

Vitamin P3: New Perspective in Painting *Phaidon Press, 2016*

Lee Kit is, despite the perceived limitations of the label, primarily a painter. This categorization comes from Lee himself: 'I am a painter', he wrote in relation to his subtle geometric patterns. 'Perhaps I am naturally poor at making dots. At the furious age of twenty-three, I started to paint chequers. In the repeated lines and squares, I practiced how to have a dialogue with myself.' It was in 2001 that Lee started experimenting with painting on fabric. At the time he was studying with the abstract painter Lui Chun Kwong (b.1956) in the Department of Fine Arts at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. For decades, Lui has remained committed to obsessively translating the elemental forces of nature into abstractions of lines and coloured strips, creating paintings that are as infinitely varied as they are consistent.

Lee's paintings – both on cloth and found cardboard that often contains hints of foreign packaging – use gently pastel colours, evocative of some of the tones in Lui's compositions, or indeed those of the American painter Agnes Martin (1912–2004). Yet Lee's images are perhaps the least committed kind of painting, doggedly refusing to be recognized as a painted picture. His acrylic stripes and checks, together with occasional hand-painted song lyrics, are created with painstaking care and a minimalist sensitivity, yet come in many guises: picnic blankets, tablecloths, bed sheets, curtains, wall decorations and flags for street protests. The results are tidy and meticulously regular, so much so that they often pass as mechanically printed. These textile paintings have every desire to be integrated into the appearance, actions and order of everyday life, always ready to be used, stained and circulated.

But what does it mean for a painting to be not simply seen but, more importantly, used? As a tablecloth or picnic blanket, such paintings are incorporated relatively easily into the running of art events or gatherings with friends and colleagues (which the artist documents and considers artworks). In fact, Lee's painted fabrics blend in so well that they are not so much artworks pretending to be everyday objects as everyday objects proper: material for people to sleep on, dine on, wipe a table with, to cover a window or just to bear witness to events.

Like many traditional Chinese intellectuals and artists who are concerned with social politics but limited by national circumstances, Lee chooses to express his frustrations and opinions imaginatively, infusing his politics into the narratives and stories that accumulate – sometimes literally – on his paintings. By providing practical functions and offering a space or a platform for events to take place, these hand-painted textiles could be said to activate actions, connections and social relationships. The question is no longer whether we should still consider them as paintings, rather, how do we evaluate the subtle presence that these patterns have in the political realities today? This is not overtly political painting, but painting as politics.

– Carol Yinghua Lu

LEE KIT Born 1978, Hong Kong. Lives and works in Taipei, Taiwan. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – SMAK, Ghent, Belgium; 'Please Wait', mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2014 – 'How are things on the West Coast?', Lombard Freid Gallery, New York; 2013 – 'You (you)', Hong Kong Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale; 2012 – 'Every Breath You Take', Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; 2011 – 'Henry (Have you ever been this low?)', Vancouver, Canada. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – Sharjah Biennial, UAE; 2014 – 'Ten Million Rooms of Yearning: Sex in Hong Kong', Para/Site, Hong Kong; 'Room Service', Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany; 2013 – 'Duchamp', Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing; 2012 – 'Home WHERE?', Lombard Freid Projects, New York. Selected Bibliography: 2014 – 'Bringing a Flagship of Contemporary Art to Hong Kong', *The New York Times*, Mar; 2013 – Anthony Yung, 'Lee Kit: The feeling of being hit head-on', *ArtReview*, Spring/Summer; John Jervis, 'In Pursuit of ... Lee Kit', *ArtAsiaPacific*, Mar/Apr; 2010 – Victoria Yip, 'Material Man', *Muse Magazine*, Feb.

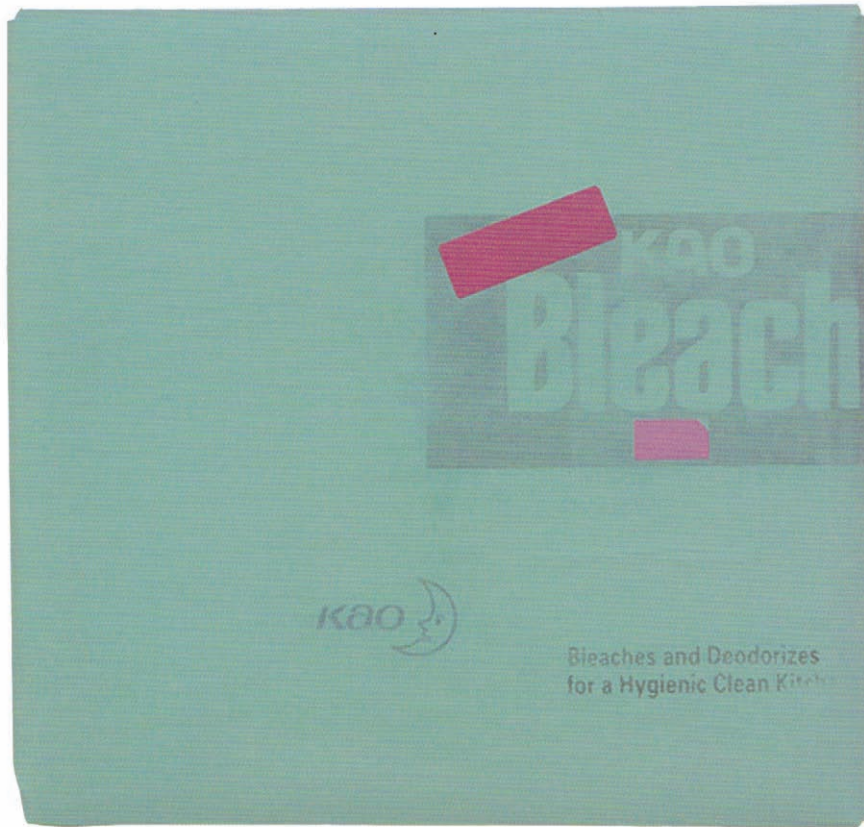


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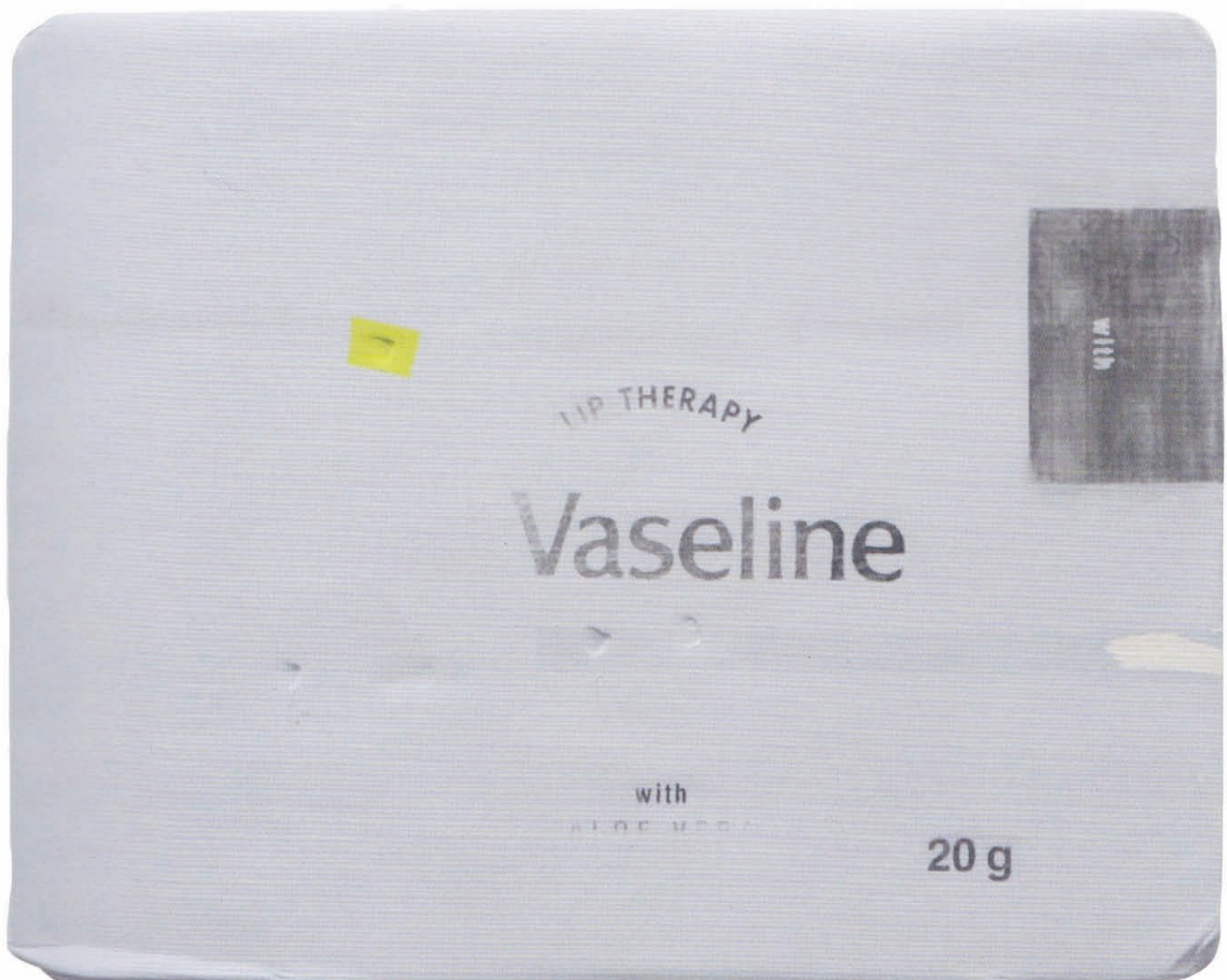


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- All Day, 2012
Acrylic, emulsion paint and inkjet ink on cardboard, acrylic on fabric, readymade objects, installation view
- Sunday Afternoon: Picnic with friends and hand-painted cloth at Yung Shu O, Sai Kung, Hong Kong, 2003
Acrylic on fabric, photograph
Dimensions variable
- KAO – Bleach, 2011
Acrylic, emulsion paint and inkjet ink on acid-free board
47 × 44 cm / 18 ½ × 17 ½ in
- Vaseline – with, 2012
Acrylic, emulsion paint and inkjet ink on acid-free board
67 × 62 cm / 29 ½ × 24 ¾ in



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