



No more tradition's chains shall bind us

If this is the party I want, you may not be part of it.

Jennifer Chan, Fang Di, Will Kwan, Alvin Luong,
Midi Onodera, Rah, and Karen Tam

Curated by Henry Heng Lu



This catalogue is published on the occasion of the group exhibition, *If this is the party I want, you may not be part of it*, on view from August 27 to October 29, 2022 in Hamilton Artists Inc.'s Cannon Gallery.

If this is the party I want, you may not be part of it is an experimental and curious multimedia project that offers views on expanding and challenging the concept of party as a form of social interaction, as well as representations of a political entity or a belief system. First initiated through wordplay, and then activated by a composition of moving images and installation works, the project foregrounds and inquires into the cultural and political implications of party and its intricacies in the context of a contemporary society. In this proposition, there is party for one person, for politically engaged individuals, for racialized bodies, and for culturally isolated communities. It sets out to develop new possibilities: Party is for everyone, tangible or intangible; it's a call and response.

If this is the party I want includes: Will Kwan's *Cultural Revolutions* that draws a parallel between historic events and rave culture; Karen Tam's *Karaoke Sessions* that invites multi-lingual performances of old favourites; *Utopia Social Club* by Alvin Luong offering an EDM version of the Internationale; Fang Di's *Triumph of the Skies* making wishes into faces for three flight attendants; Midi Onodera's *Nobody Knows* embraces solitude for moments of the self; Rah's *Ethnic Roots*, a parody of stereotypical racial authenticity, in drag; and Jennifer Chan's installation *Body Party* that puts the party where it longs to be – in bed.

Curated by Henry Heng Lu, through *Call Again*, a nomadic initiative/collective committed to creating space for contemporary diasporic artistic practices in the context of North America and beyond. This exhibition is a new iteration of the 2018 exhibition, *OMG, it's a Party!*, curated by Henry Heng Lu and Winnie Wu, at Vtape, Toronto.



Karen Tam, *Karaoke Sessions*, 2005-2007. Series of 5 videos, colour, 15:00. Installation view.

If this is the party I want, you may not be part of it

Henry Heng Lu

Join the party of your dreams: dance party, birthday party, tea party, makeshift party, your local political party (that no one votes for). Party like there is no tomorrow!

If this is the party I want, you may not be part of it is an exhibition about being part of something, or situating oneself. As a person of the diasporas, I know this searching desire for a sense of being or belonging all too well. As someone who had embarrassing dance moves when younger and did not know how to party, I identify so much with those awkwardly dancing alone in the corner of a nightclub – a drink in hand, shaking their head, and trying extremely hard to catch up with the beats of pounding electronic dance music.

The word party is ostensibly associated with joy, but, to me, it also goes beyond the act of gathering to have fun, or letting loose. The thrust of it is how we interact with one another and co-exist; and, in the context of this exhibition, how to party by way of misidentifying the idea of party intentionally. Taking up different spots of the gallery space, the dazzling videos and films that populate the composition of the exhibition make statements of their own – whether it's political, nostalgic, cultural, or nothing of a particular agenda. *If this is the party I want* is absolutely



Rah, *Ethnic Roots*, 2017. Colour/black and white, 4:56. Still. Courtesy of the artist.

experimental and curious, intending to expand on the concept of party as a form of social interaction, as well as representations of a political entity or a belief system.

Utopia Social Club by Alvin Luong presents an EDM version of “The Internationale,” a 19th-century left-wing anthem composed by Eugène Pottier and Pierre De Geyter that has ever intertwined with the socialist movement. Playing on affect, the soundtrack resonates with an imposition of a populist politician.



Midi Onodera, *Nobody Knows*, 2002. Video, colour, 3:15. Still. Courtesy of the artist.



Fang Di, *Triumph of the Skies*, 2017. Video, colour, 5:04. Installation view.

Will Kwan's *Cultural Revolutions* draws a parallel between the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China that secured former chairman Mao Zedong's power and influence over the country and western rave culture. The two maniacal "revolutions" radiate a similar level of energy, as two almost religious manifestations.

There is a certain level of comfort I hope visitors can find in Karen Tam's *Karaoke Sessions*, a collection of well-known Western classic tunes sung in Chinese languages paired with imagery of landscape, strangers, seagulls, and flowers. The diasporic sensibilities embedded in the work give it an infinite power to translate (no pun intended) something strange yet familiar and make space for a culturally-specific sonic field that transcends linguistic barriers.

There is no shortage of quirky and fun representations in the assembly of works: Fang Di's *Triumph of the Skies* depicts a party with three doll-faced flight attendants who aim to save innocent lives by consuming a poison that the government wanted to transport on a plane and later use to kill. A glorious state of bliss and an edge of raunch come hand in hand to make visible a counter-authority agency – achieving a crushing victory by sabotaging the government's plan.

Midi Onodera's *Nobody Knows* embraces solitude for moments of the self, illustrated by a video shot with toy cameras and a calming tune. The flow of thought dangles within random imagery (who doesn't love the kitten that made a cameo?!) and creates a unique contrast with the big sounds running through the exhibition site.

The exhibition is also an attempt to give form to some of the minor feelings one has when situated within a larger structure that favours the majority, identified by Cathy Park Hong as "the racialized range of emotions that are negative, dysphoric,

and therefore untelegenic.”¹ Rah’s *Ethnic Roots* is a parody of stereotypical racial authenticity linked to natural hair colour that incorporates film noir and YouTube tutorials aesthetics to laugh in the face of so-called assimilation. Jennifer Chan’s mattress installation *Body Party* is a collage of pictures of men’s naked torsos that she found online. Literally, one can lie in a sea of men and feel awkward, sexy, or depressed, to insinuate gender dynamics and masculinity.

If this is the party I want consciously makes inquiries into the cultural and political implications of party and its intricacies in the context of contemporary society. Engaging with these works, I search for answers about becoming that may or may not be there – perhaps this is really a “to be, or not to be” question? How do we navigate our states of being with our own agencies?

I imagine the exhibition as a site where one does not necessarily know how to interact with others. Each work can be imagined as a person on a dance floor, and each of them has their own awareness. The show ponders a range of possible identities and actions within different social backgrounds and concerns: there is party for one person, for politically engaged individuals, for racialized bodies, and for culturally isolated communities. Party is for everyone, tangible or intangible; it’s a call and response, set out to foster new possibilities for co-existence.

1 Cathy Park Hong, “Stand Up,” in *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, (New York : One World, 2020), page 60.



From left to right: Will Kwan, *Cultural Revolutions*, 2000. Video colour/black and white, 7:00;
Jennifer Chan, *Body Party*, 2014. Installation;
Midi Onodera, *Nobody Knows*, 2002. Video, colour, 3:15. Installation view.

Documentation: Abedar Kamgari
Design: Kristina Durka and Eli Nolet
ISBN 978-1-926454-19-1



HAMILTON ARTISTS INC.

155 James St N
Hamilton, Ontario
L8R 2K9
<http://theinc.ca>

Hamilton Artists Inc. would like to acknowledge the generous support of
its funders, donors, sponsors, and programming partners.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



Hamilton



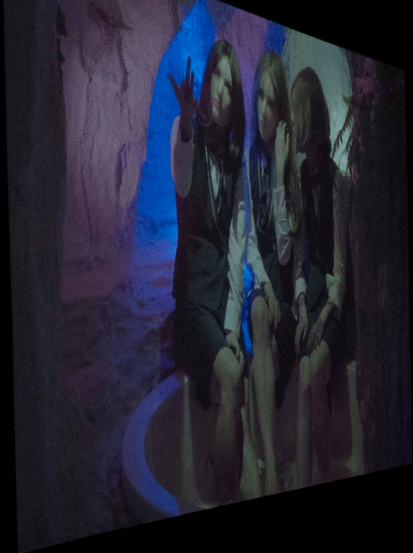
ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



incite
FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

Providing funding in support of the
cultural performing arts in Ontario

Cover: From left to right: Fang Di, *Triumph in the Skies*, 2017. Video, colour, 5:04;
Jennifer Chan, *Body Party*, 2014. Installation;
Alvin Luong, *Utopia Social Club*, 2017. Video, colour, 4:02;
Karen Tam, *Karaoke Sessions*, 2005-2007. Series of 5 videos, colour, 15:00. Installation view.



EXIT

