



Tam Wai Ping, Falling Into Mundane World, 2013.
Inflatable sculptures.
Installation view, Inflation,
M+ / West Kowloon
Cultural District,
Kowloon, Hong Kong.
Image source:
Jessica Hromas
/ Getty Images.

VIS327Y Urban Studio Hong Kong

University of Toronto Summer Abroad Program at Hong Kong University 2025

Hong Kong University main classroom: Location TBD | Access hours: TBD

Hong Kong University workspace: Location TBD | Access hours: TBD

Professor Will Kwan

Student drop-in hour: TBD

Email: will.kwan@utoronto.ca

Hong Kong mobile contact info: TBD

Urban Studio Hong Kong is an interdisciplinary art course where you will make use of the multi-faceted urban fabric of Hong Kong as a laboratory for visual art projects. The city's intricate mix of high-density neighborhoods, informal and vernacular architecture, and diverse natural terrain offers a wealth of scenarios for studying how the urban environment shapes daily and civic life, social relations, and artistic production. Hong Kong is the premiere city in East Asia for contemporary art, home to M+ (the leading contemporary art museum in the region) Art Basel Hong Kong (the Asia Pacific outpost of the prominent Swiss contemporary art fair), and a growing artistic ecosystem of public and commercial galleries. You will explore Hong Kong's unique urban dynamics to create artwork using photography, video, drawing, performance, or site-specific art. Guided visits to artists' studios, galleries, and museums will give you special access to the city's robust art scene and offer you diverse perspectives on contemporary art and culture in Hong Kong.

Knowledge and Skills You Will Gain in This Course

- An understanding of the significance of the city and the urban environment as a subject matter in contemporary art.
- An understanding of Hong Kong's evolving contemporary art scene, its key contemporary art institutions, and local perspectives on art and culture.
- Methodologies for conducting artistic site research and practical techniques for art-making in unfamiliar contexts.
- The ability to research, develop, and finish artworks at an intermediate level.
- The ability to self-motivate and work independently.
- The ability to analyze and evaluate the creative work of others.
- Intermediate writing skills relevant to artistic practice.

Course Expectations

Our four weeks in Hong Kong will be intense. There will be many new experiences that you will be processing (an unfamiliar working and living environment, culture shock, extreme heat) and exciting distractions (the beach, nightlife, markets and malls...). While it is important that you explore the city and have fun, it is also crucial that you stay on track in developing and finishing your course project. I will be there to provide plenty of support and advice.

Contribute to the class community by:

- Sharing your experience and know-how, especially if you have local knowledge, speak the local language, or are a seasoned traveler.
- Storing your mobile devices away during class time to create a distraction-free space for yourself and others.
- Being actively involved in all group discussions, class activities, setup, and cleanup.
- Respecting others' time: arrive early to ensure our class activities and field trips run on schedule.
- Being prepared for presentations, critiques, and activities.
- Being attentive when others are presenting their work and sharing your observations and thoughts.
- Making space for others and showing respect. Expressions of racism, misogyny, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia will not be tolerated in this course.

Course Expectations (cont'd)

Effort and care. Endeavour to produce work that is ambitious, supported by rigorous research, with craft, precision, and attention to detail appropriate for an intermediate level course. This will require spending significant amounts of time outside of class sessions developing, refining, and completing your artwork. Your effort, determination, and care will set a meaningful example for others.

Field Trip Expectations

This course involves numerous field trips that will give you direct insight into the key features of Hong Kong's contemporary art landscape. These are invaluable learning opportunities that are a compulsory component of this course.

- **Punctual departure.** Be respectful to your classmates by arriving early and being prepared to depart on time. Please do not make the entire class wait on your behalf.
- **Stay focused and be attentive when we are in transit.** Stay with the group and be attentive to traffic and other hazards.
- **Be respectful to our hosts.** When we visit studios and galleries turn off and store away your mobile devices, give our hosts your full attention, ask thoughtful questions, and be careful not to damage fragile objects.

Coursework (See Quercus for full details.)

Pre-Hong Kong reading and viewing exercises. You will complete reading and viewing exercises prior to arriving in Hong Kong. This material will provide an intellectual framework for our exploration of Hong Kong's urban environment. PDFs, media links, exercise questions, and instructions for submitting completed exercises will be available on Quercus one month prior to the first class. Exercises will be due one week prior to the start of class in Hong Kong.

Research sketchbook. Your research sketchbook will be used for all in-class exercises, notes, drawings, research materials for your artwork, notes from field trip and guest speaker presentations, and all of your visual and written observations of Hong Kong. Your research sketchbook will be collected twice for grading.

Work-in-progress presentations. There will be graded work-in-progress presentations to support you in the development of your artwork.

Artwork, description, and photo documentation. You will complete one artwork in any medium that you wish. Our four weeks in Hong Kong will go by in a flash! Be ambitious but also set reasonable goals and make practical decisions early on about the subject matter, technical demands, and the schedule required to complete your work. Keep in mind that you will need to find a method to transport your work home after the course. You will write an artwork description and create photo documentation to accompany your finished artwork. Full assignment details will be provided on Quercus.

Art-making Materials, Tools, and Workspace

Materials: you will gather or purchase materials for your art project as necessary. Consider budgeting some funds for materials, photo printing, or fabrication related to your artwork. Information about photo labs, electronics stores, art supply stores, hardware stores, and bookshops will be available on Quercus.

Required supplies and tools (for in-class exercises and artwork installation)

- Sketchbook: something portable, no larger than 8.5" x 11", no smaller than 4" x 6".
- Supplies for in-class exercises: pencils, rulers, scissors
- Presentation/install tools (if you make 2-D work): tape-measure, small spirit level

Workspace and facilities: VIS327Y will have a dedicated workspace with extended access hours for you to work on your course project. However, this space is not a conventional studio classroom. This is a reality of making art abroad, and it is a good opportunity to develop flexible working skills. Our class will also have access to a general computer lab in the HKU Main Library. If you plan to work with video, sound or digital images, be prepared to edit on your own laptop with your own software.

Grading Scheme and Evaluation

Pre-Hong Kong reading/viewing exercises	15
Artwork (with written description, documentation)	40
Work-in-progress presentations	15
Research sketchbook	10
Contribution	20

Late coursework

- Meeting coursework due dates will keep your learning on track and help you succeed in this course.
- Please talk to me during office hours if you are having difficulty meeting coursework deadlines and a reasonable accommodation can be made.
- Late deductions will not apply due to illness.

Evaluation

- How your coursework will be evaluated: see coursework pages on Quercus.
- For grading scale information, please visit <https://sidneysmithcommons.artsci.utoronto.ca/what-do-my-grades-mean/>

Academic Integrity

Approach your learning and work honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly.

Please familiarize yourself with UofT's guide on "How Not to Plagiarize" (<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/>) and the university's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>)

The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. Talk to me if you are unsure about appropriate research and citation methods. Potential academic offences include, but are not limited to:

- Copying an artwork (in part or in whole) from the internet (or elsewhere) without proper citation.
- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement or copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing words within quotation marks.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts and including references to sources that you did not use.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing" or lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.

Use of Generative AI In This Course

You may use generative AI in this course:

1. only with prior approval from the instructor
2. and with full disclosure (identifying all elements produced using generative AI) and citation (identifying tool and prompts used). This information must be included in the artwork description that accompanies your final artwork.

For guidance on using AI for image research in art and architecture read the materials provided here: <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/image-gen-ai>

Accessibility and Accommodation

The course materials in this class have been created using Universal Design principles. Feedback on making all aspects of the course accessible are welcome

Students with diverse learning needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that requires an accommodation, please make your request through Accessibility Services:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/>

Contact and Student Drop-in Hour

My contact and student drop-in hour info are listed at the top of this course outline. No appointment is needed for my drop-in hour. For feedback on your artwork during drop-in hours, please bring a physical item to discuss (a sketch, a test print, a prototype, an exported video clip, etc.).

Electronics Policy

Store away smartphone and computing devices during class time. You are encouraged to take notes in a sketchbook to avoid creating a screen distraction. If you have an accommodation that requires the use of an electronic device, please let me know.

Day-to-Day Schedule*

See our course homepage on Quercus for the up-to-date schedule: <https://q.utoronto.ca>

*A tentative schedule can be found below.

Changes to This Course Outline

This course outline is a planning document and may be revised throughout the term in consultation with the class.

Tentative Day-to-Day Schedule

Pre-departure class (in person at UofT St. George campus)

TBD in May Introduction, student lightning talks

In Hong Kong

Note: While our regular scheduled class sessions in Hong Kong take place Monday through Thursday from 9am-12noon, field trips and presentation sessions will extend beyond this timeslot. Full details will be provided in the complete Day-to-Day Schedule on Quercus.

Week 1

Mon 9 June	Introduction, Lecture 1 material review/discussion.
Tue 10 June	Lecture 2 material review/discussion, brainstorming/research activity.
Wed 11 June	Lecture 3 material review/discussion, brainstorming/research activity.
Thu 12 June	Field trip #1: guided tour of Hong Kong's contemporary art anchor institutions (M+ and Tai Kwun).

Week 2

Mon 16 June

Project proposal presentation.

Tue 17 June

Field trip #2: guided tour of local non-profit arts organizations (Asia Art Archive and Para Site).

Wed 18 June

Work-session/1-on-1 meetings.

Thu 19 June

Field trip #3: tour of local and international commercial galleries in Central and Southern District (Blindspot Gallery, Exit Gallery, Empty Gallery, Hauser & Wirth, White Cube, and David Zwirner Gallery).

Week 3

Mon 23 June

Work-in-progress presentation.

Tue 24 June

Field trip #4: studio visits/walking tours with local artists (artists TBD).

Wed 25 June

Lecture 4 material review/discussion, work-session.

Thu 26 June*

Field trip #5: Shenzhen, China (Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art and Urban Planning, OCT Loft Creative Culture Park, Dafen Oil Painting Village).

*Early meeting/departure.

Week 4

Mon 30 June

Work-in-progress presentation.

Tue 01 July*

No class. *Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day.

Wed 02 July

Work-session/ 1-on-1 meetings.

Thu 03 July

Final project presentations.