



Art

+ FOLLOW

Get more with myNEWS
A personalised news feed of stories that matter to you
[Learn more →](#)

TOP PICKS

Regent Hong Kong Introduces Qura Bar
Paid Post: Regent Hong Kong

News
Expats TV show puts Hong Kong officials in 'awkward position', seen as glamorising

News
Piano-playing London live-streamer accused of staging China row to boost traffic

Business
Hong Kong High Court orders Evergrande Group to liquidate

News
Robbery mastermind found dead in Hong Kong jail cell hours before sentencing

News
Cathay flight forced to return to Hong Kong over unusual smell in cabin

News
Banned from pro sports, ex-Hong Kong athletes, coaches adjust to life in Britain

News
Hong Kong issues cold weather warning with temperature set to fall further overnight

China Macro Economy
China finds new oilfield that could be 'abundant oil-and-gas resource base'

News
Diligent doctor passes out as he tries to stabilise oxygen levels of child

News
Angry China plane passenger demands 'free' seat for son, delays flight by hours

Regent Hong Kong Introduces Qura Bar
Paid Post: Regent Hong Kong

Lifestyle / Arts & Culture

She photographs him naked or scantily clad in submissive poses. Chinese artist Pixy Liao on power and trust

• Pixy Liao's photos of her and her male partner – often shown naked and in a submissive pose – aim to smash gender stereotypes, but not to wage a war against men

• The Shanghai-born artist says she aims to reflect their 'deep mutual trust' as a couple in her work, on show in her first solo Hong Kong exhibition

[Listen to this article](#)

Erika Na + FOLLOW
Published: 5:15pm, 29 Jan, 2024

Why you can trust SCMP

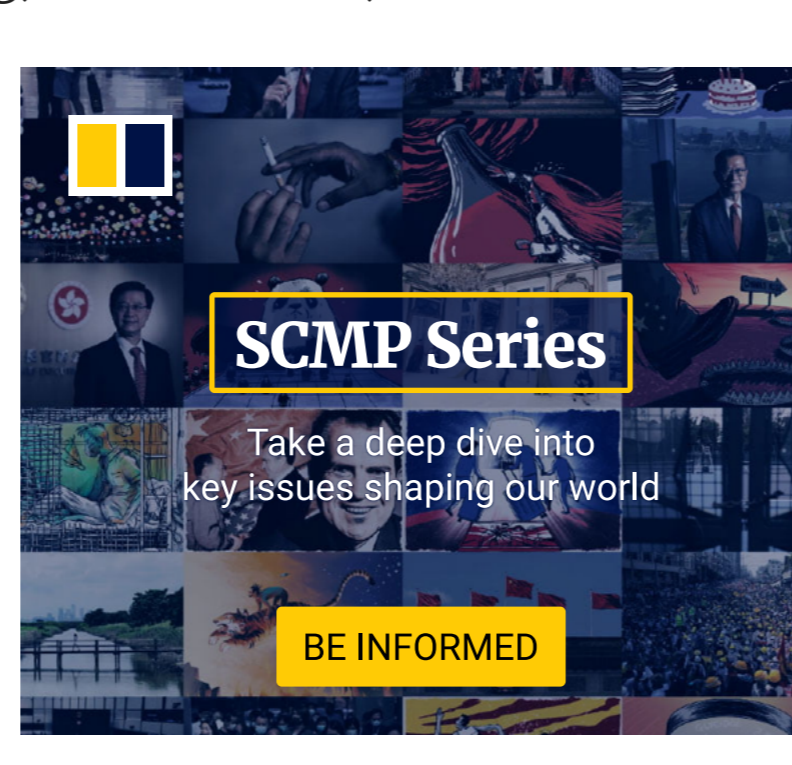


Shanghai-born artist Pixy Liao's "Comfort Zone", the titular photo of her first Hong Kong solo exhibition. Photo: Pixy Liao/Blindspot Gallery

The images of Pixy Liao and her long-term male partner, who is often photographed naked, tend to elicit strong reactions.

Some people may find them offensive; others may find that they scratch an itch in their psyche they didn't know existed.

If anything, the Shanghai-born artist's first solo exhibition in Hong Kong, belies its title, "Comfort Zone".



For example, in an image called *After Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss* (2019), Liao's partner, who is referred to as Moro, is seen lying prone and passive on Liao's lap wearing nothing apart from a pair of pulled-up white cotton socks and what looks like an apron tied around his waist.



"Bed Wrestling 3014 (Rear Chin Lock)", featured in Liao's Hong Kong exhibition. Photo: Pixy Liao/Blindspot Gallery

Liao, staring straight into the camera, is dressed in a terry cloth robe with a mandarin collar, her left fist raised towards the sky. In it, she is clutching the camera's shutter release above Moro's exposed buttocks.

In *Story Time* (2022), a fully dressed Liao is sitting in a chair holding a copy of *Emmanuelle*, the French novel about female sexual liberation. A naked Moro is seen kneeling at Liao's feet, looking attentive.

Young naked women are their canvas – Hong Kong artists' erotic nude art
31 Oct 2023

"I imagined that I was a female teacher teaching Moro about female sexuality," Liao says with a smile.

Liao is bemused by the fact that even in 2024, photos of her younger, Japanese partner posing naked still manage to shock.

She has been exhibiting staged photos of the two of them since 2008, shortly after her ongoing series called "Experimental Relationship" began.

I want him to be comfortable. So he will kind of adjust his body based on how he feels Pixy Liao, on sharing control with her partner Moro

f X

But then again, convention is formed by centuries of deep-seated bias. Consider that in 1989, the feminist collective the *Guerilla Girls* had to ask: "Do women have to be naked to enter the Met. Museum?" That was because they found that 85 per cent of nude paintings at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art were of women, while 95 per cent of the artists whose work was exhibited there were men.

EVERY FRIDAY
Luna
Discover news and insights on women trailblazers, social issues and gender diversity in Asia
By submitting, you consent to receiving marketing emails from SCMP. If you don't want these, tick here
[GET OUR NEWSLETTER](#)
By registering, you agree to our [T&C](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

Liao says she occasionally gets hate comments online from those disturbed by her work. But she wants to make clear that she is not calling for war against men, nor is she pushing for women to have revenge and assume dominance over men.

Instead, her photos reflect how she and Moro flexibly share control and power in their relationship after years of experimentation and finding their own comfort zone.



"Space Girl Met Earth Boy 4804", which is featured in Liao's Hong Kong exhibition. Photo: Pixy Liao/Blindspot Gallery

She explains that Moro's vulnerability on camera is only possible because the two have built deep mutual trust and firm boundaries.

"During the photo shoot, it's kind of like a jam session. He has a lot of his own idea of what I want to do. But I want him to be comfortable.

"So he will kind of adjust his body based on how he feels and what he thinks he should be like in that situation," Liao says.

She has also been respectful of what he feels comfortable with, she says. "No full – frontal nudity," she says.

Evidence of the alternating power dynamic in the photos is the way the cable release is sometimes held by Liao, sometimes by Moro.

At first, it wasn't intentional that they would take turns in controlling when the photo would be taken. Liao simply didn't have the strength to press the button, so Moro had to do it.

"A long time when he was the only one who could control the cable release, I would just be waiting there, not knowing when he's going to squeeze. He might take his time and press when I'm blinking my eyes," Liao says. "I worked out, gained some strength and now I can do it."



"G7b9", which is featured in Liao's Hong Kong exhibition. Photo: Pixy Liao/Blindspot Gallery

In that sense, *Intertwined*, one of her latest works, may portray the couple's shared control in the most straightforward manner.

In the photo, the couple sit in a bathtub. Both of them are naked, looking into each other's eyes while holding on to the cable release together. The long camera cable that loops around their necks multiple times reflects the important role photography plays in their relationship.

Liao says her work is possible only because they both feel completely safe with each other, and that's where the title of the exhibition, "Comfort Zone", comes from.

In the back alleys of Kowloon, camera around his neck, he's in his element
29 Jul 2023

In a photograph titled *Comfort Zone*, one of the biggest in the exhibition, which is printed on the wall of the gallery, Liao peeks out from between Moro's legs, right under his crotch.

"I think this one's very funny because in Chinese we have this saying 'The humiliation of being under somebody's crotch'. But for me, it's actually a comfort zone. It's almost like the secret of our relationship.

"The reason we can collaborate on many levels is because we feel comfortable with each other," Liao says.

"He is like a shelter or support for me and I think I mean the same things to him. So even though this might not be a conventionally 'good' pose, I feel very comfortable because we are each other's comfort zone."

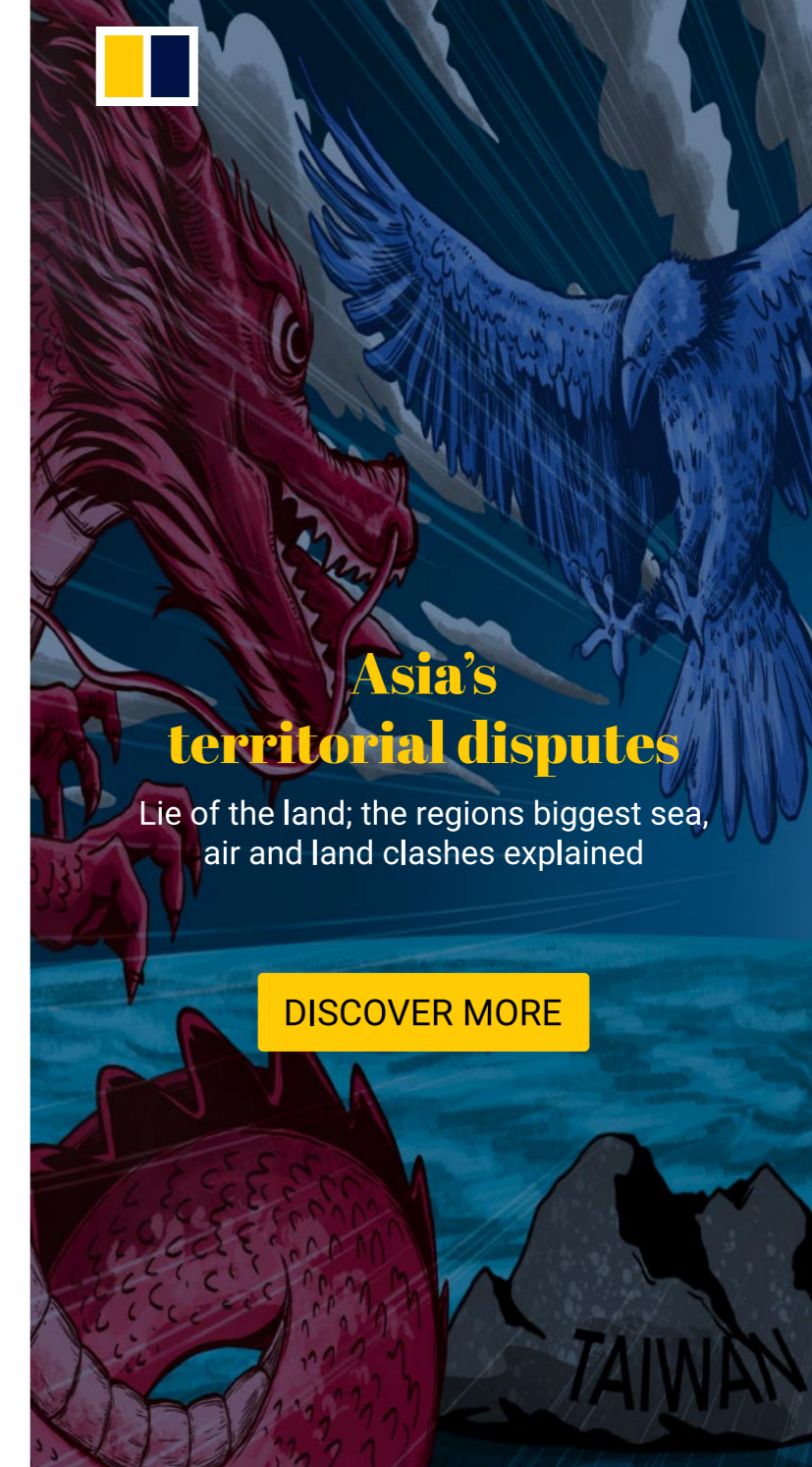
"*Comfort Zone*", *Blindspot Gallery, 15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang. Tue-Sat 10.30am-6.30pm. Until March 9.*

CONVERSATIONS

Erika Na + FOLLOW

Erika Na joined the Post in 2021. Originally from South Korea, she studied international affairs with a focus on Asia in the US, followed by studying law and journalism in Hong Kong. Before joining SCMP, she worked as a Hong Kong foreign correspondent for Airrang Radio where she regularly updated news from the city and also as an intern at NBC News covering stories from Asia.

Art 5050 | Photography | What to do in Hong Kong



SCMP Poll
Considering Standard Chartered Priority Banking soon?

- Yes
- Yes, but beyond 12 months
- No, I'm a Priority Banking customer

Per our [Privacy Policy](#), data collected may be used for marketing.

Read more
'My life is a string of serendipities': Hong Kong photo art gallery founder

Read more
'People didn't know what to think': New York street art pioneer's dark works

Read more
'Freedom': the Taiwanese naturalists defying social – and legal – norms

