

NEW CURRENTS

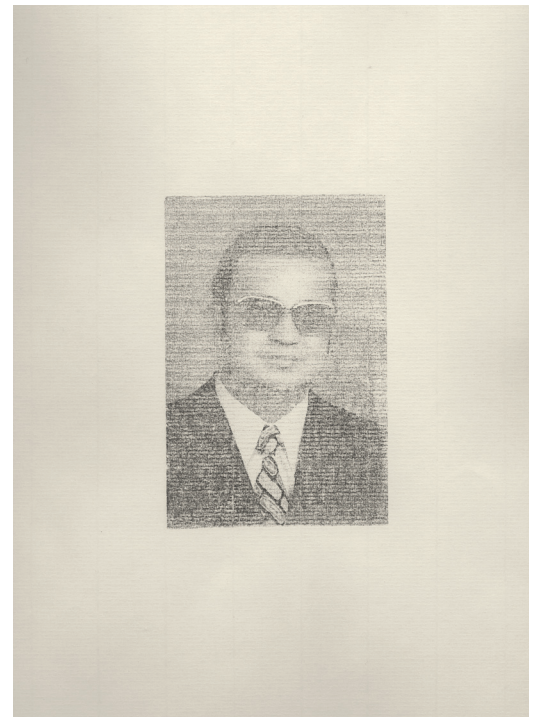
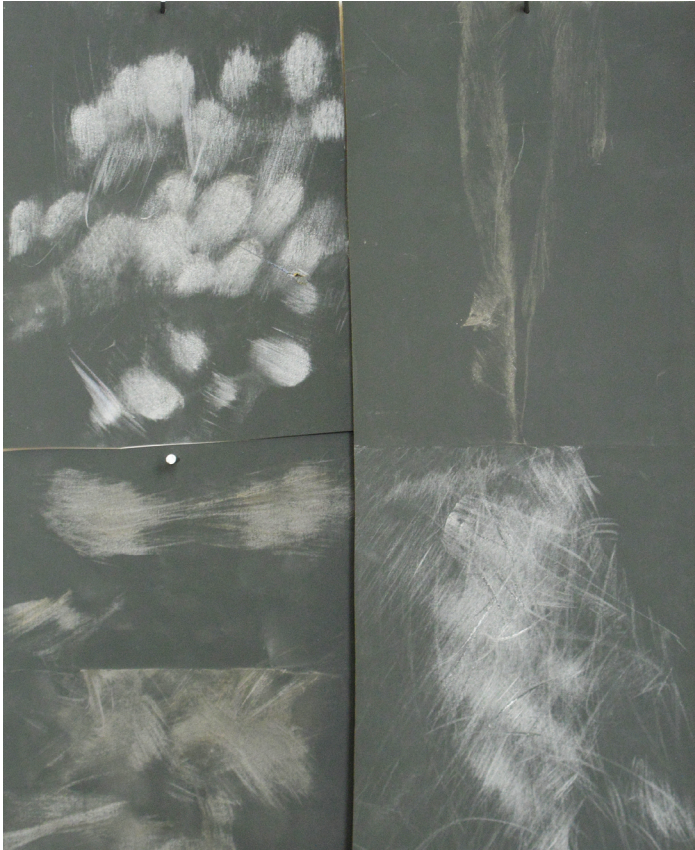
Ghosts in the Lens

BY THE EDITORS



Intrigued by jagged forms on sandpaper, uncannily lit rooms and methodical reworkings of passport photos found in Lebanon, *ArtAsiaPacific's* editors spotlight the work of three young artists who scratch beneath the surface.

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FROM "CHILD AND THE BEAST"
Genevieve Chua



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FROM "PASSPORT PHOTOS"
Hajra Waheed

²
FROM "SANDPAPER DRAWINGS"
Jo-ey Tang

1

GENEVIEVE CHUA
Child and the Beast #2
2011
Giclée on cotton fiber, 20.3 x 20.3 cm.
Courtesy the artist.

2

JO-EY TANG
Sandpaper Drawings
2010–
Sandpaper, 27.9 x 22.9 cm.
Courtesy the artist.

3

HAJRA WAHEED
"Anouchian Portrait Series" (detail)
2010
From a series of pencil and xylene
transfers on paper, 36.8 x 44.5 cm each.
Courtesy the artist and Green Cardamom,
London.

SINGAPORE Genevieve Chua

Genevieve Chua describes herself as an artist who "researches the fear of the unknown." She has achieved this to compelling effect in her well-known photographic series "Raised as a Pack of Wolves" and "Full Moon and Foxes" (both 2009), which depict adolescent girls wandering through city streets and parks at night—their aimlessness both delinquent and sexy.

Chua's participation in the Singapore Biennale follows her solo show at Singapore's Objectifs Center for Photography and Filmmaking, where she displayed "Child and the Beast" (2011), a series of black-and-white and colored giclée-on-cotton prints and cyanotypes. Among the eerie images are long-nailed bony hands clasped together and illuminated by an unexplained light source; a woman standing with her back to us, her scraggly black hair dropping far below her waist; and the skeletal remains of dried vegetation. The series conjures up a ghostly, almost paranormal world in which life appears to be falling into decay.

For all its supernatural, imaginative mood, Chua's work achieves critical relevance when looked at in terms of its country of origin. The irrationality, wildness, uncontrollability and naturalness of the phenomena alluded to in her work contrasts subversively with the city-state's clean but authoritarian political system, which unapologetically regiments society and restricts individual freedoms. Chua's work offers a moment of escape from the conventional order.

HONG KONG Jo-ey Tang

Jo-ey Tang's two most recent series read as traces of enigmatic, almost obsessive acts conducted in private. In "Attempts at Resistance" (2011), Tang smears shoe polish of various tones back and forth over boards and panels, while in the "Sandpaper Drawings" (2011), the artist rubs sandpaper around his studio to create ghostly, sometimes semi-figurative forms. "There's a sense of something fugitive in all of these works," he tells *ArtAsiaPacific*, a few days after the opening of "S(l)umm(er)ing on Madison Avenue," a show he curated at his apartment in the Upper East Side of Manhattan in May. The first in a series entitled "The Notary Public," this show presented installations and sculptures made of everyday objects by artists such as Carol Bove and B. Wurtz.

The low-key, almost austere tone of the show typifies the Hong Kong-born artist's aesthetic and conceptual interests. Whether he is working with shoe polish or sandpaper, much of his work is the product of instructions he sets himself. At the UCLA New Wight Biennial in 2010, he exhibited sculptural objects on the floor, but returned to the exhibition the day after the opening to move them all five inches forward, out of the spotlights. "I wanted the possibility of repeat viewers to register this change at some level without knowing, and those who

come for the opening and then later to experience two slightly different scenes—a setup that is not unlike how a stereoscopic image operates."

A number of projects are keeping Tang busy this year. In July, he is spending a month in Montauk, New York, as an Edward F. Albee Foundation fellow. In September, he will travel to Paris for a yearlong academic fellowship sponsored by the Carla Bruni-Sarkozy Foundation. That month he will also hold a solo show at Exile gallery in Berlin. He explains that in January, he snuck into the construction site of Exile's new space and hid some objects underneath the floor, right before the cement was poured. "With this task (I don't call it performance), I was attempting to bracket the life span of the gallery space by installing a hidden and permanent work. These objects, which will be announced in the press release later on, act as perpetual shadows of the exhibition. Their exact location will never be revealed."

CANADA Hajra Waheed

Archives are for plundering, and that is what Hajra Waheed does to generate her reference-rich collages and drawings. A series of 16, "Architectural Studies" (2010) is made on old paper unearthed from a Fez stationery store, and inscribed with the floor plans of some of the world's oldest mosques, including Jerusalem's octagonal Dome of the Rock and the irregular Masjid-i-Jami in Isfahan. Beneath the abstracted forms of these venerable structures seen in architectural plan are fragments of miniature paper U-2 spy planes attached with clear tape and a cryptic, typewritten caption—perhaps a flight number—suggesting that the drawing itself is an inaccessible document of secrets.

Elements of Waheed's biography help to unlock her work's content. Born in Calgary to Muslim-Indian parents, she grew up in the ARAMCO gated town in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and lived there through the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War. She recalls watching US Air Force planes take off from the neighboring bases, a story that inflects the schematic "Architectural Studies" with personal narrative.

Waheed's current series bears a similar balance of formal austerity and embedded narrative. "Passport Photos" (2010–) is a planned suite of 198 images, of 99 women and 99 men, whose portraits (held by Beirut's Arab Image Foundation) were taken by the Tripoli-based Armenian photographer Antranik Anouchian (1908–91). Waheed's renderings, which she groups in nines by category—"Men with Glasses," "Women with Headscarfs," etc.—are painstakingly created in pencil/charcoal by moving her hand like a printer-head from left to right over the paper's ridges. The drawings are like apparitions, slowly revealing the faces of a long-disappeared era in Lebanon, captured by a man who himself escaped the mass obliteration of the Armenian people in 1915–17.