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WONG KIT YI, *October 8, 2015, p.m. / Argus-eyed / Gold*, 2015, inkjet on archival paper, eight pinhole photographs on gelatin silver paper, 61x 81 cm. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

FUTURES, AGAIN WONG KIT YI

MIMI WONG

P!

HONG KONG USA

Wong Kit Yi fulfills a past promise with “Futures, Again” at P! gallery in New York. Two years ago, the conceptual and performance artist proposed a novel idea to fund her three-week-long residency in the Arctic Circle: she sold commissions for customized work to be produced during the expedition. These contractual agreements became the basis for the 2015 show “North Pole Futures,” which was also curated by P!’s Prem Krishnamurthy. “They were basically buying a piece of paper from me,” Wong said of her patrons, who were only allowed to specify a date and time, an unusual word, and a color as prompts for the purchased pieces.

334 BROOME ST
NEW YORK NY 10002
+1 212 334 5200
INFO@P-EXCLAMATION.COM
@P_EXCLAMATION

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by Mimi Wong
4 April 2017

Exhibited in public for the first time, the completed works hang on the walls as a timeline, ranging from the 7th to 18th of Wong's October 2015 residency. "They represent a moment from the past that's now been made visible," Krishnamurthy explained. On the second day of her arctic adventure, Wong asked eight fellow travelers, which included a mix of artists and scientists, to stand in a circle facing different directions while holding pinhole cameras. Solving the problem of digital cameras dying easily in the extreme cold, both the performance and resulting photographs became the realization of *October 8, 2015, p.m. / Argus-eyed / Gold* (2015).



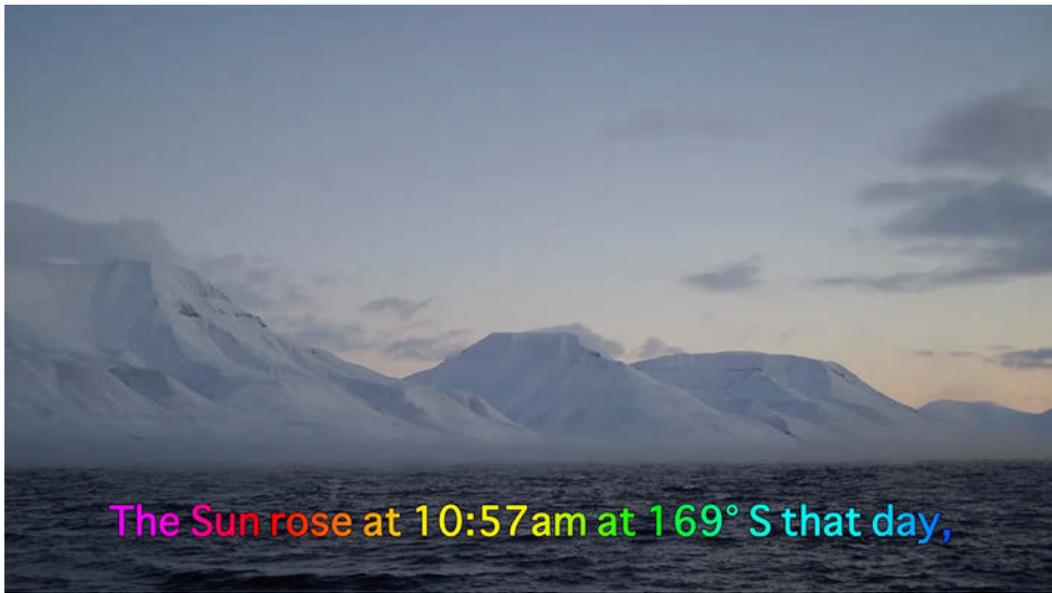
Installation view of **WONG KIT YI**'s *October 14, 2015, a.m. / Chanticleer / Dragon's Blood*, 2015, inkjet on archival paper, one toner print on colored paper. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

Another instance of puzzle-solving helped produce *October 14, 2015, a.m. / Chanticleer / Dragon's Blood* (2015). Upon learning that roosters do not exist in the arctic, she wrote an apologetic letter to her patron stating that, according to geologist Ólafur Ingólfsson, "the closest substitute would be a small chicken-like bird called the Ptarmigan, which croaks but does not sing." With the aid of a feather duster she found on board the ship, the artist transformed herself into the "alternative rooster" she was searching for, and photographed herself standing in the arctic water.

If the commissioned works gesture to the past, then the newest addition to the show, *A River in the Freezer* (2017), encapsulates the present in terms of Wong's journey. Both the physical and creative starting point, the world's northernmost settlement of Longyearbyen, Norway—and, in particular, its bizarre law that people are not allowed to die there because the frozen ground prevents bodies from decomposing—served as the inspiration for the short film. Weaving together interviews, found footage, anime excerpts and her own photography, the artist-turned-documentarian explores a myriad of topics from glaciology (the scientific study of glaciers) to Cold War intrigue to the socioeconomic history of ice. An electropop soundtrack composed by Kyle Oppenheimer converts her meditative essay into whimsical lyrics, and transforms the experimental travelogue into a kind of educational karaoke.

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WONG KIT YI, *A River in the Freezer*, 2017, still from HD video with sound: 25 min. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.



WONG KIT YI, *Parallel Memory*, October 27, 2015, 2017, laser-etched UV plexiglass, archival inkjet prints, custom sliding frame, 70 × 130 cm. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

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“I think she’s interested not in the static object, but the object that’s performative,” Krishnamurthy said in describing Wong’s artistic philosophy. *Parallel Memory, October 27, 2015* (2017) features two identical photos taken at Longyearbyen that can slide interchangeably back and forth. In one of the frames, a poem recalls her associations with the moon that she observed during the time of year when the sun no longer rose above the horizon: she writes, “It’s a time of rejuvenation.” This format will become the prototype for Wong’s future work, which in this case are the unsold dates from her trip. Should they eventually be purchased, she will collaborate with the patron to generate a “parallel memory” to be determined in October 2017.

“Futures, Again” offers a fascinating glimpse into how one artist uses time not only conceptually but also as a means to sustain her project. In her revisiting of the “past-future” or “future-past,” Wong prevents moments from stagnating by continuously mining them for new possibilities.



Exhibition view of **WONG KIT YI**'s exhibition "Futures, Again" at P!, New York, 2017. Photo by Sebastian Bach. Courtesy the artist and P!

Wong Kit Yi's "*Futures, Again*" is on view at P!, New York, until April 12, 2017.

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