

* Interview Annysa Ng



The silent history Ng and Searching (2010)

Art

Hong Kong-born artist Annysa Ng studied under watercolour painting master Kan May-tin before she relocated to New York a few years ago, where she is now based. Tipped as one of the top 10 contemporary artists to watch back in 2008 by the *The Sunday Times* in the UK, she has since returned to the home of her birth to show off her latest work. In her latest exhibition, *Eyes Closed*, Ng reflects on Hong Kong's somewhat ambiguous identity via featureless silhouetted figures, dressed in traditional Chinese costumes but with the addition of particularly un-Chinese Elizabethan-style collars.

Your work seems to be very sensitive to the notion of identity. Do you have something to say about history?

We can't really evaluate history, yet we are being influenced by it. It's a kind of reflection without answers. You can't really analyse [recent events] until a hundred of years later. When you are living in it, it's hard to comment. It's all very nebulous to me.

Is that why you keep your subjects faceless and featureless?

All my figures are featureless and emotionless. In my opinion, it's hard to comment on Hong Kong's identity and history and I'm somewhat unwilling to do so. I try not to reveal my emotions. So, I want the faces to be blacked out.

Your intention to merge Chinese and Western costume is evident in this series. But why did you pick the Elizabethan collar specifically? Any symbolic meaning there? If I am to show the character of

the [silhouette] figure, costume is a strong element. Most of the Chinese costume is from the Qing Dynasty – it's when the Opium War took place. When it comes to English costume, the most striking element to me is the Elizabethan ruffle collar. I think the collars give a feeling, vaguely, of control and constraint, despite its charm. It's not a strong statement of feminism. It's not intentional but I'm always conscious about the suppression of women.

What about this work titled *Searching*? What are these spiritual scripts in the background?

I came across them in a Daoist book while [I was] researching. What first captured my attention were the lines of the mystical characters. They are, to me, a visual arrangement. The dots above are star patterns in Chinese astrology. The figures in front are Chinese deities who are collecting herbs. Daoism is interested in the studies of medical recipes, a way to cope with the unknowable future. Magical spells and medicine can give us a sense of relief. Actually, every human being is searching for that. This applies to the situation in Hong Kong: we are still searching for our direction.

What are the usual reactions from your viewers?

Some people saw my paintings and asked: "Why don't you draw the faces as well?" Then I thought: You'd just seen the main point [of the work].

Interview: Winnie Chau

Eyes Closed is at Blindspot Gallery until **Jun 4**.

Museums & Major Spaces

Art in Hong Kong

1/F Lobby, Central Plaza, 18 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai, 2132; 8601; www.artshk.com. Daily 9am-9pm.

Dialogue A group exhibition showcasing a dozen of prints by Chinese artists Liu Ye, Wang Guangyi, Fang Lijun, Sui Jianguo, Zhou Chunya, Yang Shaobin and Wei Dong. *Opens May 17; until Jul 13.*

Avenue of Stars, Tsim Sha Tsui

* **The Upside Down World of Philippe Ramette** The French artist returns with 36 photographs of his extraordinary performances. *Until May 29. See Feature.*

Museum of Art

10 Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2721 0116; hk.art.museum. Mon-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat 10am-8pm.

From Common to Uncommon – the Legend of Ha Bik-chuen A retrospective of the late Hong Kong artist, showcasing more than 80 selected works. *Until Jul 17.*

Museum of Medical Sciences

2 Caine Lane, Sheung Wan, 6495 0111; www.hkmmms.org.hk. Tue-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 1pm-5pm.

Laughing with a Mouth Full of Blood An exhibition of Hong Kong-based artist Simon Birch's new oil on canvas figurative paintings. *Opens May 19; until Jun 19.*

Galleries

10 Chancery Lane Gallery

10 Chancery Ln, Central, 2810 0065; www.10chancerylanegallery.com. Tue-

HOW TO USE THE LISTINGS

* Denotes an exhibition we particularly recommend. Admission is free, unless otherwise stated.

How to be listed

Listings cannot be taken over the phone but should be sent by email (art@timeout.com.hk), fax (3583 5679), or post (12/F, 188 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong) to be received by noon on Tuesday, **two weeks** before publication. Admission prices, times, venue details, and contact phone number and/or email address must be included.

Sat 10am-6pm.

* **Night is Imminent** London-based artist Maya Hewitt uses symbolic narrative to explore the notion of reality and fiction. *Until May 14.*

2P Contemporary Art Gallery

Shop 5, G/F, Pogo Building, 6-20 Po Tuck St, Sai Ying Pun, 2803 2151; www.2p-gallery.com. Mon-Fri 1pm-7pm.

* **Discursive Digression** During the residency, Berlin-based Japanese artist Yotaro Niwa investigates how displacement and dislocation can be reframed within a new paradigm. *Until May 19.*

agnès b's Librairie Galerie

1/F, 18 Wing Fung St, Wan Chai, 2869 5505; www.agnesb.com. Daily 11.30am-8pm.

Dogs Meow French artist Cyprien Chabert tells the story of an island he discovered through his installations. *Opens May 21; until Aug 20.*

Alisan Fine Arts

Asian Cultural Council Hong Kong, Rm 702, Hong Kong Arts Centre, 2 Harbour Rd, Wan Chai, 2895 0407; www.alisan.com.hk. Mon-Fri 10am-6pm.

Selected Asian Cultural Council Fellows: Then and Now A group exhibition by Wei Ligang, Wei Qingji and Zhang Jianjun in celebration of the gallery's 30th anniversary. *Opens May 13; until Jun 17.*

Art Beatus Gallery

50 Peel St, Central, 2522 1138; www.artbeatus.com. Mon-Sat 11.30am-7.30pm.

Duet A joint exhibition by Vincent Breed and Louis Boudreaux, presented as part of the Le French May Arts Festival. *Until May 27.*

Asia Fine Art

G/F, 14 Sik On St, 99 Queen's Rd East, Wan Chai, 2522 0405; www.asia-fineart.com. Daily 10.30am-6.30pm.

Through the Eyes of Lim Khim Katy Fifteen new paintings by the Vietnam-based artist. *Until Jun 15.*

Blindspot Gallery

24-26A, Aberdeen St, Central, 2517 6238; www.blindspotgallery.com. Tue-Sat 11am-7pm.

* **Eyes Closed** New York-based artist Annysa Ng explores topics of identity and reality through her pen and ink paintings created between 2007 and 2011. *Until Jun 4. See left.*

The Cat Street Gallery

222 Hollywood Rd, Sheung Wan, 2291 0006; www.thecatstreetgallery.com. Mon-Sat 11am-7pm.

VOID Australian artist Paul Davies explores his fascination with the form and history of modernist architecture