

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blindspot Gallery participates in ART021 Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair Presenting Sarah Lai's solo project "Kyuusekkin! (Love SOS)" in the APPROACH sector

Date: 9 - 11 November 2018

Venue: Booth P05, Shanghai Exhibition Center, Shanghai, China (No. 1000 Yan An Middle Road, Shanghai, China)

Blindspot Gallery is delighted to present a new project by Sarah Lai – titled "Kyuusekkin! (Love SOS)" – at this year's ART021 Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair. With a continuing focus on oil paintings, Lai's recent art practice has evolved to integrating other mediums including installations and videos, where she deepens her experimentation with the display of her paintings, the mise en scène, and the atmosphere of the space, orchestrating the viewers' encounter and entrance into her works. Lai is particularly fascinated by existing images in the media, and her creative practice for the most part investigates renewed ways of seeing and reading these images. Through the merging of perceptual experiences, personal memories and cultural archives, she works to capture the textural nuances of a certain place and a certain moment. Lai's most recent projects investigate the aesthetics and visual culture of the 1980s-90s, drawing inspiration and source materials from the film, television, advertisement, packaging and publication of that era.



The new project "Kyuusekkin! (Love SOS)" takes its theme from the culture of Japanese anime, which was widely popular in Asia in the 1980s-90s. Back in the days, prior to widespread advances in computer-generated imagery (CGI), cartoon animations were all hand-drawn. Animators efficiently narrate storylines in simple and significant scenes, drawing them in clean, minimal outlines without redundant details. Lai regards the cartoon animation from this era as an exemplar of effective visual language and communication, in addition to being a collective memory shared by a whole generation.

Lai models the exhibition booth on the setting of an old-style Western café in Japan in the 1990s. The walls display the backdrop of a night-time cityscape, as the sky blushes with bright colours over the streets of Minato-ku in Tokyo. Faux-leather seats, vintage coffee table, retro-futuristic neon light telephone, square floor tiles, indoor phone booth ... these material objects articulate concisely the historical background and location of the scene.

Sarah Lai screen-captures and enlarges classic scenes in cartoon animations, and analyses the visual signifiers that were once meaningful and now turned into clichés. With a careful direction of models, clothing and props, the artist restages and photographs some of these scenes in real life, and then transforms these representations into paintings. The scene does not show upfront the protagonist's face, but implies or suggests her psychological state through the portrayal of side actions, gestures and functional objects. *In Waiting for your voice*, the heroine holds the telephone handset with her left hand, while her right hand nervously fidgets with the coils of the telephone cord. Will the person she yearns for pick up the call on the other end? *Feeling stirred – The rolling first date* shows the heroine gently reaching for the tea cup, while the freshly made tea is still too hot and needs waiting. In *Midnight temptation*, the red sports car is stopping in front of the heroine in a mini dress. Is that the arrival of the date she awaits for? Without an identifiable character and definite plots, the uncertainty in these pictorial spaces triggers a chain of emotional reaction – anticipation, perturbation, doubts, and longing.



In the post-Internet age, images are constantly produced, disseminated, browsed, stored, archived, and appropriated. In this circulatory loop, viewers easily lose patience for perceiving images, and tend to opt for those with greater visual impact and stimulation. Lai rethinks the essence of images by re-considering how paintings, as a visual language, can regenerate the creation, presentation and reading of an image. Lai is not pursuing the acquisition of meaning in paintings, but rather approaching it as an intuitive medium for affective response.

About the Artist

Sarah Lai (b.1983, Hong Kong) obtained her BA in Fine Arts in 2007, and MFA in 2018, from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Lai's paintings depict objects from daily lives, represented by her signature pale palette and a particular stillness imbued with material memories. In her most recent practice, Lai uses as inspiration images from films, TV and advertisement of the 1980s-90s, capturing the aesthetics of sensuality presented by the media of a bygone era, articulating a delicate subtlety in personal experiences and memories.

Lai has held solo exhibitions that include "In Stasis" (Para Site, Art Basel Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2015) and participated in group exhibitions such as "(In)tangible Reminiscence" (Center for Heritage Arts & Textiles, Hong Kong, 2018); "Against the Light: Sampling in Two Cities" (Frank F. Yang Art and Education Foundation, Shenzhen, China, 2017); "From Ocean to Horizon" (Center for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester, UK, 2017); "Inception" at the 5th Art Sanya (Sanya, China, 2016); and "The 2nd CAFAM Future Exhibition" (CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2015). Lai currently lives and works in Hong Kong.

About Blindspot Gallery

Set up in 2010, Blindspot Gallery is a Hong Kong-based contemporary art gallery. The gallery began with a primary focus on contemporary photography and image-based art, and has evolved to include diverse media in contemporary art. The gallery represents both emerging and established artists, mainly from Hong Kong and the region but also beyond.

For enquiries and media interviews, please contact Ms. Lesley Kwok at 2517 6238 or by email info@blindspotgallery.com

Image Captions:

Sarah Lai, *Midnight temptation*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 92 x 122 cm

Sarah Lai, *Waiting for your voice*, 2018, Archival inkjet print and oil on canvas, 92 x 122 cm

(Image courtesy of artists and Blindspot Gallery)