

# KUO YU-PING

KUO Yu Ping was born in 1986 in Nantou, Taiwan, and she received her master's degree in trans-disciplinary arts from Taipei National University of Arts. Kuo's art practice includes a diverse range of genres, including painting, video, installation, and performance. She uses art to express the missing elements or insufficiencies between her own experiences in life and what is considered Big History, including issues involving her personal memories, the Cold War, and the circumstances she encounters. Using the notion of "missing or lacking" to bring forth already determined historical predicaments, Kuo uses trauma and disappointments to support a medley of metaphors, which has become a notable feature in her artworks. She seeks to push or correct "existing" concepts, in order for them to be more aligned with reality and the local mentality. Through her endeavors, she searches for a subjective narrative.

Kuo has been working along with dual trajectories in her practice. One concerns how her personal experience and action connect to history and collective memory following a rational criticality and attention to modernisation and politics. The other reflects her inner world featuring a realm of eerie fantasy and intuitive expressions with vibrant and fluid visual language. Her recent solo shows include: *How Real is Yesterday*, TKG+ Project (2019); *My Little Black Book*, Michael Ku Gallery (2017). KUO is the Finalist in the 2018 and 2015 Taipei Arts Award, and participated in the 2018 Taiwan Biennial and 2016 Taipei Biennial.





# RECENT WORK





*Sleep, Dream, in a Feverish Land* installation view



# *Sleep, Dream, in a Feverish Land*

mixed-media and sound installation,  
dimensions variable, 2019

Starting in 2016, Kuo began dismantling a piece of carpet in an extremely prolonged, self-torturing, and neurotic manner. Through repetitive and almost ritualistic manual labor, she carefully pulled the threads apart, loosened the wool, and turned them into numerous solid pom-poms.

Over time, her body has developed a pattern of movement most efficient for the laborious task. She can stay in the same position for hours with both arms being the only body parts that frantically move. It is as if the whole body was isolated in a vacuum, without growing or aging. Sometimes, bits and pieces of mixed emotion and memory are like fleeting snowflakes, fluttering and then vanishing in the blink of an eye. Sometimes, like heavy rain bucketing down for a whole day, emotion and memory persist until a bitter, astringent belief grows out of it — as if one could believe the time is under control; as if one could keep carrying out the act of dismantling ceaselessly.

Continuing the trajectory of Kuo's artistic practice, this piece of carpet explores questions on essentiality: how can "existence" be portrayed when the "subject" is a perpetual motion, a verb? She records various sounds produced by tools used during manual labor, like sounds of dismantling the carpet and making pom-poms; she then further combines them with sounds that convey "the essential state of human's existence," such as sounds of sleeping, eating, and waves of emotional fluctuation—what she calls mental labor.



detail shots of the installation



In the installation, soft materials like wax and silicone rubber are used to create a tree-branch-like structure prodding through the carpet from the bottom. Different objects are well integrated with one another, magnifying their anthropomorphizing effect. The work exemplifies the tension of entangling contestation between subjectivity and creative practice.

sound link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19lfFDqF6r1EfsF5qnLmpjnn8oW7JGUol/view>







## *Is Waking Up*

mixed-media and duo-channel video installation,  
dimensions variable, 2019



The work *"Is Waking Up"*, can be considered a hybrid representation of Kuo's memories — pouring rain and wastewater running through a sewage system, on top of which stands the Zhongxing Auditorium. Built in Kuo's hometown in the 1950s, the classical symmetry of this colonial auditorium imitates the shape of a bomber aircraft, equipment that the ROC government received from the US. Much like an allegory of modernity telling the story of a lost plane, it is, too, the artist's spatial and physical memory of her hometown. Encircled and concealed by wooden walls in the exhibition, the enormous object's ostensible invisibility closely corresponds to the artist's state of mind. The white symmetrical architecture with a bomber-aircraft-like shape seen from a bird's eye view, a symbol accentuated in the grand historical narrative, is now bundled up within a tender, intimate, feminine space. Through the arrangement of the installation, Kuo attempts to highlight the deep desires of decolonizing subjectivity, as well as the core idea of subjectivity construction. Such desires point right towards the collusion and complicity between subjectivity and larger structural factors. Decolonizing subjectivity must be colonized first. It is not merely about chronological order. Rather, it is because we inhabit in the narrative. More precisely, we live in symbiosis with the narrative codependently.

A video work shot on site at the exhibition space, attempts to excavate what lies deep within the artist's subconscious via images of once-present honor guards, eliciting an inexplicable, haunting state of self-censorship.







*There Is a Light That Enters Houses With No Other House In Sight* Installation



# *There Is a Light That Enters Houses With No Other House In Sight*

mixed-media and sound installation,  
dimensions variable, 2019

Taking up the space of a ground floor and basement, the exhibition consists of several sculptures, sound and site-specific installations to form a dimming and uncanny environment that resembles a dwelling space. There is a participatory component that invites the audience to imagine his/her own house through writing, which opens up a public space that could accommodate diverse personal narratives.

Following the thread in Kuo's recent oeuvre, the pit is seen as the metaphor of a connecting point between inner consciousness and corporeality. The house here further signifies subjective consciousness. The exhibition space connects the outer and the inner, which means it mediates between our outer behaviours and inner consciousness. The descending movement to the basement is an allegorical gesture of excavating hidden desires, knowledge, and emotions.

The writing project invites the audience to write their stories and read those of others. These diverse bodily experiences then become a bricolage of self-awareness and reflexive performativity which is crucial in the process of establishing identities. The texts and drawings in the exhibition resonate with the banyan-like treadmill installation, suggesting how bodies are disciplined by

sound link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1do3jsNetyYblva99-t3soi-Osh8IqGNKz/view>





*The House She Want to Build installation view*



# *The House She Wants to Build*

A series of paintings and sculpture,  
dimensions variable, 2019

*"The House She Wants to Build"* is inspired by the artist's own childhood home, and by considering the notions of dwelling and existence, she sees herself as one with the house and even extends out from the basement floor to reach deep into the ground, whereby she reaches the childhood homes of her parents and even her ancestors. She sees infinite of possibilities with this house, where different shapes and forms are imaginable. However, although tangible, it is immaterial and is without a name. This house serves as a metaphor, and it could be seen as a human body, a concept, an imagery, a value, and an ideology, and it could even be a proposal for the future. The artist fully exposes her own inner state of mind through the highly supernatural and mysterious forms of object. Through the imagery of home and the meaning it embodies, Kuo has created a model with sculpture derived from her consciousness, which pays tribute to the memories of her own family.









# *There was no food in my stomach, sun on the back of my neck, love on my mind, panic in my soul, and an ache in my heart*

mixed-media and sound installation,  
dimensions variable, 2018

Within the trend of migration across countries given rise by capitalism, more and more women are now searching independently for ways of survival. This installation work composed of sound and objects begins with descriptions of “home” by Vietnamese actress Thu Lieu and her Taiwan-born daughter. In collaboration with sound artist and actor, the art work turns the two woman’s narratives into poetries with sound, with the setting transformed from the dynamic emotions stirred by transnational migration, the desire to survive, and the imagery of home, with the ethos behind the notion of “home” explored. The artwork also examines the space that people dwell and mature in, which is connected to the artist Kuo Yu Ping’s recurrent quest to find the key that could open up the understanding for the condition of “lacking missing” – a relationship between deep memories and self-existence.



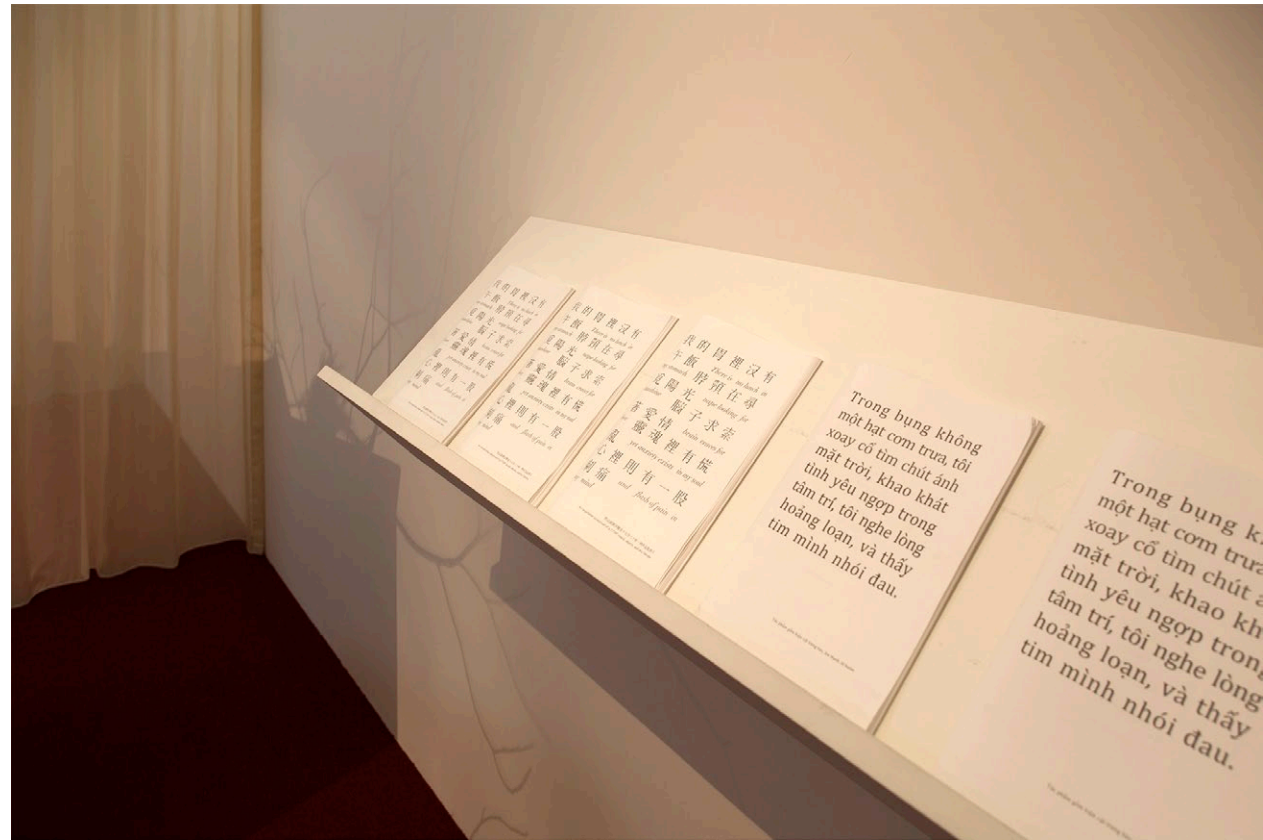




*There was no food in my stomach, sun on the back of my neck, love on my mind, panic in my soul, and an ache in my heart, installation view*



The artwork consists of a few modified piece of furniture, with nest-like shapes created using hair, fur, wax, and colored glass scattered between the branches that have sprouted out of the furniture. The branches support the nests but several rackets have also grown from the branches, seemingly about to smash down the nests, which evokes feelings of uneasiness.



installation view

sound link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/16i8lXUf0tIKm9wEypSG-zoOVomhom\\_Dne/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/16i8lXUf0tIKm9wEypSG-zoOVomhom_Dne/view)



# *My Little Black Book*

a series of paintings and several sculptures, dimensions variable, 2017



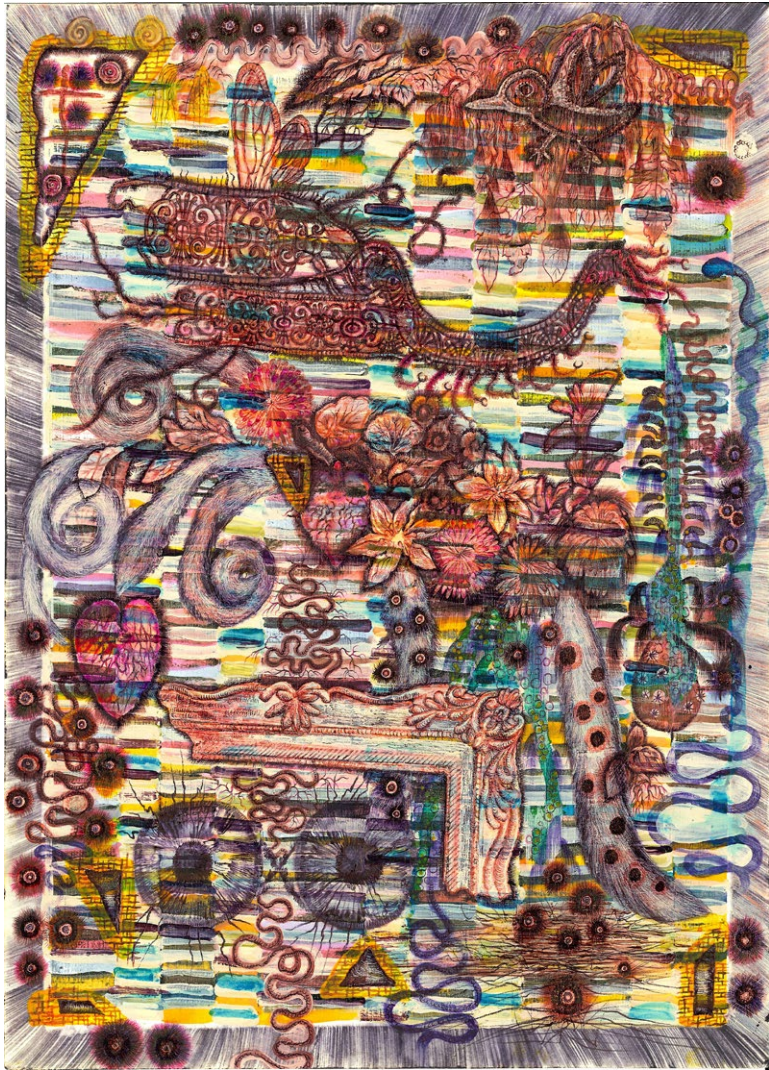
*“My Little Black Book”* represents a change of pace for Kuo Yu-Ping. Her new solo exhibitions depart from her common theme of Taiwan’s history, and on the surface is not as explicitly conceptual, mainly comprised of small A4 paintings, created by the artist during an extended stay in Colombia.

The exhibition itself could also be understood in the contradictions between inside and outside: working abroad and absorbing outside influences has allowed Kuo Yu-Ping to separate herself from the Taiwanese context, but the finished pieces also have an “internal” aspect, perhaps more personal than before.

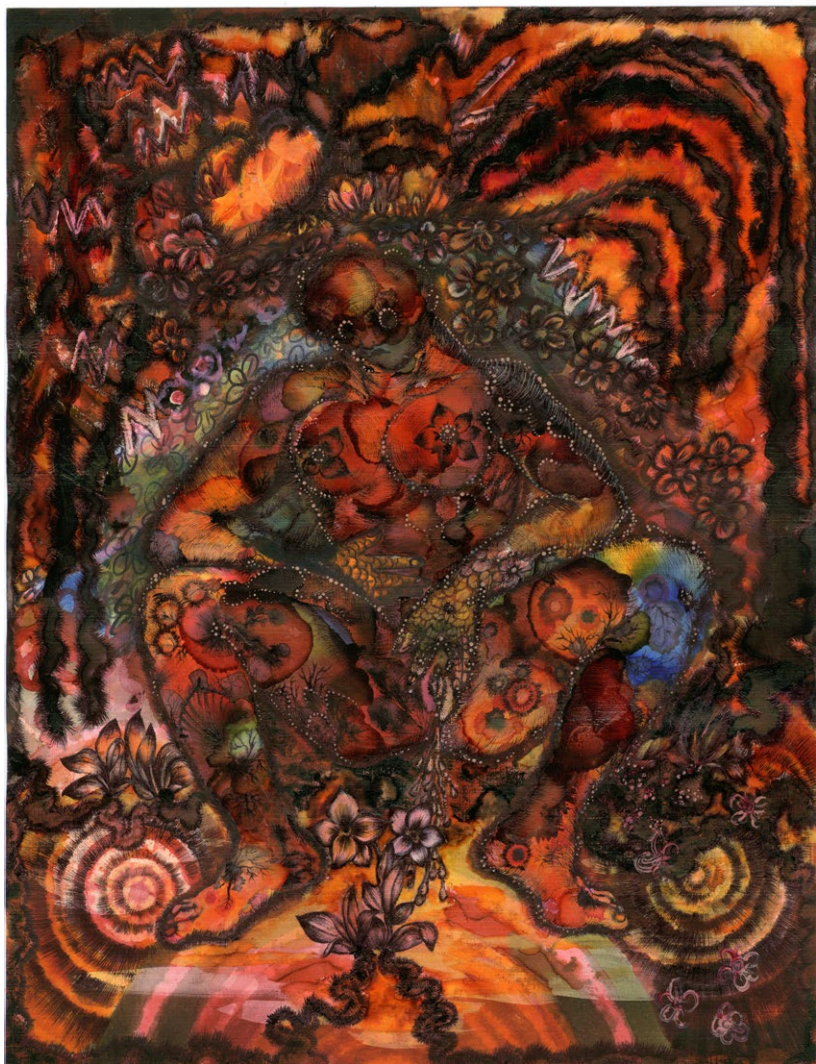
The brightly colored, surreal paintings feature grotesque faces blending into landscapes, alternately suggesting joy and violence. Within embroidery-like borders, flower, shells, and vague shapes recall genitalia. With a general aesthetic not too far away from the “Día de Muertos” strand of Mexican folk art, the paintings certainly bear the influence of Latin America. Yet the deep swirling reds and supernatural subject of *Peeing Fairy* (2017) strangely recall the fierce figures of Tibetan religious iconography, although with some levity.



*My Little Book series*









# *The Ark*

sound installation,  
dimensions  
variable, 2017

*"The Ark"* is a sound theatre work, assembled from filing cabinets borrowed from Reconstruction Department of the previous Taiwan Provincial Government. Produced in the 1960s, the grey metal cabinets are standardized and monotonous have become mottled and old through years of bureaucratic usage, like a vehicle that carries the tenor of the rapid transformations in Taiwan's urban and rural landscape under the pressures of politics. The display of decommissioned iron cabinets is a minimalist sculpture, becoming waste products in aftermath of success within the mythology of economic development in the realistic context of a developing country.

*The Ark installation view*





Kuo Yu Ping collaborates with sound artist and actor in this re-enactment of the renowned novel “I Love Black Eyes” by contemporary Taiwanese author. The artist has removed the vintage files that filled the metal cabinets and replaced them with sound tracks. The now-emptied filing cabinets provide a metaphor for the chapters in the history of modern life management.

The floodwater sound that appear to relieve social etiquette and façade of pretense in human relations, seem to overflow from the metal cabinetry to wash away the files that become ourselves.



# Autonomy

include a hand-made book, two wood table, installation and document, dimensions variabl, 2016

"Autonomy" was inspired by a translation of the British textbook Chambers's Educational Course: Political Economy for Use in Schools, and for Private Instruction. The text was introduced to Northeast Asia during the transformation of modern Western knowledge at the end of the 19th century, and became a common text of such knowledge. It conveyed a political economy conceived with nation as a unit of utilitarianism and liberalism. However, in the process of translation in 1885, Chambers's Educational Course made concessions and compromises vis-à-vis Chinese moral principles and the prevailing political environment and was akin to a strategy handbook with traditional Confucian principles as a foundation, and nation (republic) as the ultimate goal, signalling the birth of a modernist "subjectivity" within the Chinese context.



installation view



Kuo Yu-Ping undertakes a reinterpretation of the text by re-transcribing the book with her own blood, and explores the multiple contemporary transformations and configurations of the ethical and technological derivatives of Modernism. She collects and records events and objects encountered in the process of her execution, and the side-effects that accompany non-medical blood collection. In addition to self-archivalization, she also creates a faint narrative that links together the individual, the family, and the nation. The work reveals an individual “free will” that implicates not only modern scientific medical concepts, but also the set laws and contracts between the individual and the nation, and ethical relationship between the self and the Other.







## *Eastern Messiah*

include a single channel video, a series of paintings, installation and document, dimensions variable, 2015

snapshot of the video, 5"45'



In Kuo's "*Eastern Messiah*" work, she created interlinking works — including a video, installations pieces, and a set of paintings — inspired by the imagery of one freeway and one family. She peer out from a historical point of view and see, through a nation's imagination, the effects of cold wars and modernization. She wish to refine these specific historical situations through the path of my own politics. She seek ways of molding our subjective experiences, our patterns of desire, and even the gloom politics of modern life.

A Hungarian author who was present during the Korean War described what he witnessed, saying, "All that remained of the towns were chimneys. I do not know why chimneys survived when all houses had collapsed. Passing through a town with a population of 200,000, I saw nothing but a few chimneys." "Just piles of low, purple chunks of cinder." Inspired by this description, She crashed, cut, and re-created her collection of discarded household objects and packaging into images imitating the ruins of war. Through the production process of attempting to link one image to another, and through the material and labor meaning behind the process, she are able to outline the relation between modern material life and past wars.



snapshot of the video

video link:  
<https://youtu.be/sbtPmmRRcQ4>





*Eastern Messiah* installation view





## *Delay and Pit*

include a single channel video, a  
series of paintings and document,  
dimensions variable, 2015

snapshot of the video, 13"37'



*"Delay and Pit"* includes, video, drawings and a brochures. Kuo Yu Ping recalls her memories of growing up by producing and shooting an architectural model of her family home in "Chung-Hsing New Village". In her role as a storyteller, Kuo undergoes a process of self-healing as she uncovers the effects of political displacement on rural development to present a present a rational and emotional archival writing. The perspective in this video shifts around the detailed model. Every object in the model seems so familiar to the artist, but is shrouded in an oppressive mist of orange light. There is a huge cavity at the center of the model. With this huge cavity, the artist attempted to reveal that there is a desolate scene, namely without any deity, clan, or history, under her house. There is merely a pipe that symbolizes the mechanism of a modern state, and this pipe ultimately becomes a bizarre hole through which something passes. This video fabricated dramatic temporal and spatial tension, which indicates the artist's morbid attachment to this place and her high level of anxiety at the collective memories of history.

video link:

[https://youtu.be/dTk\\_pg40zKQ](https://youtu.be/dTk_pg40zKQ)





C.V.

## **EDUCATION**

2016 ( M.F.A.) Graduate Institute of Trans-disciplinary Arts,Taipei National University of the Arts, Taipei

2008 (B.F.A.) in sculpture, National Taiwan University of Arts, Taipei

## **SOLO EXHIBITION**

2019 How Real Is Yesterday, TKG+project, Taipei

2017 My Little Black Book, Michael Ku Gallery, Taipei

2015 Sun Yat-San Freeway, Michael Ku Gallery, Taipei

2013 Cement Love, Nan-hai Art Gallery, Taipei

## **SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

2019 Female Avatars' Futurist Statement: Matrilineage, Production, Ecosystem, Taipei Contemporary Art Center, Taipei

2019 hOle, Supported by Arts Council Korea, Department of Cultural Affairs, Taipei City Government Organised by Taipei Contemporary Art Center

2019 Once Upon A Time–Unfinished Progressive Past, MOCA taipei, Taipei

2019 Madou Sugar Industry Art Triennial, Tainan, Taiwan

2019 Tears and Joys House, Wild Rhizome-2018 Taiwan Biennial Project, BlackandWhite Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan

2018 It follows, Enjoy Art Space, Wellington, New Zealand

2018 Wild Rhizome-2018 Taiwan Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan

2018 Black Ships, Civilization, Remarks, and \_\_\_\_\_s' Footprints: From Japanese Modern to East Asian Contemporary Art, Galerie Niched Taipei, Taipei

2018 Family Memo — Island of Memory and Migration Southeast Asia New Immigrant themed Contemporary Art Exhibition, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, Taipei

2018 We can't come from nothing –eight strategies for undoing borders and rethinking identities, Haohaus Gallery, Taipei

2018 Even though the future may be far away, Even though saying good bye needs not be at an airport, If only you could describe a future, Michael Ku Gellary, Taipei



2017 Tobacco, Carpet, Lunch Box, Textile Machinery and Cave Men: the narratives of craftsmanship and technologies in contemporary art , Hong-Gah Museum, Taipei  
2017 Tropical Cyclone, Kuandu Museum, Taipei  
2017 Family Reunion, Pi Artworks, London UK  
2017 Shattered Sanctity, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei  
2017 RIVERRUN, Taipei Fine Aarts Museum, Taipei  
2016 the Third International Biennial of Muralism and Public Art, Colombia Cali  
2016 Taipei Biennial, Gestures and Archives of the Present, Genealogies of the Future, Taipei  
2016 Who's Who – Waley Art, Taipei, Taiwan / Audio Visual Pavilion, Seoul Korea  
2016 MOCA, The Moment that Comes is about to Go- 6 Visions about Time, Taipei  
2014 Taipei South Town Art Festival 2014 —The Contemporary Art of Chinese Characters, National Museum of History, Taipei  
2014 The Red Bloc, Treasure Hill Artist Village, Taipei

## **HONOR**

2018 Taipei Arts Award, Finalist  
2015 Taipei Arts Award, Finalist  
2013 Taipei Arts Award, Honorable Mention  
2013 S-An Cultural Foundation Art Award, in Video Arts  
2009 S-An Cultural Foundation Art Award, in Visual Arts

## **SELECTED REVIEWS**

2019 ARTFORUM CRITICS' PICK, Kuo Yu-Ping's solo exhibition "How Real is Yesterday", — Brian Hioe  
2019 ARTFORUM "How Real is Yesterday", — Yu-Chieh Li  
2017 LEAP, Kuo Yu-Ping's solo exhibition "My Little Black Book", — Simon Frank