



**‘Paradoxical Gasp’ experimental event
explores the impact of tear gas around the world**

- ‘Paradoxical Gasp’, an experimental immersive performance event at the Crypt Gallery, 17-20 Nov 2022
- First event of ‘Out of Breath’, a socially engaged art project exploring the use of tear gas and its legacy
- Curated by Hidden Keileon, a collective of Hong Kong artists and curators
- Presented as part of Bloomsbury Festival 2022
- Supported by the Wellcome Collection and Arts Council England

‘Paradoxical Gasp’ is a performance and digital project dealing with the traumatic legacy of tear gas exposure. The underground spaces of the Crypt Gallery are used to present a sensory experience for the audience to explore how air is used as a form of political control through immersive performance, interactive exhibition, music and sound installation.

This experimental event is based on archival and community research about the impact and use of tear gas, globally and locally, on society and personal freedom. Working closely with researchers, archivists and art therapists, this project shares stories about tear gas, how tear gas has been used and its impact on mental and physical health.

The project also includes an accompanying exhibition with a publication and a documentary film to be presented in 2023.

‘Paradoxical Gasp’ explores the links between tear gas as a form of oppression and the social issue of trauma and creates a space for traumatic experiences to be heard, inviting the audience to consider how society can stand together in the pursuit of freedom regardless of background, race, and nationality.

This experimental event is devised by Hidden Keileon, a multidisciplinary artist-led non-profit enterprise aiming at building inter-racial solidarity among global majority communities and addressing social issues related to migration and racism.

The global majority population in the UK is impacted by tear gas. Some of the recent waves of migration have been the result of political repressions in their home countries. Their stories are carried into the UK by these newly formed communities of diaspora groups and deserve a wider audience. What we need to learn is not about how to avoid tear gas, but how to protect ourselves against oppression, to move forward in unity towards a progressive society.



Hidden Keileon team research at Wellcome library. Photo by Jane Lam.

Sandra Lam, Curator, said: “This programme provides a public space for the oppressed to tell their stories and creates an audience of individuals united by vulnerability and empathy. As the stories of individuals are usually not told in the mass media, it is important for each individual to tell their own stories as a form of resistance against oppression.”

John Chan, Artist and Researcher, said: “I am interested in studying the legacy of the British Empire in contemporary society through investigating the use of tear gas in military environments and civil spaces. This learning process will be presented in forms of creative productions, aiming at surfacing postcolonial trauma all over the world.”

Events:

Thurs 17 Nov 7pm (preview & press night)
 Fri 18 Nov 7pm
 Sat 19 Nov 2pm & 7pm
 Sun 20 Nov 2pm w/ a post-show talk*

Venue:

The Crypt Gallery,
 Euston Road,
 London NW1 2BA 1

Tickets: £15 (£12) | Book your ticket here:

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/paradoxical-gasp-tickets-383450900967

Notes to editors**About Hidden Keileon**

As art-makers Hidden Keileon activates theatres, galleries and digital spaces by displaying, demonstrating and wildly imagining ways for us to examine collective trauma resulting from socio-political events. This allows us to empathise with each other's pain and support each other's fight for justice and freedom. The collective comprises of musician Angela Wai Nok Hui, theatre-maker Bonnie Chan, multi-art duo Ghost and John, and spatial/visual artist Jeffrey Choy and curator Sandra Lam.

Use of Tear Gas

According to colonial archives, including the Himsworth papers (1954-1962), tear gas has been used as a so-called 'non-lethal weapon' by the authorities.

Through research we learn that tear gas has been typically used by repressive regimes to ensure media coverage portrays peaceful protests devolving into riots, leading to a decline in public support for the protestors.

Another finding is that the police believe footage of live ammunition and direct violence towards women, such as shooting rubber bullets as another non-lethal option, significantly damages their image, therefore tear gas is the preferred anti-protest tool.

Research facilities for the project include the Wellcome Collection archives.

Accessibility: The Crypt Gallery is a grade I listed building. Unfortunately, there is no wheelchair access into the space. There are steep uneven stone steps with handrail, leading down into the gallery. The floor of the gallery is uneven stone.

As the venue is an underground space, this immersive event may not be suitable for people who fear dark, claustrophobia, and visual/auditory delusions.

An art psychotherapist is present at all performances. The space will stay open for quiet reflection for 20 minutes after the event. Visitors are welcome to attend the open studio hosted by Lily Hsu, Art Psychotherapist.

*The show on Sun 20 Nov is accompanied by a British Sign Language tour led by Martin Glover with an interpreter support for sound description, and followed by a BSL interpreted post-show talk at St Pancras Church (165 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BA).

More details on: <https://www.hiddenkeileon.art/out-of-breath>

The production of the event has been supported by the Bloomsbury Festival and supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. The research for this project has been supported by Wellcome Collection in connection with the exhibition In the Air (2022).

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For more information and artist interview requests, please contact Sandra Lam, Curator, Hidden Keileon at sandra@hiddenkeileon.art.

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 Keileon**