

For Immediate Release

Samson Young
***Songs for Disaster Relief* Opens Today**
Collateral Event of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Co-presented by M+ and HKADC, *Songs for Disaster Relief*, features a series of *newly commissioned* site specific works

Exhibition period: 13 May – 26 November 2017

Venue: Campo della Tana, Castello 2126-30122, Venice, Italy
(Opposite the main entrance of Arsenale)



Installation view, *Palazzo Gundane (homage to the myth-maker who fell to earth)*, 2017, Silk-screen print on vinyl cover, felt tip pen on vinyl records, 3D-printed nylon, vitrine of found objects, movable curtain system, neon, video, animation and 10-channel sound installation. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Simon Vogel.

(11 May 2017, Venice) M+ at the West Kowloon Cultural District and Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) are proud to present the solo exhibition *Samson Young: Songs for Disaster Relief, Hong Kong in Venice* as a Collateral Event of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. As the third collaboration between M+ and HKADC, this exhibition marks a major milestone for

Hong Kong contemporary art at one of the most important international platforms.

To mark the occasion, Mr. Lau Kong-wah, Secretary for Home Affairs, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Dr. Wilfred Wong, Chairman of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), Mr. Duncan Pescod, Chief Executive Officer of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, and Ms. Suhanya Raffel, Executive Director of M+, officiated the inauguration of the exhibition. The occasion also marks the ninth Hong Kong's presentation at the International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia. The show will run through to 26 November 2017.

The curatorial team consists of Ying Kwok, a respected Hong Kong curator, as the Guest Curator, with Doryun Chong, Deputy Director and Chief Curator of M+, serving as the Consulting Curator.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Lau Kong-wah, Secretary for Home Affairs, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, said, "The Hong Kong Government has all along been working with the stakeholders to promote the arts and culture and celebrate the achievements of our artists. We endeavour to create an environment which is conducive to developing Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis.

We are excited about the commissioning of various arts and cultural landmarks in the next few years. The first batch of the arts and cultural facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District will come into operation in the next two years, namely, the Xiqu Centre for Chinese opera, and M+ museum for international visual art and culture, design and architecture, and moving image."

Dr. Wilfred Wong, Chairman of HKADC, said, "We are happy to see Samson's artistic development and hope the Venice Biennale experience is another milestone for him to go further. Also in the 3rd collaboration with WKCDA, our partner has taken the initiative to invite Ying Kwok, guest curator, to take part in the project. It is our hope to nurture more Hong Kong talents so that the torch of Hong Kong arts can be passed on to the younger generation."

Ms. Suhanya Raffel, Executive Director of M+, said, "This year, we are excited to collaborate with widely respected Hong Kong curator Ying Kwok, who has worked closely with Doryun Chong, Deputy Director and Chief Curator of M+, and Samson to present a timely, resonant project at one of the most important art world events. M+ is proud to be able to present Hong Kong artists doing magnificent work on the world stage. We look forward to bringing more of our artists and curators into the world's spotlight."

Songs for Disaster Relief by Samson Young

At the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Young presents a new body of work that reframes the popularity of "charity singles" —purpose-made recordings for charitable causes, featuring super-group artists—as historic "events" and a culturally transformative moment in time. Charity singles were mostly associated with the 1980s, and coincided with the rise of neo-liberalist aspirations and the globalisation of the popular music industry. However, Young began to reflect on their appropriateness when 'We Are the World', one of the best-known charity singles, was remade recently. A perceived strangeness in the setup left a mark on the artist's consciousness, setting him on a journey of rediscovery that informs this exhibition.

Through a deliberate repurposing and creative misreading of such iconic songs as 'We Are the World' and 'Do They Know It's Christmas', the artist has generated a series of drawings, objects, videos, spatial sound installations and site-specific works that together constitute a unique audio-visual experience. The exhibition is conceived as an album unfolding in space to be experienced in person.

Palazzo Gundane (homage to the myth-maker who fell to earth), one of the key pieces in the exhibition, consists of a large 3D-printed statue, a “digital collage” of disparate elements. Presented in an artist-designed vitrine, the sculpture acts as a preface to the exhibition and reflects the broadness of the artist’s multi-pronged research on his chosen subject matter. The exhibition also includes an immersive installation comprising a newly created multi-channel sound piece synchronized with a single-channel video shot in the once booming Williston, North Dakota and featuring Young’s frequent collaborator, vocal artist Michael Schiefel, plus digital animations, a motorized theatrical curtain, and a host of found domestic objects. The point of departure for this ambitious new work was the artist’s discovery of an item of fake news from the internet about a fictional South African musician named “Boomtown Gundane”.

“Songs for Disaster Relief” also includes several other new works including: a new rendition of “We Are the World” via “muted performance”—a unique singing technique developed by the artist—by Kwan Sing Choir of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions; the artist’s own Cantonese-language performance of “Bridge over Troubled Water”, which makes reference to previously popular televised fundraising drives; and a neon sculpture based on the artist’s handwriting of a statement from a speech given by Mao Zedong in 1957.

Through this wide-ranging array of mediums, forms, and subject matters, Young presents an exploration of conflicting ideologies as well as the genuine affective qualities that these songs and their aspirations embodied. “Songs of Disaster Relief” brings together many political vantage points in a cross-cultural context to explore urgent social, philosophical, and political questions.

Doryun Chong, Deputy Director and Chief Curator of M+, who is serving as Consulting Curator for this project said: “In ‘Songs for Disaster Relief,’ Samson Young brilliantly finds a way to address migration and refugee crisis, the topics that are extremely relevant not only in Europe but also globally. He does this not in a didactic way but through harking back to the bygone moment that is in fact deeply lodged in our collective memory. His project promises to be a powerful reminder of the need for us to have a long-view historical perspective on the present, which increasingly grows uncertain with mounting fake news and conflicting claims. I am sure that the exhibition will provide many viewers with rich perceptual experiences and as well as with a sense of urgency.”

Ying Kwok, Guest Curator of this project said: “Samson Young’s new works are reminiscent of an album record, and when experienced personally creates a unique physical spatial environment. Each piece tells a new story with reference to the iconic 80s charity songs, which bring in exciting nuances that cover cultural and political thinking behind their production. Compared with the ‘official’ remake of these charity songs - while being a commercial success, but somehow seen as failed aspirations - the artist reconstructs them by injecting new elements that prompt the viewer to embark on a journey of re-thinking recent local (Hong Kong) and international issues.”

Samson Young added, “I took some risks with this new body of work both in terms of scale and technique, and I am really pleased with the way things turned out. It’s been a joy to work with Ying and M+. I am grateful for their trust, and their support.”

General Information

Exhibition Period

From 13 May until 26 November 2017

10 am to 6 pm

Closed on Mondays (except 15 May, 14 August, 4 September, 30 October, and 20 November, 2017)

Location

Campo della Tana, Castello 2126-30122, Venice, Italy
(Opposite the main entrance of Arsenale)

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with reprints and new commissioned essays from Seth Kim-Cohen and Anthony Leung Po Shan, as well as contributions from Samson Young, Ying Kwok, Doryun Chong exploring the intricate layers of Young's artistic practice from various perspectives.

Websites

<http://www.venicebiennale.hk>

<http://www.hkadc.org.hk>

<http://www.westkowloon.hk/en/mplus>

Social Media

Please join the conversation with Songs for Disaster Relief, Collateral Event at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia on Twitter (@mplusmuseum), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mplushongkong>) and Instagram (@mplusmuseum) via the hashtags #SamsonYoung #SongsForDisasterRelief #HongKongVenice

Notes to Editors**Hong Kong Arts Development Council**

Established in 1995, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) is a statutory body set up by the Government to support the broad development of the arts in Hong Kong. The major roles of HKADC are to fund, promote and support the broad development of the arts including literary arts, performing arts, visual arts as well as film and media arts in Hong Kong. Aiming to foster a thriving arts environment and enhancing the quality of life of the public, HKADC is also committed to facilitating community-wide participation in the arts and arts education, encouraging arts criticism, raising the standard of arts administration and strengthening the work on policy research.

Major development strategies:

- Supporting promising artists and arts groups in the pursuit of excellence
- Promoting arts administration to improve the management of arts groups
- Focusing on the arts environment and proposing policy recommendations
- Enhancing public participation and exploring arts space
- Fostering strategic partnerships and bringing arts resources together

HKADC has taken part in the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia since 2001, with an aim to enhance exchange and communication between Hong Kong and other countries in the world. About 532,000 people have visited the past eight exhibitions.

West Kowloon Cultural District

Located on Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour, the West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the largest cultural projects in the world. Its vision is to create a vibrant new cultural quarter for Hong Kong. With a complex of theatres, performance spaces, and M+, the West Kowloon Cultural District will produce and host world-class exhibitions, performances, and cultural events, as well as provide 23 hectares of public open space, including a two kilometre waterfront promenade.

M+

Hong Kong's museum for visual culture – encompassing 20th and 21st century art, design, and architecture, and moving image from Hong Kong, China, Asia, and beyond – M+ will be one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary visual culture in the world. Located adjacent to the Art Park on the waterfront, the museum building, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, is scheduled to open in 2019.

Artist: Samson Young

Samson Young (b.1979) is an artist and composer based in Hong Kong. Young's diverse practice draws from the avant-garde compositional traditions of aleatoric music, musique concrète, and graphic notation. Behind each project is an extensive process of research, involving a mapping of the process through a series of 'sound sketches' and audio recordings. His drawing, radio broadcast, performance and composition touch upon the recurring topics of conflict, war, and political frontiers.

Young was the inaugural winner of the BMW Art Journey Award at the Art Basel Hong Kong 2015. His recent solo projects include Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2015); Team Gallery, New York (2015); Para Site, Hong Kong (2016); Experimentier, India (2016); and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany (2016).

As a practising musician, Young is the member of multiple bands and has collaborated with ensembles and orchestras worldwide. He has participated in international music and performing art festivals including Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt; Fusebox Festival, Austin; New York Electronic Art Festival, New York; Tonlagen Festival, Dresden; Transart Festival, Bolzano; and MONA FOMA Festival of Music and Art.

Guest Curator: Ying Kwok

Ying Kwok is an independent curator who is noted for her inventive curatorial approach, often centered on 'boundaries of collaboration' between curators, artists, and the wider community. She is the curator of the Chinese Arts Centre in Manchester in the UK between 2006 and 2012.

Since 2013, Kwok became an independent curator working internationally. She co-curated Harmonious Society, as part of Asia Triennial Manchester 2014, From longing to belonging with Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art in Poland in 2014 and 2016; and recently No cause for alarm at La MaMa Galleria in New York 2016. In 2015, Kwok was awarded the Asia Cultural Council Fellowship to carry out a five-month-long research on participatory and engagement projects in the US. To encourage critical thinking and initiating effective discussions in Hong Kong, Kwok founded the Art Appraisal Club with a group of local art professionals in 2014. They first launch their biannual and bilingual journal Art Review Hong Kong in 2016. Apart from that, the group also provides regular exhibition reviews which are published in magazines and various cultural networks.

Consulting Curator: Doryun Chong

Doryun Chong is the Deputy Director and Chief Curator at M+, a museum of visual culture in Hong Kong. Chong oversees all aspects of curatorial activities of M+, including collection, exhibitions and symposiums, as well as learning and interpretation. Prior to joining M+, he held curatorial positions at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York from 2009 to 2013; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis from 2003 and 2009; and also at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. He served as the coordinator for the Korean Pavilion exhibition at the Biennale Arte 2001 and co-curated *Tsang Kin-wah: The Infinite Nothing*, Hong Kong's project for the Biennale Arte 2015.

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