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Contemporary Visual Culture

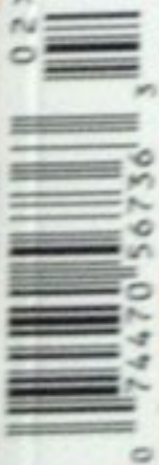
MICHAEL RAKOWITZ, KIM BEOM, GORDON BENNETT,
JANANNE AL-ANI, HONG KONG, DOCUMENTA

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NEW CURRENTS

Fragility, Decay and Rebirth

BY THE EDITORS



1
FROM THE "REMEMBERING STRANGERS" SERIES
John Clang

Amid the rush hour, some make do with the intimacy of a passing glance, others stare back at their city, digging deeper into its shadows. Sometimes it is necessary to recreate ritual spaces and practices, which provide respite for the urban spirit.



2
NEWTON AND THE PIECE BOMB
Tiffany Singh



3
FROM THE "KAZA VE KADER" SERIES
Ali Taptık

2012.08.18-09.23

Reception
08:15-10:30pm

Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei

11 Lenticular photograph 160 x 120cm

2nd Phase
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1

JOHN CLANG

Detail from the series "Remembering Strangers"
2010

Fine art archival print from polyptych of nine, each 30.5 X 24.4 cm.
Courtesy the artist.

2

TIFFANY SINGH

Newton and the Piece Bomb
2010/2011

Paper origami and organic material, installed at MIC Toi Rerehiko Gallery, Auckland, 2010.
Courtesy the artist.

3

ALI TAPTİK

From the "Kaza ve Kader"
("Accident and Fate") series
2004-08

Courtesy X-ist gallery, Istanbul.

SINGAPORE
John Clang

New York- and Singapore-based photographer John Clang is respected for his bold, dexterous works for blue-chip commercial clients including Nike, AT&T, Hermès and LG. Yet his photographic artworks explore more vulnerable situations, returning to themes of estrangement and urban moments of poetry that bind us, as global individuals and communities. In his early series, "Strangers" (2005), Clang digitally inserted passersby, snapped on New York streets, into a motel-room setting, where he had stayed when new to the city—emphasizing the intimate tension in the original photographic act. More recently, in "Remembering Strangers" (2010), the faces of strangers from five different cities are whited-out, over which their features are rendered in simple pencil lines, to graphically reflect the intimate yet fleeting encounters we have with others.

Clang also probes proximity and distance in more familiar settings. In "Being Together" (2010), he choreographed group portraits with his family in Singapore, by projecting webcam footage of them live into his New York apartment and posing alongside his tele-present father, mother and brother. In "Guilt" (2010), Clang whited-out the faces of his father, mother and brother, writing the phrase for "sorry" in Chinese in their place. Below each individual portrait Clang has handwritten the story of a guilty memory from his childhood, equally expressing anxiety about his long absence from home in pursuit of his career.

For "My Twilight Window" (2009), Clang drew simple black outlined images—a house, a UFO, birds, a balloon—directly onto soft-focused, cold city skylines and street scenes, in a whimsically escapist series made during the 2009 economic slump. Whether reassembling strips of portraits of himself and friends as single faces ("Me and Friends," 2009), or shooting a city scene through neat holes cut into photographs of zoo animals that are held up to the lens ("Self Reflection," 2010), Clang creatively intervenes in his chosen medium to create new, unique image-objects that are often beautifully unsettling.

AUCKLAND
Tiffany Singh

Examining spirituality and community through the lens of her Samoan, Indian, Maori and *pakeha* (European) heritage, as well as her three-year experience volunteering in Gujarat, Auckland-born artist Tiffany Singh's practice combines aesthetic concerns with social responsibility.

Her installation *Pre(Serve)* (2011), first exhibited at Auckland's Papakura Art Gallery, is comprised of votive figures made from beeswax, sitting on top of wooden shelves covered with rice and spices. After it was displayed for a week, Singh hosted a dinner celebrating *Diwali*, the Hindu "festival of lights." Before leaving, visitors traded homemade toys, preserves, plants and clothing for one of Singh's sculptures; Singh in turn donated the traded items to local charity groups.

Singh's *Newton and the Piece Bomb* (2010)

was displayed at the 2011 Asian Art Biennial, held at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung. The installation comprises small white paper origami baskets, hung from the ceiling of an all-white room, and arranged in concentric circles, resembling a chandelier. These were then further organized by the color of their contents, so as to imitate the visible spectrum, as conceived by Isaac Newton in the 17th century. Each basket is filled with organic materials with medicinal properties, which vary depending on where the work is shown. For its original presentation in New Zealand, they held Indian ceremonial spices and flowers from Singh's garden; while in Taiwan, they were filled with traditional Chinese medicine ingredients. The vibrant materials spill across the ground when brushed by viewers, wafting pungent aromas and transforming the floor into a makeshift, multicolored canvas.

At this year's Biennale of Sydney, Singh will present a set of wind-chime installations over three sites, titled *Knock on the Sky, Listen to the Sound* (2011), contemplating pilgrimage.

ISTANBUL
Ali Taptık

While Istanbul is reputed abroad as a city of the exotic and the powerful, its residents know well that it is also a metropolis of decay, melancholy and destitution. A native son, Ali Taptık at first studied architecture but then taught himself photography, a combination that has led him to depict the places and people that comprise modern Istanbul's "living ruins."

The series "Kaza ve Kader" ("Accident and Fate") (2004-08) portrays Istanbul at its moodiest, in images of poorly constructed, dilapidated buildings, trash-strewn lots, dim interiors, pale, enervated faces and rusted ships at dock. Cast under the same wan gray light, the snapshots from "Tangent" (2011), published as a book of the same title in March, suggest the evolution of a mordant, and morbid humor. In one image, an unused X-ray machine sits in a room's corner. In another, the vertical boards of a wooden fence have been disassembled and reassembled again so that the graffiti is scrambled. Some of the more disturbing sights from the series include a body being dragged on the sand at night, sink holes open in the street, a dog rummaging through trash and a man's genitals covered with a semen-soaked paper towel. This is a form of anti-romanticism, a filter that Taptık has even applied to several images he took in France, such as one of a defaced Parisian bus map.

As critiques of Istanbul's typical representation, Taptık's works are trenchant enough, but they are primarily concerned with the aesthetics of place. In his solo show "Deployment" at X-ist gallery last September, Taptık addressed systemic political concerns in "Meridians" (2011), digital prints of scanned pages from the second edition of the Turkish translation (1988) of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn*, with content that has been deemed offensive blacked out. Like his images of urban decay, the censored book pages form chapters in the story of the city's grim modern history.

