

A photograph of a wooden table with various legs and a tilted top, overlaid with text. The table has a light-colored wooden top and a dark, possibly black, base. The legs are made of dark wood and are intricately carved, resembling animal paws. The top of the table is tilted upwards, and there are several other wooden pieces, possibly drawers or shelves, attached to it. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

British Art Studies

November 2020

British Art Studies

Issue 18, published 30 November 2020

Cover image: Sonia E. Barrett, Table No. 6, 2013, wood and metal.. Digital image courtesy of Bruno Weiss.

PDF generated on 15 February 2024

Note: *British Art Studies* is a digital publication and intended to be experienced online and referenced digitally. PDFs are provided for ease of reading offline. Please do not reference the PDF in academic citations: we recommend the use of DOIs (digital object identifiers) provided within the online article. These unique alphanumeric strings identify content and provide a persistent link to a location on the internet. A DOI is guaranteed never to change, so you can use it to link permanently to electronic documents with confidence.

Published by:

Paul Mellon Centre
16 Bedford Square
London, WC1B 3JA
<https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk>

In partnership with:

Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, Connecticut
<https://britishart.yale.edu>

ISSN: 2058-5462

DOI: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462

URL: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>

Editorial team: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/editorial-team>

Advisory board: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/advisory-board>

Produced in the United Kingdom.

A joint publication by



PAUL MELLON
CENTRE

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

Contents

Wang Chau Village: (Non-)Indigenous Wisdom, Amidst Eviction, Michael Leung

Wang Chau Village: (Non-)Indigenous Wisdom, Amidst Eviction

Michael Leung

Authors

Cite as

Michael Leung, "Wang Chau Village: (Non-)Indigenous Wisdom, Amidst Eviction", *British Art Studies*, Issue 18, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-18/mleung>

I first met the Wang Chau villagers in February 2017 during an action in a commercial district in Hong Kong. Wang Chau is a village in the New Territories with 200 households, 500 villagers and pets, surrounded by trees and small farms and gardens. During these past three years, I have learned details about the colonial residue and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous dichotomy that has led to the dispossession of the villagers' homes and the ongoing destruction of the green belt village.

“Wang Chau Village: (Non-)Indigenous Wisdom, Amidst Eviction,” available for download on the next slide, is a paper written for the *Association for Asian Studies* conference (September 2020), which was presented in a panel with anthropologists focusing on land and sea practices and food sovereignty. Since starting my PhD in 2018, I have shared bilingual texts freely online and through zines—available at zine fairs and for free. The zine format allows a more intimate reading experience and becomes a tangible object that can be gifted to others, self-organised libraries, archives, and so on.

The indigenous villagers were granted land rights by the British colonial government following a six-day imperial war in 1899. However the hegemonic and patriarchal land policies that favour indigenous villagers in the New Territories are a colonial residue that continue to discriminate indigenous women, dispossess non-indigenous villagers whilst privileging males in indigenous families with land and building rights, known as the Small House Policy--introduced in 1972.

Figure 1.

Michael Leung, quote from Wang Chau Village zine, 2020. This is a quote from the zine, typed up similarly to past and current policies imposed by the former British colonial government in Hong Kong.

When I first joined a tour of Wang Chau in 2017, I saw a monochrome village map that loosely looked like a metro subway map, showing different places in the village such as Wong Bak's village well and the Fung Chi Village entrance. I kindly offered to do a painting of the village for the *2017 Wang Chau Jackfruit Festival*. In the following three festivals, with villagers and members of the concern group, I updated the map to its latest 2020 iteration—which is unfortunately likely to be the last amidst the eviction. However, Ms Cheng told me last week, that perhaps we can replant some Wang Chau jackfruit trees in other places and have the next jackfruit festivals elsewhere.

Please [download a double-sided PDF of the map here](#).



Figure 2.

Michael Leung, Wang Chau Jackfruit Festival Map (front), 2020. Digital image courtesy of Michael Leung.



Figure 3. Michael Leung, Wang Chau Jackfruit Festival Map (back), 2020. Digital image courtesy of Michael Leung.



Figure 4. Michael Leung, A Land Protector’s Clothes Line, watercolour. Digital image courtesy of Michael Leung.

This painting depicts an imaginary clothes line with four different garments. From the left to right, they are: a sleeveless shirt worn by village protectors in 1899, when anti-imperial villagers threatened to attack villages, who refused to join the war against the British colonial government (?? *Strong and Brave*); a white T-shirt hand painted by villagers early in the movement (? *Injustice*), a T-shirt gifted to me from the Wang Chau Green Belt Concern Group (???? ???? *No Eviction No Demolition, We Swear to Protect Our Home*);

and a poncho worn by land protectors at the ZAD (*Zone à Défendre*, Zone to Defend) in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, resisting the construction of an airport and its world (*ZAD Partout, ZADs Everywhere*).



Figure 5.

Michael Leung, ?????????! (*The land is our home and not a commodity!*), 2017–2020, calligraphy on photograph. Digital image courtesy of Michael Leung.

?????????! (*The land is our home and not a commodity!*) is composed on top of a photograph of a faded and weathered banner in Wing Ning Village, Wang Chau. The sheet metal fencing surrounds a green belt area that has been acquired by New World Development Company Limited in Wing Ning Village. The original photograph was taken on 3 May 2017. The calligraphy was added on 14 November 2020. At present there are eleven villages facing dispossession in Hong Kong. Hopefully the message on this banner can be helpful in some way and connect villagers from different land struggles together.

Licensing

The Publishers of *British Art Studies* are committed to supporting scholarship on British art and architecture of all periods. This publication is made available free of charge at <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>. We ask users to identify the use of materials made available through this website and to provide an appropriate credit to the author and the publication, so that others may find and use our resources.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence (CC BY-NC 2.0 UK). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/uk/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

The Publishers fully support the protection of intellectual property and are committed to complying with, and strictly adhering to, all applicable copyright law. In many cases, copyright or other proprietary rights may be held by individuals or entities other than, or in addition to, the Publishers. If a work or a photographic image is still protected by copyright, you must cite the relevant copyright information when using the image and comply with all other terms or restrictions that may be applicable to that material.

In some cases, exceptions to copyright that permit limited use of protected works without the permission of the copyright owner may have been applied. We are confident that we have carried out due diligence in our use of copyrighted material as required, but we apologise for any inadvertent infringement of rights.

Digital copies of resources are made accessible for research for one of the following reasons:

- they are in the public domain;
- the rights are owned by the Publishers;
- we make them accessible under an exception or limitation to UK copyright law, as outlined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended);
- we have permission to make them accessible;
- or, there are no known restrictions on use.

If you believe that we have made a mistake and wish for your material to be removed from our site, please contact us at copyright@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk.

Please include the following information with your request:

- Name and contact information, including email address and phone number.
- Identification of the resource for consideration of removal. Providing URLs in your communication will help us locate content quickly.
- The reason for the request.

The Publishers respond promptly, normally within 21 business days. We may remove the resource from our site while we assess the validity of the request. Upon completion of the assessment, we will take appropriate action and communicate that action to you.