



Oscar Chan Yik Long: It's the smiles that keep us going

Exhibition period: 21 October – 18 November, 2023

Exhibition opening: Saturday, 21 October 2023, 2 – 5 pm

Artist Sharing Session – About Artistic Practice and Cinema: 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Gallery EXIT is pleased to present a new solo exhibition by **Oscar Chan Yik Long**, showcasing paintings in acrylic and ink on canvas (all from 2023) and titled 'It's the smiles that keep us going'. The exhibition will open on 21 October and remain on view through 18 November. An opening will be held on Saturday, 21 October at 2-5 pm.

Something has happened in Chan's practice since his first solo exhibition at the gallery two years ago. He used to restrict himself to Chinese ink or graphite, although with much nuance between the black and the white. Now there is colour, almost every colour – splashes of red and pink and orange and yellow and brown and green and blue and purple – and on top there are probing, fast-moving, dancing lines and blots of ink. There is interaction and interplay between the layered topics of these paintings (as reflected in Chan's selection of frames from twentieth- and twenty-first-century Asian films) and their execution on the canvas, for which narrative form (the ink) was superimposed on emotional matter (the paint). As Chan himself suggests, the black lines also double as tools of rational thought or speech, cutting through and shaping amorphous clouds of polychrome energy.

To paraphrase Danish structural linguist Louis Hjelmslev (1899–1965), we should learn to distinguish form from the matter it shapes, with regard to both the level of content and the level of expression. Hjelmslev applied these definitions to his study of language, but we may also experiment with them when facing hybrid works of visual art such as those in Chan's new series, which contribute to debates about the painted image and the moving image. Their 'matter of content' would be the unconscious, or at least unthought, reality that prompted the films he quotes and found its form in their making. In this analysis, the 'matter of expression' for Chan's paintings would be the material qualities of primed canvas and of acrylic paint and Chinese ink, both frequently diluted with water to become more fluid.

'When I first saw this picture, some paintings were very messy, but there were strong colours, and at the same time, they all had black lines, which became a possible outline, and the constituent parts of those black lines were all inside the colour painting. I think this image is like what your situation will be after all these states are merged. There are strong colours, but with black parts on top.'

Chan was astonished when his spiritual consultant, whose work is based on receiving and explicating visions, offered him a description of the paintings he was working on and noted that the black ink was applied onto already existing colour fields. She had never seen them in external reality.

The exhibition title is a quote from the horror movie classic *The Exorcist III* (1990), written and directed by William Peter Blatty. It was no success, neither with critics nor at the box office, but Chan appreciates both the writing and Brad Dourif's performance as the Gemini serial killer, determined to maximise the impact of evil through his actions. In fact he already quoted this

film twice this year, as the title for his solo exhibition at Cazul 101 in Bucharest, 'Certain parties were not pleased' and for his large-scale installation at Galerie für Gegenwartskunst in Freiburg, Germany, *A Horror to the Eyes of All Men Seeking Faith*.

Compared to these other projects, 'It's the smiles that keep us going' stages a more positive approach to topics that interest Chan, notably our responses to fear, tragedies in life and the current state of the world. The phrase may sound like a tactical – and possibly ironic – conceit, but it may also embody a strategy for liberating or at least shifting energies that have gotten stuck.

Chan has intentionally chosen to paint stills from films in which at least one character is smiling. The films were selected for these smiles – some conventional or self-conscious, some ambiguous, nearly imperceptible – rather than for their plot lines or their artistic or cultural significance.

We see Lesley Cheung's face from Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*, naked despite the layers of operatic makeup he is applying, faintly illuminated from within by all-consuming erotic longing. We see Liu Ye and Hu Run, the couple in Stanley Kwan's *Lan Yu*, lying together with fixed expressions of bliss, mask-like as if outside of time. We see the vacantly grinning elderly couple from Yasujirō Ozu's *Tokyo Story*, guests from the province for whom none of their now metropolitan children really have time. We see Lisa Yang, the amateur teenager actor who appeared only in Edward Yang's almost four-hour *A Brighter Summer Day*, playfully wield a gun and flash a mischievous smile at the camera that forebodes her character's unexpected but inescapable death.

Stills were extracted from the following films produced in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, Japan or South Korea. Their English titles double as titles for Chan's paintings: *A Brighter Summer Day* (Edward Yang, 1991); *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1989); *A Touch of Sin* (Jia Zhangke, 2013); *Battle Royale* (Kinji Fukasaku, 2000); *Farewell My Concubine* (Chen Kaige, 1993); *God of Gamblers II* (Wing Jing, 1990); *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar Wai, 2000); *Lan Yu* (Stanley Kwan, 2001); *Profiles of Pleasure* (Tony Au, 1988); *Rouge* (Stanley Kwan, 1987); *Shoplifters* (Hirokazu Kore-Eda, 2018); *Tokyo Story* (Yasujirō Ozu, 1953,); *Treasure Hunt* (Jeffrey Lau, 1994); *The Handmaiden* (Park Chan-Wook, 2016); *Yi Yi* (Edward Yang, 2000).

Finally, as the exception that proves the rule, one of the paintings, *Jasmine and Sophie*, is not based on a film still but on a family snapshot of Chan's nieces.

Anders Kreuger

陳翊朗：是笑容讓我們繼續下去

展期：2023 年 10 月 21 日至 11 月 18 日

開幕：2023 年 10 月 21 日（星期六）下午 2 時至 5 時

藝術家分享—關於創作和電影：下午 3 時半至 4 時半

安全口畫廊呈獻**陳翊朗**最新個展「是笑容讓我們繼續下去」，展出藝術家於本年度創作的丙烯及水墨布本畫作。展覽將於 10 月 21 日開幕，展期至 11 月 18 日。開幕將於 10 月 21 日星期六下午 2 時至 5 時舉行。

自兩年前在安全口畫廊舉辦首次個展以來，陳翊朗的藝術實踐發生了一些變化。儘管陳氏畫作中的黑和白有很多細微差別，他過去一直只採用中國水墨或石墨作畫。現在他的作品有了色彩，差不多每一種顏色都用上了——一抹抹的紅、粉、橙、黃、棕、綠、藍、紫——當中有探索的、快速移動的、舞動的線條和墨跡。正如陳氏從二十和廿一世紀亞洲電影中選取的畫面所反映的那樣，這些繪畫當中蘊含的層層主題與它們在畫布上的表現之間產生相互作用，敘事形式（墨）被疊加於情感物質（油彩）之上。如陳氏本人指出，黑線亦可作為理性思維或語言的工具，切穿並形塑多色彩能量的無定形雲圖。

套用丹麥語言學家路易·葉爾姆斯列夫（1899 年—1965 年）的語言結構理論，我們必須在內容與表現層面上把形式與將之形塑的物質兩者作出區分。雖然葉爾姆斯列夫把這些定義應用於其語言研究，但我們也可以嘗試將之套用於混合視覺藝術作品之上，例如陳氏的新系列作品，這些作品亦推進了關於繪製圖像與流動影像的討論。它們的「內容物質」是潛意識的，或至少是未經思慮的現實，這些現實促使藝術家在創作中引用某些電影，並在其製作中發現其形式。在這一分析中，陳氏繪畫的「表現物質」就是底漆畫布、丙烯顏料和中國水墨的材質特性，後兩者通常以水稀釋，使之變得更流動。

「打一開始看見這圖像時，我看到那當中有些感覺很凌亂的繪畫，那裡有強烈的色彩，同時也有黑色的線條，它們成為了某種輪廓，黑色的部分同時存在於那些彩色繪畫當中。我認為這意象代表了所有這些狀態合併以後的境況。強烈色彩之上，有黑色的部分。」

陳氏的靈性導師採用接收及詮釋意像的方法，她在從未在現實世界中看過陳氏當時正在創作的畫作的情況下向陳氏描述了那些畫作，並指出黑色墨水在色彩之上的運用，讓陳氏感到非常驚訝。

展覽標題引自威廉·彼得·布拉蒂編導的經典恐怖電影《驅魔人3》（1990年）。這部電影無論是票房還是口碑也不算非常成功，然而陳氏很欣賞這部劇本以及飾演雙子座連環殺手的布拉德·道里夫的演出，特別是這角色是如何決意透過自身行為最大限度地發揮邪惡的影響。事實上，陳氏同年已經先後兩次引用這部電影：個展「Certain parties were not pleased」（布加勒斯特 Cazul 101）；大型裝置《A Horror to the Eyes of All Men Seeking Faith》（德國弗萊堡 Galerie für Gegenwartskunst）。

與之前的這些創作計劃相比，「是笑容讓我們繼續下去」展演了一種更積極的方法以對應陳氏感興趣的議題：我們對恐懼、生命中的悲劇和世界現狀的反應。這句話聽上去或帶點策略性甚或是諷刺的自負，但也可能體現了一種解放的或至少能夠轉移停滯不前的能量的策略。

陳氏的原意是描繪一些至少有一個角色正在微笑的電影場面。挑選這些電影場面純粹根據這些有的傳統或自覺、有的模稜兩可得幾乎難以察覺的微笑，而非為了其情節或藝術文化意義。

我們從這些繪畫中看到陳凱歌的《霸王別姬》裡張國榮的臉，層層京劇彩妝下赤裸裸的、從內裡隱約透射著慾火焚身的情色饑渴。我們看到關錦鵬的《藍宇》裡依偎在一起的劉燁與胡軍，二人臉上帶著固定的、如同面具一般的幸福表情，彷彿存在於時間之外。我們看到小津安二郎的《東京物語》中那對茫然地笑著來自鄉間的老夫婦，他們在都市生活的孩子們都沒有時間陪伴他們。我們看到在楊德昌片長近四小時的《牯嶺街少年殺人事件》中曇花一現的少女演員楊靜怡玩弄揮舞著手槍，對著鏡頭亮出佻皮的微笑，預示著她的角色意外而不可避免的死亡。

電影劇照取自以下於香港、台灣、中國、日本或韓國製作的電影，它們的英文名稱亦兼作陳氏繪畫的標題：《牯嶺街少年殺人事件》（楊德昌，1991年）；《悲情城市》（侯孝賢，1989年）；《天注定》（賈樟柯，2013年）；《大逃殺》（深作欣二，2000年）；《霸王別姬》（陳凱歌，1993年）；《賭神2》（王晶，1990年）；《花樣年華》（王家衛，2000年）；《藍宇》（關錦鵬，2001年）；《群鶯亂舞》（區丁平，1988年）；《胭脂扣》（關錦鵬，1987年）；《小偷家族》（是枝裕和，2018年）；《東京物語》（小津安二郎，1953年）；《花旗少林》（劉鎮偉，1994年）；《下女誘罪》（朴贊郁，2016年）；《一一》（楊德昌，2000年）。

最後還有一個遊戲規則以外的點睛之作：《Jasmine and Sophie》並非來自電影劇照，而是陳氏親屬的女兒們的家庭日常照。

Anders Kreuger