

Lifestyle/ Arts & Culture

## Two artists question mass media and human relationships in shared Hong Kong art show

At Blindspot Gallery in Wong Chuk Hang, Trevor Yeung uses live plants as conduits for an examination of human relationships. He shares the space with fellow Hong Kong artist Sarah Lai, whose paintings depict apparent ordinariness. Both invite viewers to rethink initial impressions.



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Pull it together (2022), Trevor Yeung. Photo: Blindspot Gallery

On one side of the gallery, house plants turned into artworks are on display with gently bubbling fish tanks. On the other, giant models of cassette tapes and large, pastel-colour paintings and installations recreate the style and mood of 1990s Japan.

These two very different sights are both to be found at Blindspot Gallery in Hong Kong's Wong Chuk Hang art district, where local artists [Trevor Yeung](#) and Sarah Lai Cheuk-wah each have a solo presentation of new works.

For his exhibition "Not Everything is About You", Yeung continues his practice of using symbols from nature as conduits through which to examine human relationships. In particular, his insistence on travelling throughout the coronavirus pandemic seems to have led to a running theme of isolation, alienation and resilience.

Live plants are displayed in various conditions. For example, two flourishing money trees with their distinct, braided stems are hanging from the ceiling by way of neon safety straps; a stump of cactus that will slowly, but surely, grow over the duration of the exhibition in a sexually suggestive curve.



Not Everything is About You by Trevor Yeung at Blindspot Gallery. Photo: Blindspot Gallery

These are accompanied by empty fish tanks with air pumps running, a reference to how the artist spent time tending to his plants and pet fish when he wanted to escape from reality, he says.

He has also stuffed a large gap between the ceiling and a dividing wall with standard, white pillows that are lined with plastic inside – a common hygiene measure adopted by quarantine hotels, as he discovered during his numerous quarantines. Nearby, a bed that looks perfectly normal has bits of coral carcasses hidden under the top sheet.

In all of these works, Yeung wants to question initial impressions and invite emotional responses to ideas about tolerance, temptation and trepidation.

There is a special message behind a photograph titled *Underground Lilies* (2022), taken by the artist in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, before the Russia-Ukraine war broke out.

The image of a vase of lilies in full bloom on display in an underground flower shop suggests a duality between fragility and strength. In solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance, he is selling 20 prints of this image to raise money for the charity Support Hospitals in Ukraine.



*Underground Lilies* (2022), Trevor Yeung. Photo: Blindspot Gallery

“I just want [to] do something so I can feel like I’m supporting my friends. This is important,” says the artist, who was shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize by Kyiv’s Punchuk Art Centre.

Like Yeung, Lai is equally intrigued by the human condition, but she interprets the subject through the lens of mass media.

Her exhibition “Pure Heart Shopping Street” is set in a model shopping street in 1980s and 1990s Japan, a cultural epoch to which the Hong Kong artist owes her aesthetic sense.

“In the 1990s era, I consumed a lot of Japanese *manhwa*, magazines and dramas. That affected my growth and especially my aesthetic sense,” she says.

For this exhibition, Lai’s main inspirations came from vintage advertisements and archives that she found online, which she then recreated through photorealistic painting and installations that include two giant sculptures of old-fashioned cassette tapes.



*This kind of feeling* (2022), Sarah Lai. Photo: Blindspot Gallery

While viewers are lulled by a sense of nostalgic innocence, paintings such as *This kind of feeling* (2022), a pastel-tone piece based on an underwear advertisement, are also unmistakably sensual. But Lai says she also wants to project a sense of ordinariness – that the act of wearing underwear, especially the plain white ones in the painting, is quite mundane.

Lai's works thrive on this type of subtle contrast. The softness of her paintings bring an air of sentimentality but their distinct, intentional flatness – they are all oil paintings but the surfaces are as flat and smooth as printed reproductions – critiques the all-consuming nature of advertising and mass media.

While the works in “Not everything is about you” and “Pure Heart Shopping Street” are aesthetically different, both exhibitions take over the gallery space and make it immersive.



Blue Sparty Shorts (2022), Sarah Lai. Photo: Blindspot Gallery

As Lai describes it, she wants to provide viewers with an atmospheric in-person experience “like a preset before entering the painting”.

This is why an in-person visit to these exhibitions is the only way to experience them fully.

*“Not everything is about you”, Trevor Yeung and “Pure Heart Shopping Street”, Sarah Lai, Blindspot Gallery, 15/F Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Tues-Sat 10:30am-6:30pm. Until May 7.*