

Tailwhip: Xper.Xr

Date | 11 March – 14 May 2023 (Wed-Sun, 2-8 pm)

Opening | 11 March 2023 (Sat, 3-6 pm)

Opening Performance | 11 March 4pm, Artist: Chia-Chun XU

Venue | TheCube Project Space (2F, No13, Aly 1, Ln 136, Sec 4, Roosevelt Rd, Taipei)

TheCube Project Space is pleased to co-organize the exhibition *Tailwhip: Xper.Xr* with the Hong Kong-based Empty Gallery. Xper.Xr is a sui generis Hong Kong artist, noise musician, event organizer, as well as an expert storyteller, and this exhibition features his creative archives and activities since the late 1980s. Curated by the Empty Gallery, this exhibition toured Hong Kong and New York. It is scheduled to be on view at TheCube in Taipei from 11 March to 14 May 2023. TheCube specifically juxtaposes the timelines of Xper.Xr and Taiwan's noise movement for reference in the context of this exhibition. A talk event is going to accompany this exhibition.

About the Exhibition

Tailwhip is a historical overview of the activities of Cantonese artist, noise musician, organizer, and raconteur, Xper.Xr. Comprising performance documentation, archival photographs, scores, props, and other ephemera, *Tailwhip* attempts to pull back the curtain on this obscure yet vital presence within the counter-cultural history of our city. Always cognizant of his déclassé position, Xper.Xr forged a highly personal form of anti-art through his mingling of pop-cultural detritus, dadaist spectacle, and self-lacerating humor. Taking a roughly chronological approach to Xper's practice, the show begins with his early years of activity in Hong Kong, winding through time spent in London and Paris — where he flirted with art-world professionalism at Goldsmiths, and courted the experimental music world — before returning, in pendular fashion, to where things started.

Articulating a position of radical disenfranchisement against the stultifying backdrop of Hong Kong's transformation into an affluent hub for global business, the Sino-British joint declaration, and the rise of Cantopop, Xper.Xr's art was destined from the start for an untimely reception. Coming of age in the 1980s — and finding his way to experimental music only after extended dalliances with BMX biking, drag racing, and general juvenile delinquency — Xper.Xr released his first cassette, *Murmur*, in 1989. He quickly established himself as one of Hong Kong's first noise musicians, joining a burgeoning international network of like-minded artists including Merzbow, Masaya Nakahara, and Emil Beaulieu. Through parallel activities as both a DIY organizer and writer for regional zines such as *Monitor* and *Noise*, Xper exerted a further influence on the development of the Hong Kong's underground, furnishing a handful of lucky souls with their first taste of rare delicacies such as Downtown music, visionary film, and Viennese actionism. Often performing with a rotating group of miscreants he dubbed "The Orphic Orchestra", Xper's early gigs were most often met with blinkered incomprehension by the local art scene.

Perennially disappointed by the deafening silence with which his provocations were received, Xper would spend the next decades as an itinerant artist in search of greener pastures for his practice, ping-ponging between London, Paris, and Hong Kong in the process. Embodying a congenital disregard for authority in all of its forms — from police and copyright law to notions of avant-garde “good taste” — his performances would continue to leave audiences mystified, as ersatz covers of popular tunes shared space with aggressive vocal exorcisms, comic interludes, and blasts of distortion. Shameless misappropriations of both mainstream and subcultural material — often British — rendered in damaged karaoke fashion would continue to be a through-line in Xper’s practice, but the noise would ultimately prove too narrow a category to contain a practice which so thoroughly courted failure, self-satire, and entropy as strategies for artistic resistance.

Over three decades later, Xper.Xr’s practice still presents itself as an inspiring and much-needed antidote to the cultural and political conservatism engulfing our city. It was as if all the tinkering with cars, thrill-seeking, and racing were merely attempting to accumulate enough velocity to bring his own sense of internal time into accord with the culture around him. The lines between art and life, as always, are thin — but perhaps what Xper can transmit to the next generation of artists are those essential ingredients of style, attitude, and yes, freedom. Indeed, the untimely always return, and sometimes with a vengeance — Xper’s time capsule of unrest has finally opened.

XPER.XR (born 1970) is a Hong Kong-based artist, performer, and provocateur belonging to the city’s first generation of experimental musicians. After releasing *Murmur* (1989), arguably the first industrial noise recording in the territory, he went on to release and perform alongside such names as Otomo Yoshihide, Merzbow, and Whitehouse. Characterized by a constitutional irreverence, deliberate courting of failure, and self-effacing aesthetic, Xper.Xr’s practice represents a crucial moment of the city’s artistic counter-history. From 2012 to 2015, he ran the seminal underground exhibition and performance venue CIA in Kowloon, organizing shows with like-minded artists Kago Shintaro, Vagina Dentata Organ, New Noveta, Hermann Nitsch, Laibach, and Olivier de Sagazan.

Empty Gallery is a 4,500-square-foot space located at the edge of Aberdeen Harbour in Tin Wan, Hong Kong. Founded by Stephen Cheng, the gallery showcases both established and emerging artists alongside a program of pioneering multimedia commissions, performances, and music. With a special commitment to ephemeral, time-based, and non-object-oriented practices, Empty Gallery is committed to fostering conversation across cultural, geographic, and medium-specific boundaries while serving as a regional hub for the flourishing East Asian art scene.

Co-organizer | TheCube Project Space, Empty Gallery

Exhibition Sponsor | National Cultural and Arts Foundation

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