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BYOB @ graham's Making Sense in the City

Urban Rethink Tank
Martin Fung | Stephen Chan | Thomas Chung



Marked for Death

Hong Kong's oldest street market will be demolished to make way for four high-rise buildings in Central. We have to act now to save it, write **Winnie Yeung** and **Ophelia Lui**.

As you would expect from the center of the city, Central is constantly changing. It's no surprise that parts of the area are sometimes torn down and new buildings go up from time to time.

But this time is different. Opposite the skyscraper named Queen's Road are two little streets called Graham and Peel. Hong Kong's oldest wet market (and one of only ten remaining in the city). For more than 150 years, this market – now with 13 lanes running day in, day out, providing fresh produce to housewives in the area. It's also a regular feature in Hong Kong campaigns, and a must-visit destination for tourists. In fact, the Board maintains that Hong Kong's open-air markets are the most visited attraction in the city, just behind The Peak.

But now, just as it did with the Star Ferry Pier, the government is tearing down this valuable tourist attraction and historic site without public input.

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) announced early this year that they will demolish the area, including most of the nearby buildings to make room for four high-rises – two residential blocks, one office tower. In the process, Central will lose its only street of its oldest and most-beloved features. (And don't be fooled by attempts to spin what they're doing – see p.8-9.)

Conservationists estimate that the government will be demolishing the market within two years – maybe earlier. HK Magazine has been campaigning for the market since it was founded in 1982. This street market is too valuable a feature of Hong Kong to lose.

The City's Oldest Street Market

Historian Roger Ho, director of the Conservancy Association (CASH) and lifelong Central resident, tells HK Magazine about the market's long history:

"The market was opened in 1841, and it was originally the 'Chinese market' since it was most frequently used by Chinese people."

"It is the center of the neighborhood community in Central. It is already becoming rarer and rarer in Hong Kong. Housewives do the shopping here. Shopkeepers even sometimes offer necessary foodstuffs to their poor neighbors. It's this interaction that fosters a sense of belonging."

"This was especially important from 1945-1952 when many people came into the area to settle, becoming hawkers and street traders contributed to the rise of a local culture and formed the market culture."

"The place is also of great historical importance because it was the center of the market culture."

The hawkers have their say

Mrs. Yau, 58, fruit hawker for 35 years
"It's difficult to have any future plan now, as the government are not up to us. Actually we were told that we still have a chance to move back after the area is redeveloped, but we have to gain approval from the district council, the legislative council, and even still the residents from the nearby built-up areas. Who would want an old market here in front of their new and beautiful residential buildings?"

Mr. Wong, 61, fishmonger for 15 years
"I think it's a pity for me if they're demolishing the market. What can I do? I don't have money and I'll move somewhere else. I can't afford the rent because they're increasing it all the time. I'm really the victim. My customers have become my friends now. I don't want them to change this market, and I will definitely stay the place and the people as much as I can. I can hardly think of any plan after renewal. I think I'll become unemployed."

Ms. Wong, 61, selling noodles and dumplings for 40 years
"This is my parents' business. I helped them out since I was a kid and I have been working for it ever since. I have a son who is an engineer and a daughter who is a nurse. It's quite obvious that they won't carry on with what I'm doing now. After the market is demolished, I'll retire as well."

Mr. Wong, 54, stationary shop owner for 18 years
"People always want to preserve old things, and finally I would have to see the government demolish the market. But come on, they've even abolished the Star Ferry – what else can't they demolish?"

"Fruit Tree", 78, vegetable and fruit hawker all her life
"It's originally my own business and I helped my son since a very small age. This little stall has supported my family with 13 kids."

Mrs. Yau, 58, selling noodles and dumplings for 40 years
"My husband's business. He's done it for 40 years, and I joined him in 1982. Originally we started off selling noodles and dumplings but now we've moved to other things. I can very close with my neighbors, but I won't miss them a lot if the market is to be demolished. The business here is much easier than before, as the mainland has opened up and new people buy things from the mainland. I really hope the government can abolish the market as soon as possible so that I can retire earlier."

Mr. Eze, 61, selling stationary
"The street was better back then. Even at 3-4pm, there were still many people walking around. Now it's just a few people. We were happy to be together because it was easier to do business. I am very close with my neighbors. It's unfortunate that the government wants to demolish the area because after all, this is Central, the central business district in Hong Kong. We definitely need space for new buildings here."

Mr. Kwan, 51, selling dried seafood for eight years
"I'm very close with my neighbors and customers, who are mostly regulars. Sometimes the regulars will come bring their friends from the mainland to visit my stall. I don't think there has been any direct contact with the government, besides the fact that many media and scholars visit us and ask about our opinions and feelings toward the plan. I want to preserve this market as it's a classic part of Hong Kong."

Mrs. Wong, 61, selling eggs at her stall for 30 years
"My husband has been working for this stall for 30 years. I love a few street hawkers here, and I become really close with my neighbors, many of which are still hawkers here as well. I don't want the market to be demolished. I think I'll move to stay."

Bad Marketing

Debunking the Urban Renewal myth

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) announced in February this year that they want to "redevelop" the Peel and Graham Street market. The headlines mostly read like the one from *Singapore Daily*: "URA spending \$3.8 billion to build an Old Shop Street in Central."

It sounds like big spending for the good of the city. Many people who heard the news heard the government's message – the streets are old and dirty and the URA has come to the rescue. But, they're even spending a little extra to "bring old Hong Kong back" by "preserving" the pre-war street scene with a few three-story buildings (in addition to the high-rises). They even promised to build a "green corridor" to add a touch of nature to the area.

But is that all there is? Apparently not. Here we present the information the URA has submitted to the Town Planning Board but rarely shown to the public, along with our own explanation of how it will likely look.

HAWKING ACTIVITY WILL BE "PRESERVED"

THE URA SAYS: "The open market at Graham Street and Peel Street, being one of the local features, will be retained... Hawkers' stalls can be set up in the public open spaces." Ms. explains that the new buildings will be "set back" so there will be extra space for street stalls to line up along the streets.

THE TRUTH IS: The URA says stalls "can be" set up, but how? One conservationist who does not want to be named, says, "I paid a lot for a business that there, would I want a street market stall to be in front of my building? Would any shop want that to happen?" Paul Zimmerman comes another concern: "The construction will take years. Will the hawkers be able to wait that long before they can start their business in the area again?" The market will most likely be wiped out when the construction starts. URA's plan to reintroduce hawking activity into the area sounds very unlikely.

THE AREA WOULD BE "REDEVELOPED"
THE URA SAYS: As the buildings are to be demolished, the area will be redeveloped. The proposed redevelopment... will not give rise to unacceptable visual impact."

THE TRUTH IS: These four buildings will all be high-rises – the two residential buildings will be 30 and 32 stories high, the hotel 30 stories and the office tower 34 stories. Ms. says the high-rise buildings are designed in a way so that they will not easily be seen from the streets – in the URA drawings, these buildings appear transparent. The truth is there are no transparent buildings, and it's pretty hard to miss a massive high-rise.

ABOVE: THE URA IMAGINATION. BEHIND THE BUILDINGS LOOK TRANSPARENT. BELOW: HOW IT MIGHT ACTUALLY LOOK.

CLOCKWISE: AN 80-YEAR-OLD GROCERY; SCENES OF MARKET LIFE - ALL THIS WILL BE GONE AFTER REDEVELOPMENT

Get Involved

HK Magazine has kick-started our campaign to save the Graham and Peel Street market with this issue. More updates will be coming soon.

Other groups supporting this campaign include Heritage Watch, Central Western District Concern Group, Designing Hong Kong Harbour District, Street Market Concern Group, World City Committee and High & Dry.

Visit the website www.savethestreetmarket.com to learn more and get involved. Make sure to show your support for the oldest existing street market in Hong Kong by signing the petition to save it.

We also welcome letters at letters@asia-city.com.hk.





BYOB @ graham'super Making Sense in the City

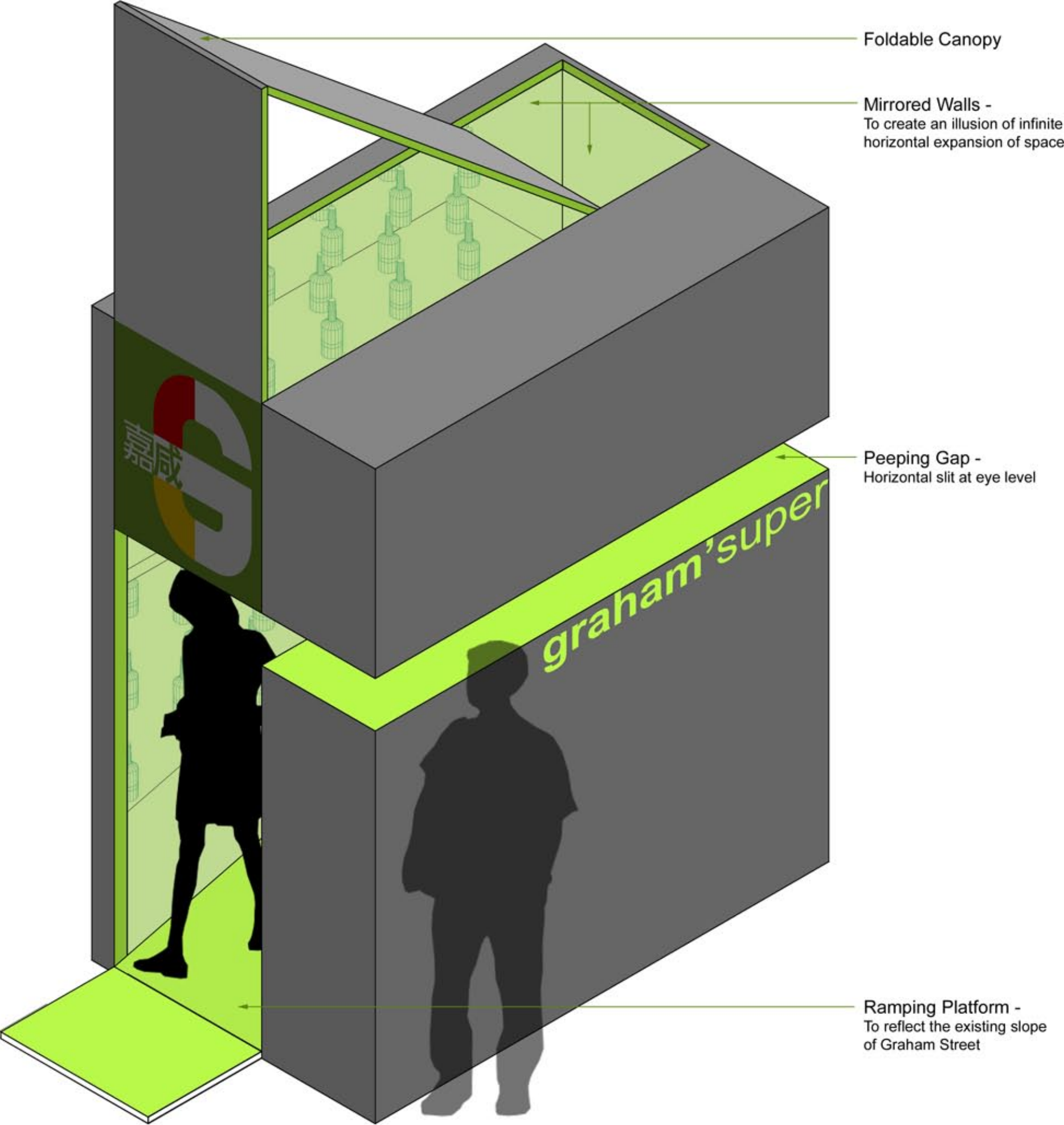
Drawing from Graham Street market precinct's abundantly humane social as well as physical (infra)structures, **graham'super** will embody the continuous adaptations and reshufflings of micro-cultural processes via various media, from sensual and spatial to digital. As such, our networked exhibition installations exploit contemporary urban experiential opportunities to explore potentials for engendering a sensible "architecture" (as arche-techne or "originary-crafting of collective space) of change-in-continuity.

A place to sell the re-fabricated senses of Graham Street market precinct

A booth to showcase the cultural trans-actions and sense-making processes of unique urban space in Hong Kong

An exhibition to mobilize a thematic cross-over between HK/SZ Bi-city Biennale 2009 and 2007

Market Booth



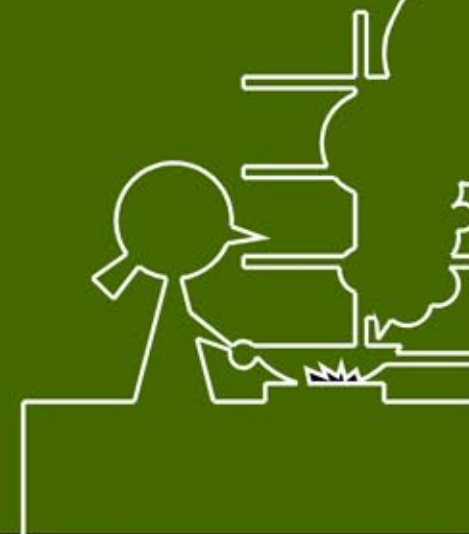
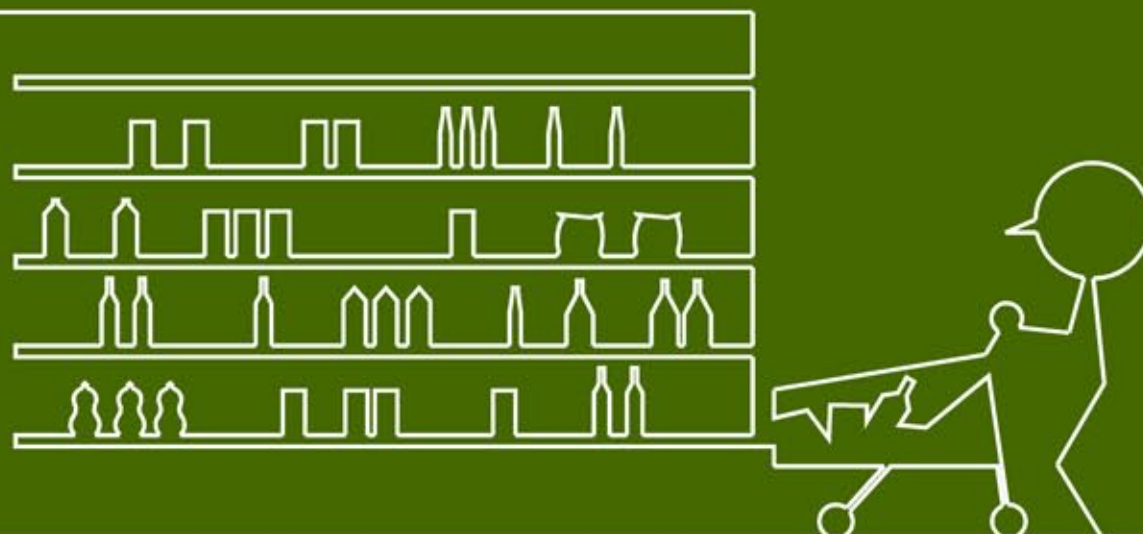


graham'super @ Graham Street

graham'super @ Hong Kong Architecture Centre

A parallel installation inhabiting a vacant street hawker booth and shophouse at Graham Street precinct for interactive displays and relaying events at the Biennale site in West Kowloon. Here imagination combines with new media technology to narrate and navigate shifting urban situations.

The market street spatial sequence accommodates "social media" happenings ranging from sparks of humanity that arises from shoppers and hawkers transact, to festival and artistic episodes, laying the ongoing urban politics when activities react.



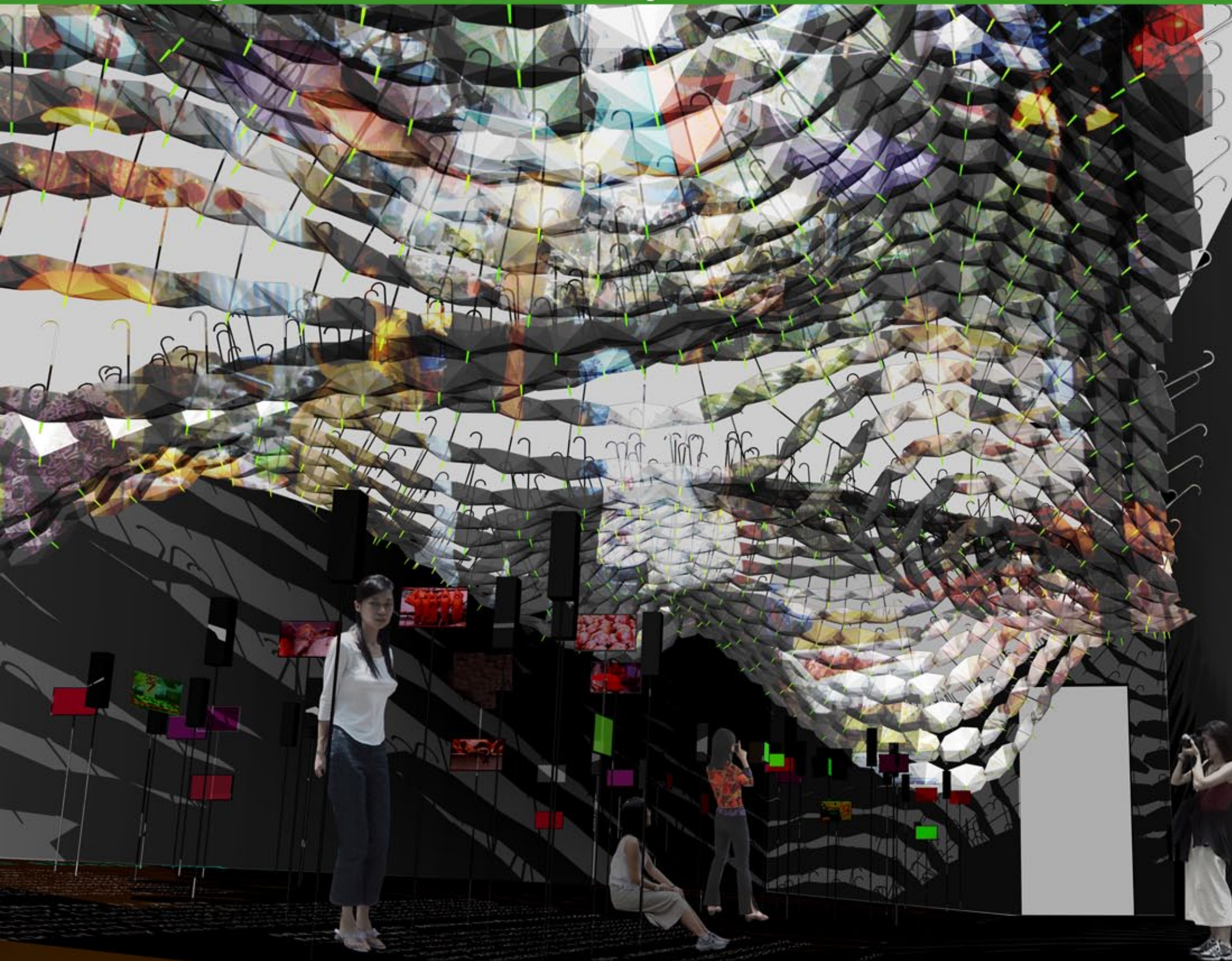


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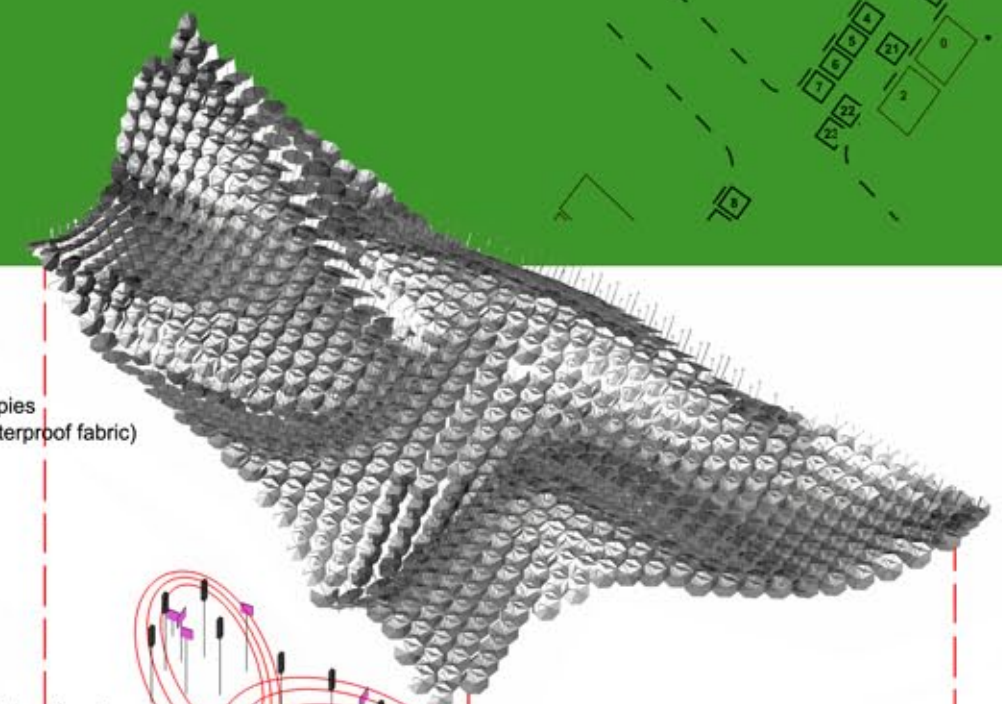
Market Fair (Optional)

Life under Canopies -

An Abstract of the existing use of umbrellas as canopies in Graham Street, we propose to create a canopy formed from inverted umbrellas for public gathering / forums adjacent to the market booths.



...people market
government
Ferry - via
us started
"It's original
This little

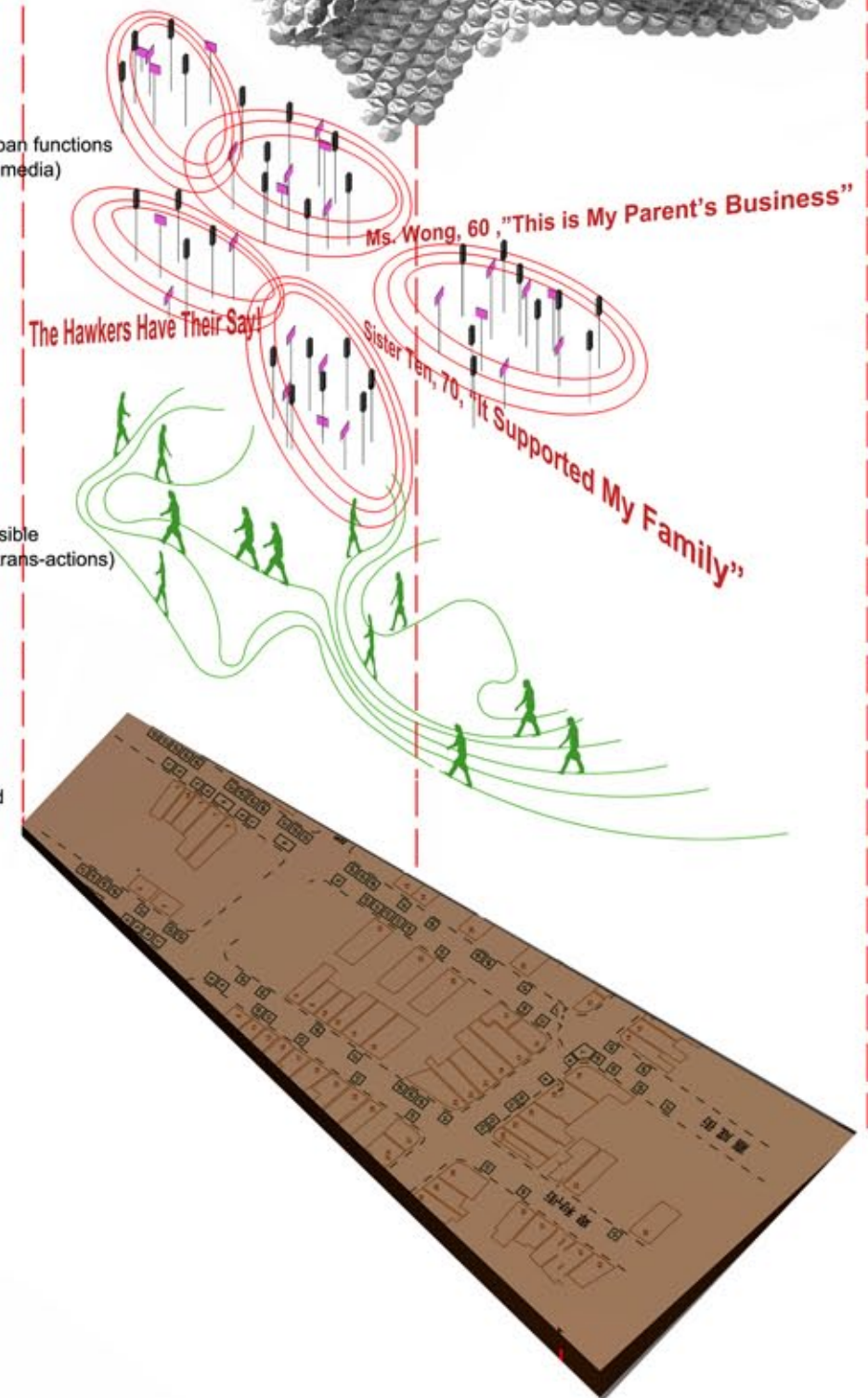


life under the canopies
(sky of shading waterproof fabric)

blurred borders of urban functions
(clusters of figural media)

inspiration of the possible
(zone of re- / inter- / trans-actions)

culture of rapport and
everyday context
(inclined ground)



Sound Artists / Record Companies (Collaborators)

Re-Records

Re-Records is a record label initiated by experimental electro-acoustic duo No One Pulse from Hong Kong. With Re, we don't solely aim to be an outlet for releasing self-initiated or other affiliated projects, but also for artists and releases we deem interesting.

Other than standard releases, our catalogue includes:

Doc: Documentary/Documents on archiving art related projects, exhibitions, and installations.

On: On Location, an attempt to focus on field recordings and other site-specific recordings.

www.re-records.com

No One Pulse

An experimental electro-acoustic duo formed by Wong Chung-fai (Sin:Ned) and Chau Kin-wai (KWC) from Hong Kong. Their collaboration first started in 2003 for the audio/visual internet project "60 seconds" and participated in the multi-media live event "Media Jam" for Hong Kong Sound & Vision Festival in 2003.

The two formed as No One Pulse in 2006, exploring the concept of free improvisation and the world of free-form electronics that embraces randomness, chaotic structure, and microsound methodology by means of non-musical instrument and devices.

Discography

E (Re-Records, 2009)

LINGK (Lona Records, 2008)

Pathic (Little Sound, 2007)

Tele (Lona Records, 2007)

Selected show & event

08/2009: INTER-FACE @ Waterland Kwanyin, Beijing

05/2009: RED_shift @ Liangcha Shop, Shenzhen

04/2009: Red @ Phonograph, Hong Kong

07/2008: The Last Night: A SZ-HK Experimental Performance @ C:Union, Shenzhen

02/2008: HK & Shenzhen Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, Hong Kong

12/2007: Shenzhen & HK Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, Shenzhen

10/2007: Emmanuel Mieville Live in HK (Supporting Act) @ Kapok, Hong Kong

08/2007: Ritual for the Ghosts @ Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong

06/2007: Get It Louder, Guangzhou

04/2007: We Play Neo Sound @ Mooka Space, OCT-LOFT, Shenzhen

03/2007: Listen Up: When The Plug Is ON, LOG-ON, Hong Kong

01/2007: Take Off The Headphone & Turn To 10, Videotage, Hong Kong

Sound Artists / Record Companies (Collaborators)

Alok

Alok, a self-taught guitarist and bassist, formed his first band Pillow early in 1996. After they disbanded in mid 98, he formed Slow Tech Riddim with the drummer of Pillow, when they started combining electronic music with live instruments. Together they had published two albums and contributed in numerous compilation releases. Since 2001, Alok appeared as a solo artist. He published the first 3" mini album <OK Karaoke> with The Pancakes in 2001. In 2002, he set up his own record label Lona Records, and started working as a producer. From the end of 2002 to 2009, he released five albums and a few 3" cd singles: <Wahoo!>, <31 Minutes to Midnight>, <29 Minutes from the End>, <All the Colors of the Dark>, <Stalemate>, < Amidst The Boredom, They Gather Forces>, <C For Schubert>, <Mass For Repose Of The Soul Of The Dead>, <Placid Places> and the coming single <MSN warning>.

Alok had participated in numerous shows and event , including Hong Kong international film festival closing party (2002) , Rockit festival (2004) , Mondialito Live in Hong Kong (2005) , AGF Live in Hong Kong (2005) , Lantau Arts Festival 05 Concerts (2005) , Take off Your Headphone & Turn to 10 (2007) Get It Louder (2007) Ritual For The Ghost (2007), Emmanuel Mieville Live in Hong Kong (2007), HK Live (2007), G-Imagineering Along Desire Lines (2008), Central Subconsciousness (2008), Sounds, Light and Memory (2008), Enter The Night•Exit The Light (2009), Red / Red_Shift: A Sound Exhibition & Performance For The Red Compilation in HK / Shenzhen (2009), Waterland Kwanyin 160 : INTER-FACE Live in Beijing (2009), Architecture is...Discourse with Music (2009)...etc.

Discography:

2009 MSN warning

2008 Mass for repose of the soul of the dead

2008 Placid Places

2007 C for Schubert

2006 Amidst the boredom, They gather Forces (with lwtv)

2006 Stalemate

2005 All the colors of the dark

2005 29 minutes from the end

2003 31 minutes to midnight

2002 Wahoo

2001 Ok Karaoke (split with The Pancakes)

Edwin Lo

Born in 1984. Edwin Lo, sound artist, field recordist and phonographer from Hong Kong. Graduated from School of Creative Media (SCM), City University of Hong Kong. The early works of the artist mainly focused with video; After the second year of the study of SCM, he is now more concerning the issue of sound. Through different experiments on sound — whatever in computer or in recording process — Edwin Lo tries to develop his own philosophy and language on sound and listening: thinking sound as an object of desire, as haunting memories and experiences, articulation of our consciousness and awareness on listening and the evolution of listening.

??Past Show/Performance?Hong Kong Sound Station (9th February - 4th April, 2009) ?Selected Artist of SoundLab VI 2009 "SoundPool" (2009)?Digital Art Week, SOUNDSCAPE & HOERSPIEL 08"A Diamond in the Mud" (25th - the 27th of September 2008) ?Micro Narrative: Invented time and space in video (8th April - 28th April, 2006) ??Past Exhibition?Modern Media x Hong Kong & Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture: Central Subconsciousness (23-2-2008 , 15-3-2008) ?The Diplomat Project: Dialogue with the Ghosts 異靈對話 (7-7-2007) ?The Diplomat Project: Ritual for the Ghosts 異靈祭典 (25-8-2007) ??Awards ?城市文學創作獎 2008, 散文組, 亞軍, 《音景上環》[?City Literary Awards 2008, prose category, runner-up, "Soundscape Sheung Wan "] ??Art in Residency ?Videotage FUSE (march to april, 2009, Hong Kong) ?