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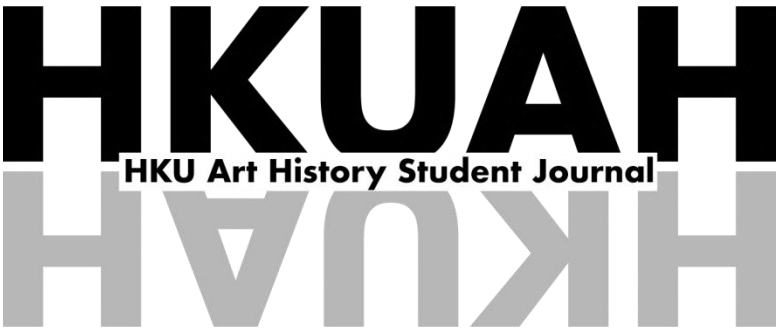
Cover Image
(Detail)

Egon Schiele, *Moa*, 1911. Pencil, watercolor and opaque color on paper, 315 x 478 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna.



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Perspectives on Identity and Fluidity

Wu Yuxin Stella

We are delighted to present the second issue of *HKU Art History Student Journal (HKUAH)*. This is the first issue where we have an open call for papers with overarching keywords. The keywords of the journal for this academic year are "identity" and "fluidity." Artistic practices often involve direct or indirect processes of constructing, negotiating, and reconsidering multi-layered identities at individual, societal, or national levels. Recent scholarly discussions have deconstructed identity as being secured, monolithic, and stable, instead probing fluid, hybrid, and intersectional perspectives of identity with terms such as individualization, pluralization, or globalization.[1] In art history, this trend has evoked a re-examination of the fluidity of identities projected in art objects across geographical boundaries and time spans.

The articles in this issue foster dynamic discourses on art, identity, and fluidity. By analyzing works of art in diverse socio-temporal contexts, these writings present how identities merge in self-images, social attributions or roles, performances, or archival-constructed narratives. In the Exhibition Review section, Chen Youxi reviews the exhibition *Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970–1990* at Tate Modern, highlighting the exhibition's "non-restrictive" narrative discourses on feminist art. In the research article section, Tam So Yin Dilys takes a cross-disciplinary approach to investigate how statistical theories of estimation and iteration can be applied to comprehend archival narratives in art. Li Chuqi Catherine examines how the photographer Tseng Kwong Chi asserts a complex Asian-American identity that rebuts flat labeling through his photographs, while Kwok Yan Yi Emily discusses how Tokyo-based Japanese artist Mako Idemitsu's video artwork dissects the social phenomenon of the housewife in the Japanese context. Through a comparative analysis of *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005) and *Almerisa Series* (1994-2008), Tam explores how performance art elicits emotional responses from viewers and demonstrates the inextricability of duration and affect. Closing our issue is Max Chan's commentary on Anita Mui's cover album art, presenting how Mui transgresses feminine and masculine stereoscopes, and how her art reflects the identities of Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s.

As these articles show, identities are intricate constructs that encompass multiple dimensions of identity, including gender, ethnicity, race, social class, and more. These identities are not fixed or definitively established; instead, with openness and ambiguity, they allow for subjective articulations from different positions in art.[2] However, the fluidity of identities always exists in relation to, rather than in opposition to, the more concrete aspects of our environment. These backdrops, relatively constant yet still precarious and contingent, locate identities in place and interact with the fluid processes of their formation and development.

To our readers, we hope you enjoy reading our latest issue.

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1 For instance, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim examine the concept of individualization and the interplay between individual agency, social structures, and the construction of personal identities. Amelia Jones probes the contingency and productive mutability of artistic identification, while Arjun Appadurai investigates the cultural dimensions of globalization and its impact on identity formation. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012); Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London: Routledge, 2012); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

2 Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?" trans. Paul Holdengraber, *Social Text*, no. 21 (1989): 31–45, 35.

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"She is Beautiful, and She is Laughing"

Chen Youxi

***Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970–1990*, Tate Modern, November 8, 2023 – April 7, 2024.**

The recognition that my pain or my silence or my anger or my perception is finally not mine alone, and that it delimits me in a shared cultural situation which in turn enables and empowers me in certain unanticipated ways.[1]

Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970–1990 is one of the most ambitious exhibitions ever curated at Tate Modern in terms of its scale and inclusivity. The exhibition showcased works of over one hundred artists in diverse mediums, including textile, film, photography, painting, sculpture, and historical archives. Starting with a collection series of photographs from the first Women's Liberation Conference in 1970 at Ruskin School of Art, Oxford, the exhibition spans two decades of works on art and activism in the UK. It acknowledges not only prolific artists but also the marginalized and forgotten.[2] By presenting the history of art as an integral part of political protest and social reform, the exhibition's dispersed engagements allure ecstatic and embodied responses that challenge the disinterested aesthetic judgment of taste and the "art for art's sake" play of form under a sterile exhibition space. Despite its unprecedented scale, the curator Linsey Young noted that partiality and inaccuracy are inevitable parts of the narrative-forming process, therefore critical reflections on the exhibition are welcomed for the nuanced conversation between curators, artists, beholders, and artworks.[3]

With the Racial Relation Act of 1965, the Sexual Offense Act of 1967, and the 1975 Equal Pay Act, British society was not only installing new legal boundaries but starting a long and unfinished quest to combat institutional injustices. By framing the period of the 1970s to 1990s with a retrospective examination of social reforms, feminist activism, and feminist art history, the exhibition does not encourage a singular cohesive narrative. Still, it gestates an intersectional discourse on class, race, sexuality, and the punk subculture. The diversity of aesthetic styles or materials testifies to how artworks within the exhibition are treated with an intersectional approach, transcending the physical taxonomy in which they are placed. The idea of non-restrictiveness is concretized by Gina Birch's *3 Minute Scream* (1977) as the sound of defiance penetrates the rectangular walls (Fig. 1). Throughout the exhibition, the scream keeps reminding us that feminist artworks are created out of painfully true female experiences, with the messy entanglement of desires that refuse cultural hegemony, from the hilarious Red Women's Workshop's *YBA Wife* (1981) (Fig. 2). This poster portrays the housewife in her wedding gown to advocate for legal and financial independence for married women, to the explicit documentation of *Birth Rites* (1977) by Robina Rose, where she explored women's agency and subjectivity during childbirth, as well as Roshini Kempadoo's photographic imagination of the Caribbean diasporic experience of everyday life, memories, and history. These artworks examine personal experiences within public discourses. Therefore, the exhibition resonates with Judith Butler's assertion that "the Personal is Political." Each artist and activist contributes to this dynamic by sharing the intimate aspects of their experiences with a wider audience, thereby transforming their creative agency into politically engaged initiatives.

The radicalization and destabilization of the exhibition space form an ironic juxtaposition with the

1 Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31, 522.

2 Linsey Young, "Introduction: The Personal is Political," in *Women in Revolt! : Art and Activism in the UK 1970–90*, ed. Linsey Young (London: Tate Publishing, 2023), 16.

3 Young, "Introduction: The Personal is Political," 16.

Figure 1
Gina Birch, *3 Minute Scream*, 1977. Shown as digital video; color, sound. 2 min, 50 sec. Photo by Youxi Chen.

Figure 2
A visitor confronting the *YBA Wife* poster. Photo by Youxi Chen.

Figure 3
A visitor sitting in the exhibition room *Beauty as Protest*. Photo by Youxi Chen.

solemn and stable neoclassical environment of Tate Britain. During my visit, my thoughts constantly drifted to the permanent collection directly above dedicated to the arts and crafts of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Entitled *Beauty as Protest,* this room establishes an intriguing intertextual link with the idea of "Women in Revolt!" (Fig. 3). When I meandered my way through the exhibition, I was haunted by the fact that one of Tate's most treasured collections above me is one of the most notorious examples of the exploitation of female models. In John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* (1852) (Fig. 4), the talented artist Elizabeth Siddal lies in her golden sarcophagus, perpetually frozen in cold water, serving as a sacrificial offering for the artistic and intellectual revolt of the Brotherhood. She remains perpetually framed in the image of a tragic victim, an offering for the masculine cult of genius. Conversely, *Women in Revolt!* counters sounds with a thundering voice. Looking at the exhibition poster

Figure 4

John Everette Millais, *Ophelia*, 1852. Oil on canvas, 76 x 112 cm. Tate Britain, London. Image released under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 DEED.

with Gina Birch's dramatic facial expressions, she haunts and disturbs, even without the screaming soundtrack. She is also the Medusa that laughs back at us, as women's words fall silent upon "deaf male ears," one that destabilizes the *truth* with waves of laughter and screams.[4] The transhistorical spatial and temporal dialogue between the exhibition and the legacy of Tate Britain creates a moment of great pathos, prompting reflection on how far women have come, and lightening the perilous journey before us.

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4 Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, no. 1 (1976): 875–93, 881.

Estimation and Iteration: An Examination of Archival Narratives in *Time Capsules* (1974) and *Today Series* (1966)

Tam So Yin Dilys

Estimation in statistical theory is the inference of unknown parameters from sample data, while iteration is the process of refining estimates through successive updates.[1] In art history, estimation and iteration can facilitate archive digitization and completeness *vis-à-vis* fragmented primary sources and unrefined attributions. The systematic documentation of time has long since been a preoccupation of artists, who seek to capture the essence of moments, preserve the past, and reflect upon the fluidity of identity. Yet, insofar as the process remains dependent on distinct informational conditions, the immutability of relative ignorance and epistemic overload often render such attempts incomprehensive and unreliable. While the empiricist theories of estimation and iteration acknowledge such shortcomings and provide partial solutions towards the reconstruction of coherent narratives, the inextricability between reality and emotion convolutes such thematics, and reasserts the importance of subjective perception. By surpassing its ontological identity as an internal cognitive process, emotive perception complements the inadequacies of empiricism, and unites humanity in its journey of remembrance.

Through the systematic documentation of days in a particular period, Andy Warhol's *Time Capsules* and On Kawara's *Today Series* have complicated the process through which the past is preserved. I argue that the two works respectively mirror the ontological positions and corresponding limitations of estimation and iteration: while *Time Capsules* hinders the assertion of an objective archival narrative through the inclusion of superfluous contextual detail, *Today Series* preempts the comprehensive articulation of the past through the depletion of mnemonic content. While such thematics engage with and evince the doctrinal limitations of statistical empiricism, this essay suggests that the two works exemplify the fluidity of identity through their compositional content and creative processes, shedding light on the interconnectedness of human experience. *Time Capsules* and *Today Series* thus call into question the significance of history and memory *vis-à-vis* the individual and collective journey through time.

In statistical theory, estimation refers to the process of approximating parameter values based on a large set of empirical data possessing a random component.[2] The parameters describe an underlying physical or temporal setting which varies the distribution of the measured data.[3] As the estimator approximates the unknown parameters based on the empirical evidence, the underlying relations of the data are derived from an excess of informational conditions.[4] In the context of archival studies, estimation is employed in the conceptualization of a grand narrative from multiple dissonant accounts —based on material artifacts, and primary or secondary sources, a coherent history of the subject matter is reconstructed from these fragments of the past.[5] To the extent that random error remains an inevitable

1 David A. Harville, "Maximum Likelihood Approaches to Variance Component Estimation and to Related Problems," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 72, no. 358 (1977): 328–330, 332, 333, 336, 338.

2 Jan-Willem Romeijn, "Philosophy of Statistics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, August 19, 2014.

3 Harville, "Maximum Likelihood Approaches," 328, 329, 332, 333.

4 Harville, 330, 332, 336, 338.

5 Daniel Little, "Philosophy of History," S*tanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, October 13, 2016.

phenomenon, the reliability of the estimation may be improved by enlarging the subject's dataset.[6]

Warhol's *Time Capsules* consists of six hundred meticulously preserved boxes containing a wide array of objects.[7] The physicality and materiality of the boxes create a sense of order and containment; although the boxes vary in material and size, their regular shape suggests a systematic organization where each box is a time capsule in itself.[8] Each box is a unique iteration of the series conceived within the same conceptual framework, the repetition and serialization of which are characteristic of Warhol's oeuvre.[9] In this, *Time Capsules* echoes the artist's interest in mass production and material culture, as well as his interest in blurring the boundaries between art and life.[10] Yet contrasting with the formal structure of the boxes is the chaotic arrangement of their content, materializing the tension between order and disorder.[11] With an eclectic range of objects arranged in a seemingly haphazard manner (Fig. 1), the boxes create a visual cacophony that reflects Warhol's prevailing fascination with the banal and his penchant for collecting.[12] Thus, *Time Capsules* is also Warhol's ongoing performance; as his meticulous collection and archiving of objects become an integral part of the creation, the boxes serve as containers of memory that preserve fragments of the artist's life and the cultural milieu of his time.[13]

In its inclusion of superfluous contextual detail, Warhol's *Time Capsules* mirrors the ontological position of estimation. Spanning over twenty years, the collection may be conceptualized as a sufficiently large data set documenting the progress of Warhol's personal life, with each box representing a distinct datum constituting the totality of the grand narrative.[14] While the temporal parameters of assembling each box are standardized and

Figure 1
Andy Warhol, *Time Capsule 262*, 1974–1987. Mixed media, dimensions variable. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA. Image courtesy of the Art Law Foundation.

periodic, the contents of each time capsule are contingent on a spatial-temporal function: odd, disparate objects in Warhol's surrounding environment at a particular point of time were thrown in as retainers of ephemera or *memento hominem*, without any evidence of evaluative editing. As the project progressed, Warhol became emboldened to actively collect and archive objects of historical importance rather than passively accept unwanted matter. The result is a confusing assemblage of objects seemingly devoid of a dominant narrative, which resembles the initial conditions of an estimation study.

At first glance, the chaotic nature starkly contrasts with the scientific precision of statistical inference; however, this very element establishes a striking parallel between *Time Capsules* and estimation theory. The random assembly of the box contents mirrors the probabilistic assumption underlying all subject variables

6 Little, "Philosophy of History."

7 Christopher Schmidt, "Warhol's Problem Project: The Time Capsules," *Postmodern Culture* 26, no. 1 (September 2015): 3.

8 Schmidt, "Warhol's Problem Project: The Time Capsules," 14.

9 Schmidt, 9.

10 Schmidt, 22.

11 Schmidt, 10.

12 Schmidt, 14.

13 Schmidt, 2.

14 Schmidt, 9.

in estimation studies. One could argue that Warhol's deliberate efforts to acquire specific objects for *Time Capsules* contradict this idea, yet this inconsistent collection of archival criteria can also be conceptualized as an elevated form of randomness per se. This argument is bolstered by the artist's conflicting theories at different points in his career—in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (1975), Warhol extensively describes the project as a form of aestheticized storage, while asserting in his posthumous *Andy Warhol Diaries* (1989) that *Time Capsules* was intended to be seen as a curated historical archive rather than a chance-based sculpture.[15] Thus, despite surrounding disorganization regarding its physical contents and interpretative discourse, *Time Capsules* affirms the ontological aspect of random distribution inherent to estimation processes.

The unique conditions of *Time Capsule*s have complicated the process through which Warhol's past is preserved. Given its scale and purported lack of overarching logic, the contents of *Time Capsules* necessitate estimation as the only means to reconstruct Warhol's past.[16] In conventional archival contexts, reliable estimation is premised on a large, undisturbed dataset from which a statistical mean may be derived.[17] Conceived in this light, superfluous contextual detail is integral towards deriving the underlying order as the aggregate of each distinct item constitutes the entire dataset.

Nonetheless, the same proposition has also endowed *Time Capsules* with a randomized, archival element, representing its malleable status as both history and art.[18] This position distorts the elegance of the initial formulation; although nominally available for scholarly research, the bewildering diversity of its contents has restricted access due to its putative artistic identity.[19] The sealed impermeability of each box prevents simultaneous access to the entire collection while attempts to archive its temporally-displaced contents compromise their physical integrity.[20] These propositions have rendered a reliable estimation of Warhol's past impossible and degraded the inferential value of each individual box. Instead of enunciating a particular organizational order, an isolated box becomes meaningless when it contains randomly assembled items. Given that preserving the past partly relies on reconstructing and organizing a coherent historical narrative, this endeavor's failure is pronounced by distinguishing mere past ephemera from records of documentary significance being impossible.[21]

Here, one might note the similarities and differences between *Time Capsules* and Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (1962–ongoing) (Fig. 2). The extensive collection of images in *Atlas*, intermingling war scenes with mundane everyday life, appears to parallel the scale and purported lack of organizational coherence seen in *Time Capsules*.[22] However, the way these projects are exhibited differs significantly; while *Time Capsules* had limited accessibility, *Atlas* presented its entire collection all at once.[23] These conditions provided a large and undisturbed dataset for discerning the overarching narrative of war from *Atlas* through estimation, something that is rendered impossible in *Time Capsules*. Thus, while including superfluous detail has made estimation the sole epistemological means for forming a reliable account of Warhol's past within *Time Capsules*, it has also imposed limitations on this method's application and ultimately frustrated attempts to preserve history.

Where estimation is employed under an excess of informational conditions, iteration is employed to generate an outcome under insufficience.[24] In epistemic theory, iteration is defined by its continuous but quantized

15 Schmidt, 4, 5, 8.

16 Starlee Kine, "Act 2: Your Junk In a Box," in the episode "Thought That Counts," *This American Life* (podcast), December 20, 2013.

17 Romeijn, "Philosophy of Statistics."

18 Schmidt, 12, 16.

19 Schmidt, 12, 16.

20 Schmidt, 6, 9.

21 Little, "Philosophy of History."

22 Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas': The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 141–43.

23 Schmidt, 3; Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's Atlas," 118, 131.

24 Rasmus Rendsvig and John Symons, "Epistemic Logic," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Stanford University, June 7, 2019.

process—each iteration is distinct, and followed directly by the subsequent iteration.[25] Contrary to recursion, whereby prior knowledge concerning the cycles of repetition is unnecessary, successful iteration is contingent upon input foreknowledge in relation to the parameters of the entire iterative loop.[26] In terms of the preservation of the past, iteration enables the recollection of specificities where contextual detail is inadequate, particularly in the context of decoding esoteric customs or dead languages.[27] Nevertheless, the iterative process requires, as a starting point, some degree of reference to circumstantial knowledge external to the closed epistemic system.[28]

Yet these limitations in preserving the past are central to *Time Capsules*' exploration of the fleeting self, also reflecting the cultural landscape in which Warhol operated. Each box's contexts are "selected" through Warhol's daily experiences, uncovering different aspects of his evolving identity.[29] Similar to how Warhol often blurred the lines between his public and private selves, the objects act as snapshots that capture his relationships, interests, and professional practice contexts.[30] While these items were once significant to Warhol, their importance may have diminished over time; thus, the objects in *Time Capsules* serve as tangible reminders of personal transformation and erosion.[31] Reinforcing these ideas is the adaptable nature of artistic identity and authorship—traditional aesthetic theory venerates the artist as the sole creative genius; however, *Time Capsules* challenges this notion by incorporating items formerly owned by Warhols' acquaintances that make them contributors to this extensive collection.[32] Through integrating diverse objects and inputs from others, *Time Capsules* implies that identity is shaped by a complex web of interactions rather than solely belonging to an individual.

In contrast to the randomized nature of Warhol's Time Capsules, On Kawara's *Today Series* is distinctly rigid in its artistic rendition of time. A collection of artworks created by the artist between 1966 and 2013, *Today Series* consists of "date paintings"—canvases with the date of creation meticulously painted in white against a solid-coloured background. The consistent format of *Today Series* conveys a sense of visual cohesion—each painting features only the date of its creation, hand-painted in bold, sans-serif typography on a monochromatic background (Fig. 3).[33] The precise brushstrokes and careful execution reflect the artist's deliberate adherence to a specific style and contribute to an overall internationality; this ritualistic aspect is further expounded upon through the creation of a new painting each day, which contemplates the transience of existence and the human desire to mark each passing moment.[34] As the colors of the background vary from canvas to canvas, the vibrant primary hues morph to more subdued tones reflecting the artist's emotional state or the prevailing cultural and political climate during which the piece was created.[35] By stripping away representative content from its composition, the date paintings draw attention directly to the passing of time itself, reinforced by the center position of the date and the uniform size of each iteration.[36]

Both the creative process and visual composition of Kawara's *Today Series* mirror the ontological position of iteration and its notional shortcomings. Rendered as a date drawn against a dark background, each painting

25 Rendsvig and Symons, "Epistemic Logic."

26 Andrea Cantini and Riccardo Bruni, "Paradoxes and Contemporary Logic," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, February 22, 2017; Rendsvig and Symons, "Epistemic Logic," June 7, 2019.

27 Sterling P. Lamprecht, "Philosophy of History," *The Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 8 (1936): 197–204.

28 Rendsvig and Symons, "Epistemic Logic."

29 Schmidt, 14.

30 Schmidt, 14.

31 Schmidt, 14.

32 Schmidt, 4, 14.

33 Anne Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 121.

34 Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," 122.

35 Rorimer, 121, 126, 129.

36 Rorimer, 121, 122.

represents the day on which it was made, followed directly by the next one in the series.[37] Each date painting may be conceptualized as a distinct iteration, while the series as a whole represents an entire iterative loop. This argument is reinforced by Kawara's rigid adherence to self-imposed daily creation logic and his systematic destruction of unfinished pieces at the end of each day.[38] Coupled with meticulous recurrent paint application and similar typeface depicted in each piece, compositional repetition throughout mirrors intrinsic circularity within epistemic iteration.[39]

By depleting its visual composition of mnemonic content, *Today Series* complicates the process of preserving the past. To the extent that the preservation of the past hinges on emotion,[40] the dearth of emotional language in *Today Series* renders the project woefully inadequate in this endeavor. In the absence of figurative imagery, the letters and numbers making up the date are self-sufficient and self-reflexive statements—although their informational purpose is not lost, they are also abstracted forms of a coherent visual whole.[41] Each date is therefore "present" within the closed temporal-spatiality of the canvas, but offers no information about its relationship to external reality.[42] Likewise, the unlimited variation of background shades throughout the series strips a particular hue of its explicit and symbolic associations, and preempts elicitation of subjective sentiment per color symbolism.[43] In contrast with *Time Capsules*, in which the excess of contextual artifacts preempts the discovery of a central narrative, *Today Series* represents the difficulties of preserving the past given insufficient contextual parameters.[44]

Such conditions have established iteration as the only way by which events embedded in specific points in the past may be remembered to a limited extent, while also requiring a reference to external reality as a starting point of the process.[45] In this vein, each date painting is accompanied by its respective day's newspaper from the city where the work was painted, "[accentuating] the dichotomy between art and everyday actuality while simultaneously linking them together."[46] Unlike the occasional inclusion of newspapers or other temporal gauges in *Time Capsules* for their shock value, the newspaper fragments in *Today Series* serve a distinct but cross-referencing function.[47] Although constituting the totality of a date painting, it is not part of its subject matter; rather, it functions as a "temporal gauge of ongoing daily reality" within its non-art realm.[48] These characteristics provide objective geographical-temporal information in preserving past events and serve as input foreknowledge for this iterative loop's parameters.

Despite this, the proposition only represents the perceptual reality from a particular newspaper's point of view, and is necessarily specific to the emotive memory of an individual viewer. This sheds light on the limitations of iteration as an epistemic process—given its reliance on the inclusion of external circumstantial knowledge, the breadth and depth of iteration results are necessarily dependent on the nature of their input.[49] The position contrasts markedly with the assemblage of objects in *Time Capsules*—while subjective temporal recollections are preempted in *Today Series* per the input of an objective bystander in the form of a dated newspaper, *Time Capsules* offer only Warhol's subjective account given his

37 Rorimer, 121–22.

38 Rorimer, 121–22.

39 Jennifer Rhee, "Time Embodied: The Lived Body in On Kawara's 'Date Paintings'," *Thresholds*, no. 31 (2006): 110–13.

40 Sarah Tarlow, "The Archaeology of Emotion and Affect," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 169–85.

41 Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara,"123–26.

42 Rorimer, 123–26.

43 Rorimer, 127.

44 "Act 2: Your Junk In a Box," Podcast (December 20, 2013)

45 Rendsvig, Rasmus, and Symons. "Epistemic Logic," June 7, 2019.

46 Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," 129.

47 John W. Smith, "Saving Time: Andy Warhol's Time Capsules," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 20, no. 1 (2001): 9.

48 Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," 131.

49 Rorimer, 131.

solitary effort and organizational logic in gathering the boxed items.[50] Thus, even where the iterative process of *Today Series* illuminates to some degree the objective preservation of the past, it is also an incomplete account in that the elicitation of subjective emotive memory is severely restricted by its visual composition.

This formulation both parallels and contrasts with Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1929). Composed entirely of photographs of artworks (Fig. 4), *Mnemosyne Atlas* mirrors the inclusion of newspaper in *Today Series* in its evocation of a shared cultural memory. Yet the roles of photo and newspaper in the two works contrast with each other: while newspapers in *Today Series* have a non-art status, the photographs in *Mnemosyne Atlas* not only form part of the artwork—as was the case for temporal gauges in *Time Capsules*—but constitute the subject of the artwork itself.[51] Most importantly, the act of taking photos of *particular* works of art indicates a greater degree of intent than the passive collection of newspapers, the latter which was entirely based on the geographical-temporal conditions of a date painting's creation.[52] Apart from its apparently objective account of cultural history, *Mnemosyne Atlas* also exhibits Warburg's subjective conceptualisation of his version of European civilisation. Hence, while both newspapers in *Today Series* and photographs in *Mnemosyne Atlas* serve mnemonic functions, their purported subjectivity or objectivity is necessarily differentiated upon their incorporation processes.

Yet the dearth of mnemonic content in the composition and creative process of *Today Series* exemplifies the fluidity of identity and the interconnectedness of human experience. Much like how *Time Capsules* incorporate input from Warhol's acquaintances, the date paintings encompass dates from global locations as a universal metasign; in highlighting our collective nature within time, the series suggests that individual identities are part of a larger human tapestry.[53] The highly systematic and impersonal renderings interrogate the temporal process of identity construction, which mirrors *Time Capsules*' challenge to the artist's perpetual, individual genius.[54] Conceived against On Kawara's enigmatic and elusive public presence, the artist's mechanical, disciplined production of *Today Series* underscores the impermanence of the individual and the ephemerality of human existence, as is relayed in the faded significance of mementos in *Time Capsules*.[55] Each distinct iteration of the date paintings anchors identity within specific moments in time, suggesting that time perpetually informs one's understanding of themselves.[56]

In the systematic documentation of days in a particular period, *Time Capsules* has hindered the assertion of an objective archival narrative through the inclusion of superfluous contextual detail, while *Today Series* has preempted the comprehensive articulation of the past through the depletion of mnemonic content. The invocation of estimation and iteration in the two pieces complicate the process through which the past is preserved. Where memory remains inextricable from emotive experience, an acknowledgement of the intrinsic subjectivity in preservation complements the epistemic inadequacies of empiricism, and emancipates humanity from the cruelty of oblivion. Such paradigms reflected in the two works' compositional content and creative process, reminding us of the interconnectedness of human experience, the fluid nature of identity, and how time is ultimately inextricable from its emotive connections. Ultimately, "it is the time that you have spent on your rose that makes your rose so important."[57]

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50 Smith, "Saving Time," 8, 10.

51 Rorimer, "The Date Paintings of On Kawara," 127–28; Claudia Wedepohl, "Mnemonics, Mneme And Mnemosyne. Aby Warburg's Theory Of Memory," *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 20, No. 2 (2014): 385–402.

52 Rorimer, 126.

53 Rorimer, 129.

54 Rorimer, 120, 122, 126, 129.

55 Rorimer, 122.

56 Rorimer, 126, 129.

57 Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943), 48.

Above Left

Figure 2

Gerhard Richter, *Atlas*, 1962–1968. Newspaper & Album photos, 20.35 x 26.26 inches. Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Paris. Image courtesy of Gerhard Richter. Photo by Marc Wathieu.

Above Right

Figure 3

On Kawara, *JAN. 21, 1982*, 1982. Liquitex on canvas, 10 x 13 ½ inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Dia Art Foundation; Gift of One Million Years Foundation. © One Million Years Foundation. Image courtesy of Bill Jacobson Studio, New York.

Figure 4

Aby Warburg, Panel 39 of *Mnemosyne Atlas ("Bilderatlas Mnemosyne")*, 1925–1929. Mixed media (photographs, prints, newspaper clippings, handwritten annotations), 59.06 x 47.24 inches. The Warburg Institute. Image courtesy of The Warburg Institute, via Hatje Cantz.

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Beyond the Marginalized Asian Other: From Tseng Kwong Chi's *New York, New York* (1979)

Li Chuqi Catherine

On the evening of December 9, 1980, over six hundred guests of New York's cultural, economic, and political elite circle attended the MET Gala for the opening of the exhibition *The Manchu Dragon: Costumes of the Ch'ing Dynasty, 1644–1912*, which showcased lavishly embroidered imperial robes worn by Chinese emperors and empresses.[1] Tseng Kwong Chi, a Hong Kong-born New York-based conceptual and performance artist, also gained access to this Party of the Year as a journalist representing the *Soho Weekly News*.[2] With his grey "Mao suit" and Asian appearance, Tseng stood out among the crowd of Caucasian-looking guests, who dressed in luxurious formal wear adorned by "a kind of New York Chinoiserie" style.[3] Since many mistook him for a Chinese diplomat, Tseng took advantage of his masquerade, snapping photos with many major figures of the art, fashion, and political world, which were later featured in his *Costumes at the Met* series.[4]

In one of the MET Gala photos featuring Tseng with Paloma Picasso, the daughter of Pablo Picasso and Françoise Gilot, Tseng was standing rigidly in his Mao suit with a smile on his face (Fig. 1). Besides him, Picasso wore a long black dress featuring a plunging v-neckline. An intricately embroidered frock was wrapped around her shoulders, with billowing sleeves inspired by Japanese kimonos cascaded at the front.[5] According to curator Amy Brandt, she sees Picasso's dress as lacking cultural specificity, thus leading to the fetishization of the Orient, while Tseng in his Mao suit represents the non-white Other, who are marginalized in the dominant Western representations and narratives.[6] Therefore, she argues that the contrast between Picasso and Tseng "raises questions about the authentic experience of Asian culture."[7] However, what does "authenticity" mean? Is there such a thing as the authentic Asian experience? Focusing on *New York, New York* from his *East Meets West* photography series as a compelling case study, I argue that Tseng uses the in-between fluidity of his Asian-American identity to deny a single flat definition of authenticity or the "authentic Asian experience" through the seemingly transparent, readable-at-once and repetitive rendering of his work (Fig. 2). His photograph not only challenges the cultural non-specificity and superficiality of how mainstream Western culture fetishizes Asians or non-Westerners in general, but also offers a more nuanced understanding of the marginalized Other beyond a static label.

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1 Amy Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Politics of Performance," in *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera*, ed. Amy Brandt (Norfolk: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2015), 50; Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," in *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera*, ed. Amy Brandt (Norfolk: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2015), 87.

2 Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi," 87.

3 Brandt, 18; Muna Tseng and Ping Chong, "Slutforart." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 22, no.1 (2000): 119.

4 Brandt, 50; Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 87.

5 Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi," 52-53; Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 88.

6 Brandt, 51–53.

7 Brandt, 51–53.

Left
Figure 1
Tseng Kwong Chi, *Paloma Picasso and Tseng Kwong Chi*, 1980, printed 1997. Gelatin silver print, 7 x 7 in. (image); 10 x 8 in. (sheet). Image by courtesy of Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York.

Below
Figure 2
Tseng Kwong Chi, *New York, New York*, 1979, printed 2016. Silver gelatin selenium toned, 51 x 40.8 cm (print), 38.2 x 38.1 cm (image). M+, Hong Kong.

Within the square frame of this black and white *New York, New York* photo, Tseng was captured wearing the same Mao suit and standing in front of the Statue of Liberty, a popular tourist attraction in New York City, as well as a symbol of freedom, democracy, and welcoming of immigrants.[8] Rather than looking into the camera and presenting a smile as in the *Costumes at the Met* series, Tseng gazed out into the distance and concealed any sign of emotion behind those reflective sunglasses. His left hand rested casually in his pants pocket, while his right hand raised slightly and gripped a shutter release, from which a connected cable dangles out of the picture frame. Since the camera was positioned at a lower angle solely focusing on Tseng, his scale loomed large, thereby shadowing the Statue in the background. This photograph is part of a larger body of his most well-known works the *East Meets West* series and later evolved into the *Expeditionary Series*, which were taken between 1979 and 1990.[9] Donning the same Mao suit, wearing sunglasses, and sometimes with a fake identification badge, Tseng took photos for himself in front of popular tourist destinations, from New York City, where he was based, to across the US and later around the world.[10]

While specific compositional details vary in the *East Meets West* series, such as whether Tseng was wearing sunglasses or the ID badge, his posture, the setting, and the camera angle, the Mao suit consistently occurs in every photo. Although Tseng accidentally came across the idea of donning the Mao suit, how he used the embodied social and historical context signified by the uniform to construct a seemingly simple but inherently complex narrative is worth exploring. Much existing literature mentioned the following incident as the starting point of Tseng's adoption of the Mao suit.[11] In 1979, Tseng scheduled to dine out with his family at an upscale New York restaurant, but realized that he did not own any suits that adhered to the dress code. Throwing on the only suit he owned—a Mao suit purchased from a thrift store in Montreal, he was mistakenly greeted as a Chinese dignitary by the restaurant staff. Inspired by this experience, this uniform was transformed from a random pick to a go-to masquerade outfit in his *East Meets West* series. Appearing across a hundred photographs in the Mao suit, Tseng's identity was gradually replaced by a mistaken yet obviously displaced Chinese Communist dignitary.[12]

What Tseng constructed as an "ambiguous ambassador" moved away from the nineteenth-century American visual portrayal of the "Chinamen," which used narrow eyes with epicanthic folds, blouses, and a long, braided cue to convey a sense of Chineseness or Asianness.[13] Facing the influx of Chinese immigrants as cheap laborers in the wake of the Qing Dynasty's decline, examples with the Oriental lens, such as Bret Harte's poem *The Heathen Chinee* (1870) (Fig. 3) or the costumes note for George Baker's play *New Brooms Sweep Clean* (1871) (Fig. 4), depicted the Chinese male as unmasculine, sexually unattractive, yet slightly eerie, which manifested the fear of the mainstream white American society towards the non-white Other.[14] Inspired by Nixon's visit to China and his meeting with Mao in 1972, Tseng, standing astride in his Mao suit, evoked a sense of anxiety and curiosity towards a shifted Chineseness engineered by the US government during the Cold War. This emergent imagination envisioned Communist China as a rising world power under the leadership of Mao Zedong, who emphasized socialist rather than capitalist modernity, standardization rather than diversity, and collectivism

8 Malini Johar Schueller, *Locating Race: Global Sites of Post-Colonial Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 115.

9 Lynn Gumpert, "Introduction," in *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera*, eds. Amy Brandt (Norfolk: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2015), 11–12.

10 Gumpert, "Introduction," 11–12.

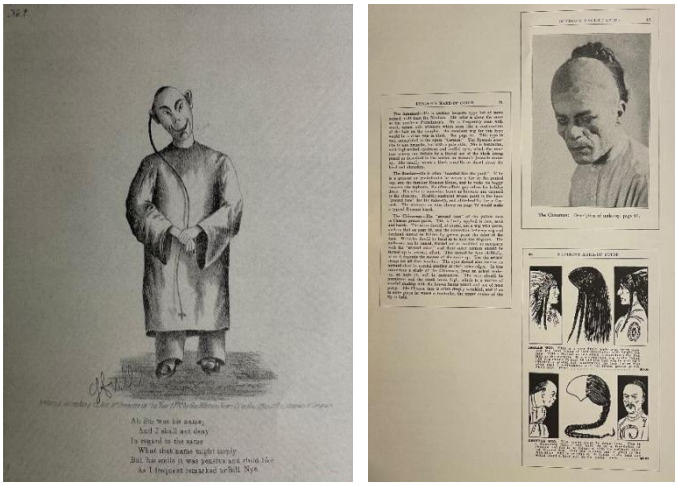
11 Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi," 29; Iyko Day, "Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape," *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2013): 91; Malini Johar Schueller, "Claiming Postcolonial America: The Hybrid Asian-American Performances of Tseng Kwong Chi," in *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen*, eds. Eleanor Ty and Donald C. Goellnicht (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 175; Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 223.

12 Warren Liu, "How Not to See (or, How Not to *Not* See) the Photographs of Tseng Kwong Chi," *Amerasia Journal* 40, no. 2 (2014): 37.

13 Christine Lombard, "Tseng Kwong Chi: East Meets West," filmed 1984, 16mm film, 6:30 min; Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 38;

14 Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 36; John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Believing is Seeing: Transforming Orientalism and the Occidental Gaze," in *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art*, eds. Margo Machida (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1994), 17–18.

rather than individualism.[15] By donning the Mao suit and thus amplifying his racially marked body, Tseng staged himself as "out-of-place" to disrupt the continued and normalized Orientalist discourse in the US, which upholds the dominant white mainstream culture while marginalizing the non-white Other by imagining a fetishized inscrutable Orient and a feared yellow peril.



Left
Figure 3
Hull, Joseph. Visualization of Bret Harte's Ah Sin from the *Heathen Chinee* poem, 1870, in John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Believing is Seeing: Transforming Orientalism and the Occidental Gaze," in *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art*, ed. Margo Machida (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1994), 17.

Right
Figure 4
The Chinaman makeup from *Denison's Make-Up Guide for Amateur and Professional*, 1932, in John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Believing is Seeing: Transforming Orientalism and the Occidental Gaze," in *Asia/America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art*, ed. Margo Machida (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1994), 16.

While reading Tseng's Mao series as a deconstructive critique of the stereotypical Oriental Other, it is important to note the risk of overemphasizing Tseng with his Mao suit as simply signifying a stable racial or ethnic identity. As Anne Cheng reminds us, "the attribution of subversive intentionality…does not get us away from the problem that, when it comes to the spectacle of the stereotype, execution and parody look uncomfortably similar…[S]ubversion, after all, replays rather than sidesteps the fetish."[16] Although Tseng utilized his Asian appearance with the Mao suit to construct a recognizable and seemingly credible Chinese dignitary figure to gain access to the MET gala, reading into his biography nonetheless complicates his Asian-American identity and challenges the notion of authenticity. After the Communist Party took over mainland China in 1949, Tseng's family, with his father formally serving in the Kuomintang, fled from Shanghai to Hong Kong, where Tseng was born in 1950.[17] He immigrated to Vancouver with his family in 1966 and continued his art education in Paris. In 1978, he decided to move to New York to develop his career as a photography and performance artist until he passed away in 1990.[18] Tseng's life journey embodies an Asian diasporic experience, which traversed across diverse cultures and geographic locations. The fact that Tseng never returned to China after leaving Hong Kong in 1966 challenged the practice of racializing bodies with appearance and clothing and simply labeling them as having the most authentic or original experiences without considering the complex background of each individual.[19] Adding another layer of ironic twist, what Tseng thought of as a Mao suit was, in fact, invented by Sun Yat-sen and adopted as the Nationalist Army suit, which was later worn by Communist leaders and ordinary Chinese citizens. Therefore, I argue that Tseng's work challenges attempts that flatten and simplify race, ethnicity, or any other identity category into labels or stereotypes and demands a critical examination of the socio, cultural, and historical impact on each individual, who has been racially labeled and stereotyped in the past.

Apart from the Mao suit, the shutter release that Tseng held in his hand, which conflates him as the photographer and the subject at the same time, is another consistent visual element that appeared not only in *New York, New York* but in every photo of the *East Meets West*

15 Warren Liu, "How Not to See," 37; Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 168, 226, 228.

16 Anne Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 42.

17 Brandt, "Tseng Kwong Chi," 26.

18 Schueller, "Claiming Postcolonial America," 174.

19 Warren Liu, "How Not to See," 34.

series. Although Tseng started photographing himself because it was practical and inexpensive, being both the photographer and the model meant he could not only decide the costume, props, and settings during the photo shoot, but also how the photos would be edited, printed, and circulated during the post-production stage.[20] As Ariella Azoulay argued, photography consists of a "dynamic field of power relations" that distributes power (albeit unevenly) among photographer, subject, space, apparatus, and viewer(s).[21] Here, I would like to bring in the photography works by John Thomson, the first Western photographer to travel through China and document images of Chinese royals, government officials, and ordinary people in the nineteenth century, to further explain how Tseng's work combined multiple sources of power, thus assigning agency to the often passive non-white Other as the subject in photographs.[22]

Although Thomson claimed that his photographs were faithful representations of China and its people, the central aim of his project was to capture "characteristic scenes and types," which imposed the Victorian English belief on the hierarchy of race and civilization on the unfamiliar Orient Other to facilitate and justify the extension of the British Empire.[23] Taking the *Machu Bride in Her Wedding Clothes* (1871-1872) as an example, we observe a woman with her servant sitting in front of a portable monochromatic screen, a prop that appeared in numerous other of Thomson's negatives (Fig. 5). Behind the screen, unfocused glimpses of pillars, stairs, and doors leak out, which proved to be the domestic space of a government official, Yang Fang, who befriended Thomson and invited him into his home.[24] Thus, the power dynamic in this photograph is divided between Yang, the male head of the household, the woman with her servant, and Thomson behind the camera. Both the smile on the woman's face, as a sign of being at ease, and the invitation from Yang, as offering normally impossible access into a private home, revealed Thomson's photographer status as

Figure 5
John Thomson, *Manchu Bride in Her Wedding Clothes*, 1871–1872. Wellcome Collection, London.

dependent and vulnerable. However, the screen as the backdrop not only helped reclaim his compromised control over the arrangement of the photo shoot, but also alluded to how he would later crop the background details on the periphery to isolate the woman with her servant from their contexts in an attempt to position them as a static "type" simply labeled as a "Machu bride" viewed under the Victorian imperial ideology and anthropological practice. The final product would be similar to this photograph entitled *A Machu Bride* (1871-1872) with a neatly cropped background and an emphasis on the upper body, especially the head (Fig. 6).

Similar to Thomson's work, Tseng's *New York, New York* seemingly captured a Chinese dignitary figure with Tseng's racially marked body donning the Mao suit. Compared to the woman as Thomson's model who had no control over the arrangement of the photo shoot and

20 Gumpert, "Introduction," 11.

21 Ariella Azoulay, Rela Mazali, and Ruvik Danieli, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 112; Sean Willcock, "The Aesthetics of the Negative: Orientalist Portraiture in the Digitized Collodion Plates of John Thomson (1837-1921)," *Phootoresearcher* 30 (2018): 96–110.

22 Willlock, "The Aesthetics of the Negative," 96–110.

23 Thomas Prasch, "Mirror Images: John Thomson's Photographs of East Asia," in *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s*, eds. Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 55.

24 Willlock, "The Aesthetics of the Negative," 96–110.

Figure 6

John Thomson, *A Manchu Bride*, 1871–1872. Wellcome collection, London.

the post-production process of developing, cropping, and circulating, Tseng combined the power of the photographer, subject, space, and apparatus into a single sovereignty, which became strong enough to allow him to infiltrate into the elite class that Tseng himself did not belong to, such as in the occasion of the MET gala, and challenge the only source of power left, the viewers' stereotypes towards racial and ethnicity identities.[25] With his mobility to travel across the US and the world when most people in China were not able to do so, he chose to pose not against a Communist Chinese background or in front of a monochromatic studio screen like what Thomson did, but physically in front of the Statue of Liberty, a neoclassical sculpture of the Roman goddess of liberty, Libertas, which became synonymous with values of freedom, equality, and democracy that the US claim to uphold. By juxtaposing the Chinese dignitary persona with the symbol of the US, Tseng disrupted the power dynamic between the dominant white culture and the marginalized non-white Other, arranging this out-of-place alien-like ambassador to intrude into both the physical space and the photography surface. This juxtaposition not only allows Tseng, as an Asian-American gay artist, to disrupt the exclusive institutions of the art world that have traditionally denied access to artists of color, women, and queer, but also diminishes the safe distance for the dominant culture to imagine the marginalized other, smashing the fetish and fear right in front of their faces.[26] Here, I propose that Tseng's work goes beyond a simple binary distinction that divides between West and non-West, white and non-white, but inspires the critique against how the dominant oppresses the marginalized, allowing further room to encompass a spectrum of identities and denying a simple stable racial or ethnicity divide.

In this essay, I mainly highlighted two central formal elements: the Mao suit donned on Tseng's racially marked body and the shutter release with a dangling cable held in his hand in Tseng's photograph *New York, New York*. They offer viewers an opportunity to explore how Tseng constructed a distinctive yet displaced persona of a Chinese dignitary to critique how the dominant culture controls the marginalized Other with the Orientalism discourse and further challenge any practices that label and stereotype identities.

25 Chambers-Letson, "On Infiltration," 97, 102, 107.

26 Chambers-Letson, 107.

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Hideo, it's me Mama! (1983) by Mako Idemitsu: A Chronicle of a Chronic Outcome of the Housewife

Kwok Yan Yi Emily

Beginning in the 1980s, Tokyo-based Japanese artist Mako Idemitsu produced a series of video art dissecting apart the intricate issues inlaid in the Japanese household. Growing up in the 1940s, Idemitsu witnessed and lived through traditional patriarchal dominance within her family of origin.[1] Such personal experience formed the major source of inspiration for her video works. As the director behind the scenes, Idemitsu gathered her crew of cast and cameraman for the 27-minute video art *Hideo, it's me Mama!* in 1983. It tells the peculiar yet imaginable story of a mother's growing obsession with caring for her adult son, Hideo Marayama, who had found work and left home. Distracting herself from the bleak relationship with her husband, the mother spends the majority of her time-consuming media content showing her son's activities. The failed mediation between the mother's friend and the husband eventually led to her abandoning of her husband to live near Hideo.

Mako Idemitsu's *Hideo, it's me Mama!* provides a poignant critique towards the unfulfilling role of the traditional Japanese housewife through its portrayal of a mother's unhealthy fixation on her adult son, which serves as a metaphor for the housewife's loss of identity and purpose once her domestic labor is no longer valued. By employing techniques such as the uncanny use of the television screen, haptic aesthetics inviting visceral viewer engagement, and depictions of mundane homemaking tasks, Idemitsu's work highlights the psychological toll of patriarchal societal norms while prompting reflection on improving conditions for housewives.

This essay will first briefly cover the historical backdrop of the development of the role of the housewife in Japanese society and how Idemitsu constructed a narrative that suitably captured this social phenomenon which was descriptive of real life and relatable to viewers like folklore. In the following, this essay will investigate the unique choice of TV as subject matter, which further assists Idemitsu in fostering the universality in her storytelling. Additionally, this essay shall draw upon Sigmund Freund's concept of the *Unheimliche* and haptic aesthetics in discussing the creation of a sense of "unfamiliar familiarity" and the potential for a corporeal reading of the video art piece.

As a staple in her video art, Idemitsu continues the usage of the TV monitor in *Hideo, it's me Mama!* The blocky TV occupies the center of the frame, alternating between daily scenes of the mother's son, Hideo, such as his morning routine, exercise, and meal consumption in his own apartment. The jarring and nonnegligible presence of the TV prevents the audience from fully immersing in the drama, reminding them that they are spectators watching a story unfold from a third person's view.

The footage of Hideo shown on the TV monitor could have the following two metaphorical meanings. The first type of scene, shown on the TV screen most of the time, is her son complying with her requests and orders. For instance, the son coincidentally eats the same food served by the mother, who moves around the table in front of the TV and smiles towards the TV screen. The grateful reactions from the son match the mother's expectations, and they appear when the mother deliberately turns on the TV or inserts her chosen DVD tape. I hypothesize that such scenes are of the mother's

1 Kara Kelley Hallmark, *Encyclopedia of Asian American Artists* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 81.

imagination, idealizing how Hideo should still behave accordingly like the obedient and dependent child he once was. The second type of scene is the pixelated TV, which rarely appears in this video artwork. In a particular scene, the mother self-decidedly serves Hideo's former favorite pork shabu shabu dish with chopsticks in front of the TV without any active request. She then encounters trouble turning on the TV to meet her son initially as the screen flickers severely. It later resumes normal, but Hideo is shown eating a Western fried port cutlet with a knife and fork instead. Here, the TV noise possibly indicates the son's updated preferences as an adult, while the difference in food consumed shows how the mother remains entrenched in the past and her idealized monodrama without actually knowing her son now.

Concerning Idemitsu's choice of using the TV as the central prop, it further suggests the story's pervasiveness in society. A 1984 survey conducted by the Economic Planning Agency of Japan found that color television sets are owned by 99.2% of Japanese households.[2] This finding confirms that the television was an easily found household electronic in domestic environments at the time of creation.[3] In terms of the narrative, Idemitsu does not create the housewife as a main character rebelling and breaking free from the oppression of domestic labor and an unhappy marriage. Instead, she constructs the housewife as someone who remains trapped in the household and encounters psychological suffering.

Making use of the complete storyline and the TV monitor to exhibit the mother's inner world, Mako Idemitsu's *Hideo, it's me Mama!* addresses the housewife midlife crisis in the 1980s from a sociological perspective.[4] Japanese sociologist Ueno Chizuko's examination of Japanese households reveals that when housewives remain in the same stifling situation of demanding domestic labor, their relationship with their husbands becomes increasingly estranged.[5] Meanwhile, their children, on whom these housewives' identities are based, begin to grow up and become independent. With the children gone from the household one day, the housewives are stuck with their barren relationships with their husbands.[6]

The increasing fragility and instability of the union partnership also reflects the concept of liquid modernity raised by the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, referring to the constant shifting and evolving of social structures like family, work, and relationships.[7] Detangled from the notion of permanent love and subsequently disrupting its equilibrium, modern marriage can easily transpire from a bonding of love to imprisonment of discontent.[8] In the video art, Hideo's mother is in a comparable predicament. There is not one word or gesture of acknowledgment and affirmation from the husband but deafening silence during breakfast, the atmosphere only to be lightened by the DVD tape with Hideo in. The diffusion of disappointment in the husband's minimum reaction is epitomized in the mother's line "Mama lives for you only Hideo dear, only for you" (Fig. 1). It discloses the mother's anxiety about losing her child. She intently focuses on her son for substitute gratification as an escape from her disappointment and misery surrounding her communicatively unresponsive husband, with her eventual decision to opt out of her commitment as the virtuous, caring model housewife by exiting her home.[9]

On the one hand, the mother's desire and over-intervention towards Hideo serves as an avoidant coping mechanism for her to escape dissatisfaction in her

2 "TV Ownership in Japan," *The New York Times Archived Print*, May 24, 1984, https://www.nytimes.com/1984/05/24/business/tv-ownership-in-japan.html.

3 "TV Ownership in Japan."

4 Ueno Chizuko, "Wives at 'Midlife Crisis' Stage," in *The Modern Family in Japan: Its Rise and Fall* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2009), 191.

5 Chizuko, "Wives at 'Midlife Crisis' Stage," 191.

6 Chizuko, 191.

7 Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania and Katarzyna Bartoszyńska, "The Fluidity of Love and Hate: Zygmunt Bauman on Death, Love, and Hatred," *Revue internationale de philosophie* n° 277, no. 3 (2016): 329.

8 Jasińska-Kania and Bartoszyńska, "The Fluidity of Love and Hate," 334.

9 Annabell Halfmann and Leonard Reinecke, "Binge-Watching as Case of Escapist Entertainment Use," in *The Oxford Handbook of Entertainment Theory*, ed. Peter Vorderer and Christoph Klimmt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 192–194.

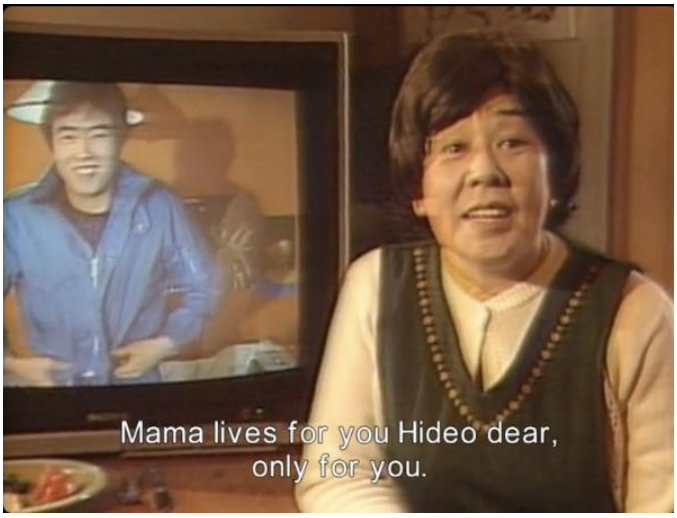

Figure 1
Mako Idemitsu, *Hideo, it's me Mama!*, 1983. Single-channel digital video (colour, sound), 26:49. M+, Hong Kong. © Mako Idemitsu/EAI.

marriage. On the other hand, the blockage of mental separation between herself and her son could also be problematic.[10] Following psychoanalysis, Julia Kristeva argues, "for man and woman, the loss of the mother is a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous."[11] For a person to become a subject with sustainable physiological and psychological operations, it requires matricidal separation, which refers to separating oneself from the closest relationship with his/her mother and her body. Matricide is essential as the mother-child dyad needs to be broken up and to introduce the child into language and social life. The mother's overt affection towards Hideo and the continual insistence on him still being a child could be a sign of her refusal to come to terms with her emotionally unfulfilling marriage, as the matricide would force her to contemplate her value and existence outside the role as a housewife. Moreover, her active prevention of independence is detrimental to Hideo's character development and socialization as a grown man. Once again, Idemitsu's plot can be critical of the side effects of the child-attached housewife trickling down as hindrances to children's development and independence.

Just like the vast number of colored television owners, there could be numerous housewives stuck at home with a colored television, enduring a similar tragedy just like Hideo's mother. As distinguished by folklorist Andrew Dundes, folklores are "autobiographical ethnographies as people's own description of themselves," used to bring the repressed areas of special concern into the open for discussion.[12] Utilizing her acute observation and conclusions from growing up in a traditional family as a Japanese woman, Idemitsu joins the shared prevalence of televisions, housewives in strained marital relationships, and their self-worth mainly originating from children in her video art. Her approach declares the capability of *Hideo, it's me Mama!* as modern folklore that could appear in households, warning viewers both didactically and viscerally of the unaware destruction, and the failure in tragedy prevention of current normative practices and evaluations of the role of housewife.

Idemitsu's *Hideo, it's me Mama!* reflects the real-life experience of instability and uncertainty relating to home and domesticity, originating from the concept of *das Unheimliche* (the unhomely). Referring to Sigmund Freud, *Heimlich* indicates something belonging to the house, which is intimate and friendly, falling in line with the conventional understanding and expectation of home and family.[13] The added prefix extends it to *Unheimlich*, indicating what is typically concealed and kept from sight of the home is unwrapped and showing the potentially strange and disturbing dimensions of the home. In *Hideo, it's me Mama!,* what place in front of the viewers are the interiors of an apartment, the furniture for the kitchen and dining room, and the family members of husband and wife. These elements combine to signify a standard, homely household supposedly recognizable in daily life. Yet, throughout the video, the fixated position and consistent use of the TV screen for monitoring, alongside the contrast between the silent background, and the husband's ignoration with the mother's exasperated monologue expressing her missing her son, exude a sense of eeriness and discomfort. Hélène Cixous reads *das Unheimliche* as "in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only

12 Simon J. Bronner, "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture," in *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (University Press of Colorado, 2007), 53.

13 Hélène Cixous, "Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche (The 'Uncanny')," *New Literary History* 7, no. 3 (1976): 621.

through the process of repression."[14] Idemitsu's portrayal of the household relates to the double-sidedness of the unhomely, as the depicted home is never purely familiar. The comfortable lid of the ordinary home, covering the family's internal psychological turbulence bubbling underneath is lifted and brought forth as the video progresses. As observed in her behavior, the mother gradually becomes more obsessive when she frantically dials and grabs the phone with a wide-eyed expression to get a grasp of her son's latest news (Fig. 2). Viewers are left witnessing the normally concealed scene of the turmoil's boiling point with the mother eerily determined, ditching her husband and leaving the home to live with and take care of her grown-up son.

Figure 2
Mako Idemitsu, *Hideo, it's me Mama!*, 1983. Single-channel digital video (colour, sound), 26:49. M+, Hong Kong. © Mako Idemitsu/EAI.

Although *Hideo, it's me Mama!* is indeed a video art displayed through screening, the artwork's meaning is not confined to its mere visual components. Instead, it is plausible to move beyond formal analysis and take the embodied dimension of the viewing experience, known as haptic aesthetics, into consideration. According to art historian Jennifer Fisher, haptic perception can explain the aspects involved in sensing a space, such as temperature, presence, pressures, and resonances.[15] In particular, distal haptics can perceive objects and the surrounding environment distant from the body and the skin's surfaces, without the requirement for actual touch from viewers.[16] Although viewers are unable to access the original film set and it is impossible to touch the TV monitor during the display of this piece, they are still able to partake in the co-production of the interpretation of this artwork by utilizing their distal haptic senses in the following ways. Framed and seen only within the TV monitor, the son is never physically present with the mother. Viewers see the mother's hand pressed onto the slippery glass TV screen, grasping for her beloved yet absent son (Fig. 3), with the TV screen radiating heat due to long-term use. The audience may have visceral engagement through observation, corporeally feeling the mother's eagerness to rekindle the experience of spending time with her son by absorbing the warmth from the TV. Moreover, hearing alone the mother's increasingly loud, fast-paced, and high-pitched side phone calls, viewers may step into the shoes of the son listening on the other end

Figure 3
Mako Idemitsu, *Hideo, it's me Mama!*, 1983. Single-channel digital video (colour, sound), 26:49. M+, Hong Kong. © Mako Idemitsu/EAI.

and feeling anxious and overwhelmed due to the enthusiasm. Such dynamic engagement based on the circulation of corporeal sensations and effects, therefore, adds another profound visceral layer to the manifestation of the depicted story in real life.

Made forty years ago, Mako Idemitsu's *Hideo it's me Mama!* is not a story of one mother or one family. Its universality is comparable to a contemporary folktale to

14 Cixous, "Fiction and Its Phantoms," 634.

15 Jennifer Fisher, "Relational Sense: Towards a Haptic Aesthetics," *Parachute*, 87 (1997): 5.

16 Fisher, "Relational Sense," 6.

this day. Narrative-wise, it serves as a bold critique of the melancholic tragedy of the aged good girl who abided by the altruistic housewife archetype in Japanese society. Living an estranged relationship with her husband and suffering from the underappreciation for her domestic efforts, the mother and housewife under Idemitsu's lens continue to fill in the void with a fixation on the children despite their gradual maturation. This leads to the housewife with an undeveloped sense of self due to the lack of respect of interpersonal boundaries, resulting in a lose-lose situation for both.

Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of the *Unheimliche*, the seemingly familiar fused with the increasing frenzy of the mother's obsessive behavior effectively garners empathetic but unsettling sentiments among the viewers. The employment of distal haptic sense in reviewing the displayed scenes of actions encourages intuitive and visceral perspective change among viewers without the need to engage with the art piece or cast members in close proximity. Nonetheless, the fragmented footage of homemaking has revealed the underappreciation of the housewife's physical, laborious contribution to maintaining the household and their significance in guarding and reconstructing the definition of home. Now lies the big question: what can one do to prevent this from happening, and how can the conditions of the housewife be improved?

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Duration and Affect: A Study of Vulnerability and Tenacity in *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005) and *Almerisa Series* (1994–2008)

Tam So Yin Dilys

As a radical form of art, performance art challenges the limits of the body, revealing the resilience and vulnerability of the artist. Photography captures fleeting moments and visual narratives, allowing for introspection on the diverse facets of personhood. While Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* and Rineke Dijkstra's *Almerisa Series* both delve into the complexities of identity, endurance, and the human experience, they contrast with each other in terms of approaches, techniques, and contexts. This essay compares and contrasts the expression of vulnerability and tenacity in the human condition in the two artworks and explores the role of emotive responses elicited from the viewer, the inextricability of duration and affect, and the malleable social construct of time.[1]

In exploring vulnerability and tenacity in the human condition, I argue that Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005) and Rineke Dijkstra's *Almerisa Series* (1994–2008) have manifestly elicited emotive responses from the viewer and demonstrated the inextricably of duration and affect. The theatricality and performativity of *Seven Easy Pieces* and displaced temporality of photography in *Almerisa Series* exemplify the subjectivity of time in the audience's emotional engagement on perception. In engaging with both documentation and time as a readymade, the two pieces have evoked the notion of repetition while articulating their inherent impossibility. Yet, the two pieces are distinct in their narratives of immigration and exile—the expression of affection manifests as retrospective alienation in *Seven Easy Pieces*, but embodies prospective integration in *Almerisa Series*. While both pieces exemplify the fluidity of identity, the proposition is evinced in *Seven Easy Pieces* as a collective challenge to the stability of authorship in performance art. In contrast, Sehric's fluid identity is documented in the Almerisa *Series* as her individual journey of cultural integration and womanhood.

Seven Easy Pieces reinterprets seven iconic pieces originally performed by Abramović and her contemporaries during the 1960s and 70s as an exploration of vulnerability and resilience.[2] In *Body Pressure*, the artist's face is contorted in pain as she presses it against a glass pane, displaying both suffering and unwavering discipline (Fig. 1). *Action Pants: Genital Panic* juxtaposes Abramović's nakedness with her combative aura, symbolized by her safari attire and firm grip on her assault rifle, suggesting her ability to overcome vulnerability through focus and concentration (Fig. 2). In *The Conditioning*, the artist replaces burned-down candles with a stiff, ritualist demeanor in a display of determination *vis-à-vis* physical ordeal (Fig. 3). Finally, *Lips of Thomas* highlights Abramović's acts of self-cutting and self-flagellation, emphasizing both the fragility of physical injury and the artist's profound endurance.[3]

Unfolding as a demanding and occasionally

1 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 188–189.

2 "Marina Abramović: Seven Easy Pieces," *The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation*, accessed May 25, 2024, https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/marina-abramovi-seven-easy-pieces.

3 Nikki Cesare and Jenn Joy, "Performa/(Re)Performa," *TDR (1988–)* 50, no. 1 (2006): 171.

perilous marathon, the interaction between the performer and the audience in *Seven Easy Pieces* elicits powerful emotional responses, underscoring the inseparability of duration and affect. In *Seedbed*, viewers compared the experience to the exhilaration of a carnival ride in their eager anticipation of the climax (Fig. 4).[4] During *Lips of Thomas*, the audience remained transfixed, even as midnight approached, as Abramović lay bleeding on a massive ice cross (Fig. 5).[5] Carving a star onto her abdomen with a razor, she evoked a fainting spell from one observer and an anonymous call to emergency services.[6] In *Action Pants: Genital Panic*, Abramović's prolonged, intense gaze with a young woman moved both the artist and the audience to tears (Fig. 2).[7] The mystical and ceremonial ambiance of *The Conditioning* (Fig. 3) and *Entering the Other Side* captivated spectators for hours (Fig. 6), while the banality of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* drove audiences away (Fig. 7).[8] By integrating audience participation as an intrinsic element of the transcendental experience, Abramović reveals how affect distorts the audience's perception of time.

Figure 2
Marina Abramović, *Action Pants: Genital Panic*, November 11, 2005.
In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005. Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

Figure 1
Marina Abramović, *Body Pressure*, November 9, 2005.
In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005.
Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.
Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

Figure 3
Marina Abramović, *The Conditioning*, November 12, 2005.
In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005. Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

4 Roberta Smith, "Turning Back the Clock to the Days of Crotchless Pants and a Deceased Rabbit," *The New York Times*, November 17, 2005.
5 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."
6 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."
7 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."
8 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."

Figure 4
Marina Abramović, *Seedbed*, November 10, 2005. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005, Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. © 2012 Marina Abramović, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

Figure 5
Marina Abramović, *Lips of Thomas*, November 14, 2005. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005. Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. © 2012 Marina Abramović, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

Figure 6
Marina Abramović, *Entering the Other Side*, November 15, 2005. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005. Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. © 2012 Marina Abramović, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

Figure 7
Marina Abramović, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, November 13, 2005. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, November 9–15, 2005. Performance, 7 hours. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. © 2012 Marina Abramović, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Image courtesy of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Kathryn Carr.

The documentation of performances in *Seven Easy Pieces* engages time and repetition, highlighting the transitory nature of performance art. The original performances, executed in an era when media production was neither instant nor easily accessible, were largely known through oral accounts and grainy photographs.[9] With the consent of the original artists or their estates, *Seven Easy Pieces* resurrects these performances by stripping away their enigmatic aura and presenting them as living art.[10] Alongside the DVD recordings, the documentation of *Seven Easy Pieces* in exhibitions, installations, and books has captured the performances in photographs, texts, and film. Such documentation not only recreates the originals but also becomes a focal point for future performances, serving as a vital link between the past, present, and future iterations of the same artistic concept.[11] They have also become part of the project's legacy, allowing the dissemination of the reenactments beyond the 2005 reenactment and contributing to the ongoing dialogue and scholarly engagement with Abramović's *oeuvre*. Thus, repetition manifests not only in the visual similarities between the original, Abramović's renditions, and future reenactments but also in preserving and revisiting the artist's creative intent and past practices.

A significant aspect of this lies in the recognition of time as a ready-made element and the acknowledgment of the inherent impossibility of true repetition. The affective experiences and ephemeral nature of performance art render each reenactment distinct due to the specific contextual and relational circumstances of a given time. By revisiting these historical works and presenting them as contemporary renditions, Abramovic takes existing performances created within specific cultural contexts and reintroduces them into a new temporal framework. Not only does this highlight the malleability of time and the potential for reinterpretation, but the reenactments in *Seven Easy Pieces* also create a temporal displacement which challenges the notion of time as a linear and fixed construct. In emphasizing the potential of time to be manipulated and recontextualized, the prolonged duration of the performances allows the audience to contemplate time's influence on human perception as they examine them in new light.

Notably, Marina Abramović's reenactments differed from their referent performances; for instance, when removed from Valie Export's intended *mise-en-scène*, Abramović's rendition of *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969) in a packed Munich movie theater lacked the immersive quality of the original.[12] Similarly, Abramović's reenactment of Joseph Beuys' *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) failed to capture the commanding intellectualism associated with speech and language, making it perhaps the flattest performance in *Seven Easy Pieces*.[13] Even in reenacting her own *Lips of Thomas*, Abramović introduced new elements absent from the original documentation, such as her father's military cap and a flag fashioned from the cloth bandage in the original performance.[14] The lack of specifics in the documentation of the 1975 performance enabled Abramović's addition of these elements to her reenactments without compromising the former's artistic integrity, despite the two performances' distinctions from one another.[15]

The discussions so far have emphasized the temporal nature of performance art, and the audiences' affective experiences. Intrinsic to the former's ephemerality is an immediacy absent in the close-looking of traditional art forms; as the artist's performance unfolds in real time, its subjective emotive existence and the inevitability of its ending intensifies the audience's unmediated assimilation of sensorial experience.[16] As

9 Lara Shalson, "Enduring Documents: Re-Documentation in Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces*," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 23, no. 3 (2013): 432–433, 434–441.

10 This sets *Seven Easy Pieces* apart from unauthorized commercial appropriations.

11 Shalson, "Enduring Documents," 432–433.

12 Cesare and Joy, "Performa/(Re)Performa," 171; Shalson, 440, 434.

13 Cesare and Joy, "Performa/(Re)Performa," 171, 172.

14 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."

15 Marina Abramović, Chris Thompson, and Katarina Weslien. "Pure Raw: Performance, Pedagogy, and (Re)Presentation," *PAJ (Baltimore, Md.)* 28, no. 1 (2006): 39.

16 Jessica Santone, "Marina Abramović's 'Seven Easy Pieces': Critical Documentation Strategies for Preserving Art's History," *Leonardo (Oxford)* 41, no. 2 (2008): 151

participants co-create meaning with the artist in this improvisational exercise, the transience of the performances facilitates the audiences' mnemonic *recall* of the actual event through their repeated reflection and reinterpretation.[17] However, in *Seven Easy Pieces*, the incorporation of emotive aesthetics as a constitutive part of its composition also transforms the piece into a partially pre-manufactured spectacle, the latter of which pertains to the deliberate manipulation of visual and emotive elements in conveying a sense of drama.[18] In *Seven Easy Pieces*, the artist's intentional use of her body as a medium of physical endurance evokes cognate responses from the audience; although the viewers' responses are spontaneous, this phenomenological experientiality is nevertheless controlled by Abramović's scripted performance.[19]

This proposition is furthered through *Seven Easy Pieces*' emphasis on repetition and intertextuality—as Abramović draws inspiration from the past performances of other artists, the audience's familiarity with the original creates a cycle of semiotic reinforcement in which viewers compare and contrast the reenactments with their referents.[20] In its elicitation of emotive responses from viewers, *Seven Easy Pieces* heightens their involvement and engagement and, as such, enables the partial construction of the performance by both Abramović and themselves.[21] Yet by creating *Seven Easy Pieces* solely from existing records of past performances, Abramović also highlights how documentation inherently fails to accurately and holistically preserve a durational event.[22] Documentation, by its nature, focuses on specific subject matter, inevitably leaving out other elements present in the same temporal-spatial context.[23] Therefore, when a performance is "re-performed" at a different time, it is not an identical repetition of the original.[24] The artist can only reproduce an impression of the subject matter based on the incomplete description provided by the documentation, while the contextual circumstances have inevitably changed over time.[25]

In *Seven Easy Pieces*, the impossibility of repetition imbues each reenactment with an exploration of ever-evolving artistic identity. Marina Abramović's project merges the delineations between herself and the original creators as she embodies their roles.[26] This blurring of boundaries prompts contemplation on the individuality and ownership of artistic ideas, suggesting that artistic identity can be fluid, borrowed, transformed, and reinterpreted.[27] Abramović deepens this investigation of artistic authenticity by drawing on the ephemeral nature of performance art as distinct from the object-centered approach of traditional art forms.[28] The reenactment of Abramović's own performances raises questions about whether authenticity resides solely in the original rendition or if it can be reproduced and experienced anew.[29] *Seven Easy Pieces* thus underscores the transformative power of performance art.

By embodying the roles of other artists, Abramović symbolically merges her own identity with theirs, and challenges the individualistic assumption upon which authorship is based. With each rendition, Abramović embarks on a journey of exploring diverse personas, showcasing the capacity of performance art to

17 Santone, "Marina Abramović's 'Seven Easy Pieces'," 148.

18 Santone, 151.

19 Santone, 148; Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, "Pure Raw," 29.

20 Santone, 148; Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 34.

21 Santone, 152; Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 29.

22 Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 45.

23 Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 45.

24 Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 45.

25 Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 45.

26 Claire Bishop, "Delegated Performance Outsourcing Authenticity," in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012), 234, 237, 238.

27 Bishop, "Delegated Performance Outsourcing Authenticity," 234, 237, 238.

28 Bishop, 219, 226, 238.

29 Bishop, 219, 226, 238.

Left
Figure 8
Rineke Dijkstra, *Almerisa, Asylum Center, Leiden, The Netherlands*, March 14, 1994. Chromogenic print, 13 ¾ x 11 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Horace W. Goldsmith Fund through Robert B. Menschel. Image courtesy of Rineke Dijkstra.

Middle
Figure 9
Rineke Dijkstra, *Almerisa, Leidschendam, The Netherlands*, March 29, 2005. Chromogenic print, 13 ¾ x 11 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Leila and Melville Straus. Image courtesy of Rineke Dijkstra.

Right
Figure 10
Rineke Dijkstra, *Almerisa, Zoetermeer, The Netherlands*, June 19, 2008. Chromogenic print, 13 ¾ x 11 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image courtesy of Rineke Dijkstra.

push the boundaries of identity and self-expression. Abramović thus becomes a conduit for the artistic vision of others while simultaneously asserting her own artistic agency.[30] In doing so, Abramović does not aim to fully replace the original performers; rather, she intends to represent and interpret the works through an accurate portrayal of their original intentions.[31] Considered in context of Abramović's dedication of *Seven Easy Pieces* to the memory of her late friend Susan Sontag and the former's indignant response to the misappropriation of artistic concepts by commercial identities, such thematics can be conceived as Abramović's attempt to address the authentic preservation and historiography of performance art.[32]

Similar to *Seven Easy Pieces*, *Almerisa Series* captures the vulnerability and resilience inherent in human nature. The series comprises eleven photos that document Almerisa's transformation from a young girl to a mother.[33] In the first photo, a somber Almerisa reflects a contemplative sadness, symbolizing her identity and vulnerability as a Bosnian child refugee (Fig. 8).[34] However, as the series progresses, the photos reveal a quiet strength. As Almerisa grows taller, her identity as a Dutch citizen becomes more grounded when her feet can literally touch the ground. The transition from wearing traditional dresses to fashionable vests and jeans and her increasingly relaxed posture reflect her growing confidence and successful integration into society (Fig. 9).[35] Finally, as a woman, Almerisa's dyed fringes and forward-leaning posture signify her certainty as a Western European and a new mother (Fig. 10).[36]

Additional details within the portraits further support this perspective. Almerisa herself draws a comparison between her life in the Netherlands and the chair featured in each photo. The series begins with her seated on a flimsy plastic chair (Fig. 8), but as the photos progress, the chairs gradually become sturdier and more elaborate (Fig. 9 & Fig. 10), a testimony to her increasing stability and gradual integration into Dutch society.[37] Despite the thematic similarities between *Seven Easy Pieces* and *Almerisa Series*, the two artworks diverge in their approach to conveying their respective messages. While *Seven Easy Pieces* juxtaposes Abramović's immediate suffering and endurance through continuous, durational performance, *Almerisa Series* employs discreet photography to capture specific moments over a span of fourteen years, emphasizing their inherent presence.[38]

Abramović's spine-tingling performance in *Seven Easy Pieces* and the brooding psychological intensity of *Almerisa Series* are both emotionally evocative. Dijkstra's compositions in *Almerisa Series* adhere to a consistent and abstracted format, intentionally omitting extraneous details to emphasize the evocative power of Almerisa's facial and bodily expressions.[39] Set against the backdrop of war-induced displacement and the complexities of belonging, the gradual physiological and cultural changes in Almerisa's appearance not only elicit momentary empathy but also encourage viewers to project their own thoughts and emotions onto her visual transformation. Both *Seven Easy Pieces* and *Almerisa Series* create powerful affective experiences for their audience. While *Seven Easy Pieces* immerses viewers in the visceral dynamism of Abramović's durational performance, Almerisa's stillness in the photographs captures a past moment that lies on the edge of activity, allowing for reflection before or after a

30 Santone, 148; Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 48.

31 Santone, 148; Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 39.

32 Santone, 148; Abramović, Thompson, and Weslien, 29.

33 Rineke Dijkstra, "Interview," *Portrait Magazine,* October 11, 2013, https://www.portrait.gov.au/magazines/45/interview.

34 Richard B. Woodward, "The Awkward Years," *Wall Street Journal,* July 10, 2012, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304708604577502893950126440.

35 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

36 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

37 Dijkstra, "Interview."

38 Gordon Coonfield, "'Marina Abramović Made Me Cry': Performance and Presence Work in the Affective Economy," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2019): 306.

39 Sally Stein, "Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective," *Aperture,* no. 209 (2012): 16–17.

significant event takes place.[40]

Almerisa Series serves as a poignant example of the inseparable relationship between duration and effect, evident in its compositional technique, creation process, and viewer interaction. As time functions integrally in Seven Easy Pieces due to the prolonged durations of the performances, Rineke Dijkstra's unusually long exposure times produce portraits of remarkable details. In both works, time is laden with symbolism.[41] *Almerisa Series* also highlights how the perception of time is influenced by emotional affect. Living in the asylum, Almerisa found it challenging to gauge the passage of time between Dijkstra's annual visits due to the repetitive and monotonous nature of her life[42] while the annual photo sessions felt remarkably brief for Almerisa as she eagerly anticipated them.[43] These dynamics observed in Almerisa Series find resonance in the reception of individual performances within *Seven Easy Pieces*, as exemplified in the tension between ennui and and captivation in *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, *Seedbed*, and *Lips of Thomas*.[44]

As Almerisa gazes directly into the camera lens, her eyes evoke the intensity of a Vermeer portrait, drawing forth a reciprocal gaze from the portraitist and, by extension, from the present viewer. When the viewers immerse themselves in these portraits, Almerisa's frozen past encounters the viewer's ever-flowing internal clock, causing a deceleration of intuitive perception.[45] As the viewer's eyes traverse the collection of photographs, they assimilate the transformations that span Almerisa's fourteen years, compressing time into a precipitated narrative of her integration and coming-of-age. In *Seven Easy Pieces*, both Marina Abramović's durational performance and the audience's affective response occur almost instantaneously, placing them in a shared temporal predicament with the artist. In contrast, the time gap between Dijkstra taking the photos and their public presentation channels the viewers' cognitive perception of their emotions into solitary contemplating as they project subjective thoughts and memories onto Almerisa's static countenance.

The concept of repetition is evident in various dimensions in *Almerisa Series* through the documentation of time. By capturing portraits of Almerisa over a span of fourteen years, the series reconstructs her coming-of-age narrative and visually emphasizes the significant milestones of her journey.[46] From a young girl to a mother holding her own child, the imagery in *Almerisa Series* reflects the cyclical nature of life.[47] In contrast to *Seven Easy Pieces*, which repeats and documents performances for future reenactments, Almerisa Series parallels the notion of repetition by tracing Almerisa's growth, while also elevating her individual story to a broader proposition.[48] The consistent composition of the photographs also highlights the recurring pattern of relational aesthetics formed through Dijkstra's annual visits to Almerisa's asylum center, adding a social dimension to the theme of repetition explored in *Seven Easy Pieces*.[49]

Time in *Almerisa Series* therefore serves not only a supporting role for changes to be documented, but is also integral to art making as a ready-made. While the portraiture genre may seem staged, the temporal qualities of the subject exist independently, as the artist has only partial control. Almerisa's physiological and cultural changes are expressed through her own facial and bodily expressions, making them pre-existing material. In contrast to Abramović's incorporation of spontaneous

40 "Almerisa, Asylum Seekers' Center, Leiden, The Netherlands, March 14, 1994," *Institute of Contemporary Art Boston,* February, 2012, https://www.icaboston.org/art/rineke-dijkstra/almerisa-asylum-seekers-center-leiden-netherlands-march-14-1994/.

41 "Almerisa, Asylum Seekers' Center."

42 Dijkstra, "Interview."

43 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."

44 Smith, "Turning Back the Clock."

45 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 188, 189.

46 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

47 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

48 Cesare and Joy, "Performa/(Re)Performa," 172.

49 Dijkstra, "Interview."

audience responses in *Seven Easy Pieces*, *Almerisa Series* preserves Almerisa's appearance and emotions as a ready-made entity. Dijkstra, the photographer, remarked that she prefers not to give much directions, allowing Almerisa to pose freely during photo taking.[50] This approach captures the transitory nature of the subject and highlights the passage of time within the series.

Notably, despite its repetitive composition, *Almerisa Series* tackles the concept of time as ready-made by acknowledging the impossibility of true repetition. Through annual photographs, Dijkstra captures Almerisa's evolving physiognomy and psychology, demonstrating that each visit brings about distinct transformations.[51] While the series visually depicts Almerisa's growth, it offers only a glimpse of her multifaceted identity, lacking the contextual nuances that shape her complete coming-of-age journey.[52] *Almerisa Series* materializes the perpetual flow of time, where subtle changes accumulate as temporal progress unfolds, enabling a retracing of paths with slight variations. In contrast to *Seven Easy Pieces*, which explores the impossibility of repetition by highlighting contextual and emotional distinctions from the original performances, *Almerisa Series* visually portrays the apparent differences in Almerisa's yearly portraits, drawing attention to the changes in the surrounding circumstances with the passage of time.[53]

While *Almerisa Series* and *Seven Easy Pieces* both tackle tensions of identity, they differ in their approaches to representation, context, narrative mode, and compositional focus. *Seven Easy Pieces* explores fluid artistic identity through performance art, while *Almerisa Series* highlights an individual's personal journey amidst displacement.[54] Unlike *Seven Easy Pieces*, which probes questions of authorship and performance art as a collective, *Almerisa Series* intimately captures Almerisa's individual development and identity exploration, delving into cultural adaptation and addressing the social contentions of displacement unaddressed by *Seven Easy Pieces*.[55] In depicting Almerisa's evolving identity, the narrative arc in *Almerisa Series* reflects the growth and transformation of its protagonist, which contrasts with the non-linear reenactments in *Seven Easy Pieces*.[56]

Despite the differences in their appearances, techniques, and contexts, *Seven Easy Pieces* and *Almerisa Series* have both galvanized the subjective dimensions of duration in articulating affective narratives of vulnerability and resilience. Their engagement with the concept of documentation and time as a readymade have exemplified the inextricable relationship between affect and subjective temporality, and the malleability of time as a social construct. In evoking the notion of repetition and articulating its inherent impossibility, the two pieces embody the fluidity of identity in relaying narratives of artistic homage, and cultural displacement and integration in the human condition. Although the two pieces remain distinct in their expressions of human strength and suffering, *Seven Easy Pieces* and *Almerisa Series* encapsulate the universality of identity evolution *vis-à-vis* the self and the other, and as such, resonate in the civic imagination.

50 Rineke Dijkstra, "Rineke Dijkstra. Almerisa, Asylum Center, Leiden, The Netherlands. March 14, 1994: MOMA," *The Museum of Modern Art, Horace W. Goldsmith Fund*, 2012.

51 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

52 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

53 Woodward, "The Awkward Years."

54 Ariella Budick, "Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective, Guggenheim, New York," *Financial Times,* September 9, 2012, https://www.ft.com/content/82cb2ce4-f388-11e1-9c6c-00144feabdc0.

55 Budick, "Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective."

56 Budick, "Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective."

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Ever-Changing and the Daughter of Hong Kong: A Look Back at the Identity of Anita Mui through Cover Album Art

Max Chan

On December 23, 2023, the exhibition *Timeless Diva: Anita Mui* officially opened in the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, commemorating Mui's legacy and contributions to Hong Kong, on the 20th anniversary of her passing in 2003.[1] Anita Mui's legacy is often associated with her avant-garde and diverse visual appearances, as well as her ability to captivate audiences through her dynamic voice, personality and charity works. Throughout her lifetime, Mui has recorded a total of 28 studio albums, many of which incorporated elements ahead of their time.[2] Cover album art often influences one's perception of a singer and was a significant part of 1980s visual culture. In Mui's case, her versatile cover albums proved to develop her identity during the 1980s and 1990s. This paper aims to examine the formation of Mui's persona and identity through her cover album art, with some portraying her as an individual who is masculine, feminine and androgynous at times, but also one who is traditional and equally challenges norms. Mui mesmerizes millions of fans around the globe, with her distinctive ability to oscaliate from traditional conforming appearances, to one that deviates from norms and appears rebellious. This paper seeks to answer the following questions by examining the range of album cover art Mui is presented in: how does Mui's cover album art reflect and embody her personal identity? How does it prolong her legacy in the current age of Cantopop re-emergence? Most importantly, how does Mui's album cover art reflect the identity of Hong Kong?

The 1980s was an era of prosperity and blossoming for Cantopop. Against this backdrop, Mui, after earning wide acclaim and fame with her first album, won the First New Talents Singing Award in 1982 by singing *Season of the Wind*.[3] Soon, Mui's career as a singer began to take off with the release of her second solo album, *Leap the Stage* (飛越舞台) two years later. The cover art for *Leap the Stage* created by designer Alan Chan used airbrush and graphic art designs. The cover illustrates Mui as a diva in outer space (Fig. 1), alongside the use of dynamic and vibrant colors, as seen in the use of pink, white, black, and red. In both the front and back cover, Mui's face takes up most of the pictorial space, dominating viewer's attention to her. In a 1985 radio interview, Mui stated that she herself came up with the name *Leap the Stage*.[4] She suggested that the "theme of the album revolves around events happening on the stage," which explains the artistic decision of having Mui's face relatively large to the pictorial space, as it reiterates her dynamic stage presence.[5] In the same interview, Mui also

1 Fiona Sun, "Exhibition to Mark 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong Cantopop Diva Anita Mui's Death Opens at Heritage Museum," *South China Morning Post*, December 23, 2023, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3246119/exhibition-mark-20th-anniversary-hong-kong-cantopop-diva-anita-muis-death-opens-heritage-museum.

2 Sun, "Exhibition to Mark 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong Cantopop Diva Anita Mui's Death Opens at Heritage Museum."

3 The Avenue of Stars, "Statue of Anita Mui," accessed January 5, 2024, https://www.avenueofstars.com.hk/en/statues/ms-anita-mui-yim-fong/.

4 Anita Mui, "1985 電台節目：梅艷芳自傳 (1985 Radio Program: Anita Mui's Autobiography,)" interview by anonymous, 1985, video, 01:06, https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1Z64y1V7hi/?p=4.

5 Mui, "Anita Mui's Autobiography," 01.26.

Figure 1
Alan Chan, *Leap the Stage* (飛越舞台), 1984. Album cover, offset lithography, 31.5 x 63.4 x 0.3 cm. M+, Hong Kong. © Capital Artists Ltd.

described how she "desired the album cover to convey a more youthful mood" and "a sense of freshness, showing her awareness to convey herself in a new energetic state of mind.[6] The use of diverse patterns, geometric shapes and lines further accentuates the dynamic atmosphere of the cover. A lively and captivating presence aligns with the more innovative songs within the album, such as *Leap the Stage* (飛越舞台) and *Generate One Thousand Volt* (發電一千 Volt). *Leap the Stage* vividly showed Mui's identity to its viewers. The brilliant and flamboyant color used, her imposing face on the album cover with varied shapes and patterns, ultimately portrays Mui as a new superstar who is active, avant-garde and captivating. The cover also shows Mui's gender-fluid stage persona and identity at the time of her fame.[7] Her androgynous, short haircut in the album contrasts with her first release, *Red Anita Mui* (赤色梅艷芳), where Mui appears in a more feminine and tender image.

However, the emergence of such a ground-breaking album cover in *Leap the Stage* and Mui's rise as a superstar must be attributed to the Hong Kong cultural scene in the 1980s, which demonstrates the artistic interaction between Hong Kong, the West and Japan from the East. There was an increased openness and willingness to explore a path different from the past, leading to the rise of artists like Mui who embraced different cultures. Popular culture scholar Li Chin Pang suggests that Mui's concerts and songs show cultural hybridity.[8] Musical adaptations of existing Japanese, English and Asian songs turned into localized Cantonese music. Mui's Cantopop songs incorporated influences from China, the West and other Asian countries, which also symbolized the complex local identity formed.[9] Hong Kong as a British colony at the time, was trying to find its own localized status and distinct way of presenting itself. Hence, artists like Leslie Cheung and Anita Mui were able to rise to fame, with their avant-garde styles and attitudes. The diverse range of cover album art embodies the social and cultural atmosphere of society in its time of creation, and *Leap the Stage* in turn reflected the identity of Hong Kong in the 1980s.

6 Mui, "Anita Mui's Autobiography," 02:10 to 03:05.

7 "Album Cover, Anita Mui: Leap the Stage," *M+*, accessed January 5, 2024, https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/collection/objects/album-cover-anita-mui-leap-the-stage-2017203/.

8 Chin-Pang Li, 夢伴此城：梅艷芳與香港流行文化 *(Dream and the City: Anita Mui and Hong Kong Popular Culture)*, 1st ed. (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing HK, 2019), 150.

9 Li, 夢伴此城, 151.

In 1985, Mui released another album titled *As Years Go By* (似水流年). The album cover art presents a scene where Mui is at the center of the pictorial space, wearing a light grey suit (Fig. 2). She also wears a pair of sunglasses with her head tipped upwards and staring into the distance. Mui's appearance in this outfit was arranged by designer Eddie Lau and took inspiration from Marlene Dietrich, the first Hollywood female star to dress up in a male fashion in the 1930s.[10] This album cover art develops Mui's persona and identity to a new level. If Mui was energetic and active in *Leap the Stage*, *As Years Go By* provides a different perspective. Here, she became androgynous, possessing both a sense of melancholy and hardness. Mui's outfit here blurs traditional gender stereotypes by fusing masculine and feminine traits in her appearance. This is most evidently seen in how Mui is wearing a suit which strengthens the perception of masculinity, but also has intense makeup on her face that generates a more feminine impression. By transcending typical gender constructs through her outfit, Mui reiterates her androgynous identity as an independent woman. The designer of Mui's outfit, Eddie Lau, suggested that the outfit is aimed to promote self-empowerment in the absence of love.[11] The outfit is a motif that symbolizes the increased autonomy women had towards their own body, serving as a statement that challenges a conservative society. Mui is a star who is not afraid of breaking norms and actively plays with experimentation. In 1985, she said, "something others haven't thought of trying yet, I will seek to try it first."[12] By presenting herself with an androgynous identity and reinforcing ideals such as self-empowerment, Mui openly challenged the deeply entrenched patriarchal traditions within 1980s Hong Kong.

Figure 2
Eddie Lau, *As Years Go By* (似水流年), 1985. Album cover, 31.5 x 63.4 x 0.3 cm. Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Hong Kong. © Eddie Lau.

By 1986, Anita Mui had been established as a household name around Hong Kong, and her new album *Bad Girl* (壞女孩) challenged the established social boundaries of the time. Li Chin Pang suggests that discussion about a woman's sexual needs, sexual pleasures and fantasies were still considered taboo in 1980s mainstream society.[13] Hence, Mui was a changing force in the music industry, and established a new culture by making the lust of women through songs and image visible. Cultural studies scholar J. Lawrence Witzleben suggests that "it was almost unheard of for a young Chinese woman to sing about sexual desire with such frankness," especially in the 1980s.[14] Mui's signature song in the album titled *Bad Girl* has lyrics that encourages young girls to challenge patriarchal norms, by openly discussing their bodies, sexuality and desire.[15] Meanwhile, the front cover album art of *Bad Girl* depicts Mui wearing a silk dress, in an elegant pose with her hands holding up her head (Fig. 3). However, the back album cover shows Mui in a denim jacket, with bold makeup on her face as she directly confronts the viewer. The back cover reiterates her androgynous identity, whilst the front

10 Li, 63.

11 Josephine Y.Y. Lai, "Bad Girl, Femme Fatale, and the Androgynous Body: Cantopop Queen Anita Mui's Gender Game," *Visual Anthropology* 34, no. 2 (2021): 167.

12 Li, 夢伴此城, 77.

13 Li, 82.

14 John Witzleben, "Cantopop and Mandapop in Pre-Postcolonial Hong Kong: Identity Negotiation in the Performances of Anita Mui Yim-Fong," *Popular Music* 18, no. 2 (1999): 247.

15 John Nguyet Erni, "Gender and Everyday Evasions: Moving With Cantopop," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (2007): 91.

Figure 3
Alan Chan, *Bad Girl* (壞女孩), 1985. Album cover, offset lithography, 31.5 x 31.7 x 0.3 cm. M+, Hong Kong. © Alan Chan.

displays a more erotic and teasing Mui. The album cover art and songs within *Bad Girl* challenged what society considered acceptable at the time: many thought Mui was guiding the youth towards the wrong path and providing incorrect ideals for them to follow. But equally, Mui's "Bad Girl" outfit on the album cover attracted many female adolescents to emulate and take influence from her, creating new social progress for women to express themselves freely and discuss forbidden sexual subjects like their own desires. *Bad Girl* as an album sold a total of 720,000 copies at the time.[16] An expert on Hong Kong popular culture, Ng Chun Hong suggests that Mui took influence from Madonna's sexual image, reflecting a shift from past traditional images of women.[17] The album cover of *Bad Girl* reiterated Mui's dynamic and multifaceted identity by showing her previously unrevealed rebellious nature. Li Chin Pang proposes that the 1980s was a special "cultural moment" for Hong Kong and that Mui redefined womanhood.[18] By challenging established patriarchal norms through the controversial lyrics and album cover of *Bad Girl,* Mui shaped herself as an artist with a rebellious and versatile identity. Her unrelenting attempts to push conventions inspired generations of woman not to be afraid of defying traditions and asserting their individuality.

Mui continued to put out a series of albums in the late 1980s, with the album *Get Drunk Together in Our Dreams* (夢裏共醉) released in 1988. This album surprisingly presented another facet of Mui's identity. The album cover (Fig. 4) shows Mui in the outfit of a classical Hollywood film actress, wearing an eloquent and feminine outfit.[19] Once again, Mui deviates from her past album covers, since she resembles a traditional and glamorous woman like famous Hollywood actress Marlene Dietrich, in *Get Drunk Together in Our Dreams.* Mui's head is tilted slightly, with her eyes gazing to the side and her hands overlapping with one another. Mui is depicted with heavy makeup, as seen in her bright red lipstick and the whiteness of her heavily powdered face. This album cover portrays Mui as a woman who is reminiscent of a past love affair, which is strengthened by the nostalgic atmosphere created. The wide range of Mui's album cover art truly exemplifies the fluidity in Mui's identity: she can be a traditional and elegant woman like *Get Drunk Together in Our Dreams*, a woman challenging the contemporaneous

16 Li, 夢伴此城, 141.

17 Li, 70.

18 Li, 58.

19 Li, 67.

Figure 4
Eddie Lau, *Get Drunk Together in Our Dreams* (夢裏共醉), 1988. Album cover, 31.5 x 63.4 x 0.3 cm. Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Hong Kong. © Eddie Lau.

gender norms by wearing a suit in *As Years Go By*, or even the rebellious and provocative identity seen in *Bad Girl.*

In conclusion, Mui's album cover art manages to convey her multifaceted and complex identity. As extrapolated based on her album cover images, Mui's identity can be summarized by two words, ever-changing and avant-garde. As stated, Mui's gender identity does not comply with conventional standards established for a woman, as she encompasses both an androgynous and feminine identity. Moreover, Mui's album cover art also epitomizes the identity of Hong Kong in the 1980s, a period characterized by tumultuous changes in social norms and atmosphere. The change in Mui's album cover art, from the avant-garde and active portrayal of Mui in *Leap the Stage* to the sexually charged image in *Bad Girl*, shows the growing acceptance of diverse expressions of identities within Hong Kong's social and cultural landscape. Li Chin Pang echoes this sentiment by suggesting that Mui's contradictory identities show how the facets of a woman's identity are influenced by the rapidly changing society of 1980s Hong Kong.[20]

Mui's identity and status remain unshaken in the present age of Cantopop, despite new groups such as Mirror and Collar. After twenty years of her passing, Mui is still regarded as the "Ever-Changing Anita Mui" and widely acclaimed for her stage performance, acting, and remarkable songs. Cover album art is part of 1980s visual culture and plays a significant role in sculpting a singer's identity. Two of Mui's album covers, *Leap the Stage* and *Bad Girl*, are both currently on display in the M+ Museum in West Kowloon Cultural District, showing Mui's long-lasting influence even in the present day. Mui's cover art still remains widely celebrated for its innovative and ground-breaking nature, especially in its success in fostering Mui's free-spirited and dynamic identity.

In an age of Cantopop reemergence, Anita Mui is not only revered as the Daughter of Hong Kong, but her legacy is continued through the publication of countless books, movies and exhibitions dedicated to her. Cover album art is only one method of celebrating her legacy and establishing her free-flowing identity. In 2021, there was the release of the biographical drama film *Anita,* which provides a vivid portrayal of Mui's life from a child performer to a shining diva and actress. Not only is Mui's legacy celebrated on the big screen, an ever-growing phenomenon is also emerging in Hong Kong, with new fans being enchanted by Anita Mui, despite being only born after her death in 2003. These fans are dubbed post-Mui fans (後梅迷). The series of commemorative activities and her ever-fresh images on albums prove to sustain her legacy amidst her fans. With Mui's diverse and varied album covers, she will forever be remembered as a legend, an icon and a star who once brightened the Hong Kong Cantopop field through her dynamic identity.

20 Li, 91.

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