

Post Magazine

Hong Kong artist's debut show walks fine line between reality and illusion

In his first solo outing, Eason Tsang exhibits mind-boggling works of art that trick the eye

BY **JOHN BATTEN**

30 JUL 2016

Carefully placed and running around and through Eason Tsang Ka-wai's debut solo show, at Blindspot Gallery, in Wong Chuk Hang, are redundant cables. These lines of bright orange industrial cabling, seemingly useless, are actually demarcating inside and outside, day and night, and, when the switch is turned on/off, the power and powerless.

[Welcome to the world of optical illusions \(http://www.scmp.com/photos/recent/658/1787792\)](http://www.scmp.com/photos/recent/658/1787792)

A gently flapping translucent curtain on which a six-minute looped video of moving clouds is projected forms the boundary, or gateway. After gazing awhile into the imaginary sky, viewers walk around the curtain to enter the show.



Housework No 3 (2016)

Tsang, who graduated from City University's School of Creative Media in 2013, has a solid grounding in photography, video-making and digital presentation. His work has previously been displayed only in group shows, easing the pressure to exhibit more intensely. All this has resulted in a nicely resolved, beautifully presented exhibition, curated by Leo Li Chen and the Blindspot team.

Attached to a mid-point pillar is a discrete overhead concave mirror offering visitors voyeuristic glimpses into each exhibition zone. This is one of the small, intelligent touches – or artist interventions – that makes this a subtle, enjoyable show. Comprising individual videos and groups of photographs, "Powerless" is also a complete installation.



Internal Structure No 3 (2016)

The “outside” section presents a set of photographs, the *New Landmark* series, completed in 2014, each depicting a lopsided view of a landscape. *New Landmark No 7* is the best work here: a vertical photograph with a foreground of indistinct boxes covering sloping ground; and a single small cloud hovering above the horizon. But, it is an illusion. Tsang has skillfully angled his camera into a blue sky, capturing an angled section of air-conditioners protruding from a building and a cloud floating above the rooftop. The image tricks the mind into thinking it is seeing a landscape.

Other photographs in the series use a similar perspective. *New Landmark No 1* features hanging clothes and laundry poles, imitating a landscape of upright television or radio aerials. And, in *New Landmark No 5* the upper-level pediment of a building takes the form of a classical-styled wall running alongside an architect-designed plaza.

[For Hong Kong, colluding with ‘foreign forces’ is a must on the cultural front](http://www.scmp.com/comment/article/1983477/hong-kong-colluding-foreign-forces-must-cultural-front)

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Stepping past the curtain into the “inside” zone brings you to a long corridor of contrasting videos and photographs.

In *Housework No 3* (2016), an old-style television set both projects a video and is an integral part of the artwork. In this visual trick, Tsang's videoed hand appears from the back of the TV and seemingly sprays detergent and then cleans the inside of the screen with a cloth. This cleaning video links chronologically with *Housework No 1* (2016), a video projection of washing a floor with a mop. The floor that is being mopped, however, is made of sandpaper and its natural resistance makes it seem an absurd surface to try to clean.

The view of the mop head is directly from above, with neither its long handle nor the cleaner's hands controlling the action. This is cleaning stripped to a bare action: the dance routine of a mop cleaning a floor that cannot easily be cleaned. It is absurd choreography.

[Why a Western gallery in Hong Kong is highlighting local artists](http://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/arts-music/article/1992739/why-western-gallery-hong-kong-highlighting-local) (<http://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/arts-music/article/1992739/why-western-gallery-hong-kong-highlighting-local>)



A failed light box No1 (2016)

The exhibition then takes a more thought-provoking turn. In a series of light boxes titled *Internal structure* (2016), Tsang mixes reality with imitation. A photograph of a light box's internal structure – namely, various formations of fluorescent lights – is processed as a large transparent coloured slide, which is then inserted into a real light box. The slide is illuminated and portrays a replica of the light box's internal fluorescent light structure. It is a potential conundrum but close examination reveals that it is only a photograph, although the light-box casing holding the slide looks real enough.

An adjacent room houses a small selection of Tsang's earlier photographs, which adds depth but does not interfere with the purity of the exhibition.

“Powerless” will be on display at Blindspot Gallery, 15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, until August 27.