

劇本及
評論集

好郁

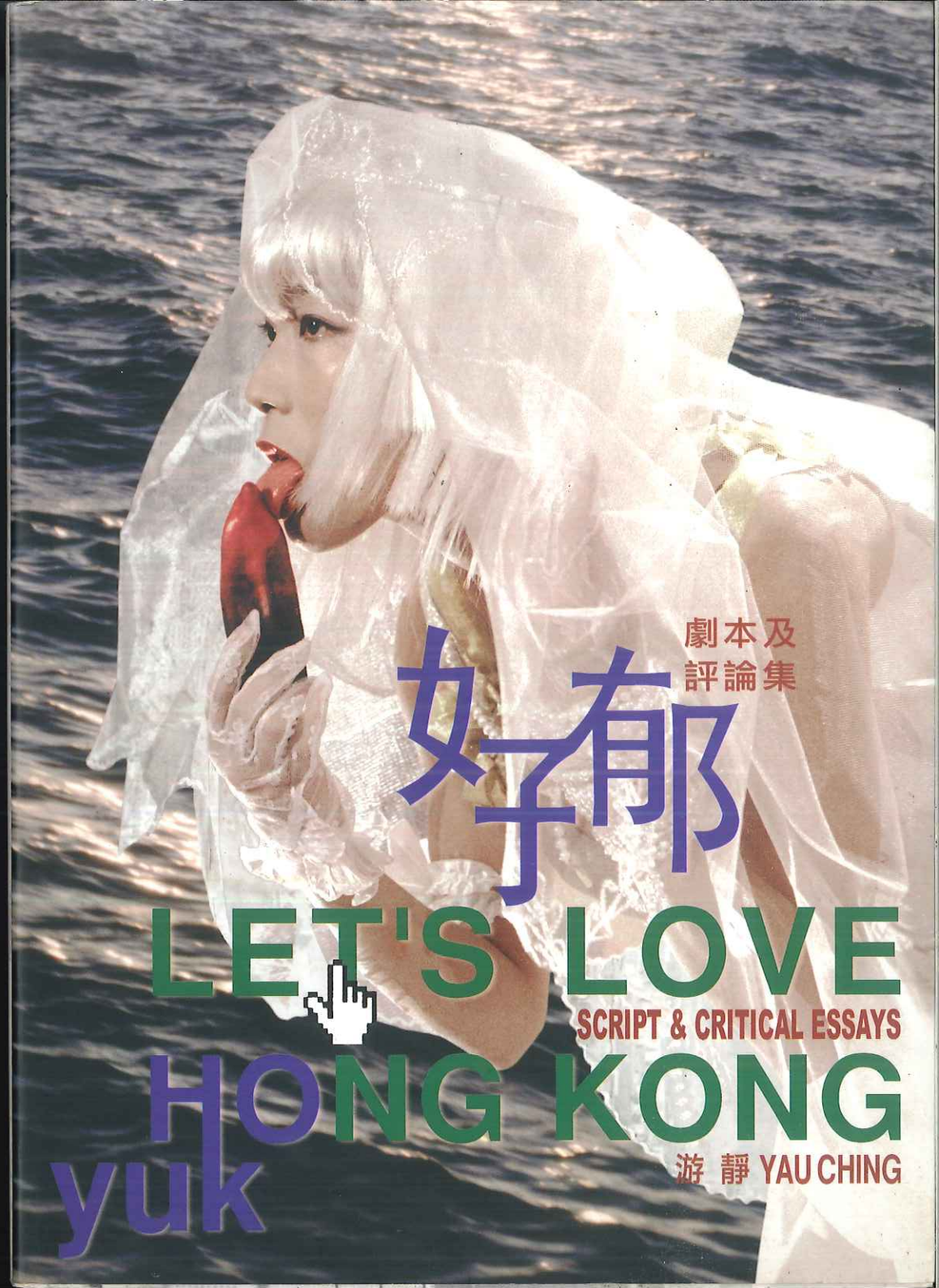
LET'S LOVE

SCRIPT & CRITICAL ESSAYS

HONG KONG

游靜 YAU CHING

yuk





LET'S LOVE

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AFTER 5 YEARS

YAU CHING

I wrote a short story in 1997, published in *Ming Pao Daily* (Hong Kong). Its main character is called Chan Kwok Chan (Made-in-China Chan). Around the same time, I was teaching a video production workshop on body politics at the Hong Kong Arts Centre. One of the workshop participants was Wong Chung Ching (who plays Chan Kwok Chan). She has never made a video before. But she has bought a DV camera and was curious about what it could do. Around the same time, I had just finished a feature-length documentary video, *Diasporama: Dead Air*, on the diaspora of Hong Kong people during the decade before the Chinese takeover in 1997. It was premiered at the Hong Kong Arts Centre on June 30, 1997. After the screening, I, like everybody else, took my camera to the streets. I made another video that night: *June 30, 1997, aka Celebrate What*.

Then I went back to my teaching job in Michigan. Under circumstances not entirely explicable to myself, I started adapting the short story into a film script. Hong Kong Arts Development Council approved a small production grant for this project in the following year. Soon I found myself packing, planning to move back to Hong Kong.

I started pre-production in 1999. I have left Hong Kong for nine years. Although I have freelanced as a scriptwriter and a film critic in Hong Kong, I did not know anybody within the Hong Kong film industry upon



my return. One acquaintance led to another; a key crew gradually took shape. Through Wong Chung Ching, I was introduced to Gill Wong, a recent graduate from the School of Visual Arts in New York. After seeing her portfolio, I hired her as Production and Costume Designer on the spot. After a series of begging phone calls to San Francisco, my long term pal, Chen Hung-yut, a graduate of Stanford's program in documentary filmmaking, and a still photographer in his own right, took pity on me and finally agreed to come to Hong Kong to shoot the movie at his own expenses. Around the same time, I found myself hopping among the "les" (short for lesbian in Hong Kong) bars. One night, I walked into a bar, and I saw a face and a male Hawaiian shirt with large flowery pattern. That was Erica. I gave her my number and had my fingers crossed. *Ho Yuk - Let's Love Hong Kong* is also the first feature ever done by Erica, Wong Chung Ching, Gill, and Hung-yut.

Although I had written a script with 43 scenes, nothing at the time was more enticing to me than the real lives and personalities of the two main actresses. Wong Chung Ching spent more than 15 hours per day in front of her computers; Siu Hak was selling cell phones in the streets. All of us, including myself, had more than one fulltime job, besides preparing for the film. On and off, we spent about six months rehearsing. I gave them particular situations, and they filled in with their improvisation and imagination. Their contribution to the development of the script was crucial. For example, when I had the quirky idea of Hong Kong experiencing an earthquake, I called Ching up in the middle of the night to run it by her — she would still be up working of course. She told me that she had suddenly felt the ground shaking not too long ago and that for a long time, she could hardly walk. I knew that my impulse with them was right all along.



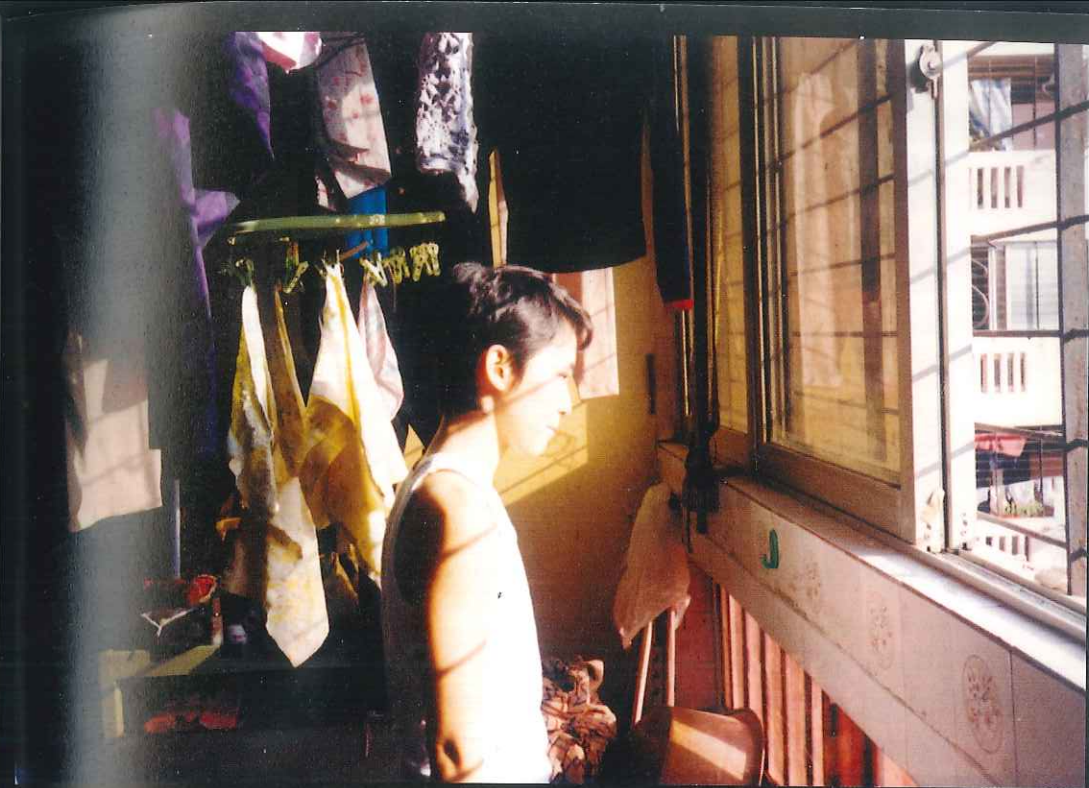
Before the shooting, cartoonist Emu drew the storyboard for the entire film. Through extensive discussion with the camera department, meaning Hung-yut and Cam Kam (who served simultaneously as Assistant Camera, DP when Hung-yut was gone, and Sound Recordist, depending on the day), we finalized the "look" for the film. In order to represent a society that moved very fast (*ho yuk*), I wanted the camera to be very quiet. In 99% of the scenes, the camera should be kept still, without any movement. Hung-yut's background in still photography, his excellent sense in composition, came in handy.

I had not expected the editing to be so difficult. My assistant and ex-student, Kit Hung (director of *Invisible People, I Am Not What You Want*) offered me the most needed emotional and artistic support throughout the 2 years I was struggling with editing, often during sleepless nights, endless computer crashes and cut-throat anxiety. In the end I am extremely grateful to Jofei Chen (director of *Where Is My Love, Incidental Journey*) who introduced me to Chen Po-wen (*A Brighter Summer Day, Yi Yi*, among others), Edward Yang's editor and one of the most influential figures in the Taiwanese New Wave Cinema. For me, I learned more about feature film editing in Chen's studio during the four days I slept there than what I have figured out on my own in the past ten years. I always thought that I had some authenticity in understanding and representing young Asian dykes' feelings and experiences but it was Chen Po-wen, this middle-aged married man, who miraculously combined the two rough cuts I gave him, and managed to create a gradual deepening and elevation of emotions of the characters through editing.



Compared to our colleagues in many Asian countries including Taiwan and Mainland China, Hong Kong independent filmmakers experience a uniquely difficult lack of resources, from funding, crew, cast, services to distribution support and legal protection. Our so-called post-colonial situation is not necessarily better than colonial times in terms of available support for its arts and culture. The former successful money-making machine is turning into a gradually dysfunctional money-making machine, with nothing necessarily changing for the better. At the expansive beach of Figueira da Foz, Portugal, where *Ho Yuk* won the Grand Prize for Fiction awarded by the International Federation of the Press, I watched how people stood still with their bodies facing massive movements of roaring waves. There is not much of a choice : either you get swallowed up by waves, that move very fast, or you do not move at all. *Ho Yuk*, at least for me, expresses that lack of a choice, either moving too fast, so you lose yourself, or you remain still, as still as possible, as if you are not able to move at all.

September 2002



PRODUCTION NOTES

Ho Yuk is a story of three women trying to stalk, chase, seduce and/or be seduced by each other. It is a narrative feature set in a reality that cannot separate the virtual from the real, that moves too much (*ho yuk*), in a speed faster than any of the characters can handle.

Hong Kong Culture

The film chooses to capture and expose a quintessential Hong Kong and the human struggles and sentiments in this microcosm. It has chosen to use a lot of actual street locations, many of which are being rapidly phased out by urban gentrification. Given our limited budget and the fact that lesbianism, issues of the sex industry and female nudity are all taboo subjects in Hong Kong cinema, all of the exterior shooting has been done without a permit, guerrilla style.

1. Temple Street

Zero sells sex toys in the most famous night market in Hong Kong at Temple Street, where there is also a large population of newly arrived immigrants from Mainland China. Zero and "Made-in-China" Chan meet here without their noticing each other.

This area is also heavily controlled by triad societies in Hong Kong. We were noticed even before we pulled out our camera. We paid for every second of the time we shot there.



2. Large Movie Theatres

Zero lives in a deserted movie theatre with more than 100 other people. It is a Hong Kong in which everybody watches moving images in their private homes or on their laptop computers, thus movie theatres are deserted. Like most large movie theatres currently deserted in Hong Kong, this movie theatre that Zero lives in used to specialize in showing pornographic movies. Zero's living environment is surrounded by porno images.

3. Housing Estates

To house the large influx of Chinese immigrants and the fast population growth of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, the British colonial Government built massive housing estates all over Hong Kong. It is a typical environment for working class families to live in. Chan Kwok Chan lives in a housing estate. Down at the very end of a long corridor with 48 doors that look exactly the same, Kwok Chan lives in a 200-foot room with her Mom and Dad. Like most people in Hong Kong, Kwok Chan also dreams of owning a place of her own. At her spare time, she likes to check out flats to let as a hobby.

4. Canto-pop/Karaoke

Zero spends her quiet moments singing sentimental love songs amidst the crowd in open air concerts, partly because such entertainment, like fireworks, is free in Hong Kong as they are provided by the Government. Zero's singing also gracefully appears in our end credits.

5. Hong Kong Food

Hong Kong is known for its food. Mom shows Chan Kwok Chan how to make turnip cake, a Cantonese delicatessen. To her, this is her way of showing love as well as keeping the Chinese tradition alive. Zero,



however, like many youngsters in Hong Kong, only eats fast food, especially from McDonalds.

6. Sell Sell Sell

Hong Kong specializes in selling. Zero is a salesperson. She sells so many different things that she has to use the same language for all of them. As a salesperson, she speaks as fast as possible to attract attention. She speaks so much every day that she is at a loss of words when it comes to things unsellable.

7. Realism, Pacing and Colours

To enhance the special realism in the film, non-professional actors have been used throughout. However, a contrast between an ever-changing screen with fast-paced cheesy computer effects and a still frame with observant, long-take camera style is used to highlight a uniquely absurd and almost surrealistic pace for the film. The slow movement of the giraffes also underlines the surrealism. A special kind of lush, warm, yellowish colour tone is designed to recall a certain emotional resonance that resembles one created by period drama.

8. Lesbianism and Women's Desire in Hong Kong

Ho Yuk is the first movie with lesbianism as the theme ever made in Hong Kong by a woman (all the previous ones have been directed by men), and could therefore be seen as the first lesbian movie in the history of Hong Kong cinema. As a movie centering on women's desires, the majority of the crew and cast are women, a structure unprecedented in Hong Kong film industry. Although Hong Kong is known to be a society as being highly modernized, this film touches upon some of the taboos and repression in this very Chinese society.



Problems in Hong Kong

The problem of loneliness, of expressing desire and affection when language and human relationships are increasingly mediated by technology and commercialism. A world in which we have enabled media and technology to change the colours of every hidden corners of our psyche. The illusion of speed and efficiency this society gives us, and our helpless and absurd dependability on such illusion. The problem of finding a decent place to live; the dilemma and irony to slave away for one's dream house until one dies, whether one eventually gets it or not.

Through exploring and foregrounding the predicaments of each characters' lives, examining their motivations, behaviours and emotions, the film traces their possibilities and impossibilities to change, without losing sight of the possible manifestations of goodness and hope embedded in fantasies and longing *per se*, as seen in Zero's relentless pursuit of Chan Kwok Chan, the unconditional love between Chan Kwok Chan and her mother, and Nicole's self-sufficiency, power and strength in her relationship to her own body and sexuality through her privileged access to media, technology and capital.



青文評論叢書之十

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