

Sin Wai Kin *It's Always You*

Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong 23 November – 8 January

The ubiquitous motto of Hong Kong's current Canto-pop boyband sensation Mirror reads, "Together we reflect unlimited possibilities". Here, a karaoke-style music video of what is presumably a boyband, consisting of four distinctive members performing a choreographed routine, plays on two large screens. The lyrics "I see myself in you reflected back in me. It's always you – you're like infinity" flash across the screen.

This is artist Sin Wai Kin's latest two-channel video, *It's Always You* (2021). It's a sheer coincidence that Sin's latest iteration of their drag persona – assuming the fictitious boyband's four masculine roles – is in sync with Mirror's current pop cultural reign. But while Mirror's name wants us to believe they reflect their true selves through their music, Sin posits the possibility of a fluid and infinite spectrum of identity and the multitudes it can contain. The artist plays the role of The Universe (the pretty boy), The Storyteller (the serious one), The One (the childish one) and Wai King (the heartthrob) – all four members illustrating another line from the video: "Together we're the one, and as one, I'm many".

Formerly known as Victoria Sin – the London-based artist's retired hyperfeminine persona – Sin recently announced they would now go by their gender-neutral Cantonese name. This exhibition traces their journey from Victoria to The Storyteller, the latter a role they performed live for the first time at this minisurvey show's opening.

The exhibition also features *Narrative Reflections on Looking* (2016–17), a series of four films exploring Sin's relationship to images

of idealised femininity – and how fetishising those ideals has become normalised: often clad in shades of pink, red or white, outfitted with feather boas, an alarming amount of bling and an exposed silicone breastplate, Victoria Sin's image is composed of exaggerated conventional feminine attributes.

While Sin is theatrical in appearance, their narration in voiceover and script is subtle and nuanced – the varying inflections in the artist's voice at once seductive but also instructive, similar to the tones found in guided meditation recordings. In striving to deconstruct dichotomies and binaries, Sin presents a hyperbolic female (and later male) construct: "What is she whispering softly in your ear? Sweet nothings?... Let her touch you, comfort you, please you," they croon.

The scripts are sourced from Sin's personal experiences (with psychedelics, for instance) or books (such as Aldous Huxley's 1954 autobiographical *The Doors of Perception*) and films abstracted through a lens of fantasy or science fiction; this is most evident in *The Dream of Wholeness in Parts* (2021), a videowork that charts the artist's transition from feminine to masculine drag. Beginning with Victoria Sin, the masculine character The Universe later emerges; a lotus flower painted on their face alludes to the Jing role type in Cantonese opera, known for their lyrical singing and martial arts.

The artist also draws on Taoist writing, such as the passages 'Butterfly Dream' and 'The Death of Wonton' in Chuang Tzu's eponymous book, written over a thousand years ago. In a particularly arresting scene in *The Dream of*

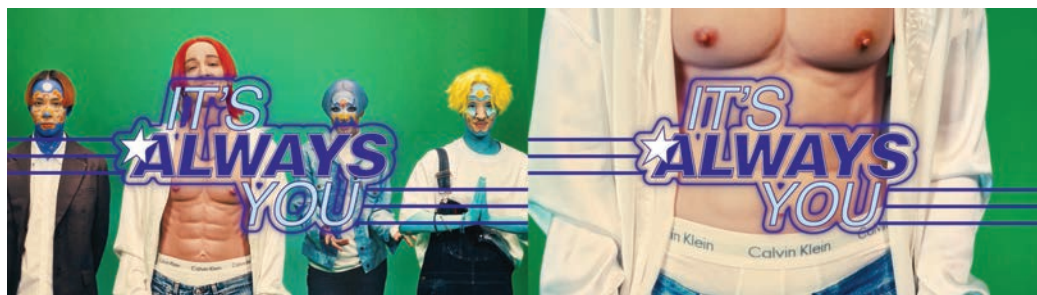
Wholeness in Parts, the artist wolfs down a bowl of wonton noodles, while a voiceover elaborates on the description, "eating... putting things into a hole in my body and crushing it until it was squished, where I could transform it into energy". The wording evokes imagery from Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1988), an influential text for the artist for its advocacy of alternative narratives for existing and thriving.

Diversifying their narrative approaches, Sin created *Dreambabes 2.0* (2021), a zine showcased at *Just in Case*, a group exhibition at Asia Art Archive that coincides with Blindspot's show. Sin edited the volume and contributed to it (along with other artists), to explore how science and speculative fiction can be used by queer communities to challenge the foundations of storytelling.

The Storyteller, a character created during the pandemic, becomes a key figure in Sin's world of characters, and takes centre stage in the video *Today's Top Stories* (2020). Purposefully glitchy (an aesthetic, perhaps, meant to reflect news media's problematic nature), The Storyteller as news anchor reports polarising perspectives, with the work demonstrating how stories are told to create binaries of objective knowledge in culture.

Culminating in the videowork *It's Always You*, the show comes at a time when K-pop dominates pop culture, bringing with it the illusions of fantasy and escapism. The possibility of change and promise of temporality in Sin's work anticipates the evolution of their persona, invoking the question: what character comes next?

Aaina Bhargava



It's Always You (still), 2021, 4K two-channel video, 4 min 5 sec. Courtesy the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong



Today's Top Stories (still), 2020, single-channel video,
6 min 30 sec. Courtesy the artist
and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong