

**TAI KWUN CONTEMPORARY PRESENTS *SNEEZE*
MIKA ROTTENBERG'S FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION IN HONG KONG**

Hong Kong, 23 October 2020, Friday



Tai Kwun Contemporary presents a solo exhibition by Mika Rottenberg entitled *SNEEZE*, which runs from 24 October 2020 to February 2021. Featuring four video installations that create surreal alternative worlds of global everyday life, this is the first solo exhibition in Hong Kong by the artist.

Argentina-born, New York-based artist Mika Rottenberg (b. 1976) is known for her engaging yet rigorous artistic practice that combines film, architectural installation and sculpture. She is fascinated by processes of labour and of technology as well as the effects of distance and the production of value in our contemporary world. Her works bring to the fore some of the absurdities in our global world.

Curated by Tobias Berger, Head of Art at Tai Kwun, *SNEEZE* presents four works by Mika Rottenberg—*Sneeze* (2012), *NoNoseKnows* (2015), *Cosmic Generator* (2017), and *Spaghetti Blockchain* (2019). Her practice focuses on material surfaces and transformations that are simultaneously stimulating and disturbing, bizarre and banal, beautiful and lethal, productive and also exploitative. More specifically, the artist seeks out locales and locations across the globe to cast a spotlight on specific systems of production, such as a pearl factory in the Mainland, or a Calexico border town—yet she does so in humorous and surreal ways.

Referencing the traditions of both cinema and sculpture, Rottenberg documents aspects of reality but also invents footage from studio-built sets in order to create elaborate and subversive visual narratives. By weaving fact and fiction together, she highlights the inherent beauty and absurdity of our contemporary existence, shedding light on connections, disconnections, and the complexity of exchange.

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Exploring production processes that betray a wilful disconnection between labourers, suppliers, products, merchants, and consumers, Rottenberg's works inspire audiences to rethink theories of production, exchange, and consumption, in the vein where New Materialism advocates a critical materialist attention to distributed global influences of late capitalism and of climate change.

Tobias Berger, Head of Art at Tai Kwun, says, "Hong Kong has for decades served as an intermediary between what we once called 'East' and 'West'; it is a place of contrasts, contradictions, but also coming together. In many ways, I think Mika Rottenberg's video works exemplify such contradictions and connections—fascinating and sometimes volatile contradictions that allow viewers to gain insight or awareness into the paradoxes of contemporary existence. Her works are not about Hong Kong as such, but are connected to the overabundance of goods and flows of global trade that Hong Kong is very much part of. Finally, she has this humorous and imaginative approach to these very serious issues."

Sneeze (2012)



Mika Rottenberg, *Sneeze*, 2012. Single-channel video installation, sound, colour; 3:02 min. Dimensions variable.
© Mika Rottenberg, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Men with exaggeratingly large red noses sneeze, one after another, ejecting an odd assortment of objects on a tabletop—rabbits, raw meat, lightbulbs, among others. This absurdist, whimsical video work constructs surreal scenarios by means of minimal content and formal repetition. Inspired by the classic work *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (1894), Rottenberg explores the connections between "labour" (giving birth and work), "excretions" (masculine and feminine), and gender from a contemporary perspective. The theme of sneezing would also be further elaborated in her later work *NoNoseKnows*.

***NoNoseKnows* (2015)**



Mika Rottenberg, *NoNoseKnows*, 2015. Single-channel video installation, sound, colour; 21:58 min. Dimensions variable.
© Mika Rottenberg, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

A burly, well-built woman sits in front of a small windmill contraption. She keeps breathing in pollen—until she sneezes and ejects platefuls of pasta. At the other end of the contraption, a female worker below rotates a pulley; like the adjacent female workers producing farmed pearls, the worker is engaged in an endless cycle of repetitive motion, a mere link in the production chain of commodities.

With its outlandish and colourful scenes, *NoNoseKnows* transforms stereotypical factory buildings and production lines into occasions of delightful surprise while commenting cleverly on contemporary conditions of labour and exchange. Arising from Rottenberg's experiences during her first research visit in China, *NoNoseKnows* demonstrates her unique imagination and daring juxtapositions that convincingly fuse fantasy and realism.

***Cosmic Generator* (2017)**



Mika Rottenberg, *Cosmic Generator*, 2017. Single-channel video installation, sound, colour; 26:36 min. Dimensions variable.
© Mika Rottenberg, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

The video presents a fantastical scene in a border town: Chinese restaurants and street vendors in Calexico are juxtaposed alongside storefronts inside Chinese wholesale markets, swallowed up by suffocating quantities of goods. These all seem to exist in parallel universes with no apparent connections. Yet at the same time, the work reveals another level of commodities, of people dressed up as quesadillas—and of a mysterious power

invisible to the human eye passing through tunnels and corridors, opening up and bridging the world in a peculiar way. With Rottenberg's impactful visual language, *Cosmic Generator* playfully thinks through today's overabundance of goods and its exhausting flow of global trade. The work forges unexpected connections of time and space, as well as melding fact and fiction, misinformation and earnestness.

***Spaghetti Blockchain* (2019)**



Mika Rottenberg, *Spaghetti Blockchain*, 2019. Single-channel 4K video installation, 7.1 surround sound, color; 18:15 min.
Dimensions variable.

© Mika Rottenberg, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

The film starts off with a Tuvan singer throat-singing on the grasslands. As the low echoing and continuous sound transitions to various scenes in the film studio, the latter offers up a series of actions that oddly stimulates the audience through colours, shapes, and acoustics—including cutting and melting a bouncy jelly, crushing stacks of spaghetti, and noisily playing with colourful beads. The artist begins with specific, miniscule objects, and then extends to advanced equipment such as Large Hadron Colliders and potato harvesters, linking the material world together in a way that goes apparently against logic, creating rich and sensorial experiences. Aside from foregrounding the peculiar material characteristics of each object, the soundtrack also incites pleasing and elusive ASMR (Automated Sensory Meridien Responses) effects in the viewer.

Public Programmes

Tai Kwun Contemporary Weekend Guided Tour



Come spend your afternoons at Tai Kwun Contemporary. Learn about the art exhibitions by joining a tour with one of our friendly, professional docents.

Date: Every Saturdays and Sundays (starting from November; please check the Tai Kwun website for the latest updates on event dates)

Time: 2:00pm-3:00pm (Cantonese), 4:00pm-5:00pm (English)

Free admission; register on the Tai Kwun website

Family Fun Guided Tour (for ages 5+)

Join Tai Kwun Contemporary for a fun Family Tour, which welcomes 1 parent/guardian participating together with 1 child. Participants will be fully engaged in the selected artworks through visual references in the form of a tour guide booklet.

Date: Designated Sundays (starting from November; please check the Tai Kwun website for the latest updates on event dates)

Time: 11:00am-12:00pm, 3:00pm-4:00pm

Free admission; register on the Tai Kwun website

Family Day at Tai Kwun Contemporary: Family Tour and Workshop “Bubble Blowing Nose”



The Family Tour consists of guiding participants through artworks based on the exhibition with interactive discussions and visual references in the form of an in-depth tour guide booklet. In the workshop, participants will make a bubble blowing pipe in the shape of a nose with copper wire. This surreal nose can be worn on the children's face, and then the children can use a long nose to dip soapy water and blow bubbles, challenging their illustrative skills and imagination. All activities are designed to welcome 1 parent/guardian participating together with 1 child (5+ years).

Date: 1, 15 & 29 November, 13 & 27 December 2020, 10 January 2021 (Every other Sundays)

Time: 11am-1pm

Tickets: HK \$80 per timeslot for one family pair (one adult with one child). Get tickets on Tai Kwun website

Visitor information

SNEEZE is on view from 24 October through February 2021, every Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 7pm at JC Contemporary in Tai Kwun. Free admission, with guided tours and related public programmes available. Along with *SNEEZE*, visitors can visit *Wet feet __ dry feet: borders and games*, a solo exhibition by Francis Alÿs featuring conceptual works about migration, borders, and children's games from around the world.

The entire site of Tai Kwun is open to the public daily from 10am to 11pm, while Tai Kwun Contemporary at JC Contemporary is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 7pm. Visitors are encouraged to book their free Tai Kwun Pass online via https://www.taikwun.hk/en/visit/taikwun_pass prior to visiting for guaranteed admission. Walk-ins are also welcome, subject to site capacity conditions.

Please note that appropriate sanitary measures are in place with regards to the ongoing coronavirus situation.

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Editor's notes:

Please click [here](#) to download exhibition guide, and hi-res images with captions.

About Mika Rottenberg

Mika Rottenberg, of Argentine and Israeli origins and currently based in New York, engages in an alluring yet rigorous artistic practice that combines film, installation, and sculpture. Her body of work has often dealt with production, commerce, and value in our contemporary hyper-capitalist world. Referencing cinematic and sculptural practices, she makes connections between disparate objects and places; with a rigorous editing technique, the artist weaves elaborate and fantastical visual narratives that have a subversive edge.

Rottenberg was the recipient of the 2019 Kurt Schwitters Prize, which recognises artists who have made a significant contribution to the field of contemporary art. She has had a number of solo exhibitions around the world, including at New Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris; among others.

About Tai Kwun — Centre for Heritage and Arts (Tai Kwun)

Tai Kwun is Hong Kong's Centre for Heritage and Arts — a cultural destination for inspiration, stimulation and enjoyment. We aspire to offer the best heritage and arts experiences, and to cultivate knowledge and appreciation of contemporary art, performing arts and history in the community.

Tai Kwun invites all visitors on a journey of discovery that fuses across multiple genres of arts, heritage, culture and lifestyle in Hong Kong. Here, visitors will discover the rich heritage of the site through the thematic exhibitions and immersive public programmes that explore Hong Kong's history and culture, alongside a multitude of vibrant and inclusive contemporary art presentations and performing arts offerings all year round.

Opened in May 2018 and operating on a not-for-profit model, Tai Kwun is the fruition of a joint partnership between The Hong Kong Jockey Club and the Government of the HKSAR to conserve and revitalise the buildings of the historic Central Police Station compound, which represents one of the most significant revitalisation projects in Hong Kong. The site comprises three Declared Monuments of Hong Kong – the former Central Police Station, Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison, all have been meticulously conserved, with unflinching attention to authenticity. The site also includes two new buildings – JC Contemporary and JC Cube, by renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron; and several outdoor spaces – Parade Ground, Prison Yard and Laundry Steps, providing an exciting venue for the public programmes presented by Tai Kwun and its partners.

Tai Kwun, which means “big station” in Chinese, is the colloquial name used by Hong Kong people to refer to the former police headquarters and the surrounding compound. The name has been adopted as a reminder of the historical importance of this living heritage site.

In 2019, Tai Kwun received the Award of Excellence in the 2019 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. This is the highest honour of the prestigious

Awards, which bestows an international recognition of the outstanding achievement in the conservation and revitalisation efforts of Tai Kwun.

Tai Kwun Contemporary is the not-for-profit visual art programme of Tai Kwun. Realising six to eight exhibitions a year and curatorially driven, Tai Kwun Contemporary showcases and commissions artists from Hong Kong and beyond, while offering an extensive range of public programming. With the aspiration to contribute to and transform the experience and understanding of contemporary art in Hong Kong, Tai Kwun Contemporary is devoted to inspiring the Hong Kong public with an inquisitive attitude and committed to offering a conducive platform for learning and experimentation.

For more information, please visit our website: <https://www.TaiKwun.hk>.

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