



Let's Try Catching Steam with Bare Hands:
CHAN Wai Lap, NGAI Wing Lam, YAU Kwok Keung
Curator: Jims LAM

11 December 2021 - 29 January 2022

Opening: Saturday, 11 December, 2021, 2-5pm

Gallery EXIT is delighted to present 'Let's Try Catching Steam with Bare Hand', an exhibition curated by Jims LAM with the new series of artworks by CHAN Wai Lap, NGAI Wing Lam, YAU Kwok Keung. An opening will be held on Saturday, 11 December from 2pm to 5pm.

'Let's Try Catching Steam with Bare Hands' features more than thirty new works by three artists. Through the use of non-human subjects such as fictional characters, mythical creations and architectural designs, NGAI Wing Lam, YAU Kwok Keung and CHAN Wai Lap, with different artistic practices, backgrounds and modes of thinking, have come together in this exhibition to demonstrate contemporary life as a "nexus" composed of various situations and systems.

As suggested by the title of this exhibition, the attempt to get hold of something as intangible as steam does not yield much success. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines steam as an odourless and transparent gas. It only becomes visible when miniscule water droplets are formed, giving steam a white, opaque appearance. Hence the illusion that steam can be moulded and shaped into a form. By capturing and magnifying various metamorphic processes, this exhibition recognises change as an active agent that is independent. How this agent creates nuanced relationships with the present is the steam that we try to grasp.

Long-time followers of NGAI Wing Lam's paintings would be familiar with the different scenarios with man-like fish creatures are created based on the artist's interpretation of contemporary life and fantasy. Very often, NGAI's paintings that are excerpts of an on-going journey have no beginning or end. Skilfully executed, her oil paintings exude a kind of lightness that is often associated today with the concept of mobility. The lighter we travel, the faster that we can adapt to various situations.

In this new painting series *Lay Here and Forget the World*, NGAI depicts famous landscapes of Hong Kong such as Tai Mo Shan, Lion Rock and Pat Sin Leng, and intentionally erasing any indicator of time. The central theme of these paintings is "exiling", a word NGAI thinks of as a noun, an outcome. The circular installation makes sure that viewers are unable to distinguish the sequence of the paintings. Neither the beginning nor the ending of the exile can be discerned, and the one or more destinations remain undefined. A lightness flows through her paintings and unites them.

Waiting for A Girl Like You is the summary of an artistic research that incorporates numerous artistic media and disciplines. When the clear bottle beer design of the Blue Girl Beer was introduced to Hong Kong in the early 1990s, it gained a huge popularity because of its transparency through which the golden fluid could be seen. As of today, the used bottle of Blue Girl Beer remains a sought-after item among hardware stores, being the best container to showcase different industrial chemicals.

Well-informed of the marketing strategies of Blue Girl Beer, YAU Kwok Keung soon expanded his research to the making of Blue Girl Beer. The title *Waiting for A Girl Like You* comes from the renowned TV commercial song broadcasted world-wide in the late 20th century. YAU traces the origin of the blue girl, who is indeed the Greek goddess of Excellence Arete.

The meaning of Arete has changed over time: Apart from being a remarkable modern beverage, its earliest form in Greek simply means moral virtue. It was later regarded by Aristotle as the highest form of human knowledge (the knowledge about knowledge itself). An ancient representation of Arete can be seen today at the only surviving library from the Roman Empire, Library of Celsus, in Turkey, certainly indicating the concepts of excellence and knowledge were made correlated by man. Realising the standard of excellence is itself a construct, Yau, in a similar fashion, applies multiple artistic disciplines such as drawing, moving image, crafts and ritual to find out how concepts of excellency can be shaped and dispensed, and perhaps on a deeper level asking whose idea of excellence it is.

In this exhibition, CHAN Wai Lap has decided to re-visit one of the core values of his artistic practise that is his keen interest in documenting public swimming pools. A set of seven new paintings called *Pure Speculation* is created based on his studies of the architectural designs of swimming pools inside different universities in Hong Kong.

For him, these paintings are made in an exceptional time period. Partly, the artist is responding to the “new normal” ever since the outbreak of pandemic, in which the accessibility to university pools has become seemingly impossible. The fact that we have all been asked to re-define what constitutes public and private spaces (via action in apps) disturbs the power structure inside public facilities. For the first time, CHAN has to create paintings of swimming pools remotely. It has become clear to him that the usual field approach may have become dysfunctional. Therefore, in the attempts to construct these swimming pools, he enters an infinite time loop where he begins to treat these spaces as heritages instead of architectural structures.

More importantly, the construction of these swimming pools has become dialectical, since it is based on artistic interpretation and secondary materials such as old/digital maps and oral interviews. This new series *Pure Speculation* frees the artist from one specific time and place. The result is close to the so-called untimeliness. CHAN smartly avoids producing representations of vacant monuments locked in nostalgia, but rather produces alienated heritages that stimulate curiosity of the viewers.

With steam being an expired symbol of power, the exhibition attempts to encapsulate the present time by opening up the thought processes of how artists define contemporary life. The notion of nexus, a complex concept seldom mentioned and discussed in the fields of art, are nevertheless important in the work of artists. How the discourse around the nexus and its contemporaneity will evolve is for future research to find out.



《請試著以雙手摘霧》

陳惠立・蟻穎琳・丘國強

策展人：林志恒

2021 年 12 月 11 日至 2022 年 1 月 29 日

開幕：2021 年 12 月 11 日（星期六），下午 2 時至 5 時

安全口畫廊呈獻陳惠立・蟻穎琳・丘國強展覽《請試著以雙手摘霧》，策展人林志恒。展期為 2021 年 12 月 11 日至 2022 年 1 月 29 日。開幕將於 12 月 11 日星期六下午 2 時至 5 時舉行。

是次展覽囊括三位藝術家三十件以上新作。通過利用非人類主題如虛構生物，神話故事和建築物設計，三位藝術家—蟻穎琳，丘國強和陳惠立，有著不同藝術創作和背景以及思考方式，在是次展覽攜手合作，展示當代生活是一種「連繫」（nexus），由各種處境與系統交織而成。

如同展題所言，嘗試抓住某種飄渺如水汽之物並不會成功。大英百科全書定義水汽為無味透明的氣體。微小水滴集集成形，變得肉眼可見，給予水汽一種白色混濁的外觀。是以向我們傳遞錯覺，以為水汽能夠模塑成實體。藉著呈現銳變不同形式，並把過程定格放大，展覽視變革為構成生活的持份者，足以獨立看待。這位持份者與當下產生細微關係，正是展覽試圖抓住的水汽。

蟻穎琳畫作的長期觀眾深知，創作出魚人的不同情景來自藝術家對當代生活和個人幻想的詮釋。蟻氏的繪畫總是持續旅途上的片段，沒有終點沒有目的。以紮實油畫技法加以襯托的同時，她的作品帶來一種輕盈之感，在今時今日觀點看來與流動性相關。我們愈輕裝上路，就能愈快適應各種處境。

在新畫作系列 *Lay Here and Forget the World*, 蟻氏部份畫作背景是一系列香港名風景如大帽山，獅子山和八仙嶺，而且有意隱去能提示時間的物件。作為畫作共同主題，蟻氏認為「出走」一詞是一個名詞，就是一個結果。畫作裝置設計成環形，使觀眾無法辨認順序。出走的開始和終結難被看到，而目的地或畫作背後無數目的地仍然尚未可知。一種輕盈感確切流淌其中，貫串她的作品。

丘國強的作品 *Waiting For A Girl Like You* 是一個藝術研究項目，結合多種藝術媒介和範疇。1990 年代初藍妹啤酒清澈酒樽設計引進到香港時，其透明的設計讓金黃液體清晰可見因而大受歡迎。時至今日用過的藍妹啤酒樽在五金店依然吃香，因為清澈酒樽是為客人展示不同工業化學物的最好容器。

丘氏瞭解到藍妹啤酒的推銷策略，很快進一步研究藍妹啤酒的製造概念。作品名 *Waiting For A Girl Like You* 來自啤酒公司著名主題曲，在 20 世紀後期廣播全球。丘氏追溯藍妹的起源，事實上源自古希臘文明的阿瑞忒女神，卓越之神。

他的研究發現阿瑞忒就像卓越一詞，它的定義和意思不斷變化。除了演變為當代著名飲品，它在希臘最早期的形式單純意指美德。及後被亞里士多德認為是人類最高等的知識（有關知識的知識）。今日仍然可見的阿瑞忒塑像位於土耳其某些索斯圖書館，僅餘的羅馬圖書館，無疑表明人們認為卓越與知識的概念互相掛鉤。了解到卓越標準也可以是種建構，同樣地，丘氏使用藝術範疇多個領域如繪畫、流動影像、工藝以及儀式，以查明卓越的概念是如何被塑造處置，或許更深一層：他詰問的是一對誰而言的卓越。

是次展覽中，陳惠立決定重訪他的藝術創作最核心精神，亦即熱衷紀錄公共游泳池。他研究位於香港不同大學範圍內的游泳池建築設計，創作出閒人免進一系列七件新畫作。

對他而言，今次畫作是在特殊時刻創作而成。某程度上，藝術家正在回應疫症爆發後的「新常態」，而進入大學泳池似乎變得不可能。我們（藉應用程式上的行動）被要求重新定義何為公共和私人空間，這一事實打破公共設施內權力結構。陳氏首次不在現場創作泳池畫。他清楚以往的田野方法或有些許失效。於是嘗試構築泳池過程中，他漫無止境反覆回溯，把這些空間當成遺址而非建築物。

更重要的是，游泳池的建構變得更加辯證，根據藝術詮釋和二手資料如舊地圖／數碼地圖和口頭採訪而成。新系列泳池畫閒人免進作讓藝術家不再專注於特定時空。結果是時間幾近消融。陳氏聰明地避過製作禁錮在懷舊狀態的空曠遺址形象，而是創作異化遺跡勾起觀眾好奇。

以水汽作為一種過時的權力像徵，展覽《請試著以雙手摘霧》通過展現藝術家思考過程，嘗試概括當下思索如何定義當代生活。「連繫」這一概念雖然複雜，在藝術領域中很少提及討論，然而在藝術家工作中非常重要。有關連繫的論述和它的當代性如何演變，尚待日後研究。