ARTNEWS

The Grand Tour





The Travel Issue

ARTISTS WANDER THE GLOBE
ALL EYES ON ISTANBUL

MAPPING THE BIENNIAL UNIVERSE

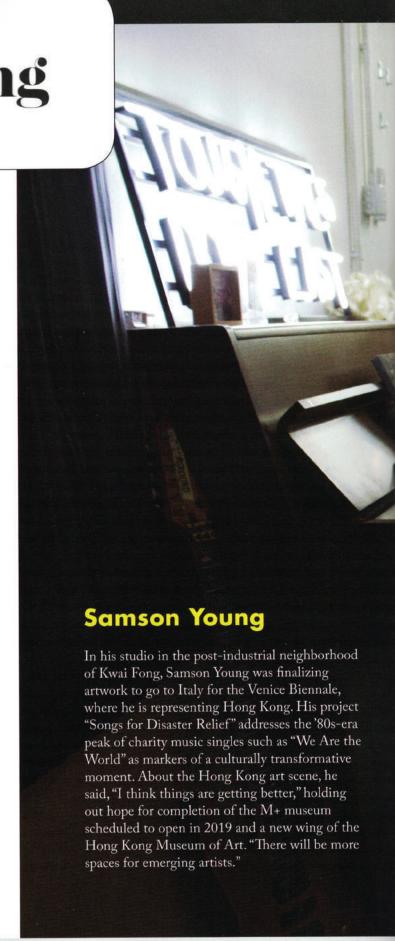
HABITAT In Hong Kong

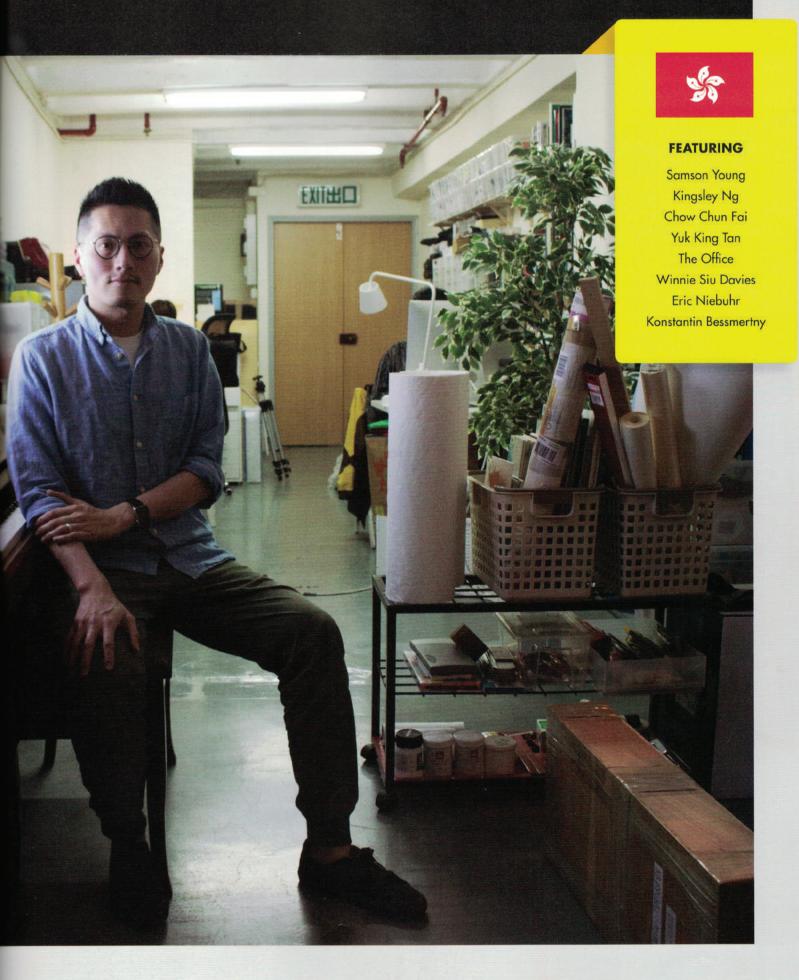
BY KATHERINE McMAHON

rtists in Hong Kong live in a city undergoing great change. In March, just one day after Art Basel Hong Kong closed to fairgoers from near and far, an election committee selected Carrie Lam as chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, an autonomous territory of the People's Republic of China. It was a historic moment for the first such female leader, but protest followed her election by a small pro-China committee representing a population of more than 7 million. "We are in for an intense and interesting time in the Pearl River Delta," artist Yuk King Tan told me. "China is changing. Hong Kong is changing. I think it's going to be a pyrotechnic interaction."

Asked for his take on the art scene in Hong Kong, artist and political activist Chow Chun Fai referred to a quote by Mark Rothko, speaking decades ago about the years leading up to the state of America in 1969: "For then we had nothing to lose and a vision to gain. Today it is not quite the same. It is a time of verbiage, activity, and consumption. Which condition is better for the world at large I will not venture to discuss. But I do know that many who are driven to this life are desperately searching for those pockets of silence where they can grow and root."

For this installment of Habitat, ARTnews visited the studios of artists growing from roots in Hong Kong.







Chow Chun Fai

Chow Chun Fai works in Fo Tan, an artist community supported by studios in a sprawling industrial building complex. "It's a nice combination of different communities," he said of the area. "On my left is a soap maker; on my right is a furniture company. With a more complex ecosystem, more locals can survive." He is also involved with the Factory Artists Concern Group, for which he developed a petition in protest of governmental policies that push up land prices and drive artists out of spaces they call home.



Winnie Siu Davies

A recurring theme in the work of Winnie Siu Davies is the economic disparity between Hong Kong's rich and poor. Her studio in Fo Tan is packed with paintings referencing Chinese politics and society, including one with a poor man and an empty rice bowl framed by a prosperous city backdrop. Her style, self-described: "symbolic surrealism."