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OCTO

Ivan Cheng: *Ambientals / The Craft*
25 June – 20 August 2023

OCTO is thrilled to premier a performance, video work, and installation by Ivan Cheng which has been commissioned and conceived to coincide with the launch of this new organisation. Taking its cue from the 1996 high school horror film 'The Craft', *Ambientals / The Craft* plays on juvenile revenge fantasies and the individuals' ongoing desire to shift power relations and spheres of influence in society.

While many of Cheng's previous videos involve his own performance footage, for *The Craft* he takes the role of the camera operator and director. He portrays three performers of different generations: Meg Harper, Aaron Kahn, and Magdalena Mitterhofer, drawing from their relationships as co-performers for other directors. He does so in distinct settings; a private apartment in Berlin, a public cemetery in Paris, and a black box rehearsal stage. Aligning acting techniques with representations of Wiccan witchcraft, *The Craft* moves between staged interviews and filmed monologues themed around notions of theatre training and rehearsal. Maintaining a fast shooting schedule, and giving the performers strict scripts, tasks, and frameworks with very little preparation, the video presents different degrees of possession and consequences of suspending disbelief. In using doowop acapella recordings to soundtrack the work, a historical form of the body imitating an instrument is positioned beside subjective descriptions of the training at the École internationale de théâtre Jacques Lecoq.

In the opening performance *Ambientals*, Cheng loosely appropriates the role of Nancy Downs, a character from the 1996 movie who misuses the magic powers she receives. Her exaggerated and iconic goth-like character is diluted by incorporating gestures from other characters that she desires in the universe of the teen movie. The script is punctuated by references to the relationship between performer and director in Bradley Cooper and Lady Gaga's 'A Star Is Born' (2018).

Running across the various wall surfaces of OCTO is a series of tile sculptures resembling road markings. In this context they too function similarly as the performers, as a line of demarcation between a presumed inside and outside. These laser etched ceramics follow Cheng's reflection on the function of online cookies: the bias and gaps of history and the gaps between audiences that they rhythmically create and maintain.

Later in the year, OCTO will be publishing the third volume in Ivan Cheng's 'Confidences' series. This series of novels takes the vampire genre as a host for his reflection on the temporality, projection and artificial delineation between audiences and performance.

The exhibition and performance are presented as part of Festival de Marseille.

Ivan Cheng (b. 1991, Sydney) produces video, objects, paintings and publications as anchors for the staging of complex and precarious spectacles. His background as a performer and musician form the basis for using performance as a critical medium. His work has recently been presented at gta exhibitions (Zurich), CNAC Magasin (Grenoble), Maxxi (Rome), Édouard Montassut (Paris). *Confidences/Majority*, the latest in a series of vampire books, was published by After 8 Books in 2022. He has initiated the project space bologna.cc in Amsterdam since 2017.

The Craft

4K video, 2023, 36:36

Performance: Meg Harper, Aaron Kahn, Magdalena Mitterhofer

Garments: Good and Bad (Marina M. Kolushova, Victor Stuhlmann, Ossi Lehtonen)

Text, camera, sound, edit: Ivan Cheng

French translation: Juliette Mello

Special thanks: Meg Harper, Aaron Kahn, Magdalena Mitterhofer, Gianmaria Andreetta, Tilman Hecker, N'gone Thiam, Thorben Gröbel, Good & Bad, Lisa Plaut, Alexander Iezzi, Shade Théret, Stefan Kalmár, Raoul Klooker

Ambientals

4K video, 2023, length ~15mins

Camera: Alexander Iezzi

Garments: Good and Bad (Marina M. Kolushova, Victor Stuhlmann, Ossi Lehtonen)

Performance, text, edit: Ivan Cheng

French translation: Juliette Mello

Highway (Marseille)

Laser engraved tiles, aluminium, 2023, dimensions variable

Production assistance: Ceel Mogami de Haas

OCT0 thanks

Sébastien Peyret

Véronique Traquandi

Patricia Chaveau

Eric Chaveau

Won Jin Choi

Nouria Behloul

Chris Kraus

Hedi El Kholti

Michèle Lamy

Festival de Marseille

Marie Didier

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