

Press Release

Isaac Chong Wai: carefully | 16 September – 1 November 2025

Opening Reception: 13 September 2025, Saturday; 3:00 – 6:00pm

Artist Talk – Isaac Chong Wai in conversation with Tobias Berger: 13 September 2025; 4pm (conducted in English)

Venue: Blindspot Gallery, 15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong

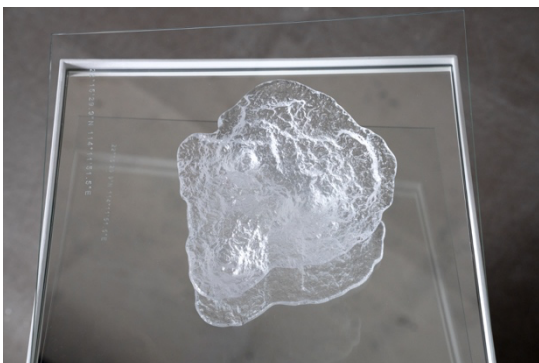
Opening Hours: Tuesday to Saturday; 10:30am – 6:30pm (Sunday and Monday, by appointment only); closed on public holidays

Blindspot Gallery is pleased to present Isaac Chong Wai's second solo exhibition, **"carefully"**, from 13 September to 1 November 2025. Chong explores the human condition through the lens of movement, time, and the traces they bear. He delves into the performative qualities of materials, showing their relationship with the body and their potential for world-making.

"carefully" acknowledges precarity while embodying a gesture of care. It proposes solidarity as a way to heal and to move forward from traumas. The new works featured in the exhibition continue themes Chong explored in his video installation and performance, *Falling Reversely* (2021/2024), presented at the 60th Venice Biennale, reflecting upon the fragility and resistance of the body in the face of systemic violence. In "carefully", Chong probes our attentiveness to the past by drawing from his upbringing in colonial Hong Kong, contemplating what we choose to remember and its influence on identity and the present. Through neon lights, glass sculptures, drawings, prints and video, the exhibition invites us to reflect upon our shared humanity converging temporalities, and to imagine an alternative microcosm of human relationality through mutual support and understanding.



The exhibition opens with two neon lights flashing "Falling Carefully", and "小心地跌倒", mirroring Hong Kong's bilingual character. The English words blink in a looped order – "Falling", "Falling Carefully", and "Care". "Falling" evokes the feelings of powerlessness, while "Falling Carefully" and "Care" express empathy, a sharing of burdens to build resilience. In the Chinese neon, the words illuminate in the sequence – "小心" (Be careful), "小心跌倒" (Be careful not to fall) and "小心地跌倒" (Falling carefully), the phrases encapsulating caution and protection.



In the next room, glass sculptures, each layered between a sheet of glass and mirror, sit on pedestals, appearing as memorials. Entitled ***Missing Space (Hong Kong)*** (2025), each glass is cast from traces of war found on surfaces left by the Battle of Hong Kong (1941)¹, including bullet holes. Etched onto the sheet that rests atop the glass is the GPS location of each mark, derived from various sites, including the HSBC lions. The missing spaces are transformed into delicate crystallized abstractions, subverting the violence that yielded them. Though immobile, the works convey subtle instability; therein lies

¹ This Battle which took place from 8 to 25 December 1941 resulted in British defeat and Japanese occupation of Hong Kong for three years and eight months, until their surrender at the end of the Second World War.

the tacit ambivalence between fragility and stillness.

These are exhibited alongside the drawings, *Traces (Hong Kong)* (2025). Chong pressed paper onto the scarred surfaces, using color pencils and ink to conceal each "wound". The subtle gradations in color and undulating forms turn the traces into soft petals, emerging from the barren.



Situated nearby are two sets of glass sculptures and photographic prints, *Breath Marks: Queen Elizabeth II and Crying Hong Kong Girl* (2023) and *Breath Marks: Princess Diana and the Walking Stick* (2025), wherein Chong used his breath marks to "paint" fleeting moments into lasting traces etched across numerous glass panels and captured in photographic prints, revealing abstracted silhouettes that shimmer with light and presence. In the first work, the silhouette of a sitting figure is outlined, based off an online photograph which went viral showing a girl clutching the photograph of late Queen Elizabeth II, weeping beside her public memorial outside the Hong Kong British Consulate. The image elicited nuanced reactions, particularly regarding her age—having not experienced the colonial past yet still clinging to the nostalgic symbol of the Queen. She is revered yet also the figurehead of a statecraft that inflicted discrimination upon its colonial

subjects. The work reflects the contradictions of public mourning and prompts us to consider the significance of grieving the monarch in a postcolonial context.

The other work *Breath Marks: Princess Diana and the Walking Stick* shows a figure bending down to reach for something, derived from the news image of Princess Diana during her visit to Hong Kong in 1989, where she knelt to help an elderly retrieve her walking stick. Her act was seen as humane, even though it unfolded within the spectacle of colonial diplomacy.

"A girl's grief becomes a meme and a princess's compassion becomes a myth," Chong writes. By using an extension of his body as a paintbrush, Chong personalizes history, probing how identity is shaped by collective memories.



Chong debuts *Touched: Rouge* (2025), a series in which he uses body imprints to outline the contours of Fleur and Chen-bong from the classic Hong Kong film *Rouge* (1987). The ethereal marks are etched onto glass panels mounted onto colored acrylic and mirror. In the film, Fleur is a courtesan who falls for wealthy heir Chen-bong in 1930s Hong Kong, before their love is thwarted due to disapproval, resulting in the two attempting suicide through opium. Fleur's spirit returned to humanity five decades later in search of Chen who had survived the attempt, only to find a city transformed. The film is adapted from the eponymous novel by Lilian Lee, written shortly after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration².

Chong's works portray the film sequence from the 1930s, capturing the duo's movements framed within mirrors. They illustrate Fleur's first encounter with Chen-bong in the teahouse where she performed as a man, Chen peeling an orange for Fleur, her anticipation to meet Chen's parents as she nervously flutters the fan, their sharing of opium, a motif that harkens back to Hong Kong's history³, and their stare into their own reflection—a portrait suspended in time. Their fictionalized bodies recall the actors who play them, Leslie Cheung and Anita Mui, both immortalized as icons of Hong Kong's golden age. Through the materiality of the mirror in *Touched: Rouge*, the speculative past is

² Hong Kong became a British colony after China's defeat in the Opium War. The Joint Declaration signed in 1984 set out the conditions for Hong Kong's handover to China, writing the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems' for fifty years.

³ Following the First Opium War, Hong Kong was established as a free port in 1841, becoming a transshipment center for opium to China.

transposed to the present, alluding to the question raised in the film— “what can change in fifty years?”

In conjunction with his manipulation of materials and their performative potentials, Chong engages in performance art and video, where he uses the human body as a vessel to embody and reinterpret the individual and collective experience, re-worlding our views. **Die Mütter** (2022), English titled *The Mothers*, is a two-channel video installation commissioned by ifa-Galerie Berlin, showing Chong and a group of performers banded together to form a fortress, turning clockwise as they sing lullabies and dirges from various cultures. While they turn, some pull out, embodying emptiness and loss. Chong cites the German expressionist artist Käthe Kollwitz's (1867-1945) *Die Mütter* (1921-1922), made in commemoration of her son killed in WWI, portraying mothers embracing and protecting their children. Chong translates the moving pathos of Kollwitz' print into the video, where the performers' movements echo the impotency of the mothers, and their refusal to give up. Their revolving motion evokes life's cyclicity and the ceaselessness of conflicts, while their embrace embodies a shared vulnerability and resistance. Their songs of healing reimagine our world.



“Learning to fall is learning how to stand up. And learning to mourn is learning how to care and to re-world.” - Qu Chang on the practice of Chong.

Image captions:

- [1] Isaac Chong Wai, *Falling Reversely*, 2021/2024, performed at the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia entitled “Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere”. Photo by Atsushi Kakefuda.
- [2] Isaac Chong Wai, *Missing Space: Ammunition Stores in Hong Kong*, 22°15'29.9"N 114°11'51.5"E (close-up), 2025, Glass, etching on glass, mirror, wooden tray, 5.5 x 17 x 14 cm (glass sculpture), 30 x 30 cm (etched glass), 30 x 30 cm (mirror)
- [3] Isaac Chong Wai, *Traces: Ammunition Stores in Hong Kong*, 22°15'29.9"N 114°11'51.5"E, 2025, Ink pen and color pencil on paper, wooden frame, 29 x 24 x 3 cm (framed size)
- [4] Isaac Chong Wai, *Breath Marks: Queen Elizabeth II and Crying Hong Kong Girl*, 2023, Etching on glasses, 14 panels, wooden base, 43 x 30 x 43 cm
- [5] Isaac Chong Wai, *Die Mütter* (film still), 2022, Two-channel video, 14' 00", Edition of 5 + 2AP

(Images courtesy of artist and Blindspot Gallery)

About Isaac Chong Wai

Isaac Chong Wai (b. 1990) uses installation, performance, video, photography, and drawing to explore social phenomena through the lens of the body, time and the traces they bear. His work transforms the emotions, tensions, and memories from human interactions into performative materiality. Treading the line between the individual and the collective, Chong examines the vulnerability and resilience of the body within social systems, reimagining alternative microcosms of human relations built on mutual support and understanding.

Chong was a participating artist in the 60th Venice Biennale, “Foreigners Everywhere”. He will participate in the 14th Taipei Biennial in November 2025. Chong's recent solo exhibitions were shown at Städtische Galerie Nordhorn (2025) as part of being selected as Winner of the Art Award of the City of Nordhorn 2024, Liste Art Fair Basel (2023), Museum Schloss Moyland (2023), Una Boccata d'Arte (Sicilia, 2022), and Bilsart (Istanbul, 2021). Chong's recent group exhibitions took place at Inside-Out Art Museum (Beijing, 2025), White Rabbit Gallery (Sydney, 2025), Jeonnam Museum of Art (Gwangyang, 2025), Kunsthalle Barmen (Wuppertal, 2024), Bangkok Art Biennale 2024, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, 2024), ifa-Galerie Stuttgart (2024), the 22nd Biennial of Videobrasil (São Paulo, 2023), Brücke-Museum and Schinkel Pavillon e.V. (Berlin, 2023), daadgalerie (Berlin, 2023), and Hamburger Bahnhof-Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart Museum (Berlin, 2023), among others. Chong currently lives and works between Berlin and Hong Kong.

About Blindspot Gallery

Set up in 2010, Blindspot Gallery is a contemporary art gallery based in Hong Kong. The gallery features diverse contemporary art practices, by emerging and established artists mainly from Asia and beyond. The gallery is committed to connecting its represented artists with an international platform and fostering global dialogues in the art community through its exhibition program and institutional collaborations.

Interviews with the artist are welcome. For enquiries and media interviews, please contact Ms. Helena Halim at +852 2517 6238 or helena@blindspotgallery.com.