



Sin Wai Kin

*It's Always You: Sin Wai
Kin's Infinite Universe*
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ARTISTS

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In 2021, Victoria Sin became Sin Wai Kin, an evolution that occurred in tandem with the artist's departure from the drag performances for which they had become known. *Narrative Reflections on Looking* (2016–17), a series of four single-channel videos featuring the hyper-femme drag persona that Sin developed in London's queer club scene, exemplifies what preceded this transition. Embodying the exaggerated glamour of a mid-century Technicolor Hollywood pin-up, the artist poses in theatrical settings as the camera explores their body, which in *Preface/Looking Without Touching* (2017) lies on red silk wearing red lingerie, faux fur and thigh-high boots. Across these videos, Sin's voice-over teases identity as a negotiation between internal and external experiences and projections. In *Part One/She Was More Than the Sum of My Parts* (2016), they talk about trying to connect with a magazine image of a woman who looks like them. Then, in *Part Three/Cthulhu Through the Looking Glass* (2017), they describe placing that image on their face.

Sin has described *Narrative Reflections on Looking* as a confrontation with idealised images of Western femininity that enabled the artist to redefine their relationship to them. 'Within an image-based culture, the images we are bombarded with every day – which represent and reify cultural constructs like gender – prevent us from seeing past pre-existing categories,' they told artist Himali Singh Soin in 2019, in a conversation reflecting on the way ideals are configured into sociocultural constructs.¹ 'Drag is a safe place for me to act on my desire and take pleasure in embodying things that the culture I'm present in has always told me I want to be, while at the same time presenting them as a fallacy.'² Engaging drag as a speculative practice intersecting science fiction and fantasy, these ideas expanded significantly in the single-channel video *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts* (2020–21), the first work Sin produced as Wai Kin.

Featuring new characters performed entirely by the artist, *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts* opens up a universe where ideas of transformation continuously upend limited constructions of being – a theme that Sin has since developed in subsequent works, each one connecting back to ideas the artist expressed in this trajectory-defining composition. In the first scene, two figures sit across a table. They are styled identically in a white pant suit and dramatic chopines, with a blazer buttoned at the belly framing bare synthetic breasts as silver chains cascade down their intermammary clefts from a choker.³ Long black hair cut into a blunt fringe, terraces around each jaw: a wig of Sin's hair, which is also shown alongside the film as the sculpture *Costume for Dreaming* (2021). Both their lips are black-lined beyond the mouth's edges and gradate into a rich crimson fill – a call-back to Sin's early drag.

The two characters are in fact different versions of the same persona, The Construct. What distinguishes them are their theatrical visages, painted in the style of leading female roles known as Daan in Chinese opera, with colours signifying specific traits. The Construct sitting on the left has eyebrows that slant up

in a dramaturgical display of concern, with a blue wash around the eyes forming sculptural edges along the nose before fading into pink cheeks, signifying bravery and loyalty. Their alterego on the right wears green and yellow contouring to create the menacing glare of a femme fatale, symbolising irascibility and cruelty. They play a chess game, which mirrors their embodied division – a black-and-white competition whose zero-sum showdown is amplified by an artwork hung above each figure. On the left is Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (1482–85). On the right is a black-and-white photo from Keizo Motoda's *Don't try* (2015), of a smoking Teddy Boy in a leather jacket staring into the camera. ('Look at his gear gleaming . . .' Motoda wrote about the image: 'He's got the punch to pitch a fight . . .')

It's a classic story, the battle of opposites. Here, it takes place between what Sin describes as 'two parts of an internalised false dichotomy', which connects to one of the core influences that shaped the film's composition: Ursula K. Le Guin's *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*.⁵ Outlined in a 1986 essay, the author 'expounds the value of narratives that hold many perspectives, and even opposing ideas together, rather than stories that create binaries of good and evil, true and false, and hero and villain', Sin has explained, describing Le Guin's theory as 'a model of non-binary form of storytelling'.⁶ That model is reflected in the seven interwoven dreams composing *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts*: a collapse of linearity felt most acutely in the visions of The Universe, the film's second character – or third, depending on how you look at it.

Dressed in a white vest and black trousers, with a white faux-fur pelt slung over their shoulder like a modern-day Hercules, The Universe is styled after the Zing role in Chinese opera: a masculine warrior who can appear as a hero, general, god, or even a villain or demon. Also known as *hualian* or *faamin* – 花脸 'painted face' or 'flower face' – the Zing role's defining qualities are expressed through painted facial motifs. In *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts*, The Universe wears a sky-blue wig cut into curtains that frame a face painted like a stylised landscape, with a red lotus flower growing up the nose's bridge to bloom at the forehead. As he dreams, 'he finds himself strangely reflected in his surroundings: a tree and a bowl of wonton noodles are animated to speak back to him, and sometimes to speak as him', Sin explained in 2021.⁷ 'Through blurring and reflections, I wanted to break down the binary of subject and object, individual and context.'⁸

This binary breakdown reflects the philosophical equation structuring the film: the Butterfly Dream allegory attributed to fourth-century B.C.E. Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi. In the story, Zhuangzi dreams he is a butterfly, and awakens to wonder if he is a butterfly dreaming of being a man. That speculation has ignited numerous interpretations, which philosopher Christine Abigail L. Tan organises into egoistic and monistic theses. The former sees the philosopher Zhuangzi and the dreamer Chuang Chou as the same person, and the butterfly as a product of their imagination. The second rejects the idea of duality and sees Zhuangzi as distinct from Chuang Chou, who is distinct from the butterfly, such that each represents a unique reality.⁹ In keeping with the carrier bag model, every possibility is at play in *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts*. From the opening shot when the camera mimics the perspective of an

Previous spread:
Portraits — Film still from Sin Wai Kin,
The Universe, 2023 © the artist.
Image courtesy of the artist and Soft
Opening, London

eye stirring from slumber or awakening into a dream, to a scene where The Universe stands on a rocky shore, Venus-like, wearing The Construct's wig, corset, and chopines.

Of the egoistic thesis, scholar Zihua Yao's interdisciplinary approach is the most compelling, given the dramatisation of the self's internal division in *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts*, whether in terms of The Construct's split or in The Construct's relation to The Universe. Through a Jungian reading of the butterfly as the dreaming or subconscious self, and Chuang Chou as the waking state's ego,¹⁰ Yao sees both selves as inhabiting 'their own territories', which 'is what Zhuangzi means by *fen* 分 or division' – that is, 'not a division among things, but between selves'.¹¹ Within this division, each self tries 'to expand its territory by projecting or objectifying its counterpart', which Yao defines as 'self-alienation'.¹²

Self-alienation is certainly one way to read the chess game Sin's film opens with. Not to mention a later moment when The Universe, wearing a butterfly-embellished diamante necklace and diamante belt with the letters 'R, E, A, L', tells a talking tree: 'I am not a character in your dream. You are a character in mine, reflecting myself back at me in every embodiment.' As a foil to The Construct's externalisation of the self's internal split, The Universe invokes another theory of division that stands both in contrast and in relation to it, in keeping with the Carrier Bag model: whereby the Lacanian ego – what philosopher Adrian Johnston defines as 'a libidinally invested and reified entity' – faces the 'kinetic negativity' of its unconscious, which defies 'capture by and within ego-level identificatory constructs'.¹³ That face-off is likewise reflected in the Butterfly Dream's equation, where the kinetic negativity of the unconscious butterfly challenges the ego's sense of identity.

But, as Tan writes, while Yao's self-alienation interpretation is plausible, Zhuangzi's allegory was never about the self alone.¹⁴ This is because 'Daoism in general, and especially Zhuangzi, dealt mostly with problems in metaphysics', Tan continues, pointing to Zhuangzi's dream reflection of the Great Sage, which raises the Butterfly Dream allegory 'to a more metaphysical level, encompassing a wider horizon than the self'.¹⁵ In the text, Zhuangzi asserts that a dreaming person knows they are dreaming only when they awake, and concludes that 'someday, there will be a great awakening when we know that this is all a great dream'.¹⁶

This idea that everything is a great dream from which there might be a collective awakening, can be brought close to the carrier bag theory of fiction, insofar as it would follow that everyone and everything is engaged in their own reveries – a mesh of conscious and subconscious experiences that meld into narratives that intersect with all others within and around them. This ever-expanding field of dynamic relationality defines both *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts* and its growing interrelations with works by Sin that have followed, where, as the artist has noted, the relationship between the characters are 'just as important as the characters themselves', because 'that's what a universe is . . . a really complicated mesh of relationships'.¹⁷ Scholar Kuang-Ming Wu's reading of the Butterfly Dream, which Tan presents as a monistic thesis, aligns with this condition of enmeshment. Engaging the concept of pluralistic monism, Wu considers each dream 'a world in itself' – 'interconnected though *mutually exclusive*'¹⁸ – that 'can

be construed from many perspectives' and that 'uniquely regulates our many notions into a unity'.¹⁹

In short, each world is a unity that forms part of a collective of unities that combine to constitute a unity as a whole. Within this framework, Wu writes, 'unique' is 'plural' and 'the one is many', just as the idea of 'the "one" is not idealistic, nor is the "many" simply conceptual', but also 'concrete' and 'situational'.²⁰ Sin's two-channel video installation *It's Always You* (2021) alludes to this paradoxically singular network of multiplicities. Filmed in a chroma key green studio, a music video shows Sin performing each archetypal role in a four-member boyband: The Universe (the pretty boy), The Storyteller (the serious one), The One (the childish one) and Wai King (the heartthrob). 'I thought I was alone, but then you showed me,' the band intones with one voice, in a poetic abstraction of a love song performed to the sound of a beating heart: 'Together, we're the one, and as one I'm many.'

The universe is a multiverse and vice versa – a speculative condition predicated on acknowledging the possibilities of the unknown, which Chuang Chou demonstrates by awakening to question his very existence. While such ideas seem contradictory, Tan notes, 'it is perfectly logical from a Daoist perspective in that one can be and not be at the very same time',²¹ just like the butterfly in Chuang Chou's dream, which may or may not be real. Sin expresses this simultaneity across their films, where assertions are negated, countered or reversed continuously in a constant and unending cycle of mediation. Take the single-channel video *Today's Top Stories* (2020), where The Storyteller, a suited, orange-haired intergalactic newscaster with face-paint depicting a red star imploding, reads lines that include 'that's it, that's not', and 'then becoming with, then becoming apart'.

That unceasing oscillation speaks to the critique of desire that *It's Always You* taps into, with lyrics amplifying a longing for resolution within and without oneself. Boybands and ballads capitalise on this desire, a salve for the agony of alienation, by idealising the completion of an incomplete self with another, which in reality can manifest as submission, possession and even erasure precisely because of the lack of internal resolution – a 'oneness' embodied by The One, whose masculine Jing face is painted over with a female body. *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts* points to these conditions in its script that describes 'Each one contained inside itself, an island universe, reaching but never touching. Made from the same thing', then 'formed into differences.' From that 'same thing', The Universe says, came 'the first dualism of an individual in a context' and a 'mutually exclusive realm of experience'. And since that first dualism, The Universe continues, 'you have been searching. Reaching in, reaching out, and dividing everything around you because you can't stand to be divided as you are.'

Sin's practice upends this toxic condition of separability, where a longing to transcend duality paradoxically manifests in the very impulse to divide. It is a duality that Zhuangzi's Butterfly Dream also seeks to overcome by challenging perspectives on selfhood, as noted in the Great Sage reflection, which points out that what is experienced as a dream 'is made not from inside that world (while we are dreaming) but from outside of it . . .'.²² Tan summarises this condition as 'an awakening from both reality and dreaming'²³ –

a position embodied by both Chuang Chou, the awakened dreamer whose conscious reflection of a butterfly in flight untethers concrete notions of self, perception and knowledge alike, and Zhuangzi, the philosopher who describes the situation as a whole in order to destabilise the notion that there is a singular reality.

This opening of a third observational position recalls Situationist artist Asger Jorn's theory of triolectics, a challenge to the interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic as thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Jorn criticised the dialectic for producing a 'merciless either-or',²⁴ a negational tendency that he also found in Niels Bohr's complementarity theory. Responding to wave-particle duality, Bohr observed that 'the wave-particle aspects of matter' are 'complementary *and* mutually exclusive', since 'an atomic entity cannot exhibit both its particle and its wave properties simultaneously'.²⁵ But while Jorn accepted complementarity's recognition of 'the simultaneous presence of several complementary or mutually incompatible but equally valid philosophical systems, principles or tendencies',²⁶ he challenged its failure to overcome duality itself – what he described as 'arbitrary antagonisms'²⁷ in relation to philosopher Stéphane Lupasco's own theory that 'all energetic movement implies an antagonistic event...'²⁸

Thus, while Jorn understood movement in Bohr's complementarity as 'the instrument with which one ascertains positions', and positions as 'the instrument with which one ascertains movement',²⁹ he pointed out a key problem: 'To move or change something, one must have the Archimedean point outside of that which is to be moved.'³⁰ Jorn's triolectic schemata of object-instrument-observer, which he diagrammed by devising the brilliant game of three-sided football, made room for that untethered third position, which is unfixed by the structuring dualities of the status quo insofar as it rejects the defining logic of antagonism baked into binary constructions – ultimately producing something akin to thirdspace; what Edward Soja described as 'a limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open and openly radicalisable' yet 'never completely knowable...'³¹

Sin's work is adept at opening up an open-ended observational point that heralds such a thirdspace. Take the single-channel video *Irreconcilable Differences* (2020), which shows two characters, 'The Clowns', standing side by side. Each face is painted with the white mask of Chinese opera's clown character. Both are dressed in white with white wigs. Each is styled after a cultural archetype: a caricatured cross between Marilyn Monroe and Jessica Rabbit on one side, and a Tang-era noblewoman on the other. Appearing like a Rorschach test – irregularly symmetrical – they speak in gibberish, in a conversation that veers from politely passive aggressive to painfully antagonistic. Sin has described these figures as two sides of an internalised false dichotomy, like The Construct, and reflections of the binary of self and other – of 'an individual who sees themselves reflected in the other person'.³² Together, they perform a 'dialectic between the characters . . . of always trying to find themselves but failing, and then finding themselves back at the same place, trapped in this body, trapped in this world.'³³

Irreconcilable Differences enacts that dialectical trap when the Tang character walks off to leave 'Marylin' in the frame. But while a negation appears to have occurred, the viewer and Sin themselves remain, embodying states of presence and non-presence alike

within the composition. This simultaneous positionality aligns with Zhuangzi's place in the Butterfly's Dream as the third observational point where either/or is replaced with all-at-once. As Tan points out, while singular in their existence, the butterfly and Chuang Chou are 'united in Zhuangzi the narrator, in the same way that the Dao, though unknowable in its totality, is manifested in singularities as a never-ending process of becoming'.³⁴ In keeping, the artist and viewer in *Irreconcilable Differences* are both present and distant in their position as integral and external to the work, where the trinary collapses into one as much as it opens out to three.

In this sense, *Irreconcilable Differences* aligns with the perspectivism that Tan and Wu identify in Zhuangzi's writings, where the awakened subject 'is anything but an ideal observer severed from the world', but a part of it.³⁵ It is from within this perspectival space that distinct identities hold as much as they overlap, intersect, interact and augment one another through their oscillating collapse into a concrete, situational and conceptual unity of one and many; where positions are viewed from within, between and beyond self and other.³⁶ As Zhuangzi put it, this is 'the center of the circle' – the 'still-point of the Tao', where 'there is no more separation between "this" and "that"', and one can see 'the infinite in all things' and 'the light beyond right and wrong'. Zhuangzi's dream allegories conjure that still-point, illuminating 'a structure of presence' that reveals 'the paradox of the absolute unity but also the absolute singularity of all things'.³⁷

It is this paradoxical state that Zhuangzi diagrams in the Butterfly Dream, through which the 'radical interchanges of identities among things, including [one's own]' can be observed,³⁸ thus introducing what Wu defines as a 'participatory kind of knowledge and of being'.³⁹ In that participatory state, Tan continues, the 'roaming and soaring of the subject makes the radical equalizing of things possible, and what unites them, in their very singularity'.⁴⁰ That roaming and soaring subject, which can be located in all three positions within the Butterfly Dream, is what Sin performs across their cinematic multiverse, through the embodiment of multiplicities that inevitably collapse into the figure of the artist themselves.

Take *The Breaking Story* (2022), which expands *Today's Top Story* by introducing six newsreader frames, each containing a variation on two characters: The Storyteller and Change, whose blue face is painted with a butterfly's red wings and brown eyes for markings. 'This just in,' reads one Change: 'we can identify multiple credible identities in the body of one performer.' Given Sin's description of 'authenticity [as] a rehearsed performance',⁴¹ the idea of a performer containing multitudes extends to the notion of selfhood as a performance of multiple and evolving roles. Drawing these ideas into concepts of collective identity, what Zhuangzi might call the great dream, is The Storyteller, who reads a line about scientists questioning 'whether a single objective reality shared by all observers exists at all', concluding that 'The answer seems to be no, until we start talking to each other.' All of which feeds into Sin's position that reality is constructed by consensus: a story that 'is repeated so much that it has become a system'.

Unravelling these systemic narratives, or becoming untethered from the idea that they are unchanging and absolute, frees the body from the categorisations that Sin has long sought to transcend. As they

pointed out, ‘humans have constructed identities through language in order to try to understand them as static and clearly delineated, when in fact they are not.’¹⁴² They are also ‘the only animal that completely constructs the environment that our brains are shaped and grown in, so what is natural or authentic is something that is a historical and social result.’¹⁴³ This sociohistorical conditioning manifests as ‘storytelling’, the ‘thing we use to understand our relationship to our bodies and our bodies’ relationship to the world’. And ‘somewhere within the tension between those two relationships,’ Sin points out, ‘an identity is there.’¹⁴⁴

Sin’s latest film, *Dreaming the End* (2023), visualises that relational tension in an opening scene that calls back to *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts*. The Storyteller and Change sit across a table from one another in an opulent dining room. By this point, Change’s reading of a storybook where the word ‘name’ stands in for most words, has shifted to the singular repetition of that word by The Storyteller, who is talking – or mansplaining? – at a silent Change. The scene recalls Sin’s performance *the story changes the body changes (repeating)* (2022), where the word ‘name’ is projected repeatedly on The Storyteller’s body, in order to visualise the dynamics of identification.

As Sin has pointed out, ‘Naming is an act of mastery’¹⁴⁵ – a designation that sets a definitive, categorical limit, which connects to a line The Storyteller repeats across Sin’s films: ‘In the telling, there is a dividing.’ Names, like stories, set boundaries – they can even become the grounds for war, which is something Change alludes to in *Dreaming the End*, when they ask The Storyteller if they are ‘a good or a bad’. Sin’s exploration of ‘a non-binary perspective’ – ‘as a way to contain multitudes in yourself, as a way to challenge the act of naming, as a way to savour the constant transformation of things and really revel in it’ – upends this divisive impulse.¹⁴⁶ To do this, Sin’s works challenge the structuring principles of language and narrative by unfolding the concept of ‘the name’ itself, which *A Dream of a Wholeness in Parts* describes as ‘the guest of a substance’ that ‘would be the name of everything’ if ‘it were really the name of something’.

This place beyond language and identification returns to the Taoist still-point described by Zhuangzi as the centre of a circle, shaped by the simultaneous unity and singularity of all things, and where the process of becoming is endless – a position that sounds uncannily like the place where ‘ideas, language, even the phrase “each other” doesn’t make any sense’, which is where Rumi actually ends up after the poet’s exhaustively quoted invitation to meet in the field beyond wrongdoing and rightdoing. Only those who have transcended see ‘this oneness’, Zhuangzi writes, and have ‘no use for differences’ but dwell ‘in the constant.’ Sin embodies and disembodies this constant across their characters in order to express these core ideas: ‘that there are points in the continuum of reality and fiction that are both real and fictional simultaneously’, to quote Change in *The Breaking Story*, and ‘We experience moments where the distinction of real or imaginary are eclipsed or transformed in and out of each other.’

A series of new video portraits created by Sin in 2023 express these dynamic conditions. The Storyteller is portrayed as a futurist Mona Lisa in a pink suit and orange hair cut into the style of The Construct, who appears in another video restaging Man Ray’s photograph

Kiki with an African Mask (1926). Change sits in a green-screen studio wearing a sharp suit and holding one lock of their chopped blonde hair in one hand and a butcher’s knife in the other, with hair strewn on the floor. The Universe, meanwhile, appears in a Tang-era white robe with long blue hair tied into a half knot, sleeping on a tree under a full moon, in an image drawing on depictions of the Butterfly Dream. Then there’s Wai King, first introduced in *It’s Always You*. The red-headed heartthrob, the lead in Sin’s cosmic boyband, re-enacts Caravaggio’s sixteenth-century depiction of Narcissus, the man who fell in love with his reflection when he saw it in a pool, his arms creating a closed circle in the mirroring of the self and its projection.

Wai King’s portrait feels like a new opening; an allegorical image folded into an allegorical image that invites overlapping philosophical interrogations into questions of being and perception. As scholar David Houston Wood writes, ‘That the gaze in the *Narcissus* inherently redoubles upon itself suggests nothing so much as a relationless anomie.’¹⁴⁸ Indeed, for philosopher Louis Marin, ‘The originating of a human being is the originating of relations’, which means Caravaggio’s painting ‘lacks precisely such an “originating” moment.’¹⁴⁹ To emphasise this dead-end loop, Wood quotes literary critic A.D. Nuttall’s description of Narcissus as the reflection of ‘an obstinate truth: self is self is self’. This absence of relation leaves Narcissus with ‘nowhere to go’, Nuttall asserts, because ‘Even the notion of self-consciousness, insofar as it has real content, demands an artificial splitting of the individual.’¹⁵⁰

But, as Wood points out, that *Narcissus* is a self-portrait of Caravaggio complicates Nuttall’s reading. As a self-portrait, the composition does in fact function as an artificial splitting of the self, just as Narcissus is likewise split through the objectification of his reflection. Yet amid this split, which Asger Jorn might have pointed out, there is the observer; whether the figure of Echo described in Ovid’s telling, who watches Narcissus at the pool, or the artist who presents the myth to the viewer who perceives the narrative as a whole, thus echoing the trielectical structure of the Butterfly Dream. Caravaggio’s *Narcissus*, then, is not a closed loop, nor is the Butterfly Dream. As with *Irreconcilable Differences*, what seems to be a representation of a duality is actually an expansive site of negotiation that transcends duality through the paradoxical representation of its divisions – that is, the reflection of the false internalised dichotomy and the binary between self and other, all at once.

This is what makes Sin’s new image of Wai King so compelling. Perfectly interpreting its source material, Wai King is Sin Wai Kin performing Caravaggio as Narcissus. In this embodiment of the artist as performer, Sin reflects and refracts themselves in the realm of representation so as ‘to explore profound ontological, existential, etiological, and epistemological questions’ that ‘get beyond superficialities’, as art historian Maria H. Loh observed of Caravaggio, whose painting, ‘in the final analysis, is about seizing the unruly self and converting it into an estranged object held out for unforgiving scrutiny.’¹⁵¹ The significance of Caravaggio’s painting, Loh continues, ‘is biographical and practical . . . historical and theoretical’, where ‘Caravaggio is inseparably . . . “the body of his own work”’,¹⁵² much like Sin, which makes Narcissus an ideal cypher for Wai Kin as Wai King.

Loh importantly notes that Narcissus was described as the inventor of painting by the fifteenth-century artist Leon Battista Alberti in *Della pittura*, a book, 'which closed with the open-ended question: "What is painting, but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?"'⁵³ Citing Arthur Rimbaud's assertion that 'I is another' and that the first exercise of any poet is to know themselves, Loh sees Caravaggio's *Narcissus* as an exercise in that kind of self-knowing. Caravaggio's 'ambivalent process of self-regard', Loh continues, 'sought to transcend the subjectivity, iniquity, and finitude of individual experience through the immortality and open-endedness of art', which 'is what it means to embrace the surface of the pool.'⁵⁴ Relating their practice to Octavia E. Butler's mantra 'the more personal, the more universal', Sin's practice likewise performs that embrace, in which the artist becomes the canvas: that fluid, reflective, open-ended surface of the pool that Alberti described.

'The universe that I am creating with my practice is really meant to act as a mirror', Sin said in 2022, 'in the same way that every character that I'm trying to create is a reflection or a site for people to see themselves.'⁵⁵ To perform the self as prism and portal is to open it to the possibilities of existence both in and beyond its frame; a reflection through which every one and every thing can be transformed into a prism and portal themselves – a still point at the centre of a circle. As Zhuangzi wrote, 'One can only know things through knowing oneself.'⁵⁶ It starts and ends with you.

- 1 Quoted from Himali Singh Soin, 'Sin Wai Kin in Conversation', *Ocula*, published 11 January 2019 under Sin's previous name, available at <https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/victoria-sin/> (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 A chopine is a platform shoe developed in the sixteenth century and especially popular among Venetian women. See Harold Koda, 'The Chopine', Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2002, available at www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chop/hd_chop.htm (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 4 See Keizo Motoda, 'Don't try' series page on the MEM gallery website, available at https://mem-inc.jp/artists_e/keizo-motoda/dont-try/ (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 5 Sin Wai Kin, 'Non-Binary Storytelling and A Dream of Wholeness in Parts', online lecture for the Transfer Project 'Circulating Narratives – Entangling Communities: Case Studies in Global Performance Art', Freie Universität Berlin, 1 December 2021, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHoG-Dhs-B3w (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Quoted in O.H. Fletcher, 'Interview with Sin Wai Kin', *The White Review*, September 2021, available at www.thewhiterewiew.org/feature/interview-with-sin-wai-kin/ (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Christine Abigail L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream and Zhuangzi's Perspectivism: An Exploration of the Differing Interpretations of the Butterfly Dream against the Backdrop of Dao as Pluralistic Monism', *Kritike*, vol.10, no.2, December 2016, p.101.
- 10 Zhihua Yao, "'I Have Lost Me": Zhuangzi's Butterfly Dream', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol.40, no.3–4, 2013, p.520, quoted in C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.107.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Adrian Johnston, 'Jacques Lacan', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Spring 2023 Edition* (ed. Uri Nodelman and Edward N. Zalta), available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/lacan/> (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 14 C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.107.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 'Sin Wai Kin', Tate Turner Prize 2022 nominee interview, 14 October 2022, available at www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/turner-prize-2022/sin-wai-kin (last accessed on 2 May 2023).
- 18 Kuang-Ming Wu, *The Butterfly as Companion: Meditations on the First Three Chapters of the Chuang Tzu*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990, p.176, quoted in C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.115.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 K.-M. Wu, *The Butterfly as Companion*, *op. cit.*, quoted in C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream and Zhuangzi's Perspectivism', *op. cit.*, p.117.
- 21 C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.116.
- 22 K.-M. Wu, *The Butterfly as Companion*, *op. cit.*, p.176, quoted in C.A.L. Tan 'The Butterfly Dream and Zhuangzi's Perspectivism', *op. cit.*, p.115
- 23 C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.112.
- 24 Asger Jorn, 'Luck and Chance Dagger and Guitar', in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen (ed.), *Cosmonauts of the Future: Texts from the Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, Brooklyn: Nebula with Autonomedia, 2015, p.41. Emphasis original.
- 25 Gerald Holton, 'The Roots of Complementarity' *Daedalus* Vol. 99 No. 4, *The Making of Modern Science: Biographical Studies*, Fall 1970, p.193.
- 26 See Asger Jorn, 'The Natural Order' (1962), in *Cosmonauts of the Future*, p.134.
- 27 Asger Jorn, 'On the Triolectical Method in its Applications in General Sitology' in *Cosmonauts of the Future*, p.242.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p.240.
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- 33 *The Story Cycle*, Channel, Somerset House, 19 October 2022, available at channel.somerset-house.org.uk/documentaries-and-films/talks/sin-wai-kin-roisin-tapponi-the-story-cycle (last accessed on 3 May 2023).
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- 36 K.-M. Wu, *The Butterfly as Companion*, *op. cit.*, p.176 quoted in C.A.L. Tan 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.115.
- 37 Chuang Tzu, 'Chapter Two: The Equality of All Things', in *Inner Chapters* (ed. Amber Lotus and trans. Gia-fu Feng and Jane English), San Francisco: Amber Lotus Publishing, 2000, quoted in C.A.L. Tan in 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.115.
- 38 C.A.L. Tan, 'The Butterfly Dream', *op. cit.*, p.102.
- 39 C.A.L. Tan quoting Wu in *ibid.*, p.117.
- 40 C.A.L. Tan summarising a concept by Wu discussed in *ibid.*, pp.115–17.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p.117.
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- 43 'Sin Wai Kin', Tate Turner Prize 2022 nominee interview, *op. cit.*
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- 49 David Houston Wood, "'Like a fountain Stirr'd": Caravaggio, Shakespeare, and the Myth of Narcissus', *Interfaces. Image-Texte-Language*, no.25, 2005, p.37.
- 50 Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting* (trans. Mette Hjort), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p.40 quoted in D. H. Wood, "'Like a fountain Stirr'd'", *op. cit.*, p.37. Here Marin draws on psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche.
- 51 Anthony Nuttall, 'Ovid's Narcissus and Shakespeare's *Richard II*: the Reflected Self', in Charles Martindale (ed.), *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.148, quoted in D. H. Wood, "'Like a fountain Stirr'd'", *op. cit.*
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- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 *Ibid.*
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Sin Wai Kin, Still from *It's Always You*, 2021, 4K dual-channel video, 4min 05sec. Courtesy artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong



Sin Wai Kin, Still from *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts*, 2021, single-channel video, 23min 03sec. Courtesy artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong



Sin Wai Kin, *Today's Top Stories*, 2020, single-channel video, 6min 30sec. Courtesy artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong



Sin Wai Kin, *Irreconcilable Differences*, 2020, single-channel video, 6min 30sec. Courtesy artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong



Top:
 Sin Wai Kin, *Dreaming the End*, 2023,
 single-channel video, 21min 06sec.
 Courtesy artist and Fondazione Memmo,
 Rome

Bottom:
 Sin Wai Kin, *The Breaking Story*, 2022, six-
 channel video, 6min 31sec. Courtesy artist
 and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong



Sin Wai Kin, *Narrative Reflections On
 Looking*, still from *Preface/Looking
 Without Touching*, 2017, single-channel
 video, 1min 02sec. Image courtesy of artist
 and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong