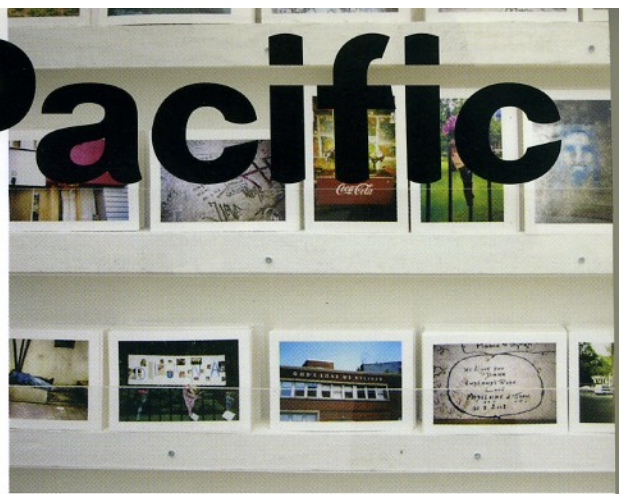


ArtAsiaPacific

TODAY'S ART FROM TOMORROW'S WORLD



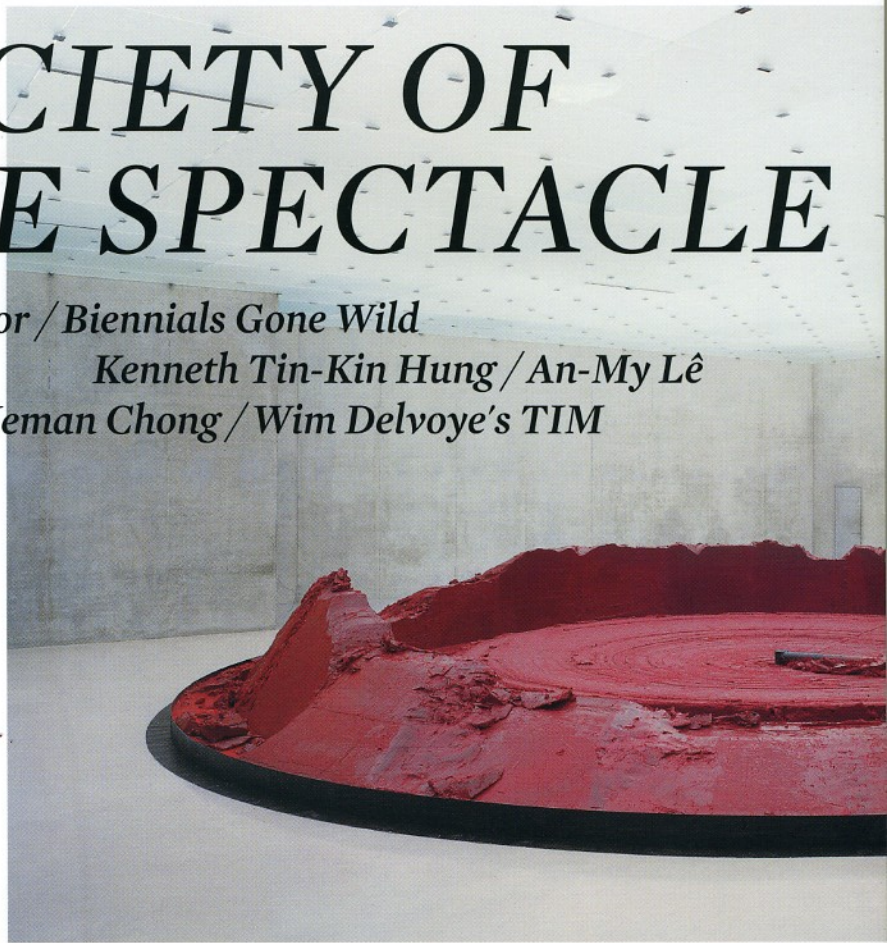
NO.60 SEP/OCT 2008

THE SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE

Anish Kapoor / Biennials Gone Wild

Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung / An-My Lê

Heman Chong / Wim Delvoye's TIM



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Hanif Kureishi *Intimacy*

Edited by BRIAN MACARTHUR

The Penguin Book of TWENTIETH-CENTURY

PROTEST

WHAT IS THE ARTIST'S ROLE TODAY?

LÉFEBVRE everyday life in the modern world





RESIDENTIAL ERECTION.
 2008, video stills from
 HD video, 5 min.
 All images in this article,
 unless otherwise noted,
 are courtesy the artist
 and Postmasters Gallery,
 New York.

as infamous despots, religious figures and tabloid celebrities. *The New York Times*' art critic Roberta Smith called the video, which was screened at Postmasters inside a newsprint-covered structure that resembled a cross between a mosque and the United States Congress, "the big draw" of the show, and compared its low-tech animation to "the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album or the credits of the Monty Python television show, with jet fuel."

Born in Hong Kong in 1976, Hung immigrated to California in 1996 and enrolled the following year in City College of San Francisco to study photography. His 1998 color photographic series "Subliminal Realm" explored issues of identity through the use of composite imagery—mixing dramatically lit portraits with crude, decaying surfaces, such as corroding steel or cracked earth, to a surreal effect. His next photographic series, "Pseudo-Pandemonium" (1999), boldly pushed his examination of inner thoughts into a punk, nihilistic realm. The resulting 18 black-and-white photographs capture subjects in a variety of maniacal poses—screaming with their eyes rolled back in their heads or



CONTENT, 2005, publication by Rem Koolhaas/OMA. Cover art by Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung. Courtesy Taschen, Köln.



sticking out their tongues—performing in outlandish costumes and on sets constructed from printouts of blown-up Chinese characters and recycled Styrofoam packaging of the sort used to protect appliances or wrap fast food. Some of the backgrounds of the settings are paint splattered, while the 35mm film used to make the prints is often abused with scratches and fingerprints. The graphic imagery and bizarre titles, from *Spasmodic Proclivity* to *Putrescent Introvert*, make for a powerful but unsettling viewing experience—one that very few people could actually have (since the photos have not been widely exhibited) without Hung's ability to post his work online.

In the process of creating an Internet portfolio of his photography, as well as websites for friends, Hung learned skills that he would soon start putting to even more inventive uses. He received a scholarship to San Francisco State University in 2000 and produced *RSVP*, a black-and-white pulp fiction comic that blended his own photography with appropriated pornography. *RSVP* tells the absurd story of a "filthy old Asian Elvis" (one of the artist's nicknames) created by Psychotic Humanoid—aka Kenneth "Well" Hung—through a disjunctive narrative. The text weaves an uneventful tale, but the pictures are enticing—even with black dots and word balloons obscuring the explicit action. Hung's daily research of pornographic websites for the project would later lead to the production of *Badminton*, an



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installation exhibited at San Francisco's Southern Exposure Gallery in January 2001, that disturbingly displayed connect-the-dots diagrams of XXX pornography and portraits of anonymous porn stars in a kindergarten classroom setting. In May of 2001, he finished his own schooling at SF State and launched his ambitious 60X1.com.

One by one, Hung's graphic photomontages were posted to 60X1.com as splash pages (a website entry page, usually used to attract attention), but Hung radically built the whole site using such pages. The pages from 2001 and early 2002 are mostly visual experiments in Photoshop and DHTML code. The content is a colorful mix of found imagery manipulated to make somewhat senseless, neo-Dadaist artworks, often resembling advertisements. However, in March of 2002, Hung completely re-invented himself and 60X1.com with an interactive layout of degraeve.com's "Wgirls," entitled *American Sweetheart! / (*)(* \ (((girls_gone_wild!))))*. Numerous Wgirls, which are a combination of George Bush's face with the alluring bodies of supermodels and actresses, pose in front of a White House surrounded by vibrant graphics. A comical, instrumental version of the classic rock song "American Woman" accompanies the page. When the cursor roles over the right spot, windows pop up with either a credit for supposed stylist Laura Swoosh—a play on Laura Bush—or fictional wardrobe designer Tommy Midfinger, which spoofs fashion magnate Tommy Hilfinger's red, white and blue design sensibility.

Hung followed *American Sweetheart...* with several splash pages that blended Chairman Mao and Ronald McDonald with Buddha, the Virgin Mary and Pac Man. The most widely reproduced of the series is the second work, *When Ronald*



PSEUDO-PANDEMONIUM,
1999, series of
gelatin silver prints,
each 11 x 14 in.

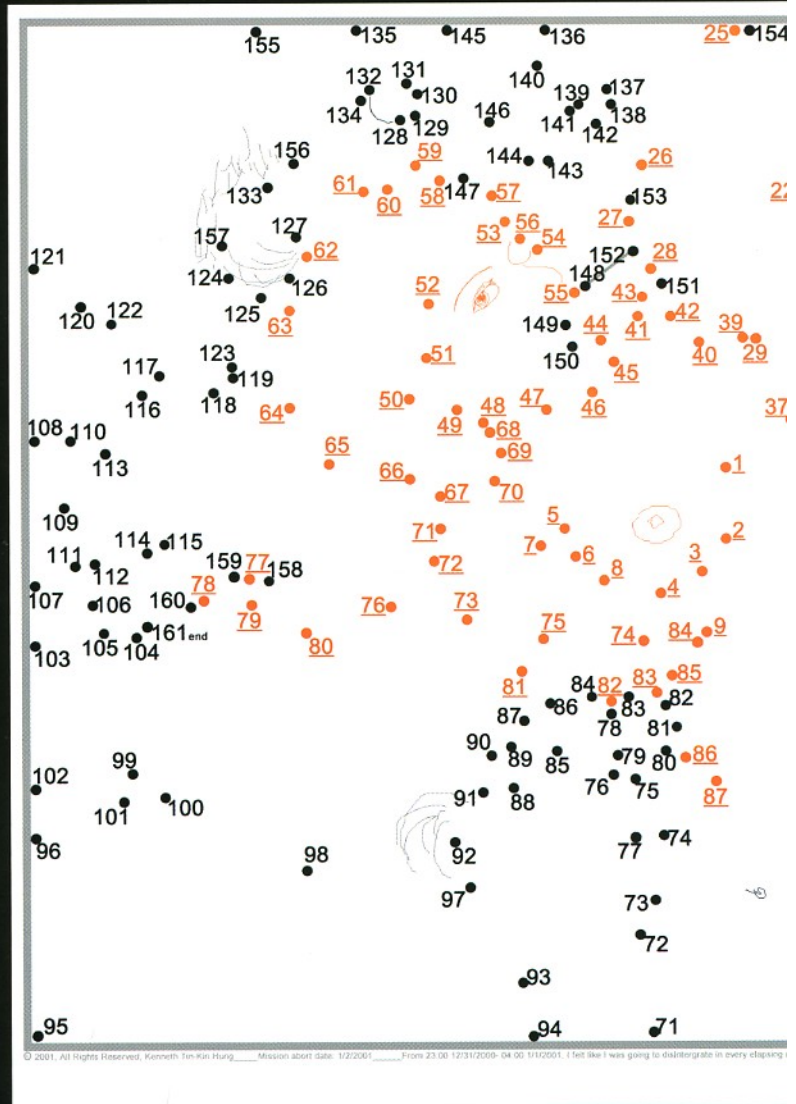
WELLHUNG, 2003,
Mixed-media
installation. Installation
view, Cartwright Hall Art
Gallery, Bradford, UK.



MaoDonald married Maodonna. Maodonna, conceived by putting Mao's head on the Virgin Mary's body, holds a Big Mac, Large Fries and Coca-Cola while Ronald MaoDonald sits at the figure's feet. The revolutionary guard, halo-like graphics and multiple packaged burgers, suggesting targets in a video game, encircle the couple. The page is accompanied by a looping, mechanical rendition of the 1986 hit ballad, "Take My Breathe Away." With this new vocabulary in tow—consisting of imagery grabbed from Google searches, the action of video games, amusing soundtracks and a cynical reading of history—Hung found his own brand of political satire that parodies a wide range of world leaders and current events. And because the work was posted on the Internet, it didn't take long for word to spread and interest in Hung's work to grow.

By the summer of 2002, Hung was invited to participate in an impressive array of international film and new media festivals, including Prix Arts Electronica in Linz, Austria; the VIPER International Festival for Film and New Media in Basel, Switzerland, where he won an award; LA Freewaves Festival of Experimental Media Arts in Los Angeles; Microwave International Media Festival in Hong Kong; and other events stretching from Chiang Mai to Rotterdam. Along the way, 60X1.com garnered favorable reviews in several major European magazines and newspapers. In the course of a year, Hung went from being a local San Francisco photographer and web designer to an internationally recognized new-media artist. He celebrated the newfound respect with his 2003 solo show, "Well Hung," at

In the course of a year, Hung went from being a local San Francisco photographer and web designer to an internationally recognized new-media artist.



(Center) **BADMINTON,**
2001, mixed-media
mural, 8 x 6 ft.

Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in Bradford, UK, and a lecture at the University of Bradford.

Back in the US, Hung was busy on a new, political website, *Global Presidential Election*, conceived collaboratively with artists Tim Blue and Elisa Harkins and computer-whiz Graham Myhre. *Global Presidential Election* advocated one world, one love and one leader. The candidates ranged from notorious dictators, such as Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, Idi Amin and Kim Jong-Il, to the freely-elected, rightwing politicians George W Bush, Sylvio Berlusconi, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ariel Sharon. There was also a spot for write-in nominations. The project was exhibited in a number of venues worldwide; most of the times, Schwarzenegger won. The tongue-in-cheek website also included a Voters Bill of Rights, Global Citizenship program, Voters Investment program (through which votes could be bought) and a Home Emergency Lifeline Patrol (HELP) line for reporting perceived threats from “people different than you.”

In 2004, commercial clients sought Hung’s services. He did the cover illustration for architect Rem Koolhaas/OMA’s

book *Content*, which was published by the gaudy art imprint Taschen. The final cover design shows the architectural firm’s iconic Beijing CCTV tower behind a crucifix-toting Bush, wearing a crown of McDonald’s “freedom” fries; a pistol-flashing Terminator/Kim Jong-Il character; and a machine gun- and knife-wielding Saddam Hussein/Rambo. Hung also made the illustration and finalized the character designs for House DJ Felix Da Housecat’s album “Devin Dazzle & the Neon Fever,” which featured a mystical, patterned vision of the band and their instruments. And for *Wired* magazine’s seminal article “The Long Tail,” by editor Chris Anderson about how digital technology is changing the entertainment industry, Hung illustrated an extended grid, in which a tower of iPods and a wall of outdated modes of communication envelop musicians, actors and sports stars, while a larger-than-life hipster looks down on the scene with one hand on the remote control.

Simultaneously, Hung immersed himself in the local San Francisco art scene, exhibiting his work in nine area group shows, while continuing to add political pages to 60X1.com. He also contributed to Warehouse 1310, a non-commercial gallery, forum and event space in San Francisco, where he was a core member and for which he designed the website and many of the early invites.

Then, in late 2005, Hung decided it was time to try a new scene and moved to New York with his girlfriend, photographer Hyun-Young Jung. True to form, they blogged the 16-day road-trip, posting it online. Shortly thereafter, the couple set up shop in New York’s Chinatown and began new projects, including cheapassfood.com, which Hung designed and contributes to and Jung edits. The blog-site highlights inexpensive food found throughout New York City and features humorous photography and whacky illustrations. Hung also spent much of 2006 compiling characters from the 60X1.com pages—including

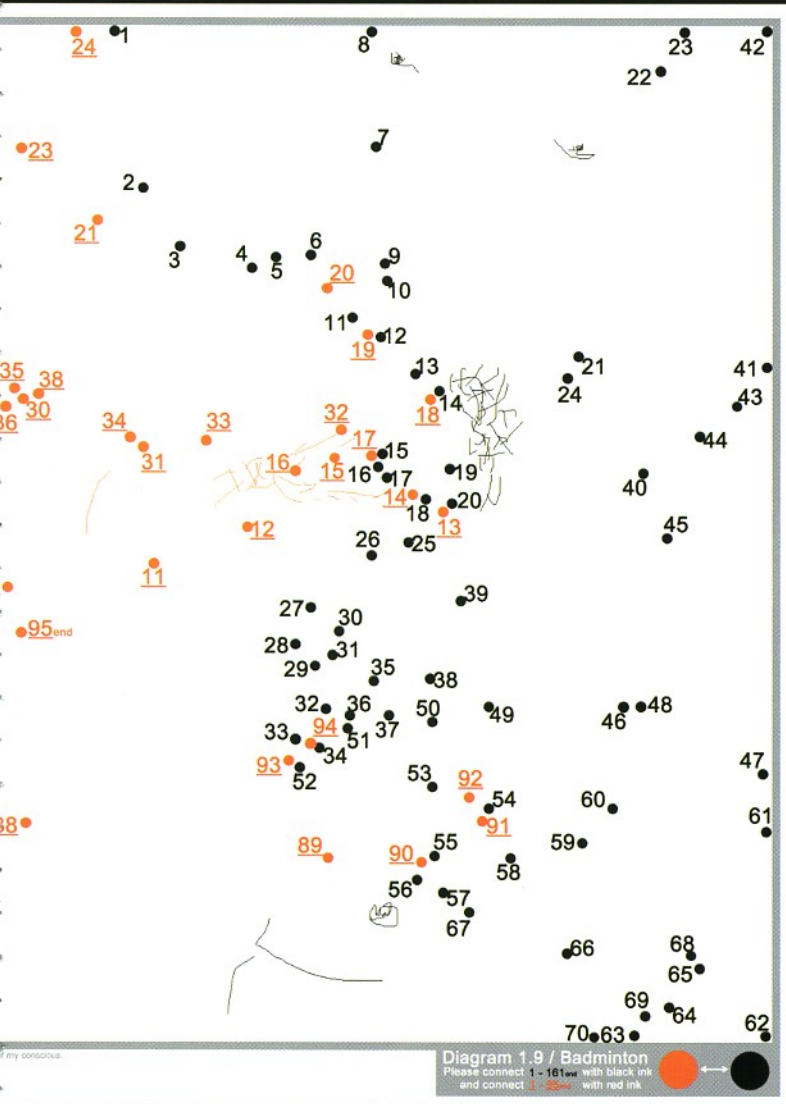


Diagram 1.9 / Badminton
Please connect 1 - 101 with black ink
and connect 1 - 50 with red ink

ABRACADABRA
(REAGANOMIC
ROMANTIC?), 2005,
mixed-media lightbox
with duraratan
photograph, 13 x 13 in.



让群众变为群众手里的尖锐武器

漢堡飽

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PAGE CREATED ON: 03-17-2008

ENTER
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.COM
60 X 1.COM

HE IS MY COUSIN!

A
SUB-
SITE OF

MaoDonald's

KEEP CLICKING THE "ENTER" BUTTON UNTIL U SEE THE LAST PAGE



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CA 94122, USA
+1 (415) 569-1296
KENNETHGTINKIN.COM

NO JAPANESE LANGUAGE THIS PAGE!

Sorry! NO JAPANESE FOR THIS PAGE!

PLEASE CHANGE YOUR SCREEN RESOLUTION TO 1024 X 768
IF YOU HAVE MODERN RECOMMENDED
-I AM CHINESE, PLS DO NOT MIS-INTERPRET ME AS JAPANESE

NO WANT SPLASH PAGES

TONG



(Left) **GAS ZAPPERS**, 2007, video still, HD video, 5 min, with music by Noah Vawter.

(Center) **AMERICAN SWEETHEART!**, 2002, mixed-media lightbox with duratran photograph, 13 x 13 in.



Arnold Sailormoonnegger, Sexy Tony Thatcher, Jesus bin Laden, and Godzillarafat—as well as creating new ones for his video *Because Washington Is Hollywood For Ugly People*.

In 2007, Hung was awarded a Media Arts Fellowship at Renew Media in New York and started work on *Gas Zappers*, a video game in the genre known as Serious Games about climate change. *Gas Zappers* currently exists as a six-minute video, exhibited in an April 2008 solo show at Postmasters, but Hung hopes to develop it into a free, educational game about global warming and alternative energy sources. The video begins with a polar bear being told by the actor/activist “Leotardo” DiCaprio to go to Venice with a gondolier. The gondolier battles to hold back the rising waters, but loses; so the polar bear swims through the seas past a sunken Amsterdam and surfaces in a forest, which nude hippies with marijuana “fig” leaves are trying to save. It fights off a bulldozer with the help of a monkey and the hippie’s tree-sprouting seeds. In the following scene, the bear combats exhaust-breathing animals—representing the US, China, India and Russia—with solar panels, wind turbines and energy-efficient light bulbs. The action continues with a race between gas-guzzling cars and a bicycle, and ends with the polar bear (transformed into a Nobel-Prize toting Al Gore)



A polar bear, transformed into Al Gore, confronts an oil-pumping George Bush. Gore wins—sitting on Bush’s face while asserting, “Try my greenhouse gas, sucker.”



confronting an oil-pumping George Bush, who is grilling the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which the US has failed to sign. Gore wins—sitting on Bush’s face while asserting, “Try my greenhouse gas, sucker.”

Equally as potent is Hung’s video *Residential Erection*, which also premiered in his solo show at Postmasters. This brilliant video, which draws on characters developed for *Because Washington....*, is scripted from beginning to end, and skewers all of the candidates in the 2008 American primary elections, without malice toward either party. The price of oil, the trade deficit, pop star Britney Spears, the religious right, the virtual reality portal Second Life, Homeland Security, the Mexican border, Guantanamo Bay, the TV personalities Oprah Winfrey and Jon Stewart and the guerilla street artist Banksy all play a part. What starts out as a critique of the weakened US dollar ends in a masturbatory climax, in which the Washington monument spurts a red, white and blue celebratory fluid. It’s a surreal moment, but one that’s totally in sync with Hung’s punk, bad-boy-but-concerned-about-the-future sensibility.

A self-made man who has constructed most of his history

on the Internet (see www.tinkin.com, which is rich in content), Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung is definitely one to watch. Like the socio-political new media art pioneers MTAA and Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries (whose 2003 text animation *CUNNILINGUS IN NORTH KOREA* proposed that Kim Jong-Il had discovered the secret formula that “DIALECTICAL SEX AND GENDER = HAPPY PEOPLE”) (SEE AAP 58), Hung uses the World Wide Web to deliver his brand of political satire to the masses and exhibitions to generate cultural interest and mainstream media response.

Whether Hung transcends his Internet presence—where his websites have received more than 28 million hits—and makes it to a level of higher visibility in the art orthodoxy remains to be seen. He has the talent; but will curators be interested in showing *Residential Erections* after the election is over? Probably not, even though there may be interest in commissioning new projects. Collectors will most likely continue to snatch up his video stills, which could be endless; or they may discover his early work, which is an untapped source.

However, considering how many websites and blogs Hung maintains (in addition to the eye-catching graphics, gaszappers and tinkin have great posts on environmental and political issues), one has to wonder how much time he has to pursue an art career, or if it’s even in his best interest.



Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung.
photo by Young Jung.