

CRITICS' PICKS



Oscar Chan Yik Long, *How do we know if the dead would not regret their efforts to survive?*, 2020, knotted wool rug, 9' 10" x 9' 10".

HONG KONG

Oscar Chan Yik Long

GALLERY EXIT

3/F, 25 Hing Wo Street Tin Wan, Aberdeen

August 14–September 18, 2021

Hong Kong's annual Hungry Ghost Festival, an event which pays tribute to the deceased

who return to roam the city during the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar, serves as an ideal backdrop for “Don’t Leave the Dark Alone,” Oscar Yik Long Chan’s debut solo exhibition. The smallest work on view, *The Most Misplaced Worry*, 2018/20, is a transparent cigarette box containing twenty paper cylinders emptied of tobacco and modified by the artist—his hand-drawn bouquet of ghoulish black-and-white figures dance and creep across each cigarette stem. These spirits populate much on show, including the knotted surface of *How do we know if the dead would not regret their efforts to survive?*, 2020. This large, circular wool rug-turned-portal into the netherworld elicits vertigo, however inviting its surface texture.

Protagonists emerge from Chan’s haunted chorus when the artist casts Donald Sutherland, Olivia de Havilland, and other actors in several ink on canvas paintings which reference classics of 1960s and ’70s cinema. The various animal heads, skulls, and other facial distortions that populate sixteen graphite drawings on paper hint at Chan’s phantasmagorical sensibility. Drawn from a growing archive of source material, they draw viewers into his scenes. Elsewhere, painted mobs based both in imaginative horror and documented reality appear ready to enter the gallery at will, writ large on eight curtains which cover opposing windows and walls in *120 Judge John Aiso Street*, 2020. Chan’s exhibition reveals his incessant need not to placate but to actively confront and exorcise these spectres. With his widening array of tools, the artist asks if we are willing to do the same.

— Ingrid Pui Yee Chu

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