

類聚集 ensemble

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I often begin my creative process with collecting - be they objects, audio recordings, or moving images. What I found would then be labelled and processed in the studio or on screen with a computer to become individual "samples", which would be further transformed into works of art through various treatments. Sometimes, this act of "sample collection" is a bit like conducting researches.

I am of course not the only one who creates via collecting. I became curious about the "samples" used by other artists during their creative processes: When do these samples appear? After the works are completed or during the creative process? If these samples come from collecting, then what do the artists collect? Why do they collect? What functions do these samples serve? Do the artists think of them as "samples" and "archives"? This was where I started developing the idea of an exhibition centering around the ideas of "samples".

Categorise/Accumulate/Gather

Exploring the subject of "samples", *ensemble* is a compilation of works that utilise samples as the themes, creative processes or forms of representation. These works are, however, of diverging subjects.

The concept of "samples" is widely seen in different academic disciplines. Be they subjects in science or humanities, the purposes of extracting or compiling samples go beyond mere preservation. They can highlight the commonality between different samples or find the differences between the samples, so as to support the research and the establishment of theories.

"Samples" are not unique to academic research. Categorisation and accumulation abound in our daily lives. Recycling bins on the streets collect wastes that can be recycled; email systems that automatically place important messages, promotional mails and spam mails into different categories for easy management; shops that compile the same groups of goods into one location like florists, hardware stores, and fruit stores. These acts of "sample collection" serve functional purposes and intends. There are also interest-based collections that are not necessarily functional – stamps, vintage/retro clothing, rocks, coke bottles, or any objects that are collected over time to be built into a small collection.

That way, "sample collection" in its broad sense is omnipresent. One could say that it is one of the fundamental activities by the humankind. Just think about it –

“samples” are all around us - corpses of insects on a balcony, flakes of painting that fall off the walls for no reason, or anything else indeed. Besides, most things surrounding us can be seen as a “sample” acquired through the act of collecting – the home in which you live, the office in which you work, and every object inside these spaces are results of intentional or accidental accumulation over a long period of time. These are “archives” of you.

The “samples” in the eight works in *ensemble* were “collected” by mixing together the purposes and methods described above: some are specific and clear like academic research, some are tangible like collecting and categorising in everyday lives, some have evolved out of interests, curiosities, emotions and desires – some can be related to all of the above. Artists utilise existing samples as their creative materials, they build up the samples through the creative process, they form their artistic concepts through the building of archives, or they borrow the format of an archive to display their works. At this point, the job of an artist is to document, filter, select, categorise, organise and generalise...similar to researchers and archivists. “Archiving”, however, is not the main purpose; the artists in *ensemble* realise their creative visions through processing, arranging and displaying their “samples”. The samples themselves are as important as the process of collecting them.

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In *ensemble*, the “samples” in the eight Hong Kong works of art are distinctly different:

Appropriation – the vast amount of materials from visual and online media can be borrowed for the purpose of creativity.

Wuxia movie by *Moving Moving Image* took old-fashioned martial arts (wuxia) movies and reconstructed them through extracting and categorising the “formulas” behind the plots and style of camera work.

Tang Kwok Hin collected a number of different photographs from the virtual world of the internet as well as other sources to create the image of a woman who has never actually appeared in this world – his unborn younger sister who was never born because of an abortion many years ago. His “younger sister” is the imaginary subject of *Nancy*. Through a collage formed by paintings and sculptures, her journey of growing up and her life are depicted – an “archive” missing from Nancy’s life.

Sampling – taking commonly neglected objects and matters around us – this can be an observation, or a game.

Man Mei To collected water from different parts in Hong Kong. In *Water*, the artist collected a sample of 200 bottles of water, labelled with serial numbers and neatly arranged. Unlike sample collection by scientists, her collection focused on the external appearances of these water samples: some are clear and

clean, some are stained and cloudy, revealing the people, events and objects in each location.

As I wrote this paragraph, one piece of work in the exhibition was still a question mark - *ensemble-plan* by [Floating Projects Collective](#). What we know for sure is the Collective sees accumulation and compilation as a game – they collected trash from the streets of Taipei and collaborated real time to construct this piece using what they found. The finished work is an outcome of a game, determined by the results of this sample collection exercise, as well as the convergence and conflicts of instincts by the artists.

Making samples – the creative process or the finished piece sometimes resemble the creation of samples, revealing the landscape of a place. These can also be seen as journals.

Over the past few years, [Wong Chun Hei Stephen](#) collected sceneries focusing on Hong Kong's natural landscape. The many life drawings in *Landscape Collections* contribute to an accumulation of an everyday views of Hong Kong.

When [Jolene Mok](#) was in a Spanish small town, she followed the local customs of siestas. She took a break at the highest point of the town, at the same time each day for consecutive days. At the same time, her video camera captured the chimneys and the scenery of the little town that appeared to be resting but also looked like they were at work. *In Pursuit of a Siesta* is a video installation that reveal the landscape of this small town at a specific time: it can be perfectly still, or turbulent and stormy.

Archiving – archives compiled through the accumulation of different samples. The target of investigations as well as a format of representation.

[Archive of the People](#) explores the historical archive of the Hong Kong government as well as its Archives Law. It studies closely these archives and turns it into another archive. *The Order of Things*, a group project, sees objects within the hierarchy of the Hong Kong government as an enormous database, offering the artists in Archive of the People the opportunity to create a series of works about history, politics and systems approached from different perspectives.

[THE LIBRARY](#) by [soundpocket](#) collects first-hand recordings of the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong through field recordings and investigations. The voices from such investigations were then compiled into a vocal CD *DAY AFTER 翌日 [2014. 9.29 - 12.12]*, using another sensory experience to document the Umbrella Movement.

Exploring the subject of “sample”, *ensemble* itself is a compilation of eight Hong Kong art pieces that utilise samples as their main purposes, creative process or

representation methods. These works are, however, of diverging subjects. In addition to documenting contemporary Hong Kong (art), what else can it be?

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The title of *ensemble* implies assembling: each piece brings together those from the same category, while *ensemble* itself brings together this type of work. Consequently, *ensemble* can be considered an “archive” compiled from a wide variety of “samples”. An exhibition itself is often a process of collecting samples and archiving: by selecting works with a preset method, an exhibition depicts the connection between different works, and subsequently establishing its central ideas.

The exhibition itself as well as the works selected for the exhibition are both related to the commonality of “samples”, highlighting the differences as well as similarities between creating art and curating an exhibition. Can this exhibition be called an artistic creation? If not, what is missing? Concept? Technique? Or a subjective nature? What is superfluous? Coordination? Communication? Or budget? If it can be called creativity, then is the exhibition on the whole the piece? Is this pamphlet a part of this piece? This passage? Can each piece in *ensemble* be considered a “curated exhibition”?

In order to identify myself as the organiser of this exhibition, I have taken up the title of its curator. Nevertheless, within *ensemble*, the only distinction between the curator and the artists is perhaps one of position and work involved. The pursuits by the two are the same.