

10 Chancery Lane Gallery
Katie de Tilly Contemporary Artists

G/F, 10 Chancery Lane
SoHo, Central, Hong Kong
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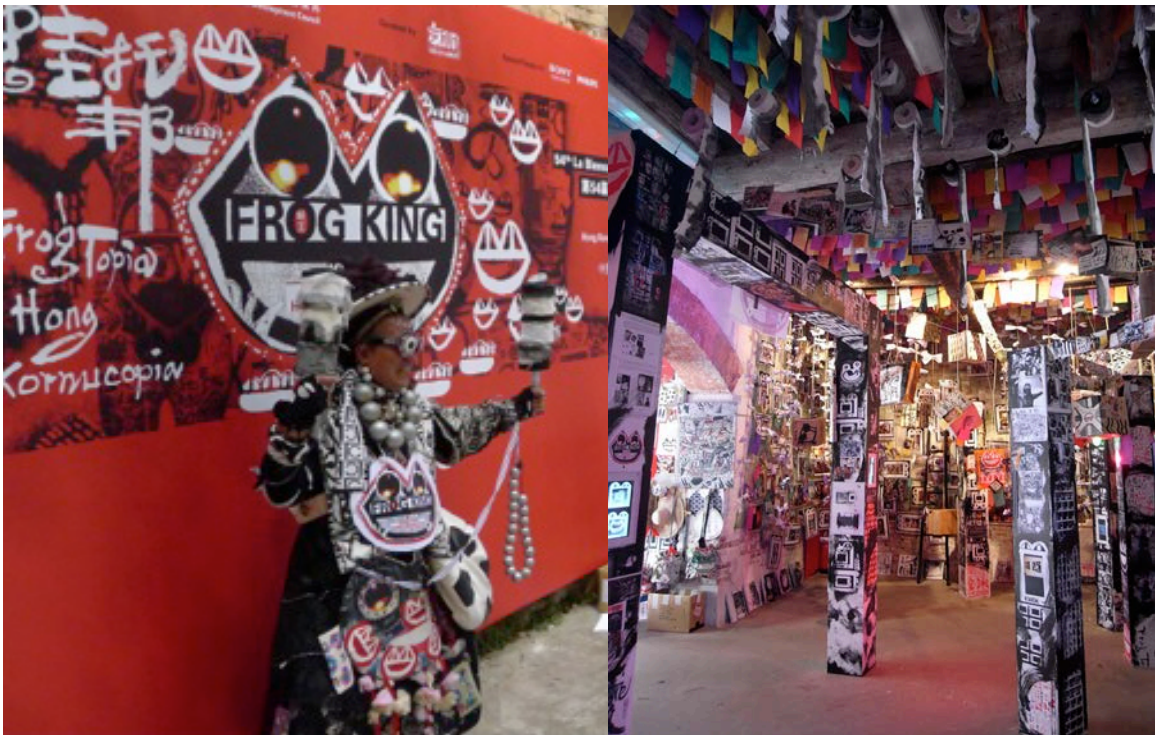
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FROG KING - Totem

10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Central, Hong Kong

Opening Reception with the artist: 26th Sep, 2014 (Thur) 6:30pm to 8:30pm

Curator's Talk: 11 October 2014, 3pm



Frog King, Venice Biennale, 2011

[06 September 2014, Hong Kong] – 10 Chancery Lane is proud to present a momentous new solo exhibition by Hong Kong artist Frog King Kwok (a.k.a. Kwok Mang-ho, b. 1947). An inimitable force unto himself, Frog King is a pioneering conceptual and performance artist who has been breaking boundaries in Hong Kong and beyond since the late 1960s. Originally trained in ink painting and calligraphy in the studio of seminal New Ink Painting master Lui Shou Kwan--where he was already considered to be something of an enfant terrible—Frog King is one of the earliest Chinese contemporary artists to explore the use of ink painting as a conceptual tool, incorporating it as both action and material into multiple-media installations, performances, happenings and assembled environments incorporating discards and everyday objects.

Frog King's artistic awareness is marked by a deeply integrated hybridity derived from dual roots. One root draws from elements of Chinese cosmological philosophy that underlie all Chinese traditional art forms, in particular the connective mutability of the Five Elements of Water, Earth, Fire, Metal and Wood. The other draws from a very different 'tradition': the contemporary 'art is life' philosophy of influential artists like Alan Kaprow and Nam June Paik, early exponents of the happening and the dissolution of the divide between artist and audience/ and art and daily life. In Frog King the creative and philosophical DNA of these seemingly disparate and even incongruous sources of influence have mutated into a being of enormous creative vitality and a kind of embracing, life-affirming anarchy. This

is the hybridity represented in the amphibious nature of the frog, and captured in Frog King's totem or seal of the abstracted frog face, whose two triangular eyes also imply a bridge or a pair of sails, as symbols of connectivity.

Frog King's first conceptual exhibition was held in 1974 in what was then the farming village of Yuen Long, where he had a studio for almost ten years. In 1979 he undertook his legendary *Plastic Bag* performance project at the Great Wall, historically recognized as the first example of performance art in China. From 1980 to 1995, Frog King lived in New York City where he studied at the Arts Students League (1980-84), opened his own KWOK gallery for experimental and performance art, and organized and participated in numerous performances, happenings and artist-led exhibitions. Since 1995 he has worked as an artist and teacher in Hong Kong, accepting invitations from all over the world to bring his unique visual and performance art to places as disparate as Tokyo, Helsinki and the most far-flung area of the Orkney Islands. In 2011 Frog King represented Hong Kong at the 54th Venice Biennale.

Despite his eclectic practice, Frog King is lauded in the art world above all as an experimental ink artist. With his own brand of positive anarchy, Frog King extends rather than deconstructs or destroys the traditional media of ink painting. The absorbent quality of xuan paper, for example, might be extended to the absorbency of a toilet paper roll or a coffee filter, which Frog King then adapts as the ground for his ink work. The movement of hand and brush is extended to the kinetic movements of the entire body, and ink might be flung by an audience member or poured from a bucket. His calligraphy seals and frog totems are carved from rubber by a local stamp-maker and often include abstract forms that are the imprint of random objects: small plastic tubes or pieces of joinery. Like Xu Bing and Gu Wenda, Frog King has also ventured to invent his own calligraphic script. Yet, again, he does not seek to destroy meaning: rather, he seeks to aggregate it, to overlay it, as can be seen in his invented 'sandwich calligraphy' that juxtaposes both English and Chinese words and rejoices in odes to the everyday.

Frog King's creative output extends to an explosion of multi-layered sculptural installations and totemic forms built up from an architectural foundations made variously of string, ladder frames and folding screens and layered with an aesthetically powerful chaos of discarded objects, fabric, snapshots, plastic bags, fragments of paintings, gilded organic forms: even, on occasion, well-looked after amphibious animals such as frogs or snails ensconced in specially designed tanks. These built objects are often incorporated by the artist into a larger environment--his utopia or 'Frogtopia'—within which the artist resides as king or shaman, dressed in his totemic Frog King costume, which itself has evolved organically over time. From within his world, Frog King extends open invitations to the audience to become his equal partners and guests, to enact 'one minute performances' with him, to create 'live body installations', to be photographed in a pair of his colourfully constructed 'froggy sunglasses' – and thus become part of Frog King's visual archive of a decades-long, worldwide project, marking us all as equals in play, whether celebrity art event attendee or random passer-by.

For the *TOTEM* exhibition at 10 Chancery Lane, Frog King has been invited to transform the exterior and interior spaces of the gallery, working with guest curator Valerie C. Doran to create a layered environment of art (and of realms) that both showcases Frog King's vibrant installation and performance work and at the same time reveals a deeper stillness at the heart of the artist's expressive life. Special features will include a new series of carved wood sculptures, totemic columns, ink paintings and screens.

Since 1967, Frog King's art and performances have been presented at over 3000 exhibitions and art events worldwide, and he has been the recipient of numerous awards and honours internationally. His work is collected by museums, foundations and private collectors. Each one of Frog King's works represents a fractal embodiment of his conceptual utopia.

For press enquiries and to arrange interviews, please contact Bo Kim on bo@10chancerylanegallery.com or +852 2810 0065.

About 10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Since 2001, **10 Chancery Lane Gallery** explores both emerging and historically important movements in art in the Asia Pacific. Working with curators and having a strong curatorial team in house, the gallery aims to bring exhibitions that take time, research and have impact on the arts in the region with an international approach to travel exhibitions. **10 Chancery Lane Gallery** is committed to play a major role in documenting the development of art within the Asia Pacific region by holding more survey exhibitions by country or theme of both emerging and mid-career artists, talks, forums and publishing books that bring together the individual historical context with the arts development within Asia. The gallery focuses on Asia however keeps its eye on international opportunities from the world bringing the need for international cultural appreciation to Hong Kong.

FROG KING TOTEM

26 Sep – 18 Oct 2014

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Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 6pm

Enquiry: +852 2810 0065