

SEPTEMBER OPEN STUDIO
MỞ XƯỞNG THÁNG CHÍN

TIME BORROWED, SPACE TRANSITED

BY/CỦA LAU WANG TAT



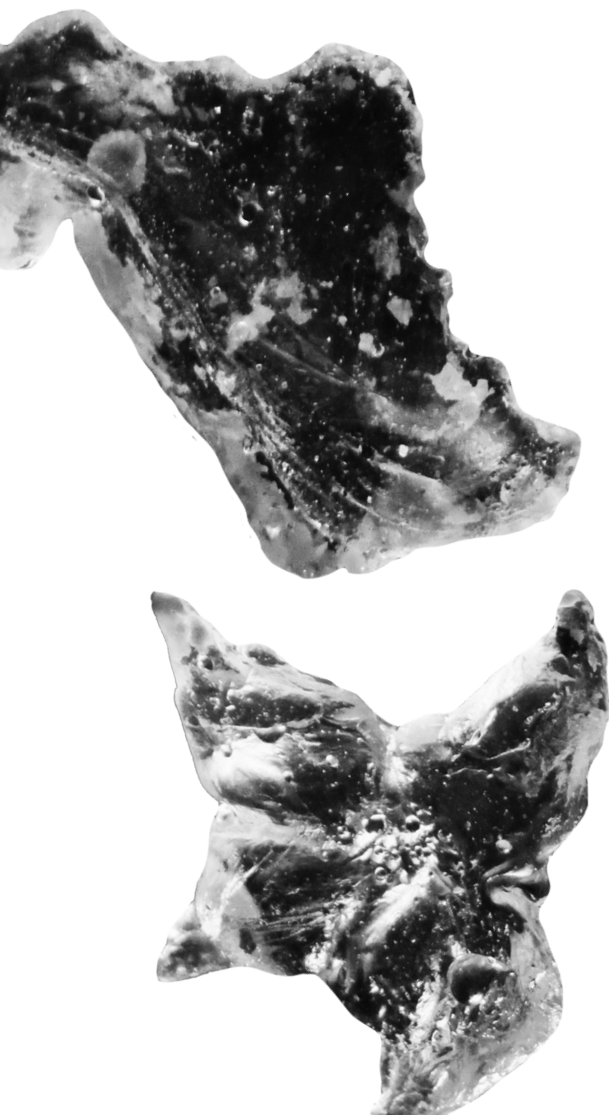
Time Borrowed, Space Transited features work in progress by Hong Kong-based artist Lau Wang Tat concluding his four-week residency period at A.Farm. When he came to Saigon, Tat brought along things that he had kept for years ranging from old works, parts of his homeland, to his white hairs, and a somewhat troubled mind. For him, Saigon acts as a pit stop, where he could contemplate the notion of identity, migration and personal archive, for soon he would have to leave his country and begin a new life in another place.

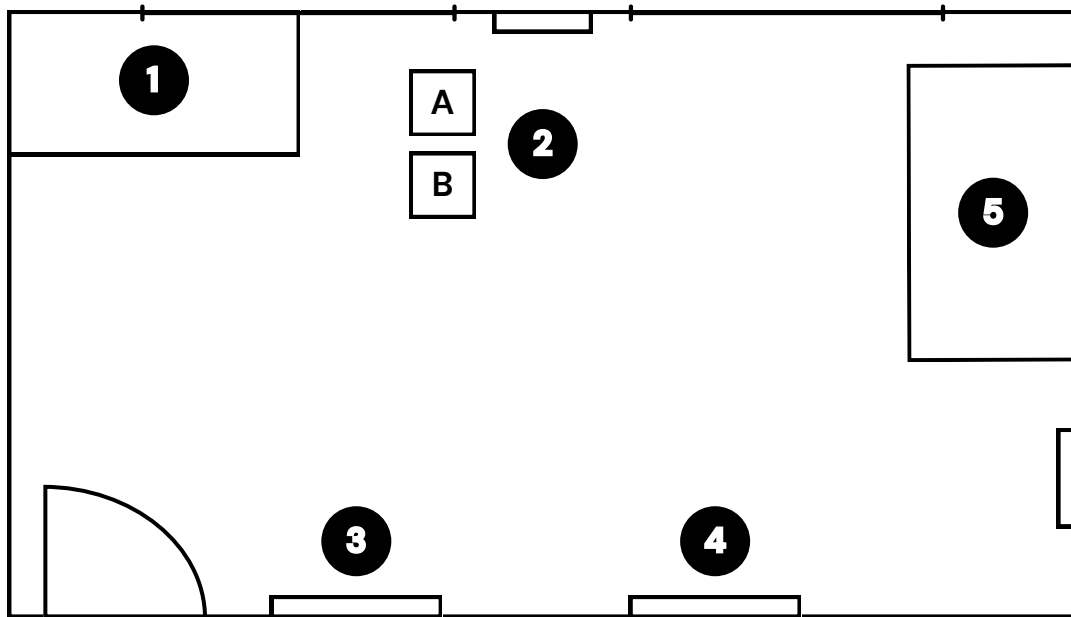
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Hong Kong, Lau Wang Tat obtained his Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) degree co-presented by Hong Kong Art School and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT). Lau also obtained his Master of Arts in Fine Arts from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 2018, he participated in the artist residency program in The Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Japan, as a studio artist. Combining different media, including ceramics, printmaking, painting, and Chinese calligraphy, his focus in art making involves the relationship between the inner self and its surroundings.

ABOUT A. FARM

A. Farm is an international art residency program in Ho Chi Minh City, operated by MoT +++ and Goethe-Institut HCMC, supporting collaboration and exchange among Vietnamese and international artists.





1

THE DESK

Please use the light on your phone to see the contents inside the cabinets. Do not feel intimidated by the objects inside. They might look like "souls," but they are just inanimate objects made of various materials

2

A. PRESLEY AND RAYMOND

A series of photos taken of two sports students, Presley and Raymond, in Kowloon City, Hong Kong, in 2003. I scaled down the photos, reorganised and encased them in resin that reflects the shape and texture of the studio's floor. The photos captured the process of "exchanging" between the two students. They also recorded their innocent smiles and shyness, a result from being "directed".

B. ONCE UPON A MID-LIFE

This work captured the texture of the studio's floor during my residency using press molding. I then transferred the texture onto resin, with my grey hair wrapped inside.

3

GRASP

Somewhere between being able to grasp something, or not.

4

A FAINT LIGHT

The poem centers around the author, who is alone and tired, returns to his empty and gloomy home one day. A faint light shines through the window into the home. The author observes the outline of objects by the window, and uses them as a means to express his feelings.

5

SOIL SAMPLES NEAR YUEN LONG PARK (NEW TERRITORIES, HONG KONG)

Formerly known as Buffalo Ridge, a total of 30 soil samples were obtained from drilling, ranging from 18 to 50.22 meters deep.

Personal memories, fragments of events and the reinterpretation of things reassembled, are starting points for me. Couple this with the unique qualities of each material, I engage in the exploration of the inner mind and surroundings. While handling each creative medium, I like to return to being “naïve.” By allowing uncertainty and the unexpected to help the artwork take shape — Isn’t this how we manage life too?

“In the past, when a person had a secret but didn’t want to tell anyone, they would go to the mountains, find a tree, dig a hole in the tree, tell the secret to the hole, and then cover it up with dirt.”— A famous line spoken by actor Tony Leung in the movie *2046*, 2004, directed by Wong Kar Wai.

For the past few years, I have been digging, as if I wanted to make those elusive memories tangible and then blurred again. Through digging and burying, I wondered if my hopes, or unease in my body and mind could be buried.

For a potter, firing is often seen as the final step because during this process, the artwork’s form and color can become permanent. It will also not dissolve or decay. However, the expression of ceramic art is no longer limited to this; it holds various possibilities, just like the ever-changing nature of life. Today, whether I see myself as a ceramic artist is no longer relevant.

I brought soil from my home—Hong Kong—to Saigon, Vietnam, to explore the notion of changing identities. Daily objects have been collected for the reasons of commemoration or record.

Before I decided on a specific theme, words like “identity,” “land,” “transition,” “conceal,” and “archive” often lingered in my mind. Through the act of collecting soil in Hong Kong, I found myself unconsciously archiving things. In my first few days of staying here, I tested materials I was interested in and discovered a tendency to wrap and preserve items.

Three years ago, while conducting drilling work at my long-time school where I worked, I collected soil samples at different depths and classified them. I was surprised to find that the thirty soil samples at different depths had distinct colors. I intuitively took those soil samples to this art residency.

While being here, in a foreign land, I decided to conduct an archiving of soil from home and interweave it with memories and emotions. By chance, I discovered that the origin of “Saigon” is kapok—a tree, which symbolizes resilience, is commonly found in Hong Kong. I wrapped the soil from Hong Kong in resin shaped like a kapok flower. This reminded me of a line from Gong Zizhen’s poem, *Ji Hai Miscellaneous Poems Part 5*, 1839:

“Fallen petals are not heartless matter,
Transmuted into spring soil they will again nurture flowers.”

During this process, I also took the grey hair I collected over the last 13 years and buried them in resin, making them their final destination and affirming that I have aged. Coincidentally, I also archived my anxieties about aging.

By exploring the intricacies between identity, space, and ordinary objects, I explored the use of various materials to create, as well as transform collected objects, using them as vehicles to convey messages and tell stories.

Saigon, 18 September 2024
Lau Wang Tat

