

## 855 Kilograms of Homes in Another State

Installation of waste cardboard bales, steel wire, ink, single-channel video (25'31" loop, stereo, colour) screen

Dimensions variable

### VIDEO OF THE EXHIBITION

<https://rmitgallery.com/digital/all/bruised-art-action-and-ecology-in-asia-video/>

### IMAGES OF THE WORK





































This work is part of *Trade/Trace/Transit* (2014-). The project started as a mobile ethnography of the cardboard waste taking form in a series of public interventions along the route of informal trade route of cardboard waste (or Old Corrugated Cardboard/OCC in industry term) in Hong Kong. At the supposed end of the project, marked by a set of major outputs at the Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, I decided to keep the artefacts because of their material significance (Antoinette, 2018). After some time storing these artefacts – waste and at the same time artwork originally assembled in *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* – in a container in Hong Kong, initially with the support of Institute of Modern Art (IMA) Brisbane, Australia, I began reassembling the artefacts. The first reassembly is in *172 Kilograms of Homes for Ate Manang* (2017), a work with a suspended OCC bale, shown at group exhibition Material Politics, IMA, Brisbane, Australia.

*855 Kilograms of Homes in Another State* is a new reassembly, composed along a small arc of a circle, in reference to the original composition of *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* (2016), where the work is excerpted from. This work was developed in coordination with the curators of the group show, Helen Rayment and Thao Nguyen, based on conceptual and logistical constraints. Technically, none of the bales could be suspended. I selected the four bales according to the drawings that could represent the nodes in the informal trade route as much as possible in just four bales.

The drawings on these four bales of OCC's surfaces were made during the OCC's previous incarnation as 'weekend houses' of different groups of Overseas Filipino Workers – most of them transnational mothers – in Central, Hong Kong. The single-channel video, *Proposal for a Film: Within the Leaves, a Sight of the Forest* (2016), contextualises the work within the project, a series of public interventions, and describes how the drawings were compiled with the rest of the ICC within the bales. The video was made during my public interventions as part of *Trade/Trace/Transit* (2014-).

During these series of public art interventions, I was also an adopted member – and intern, so to say – of a group of Filipino domestic workers that ran informal trading of OCC in the weekends. Alongside helping with and learning the trade, I would draw on the walls of our – and others' – "houses". This act was initially done collaboratively, as decoration, with my first host group. But after this first host group broke up, I realised my other host groups were more interested in watching me draw and listening to the stories along with the watching. The drawings then evolved into a narrative, some kind of storytelling.

I then traced these drawings through the next nodes in the informal trade route of OCC: the recycling collection points, where trolleys of cardboard waste were sold for 0.5HKD per kilogram and amassed into bales. The bales were then trucked to the port and sold for twice the price, then put in transit to be transported further to China. These drawings – which eventually made the surface of the four bales – depict other informal trades happening along this route, as well as personal records of events: a kind of fieldnotes made public during my field practice, published and shared immediately with my subjects. Now, these bales are almost three years and eight-thousand kilometres away from the time and place they were initially shown, and I am still tracing.

In the video, I quoted a news article about Zhang Yin, possibly the richest self-made woman in the world according to Forbes magazine in 2006, who earns her wealth from recycling cardboard waste. "Waste paper is like a forest. Paper recycles itself, generation after generation," a man reportedly once told Zhang Yin. Her company, Nine Dragons Paper Ltd., runs six recycling facilities in mainland China (with four new ones being built in India this year) to process this kind of waste into new cardboard boxes.

However, Zhang Yin's man – the inspiration for her business – was wrong. Paper does not exactly recycle itself. The video shows the cardboard waste forest from within its leaves, revolving around the Filipino domestic workers at Central, Hong Kong, who hacked into the area's informal trade of OCC. The film describes this while poetically playing with ideas of fractals, cycles and (re)generations by criss-crossing between the actual OCC route in Hong Kong and an imagined future-past in Mars.

The six short episodes of the film chronicle my interventions in *Trade/Trace/Transit* across the nodes of the informal trade route of OCC. It interweaves stories told through field recordings, text, real and reimagined interviews, images and composed verses to blur the identities of several subjects by their request. It premiered in the form of a 'proposal' in Art Basel Hong Kong, which I appropriated as one of these nodes, described in Episode Four.

## **Reaction**

Published reviews and mentions:

<http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/WebExclusives/MaterialPolitics>  
<https://hyperallergic.com/389034/from-oyster-shells-to-cardboard-bales-the-politics-of-everyday-materials/>  
<https://www.picuki.com/media/1556135298885293770>  
<http://unprojects.org.au/un-extended/reviews/material-politics/>  
<https://flyingarts.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Art-Enquirer-Draft-D4.pdf>

<https://www.nationaltribune.com.au/artists-offer-creative-actions-to-ecological-issues-in-asia/>  
<https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2019/apr/rmit-gallery-april>  
<https://www.miragenews.com/artists-offer-creative-actions-to-ecological-issues-in-asia/>  
<https://www.rmit.edu.au/events/all-events/exhibitions/2019/april/bruised--art-action-and-ecology-in-asia>  
<https://artclimatechange.org/2019/event/bruised-art-action-ecology-in-asia/>  
<https://culture360.asef.org/news-events/melbourne-bruised-art-action-and-ecology-asia-exhibition/>  
<https://artsreview.com.au/bruised-art-action-and-ecology-in-asia/>  
<https://vimeo.com/339924038>  
<http://arthubasia.org/events/arthub-favorite-week-142>

## **Acknowledgements**

Images in this document are courtesy of the artist and RMIT Gallery.

## **References**

Antoinette, M. (2018). Making Art (A Public) Matter in Asia: The Social Intervention Aesthetics of Tintin Wulia in Hong Kong. *Public Art Dialogue*, 8(2), 258-289.