.

## **Contact:**

Xiaoyu Weng, Director of Kadist Asia  
xiaoyu@kadist.org  
(415) 738-8668

Dena Beard, Director of The Lab  
dena@thelab.org  
(415) 864-8855