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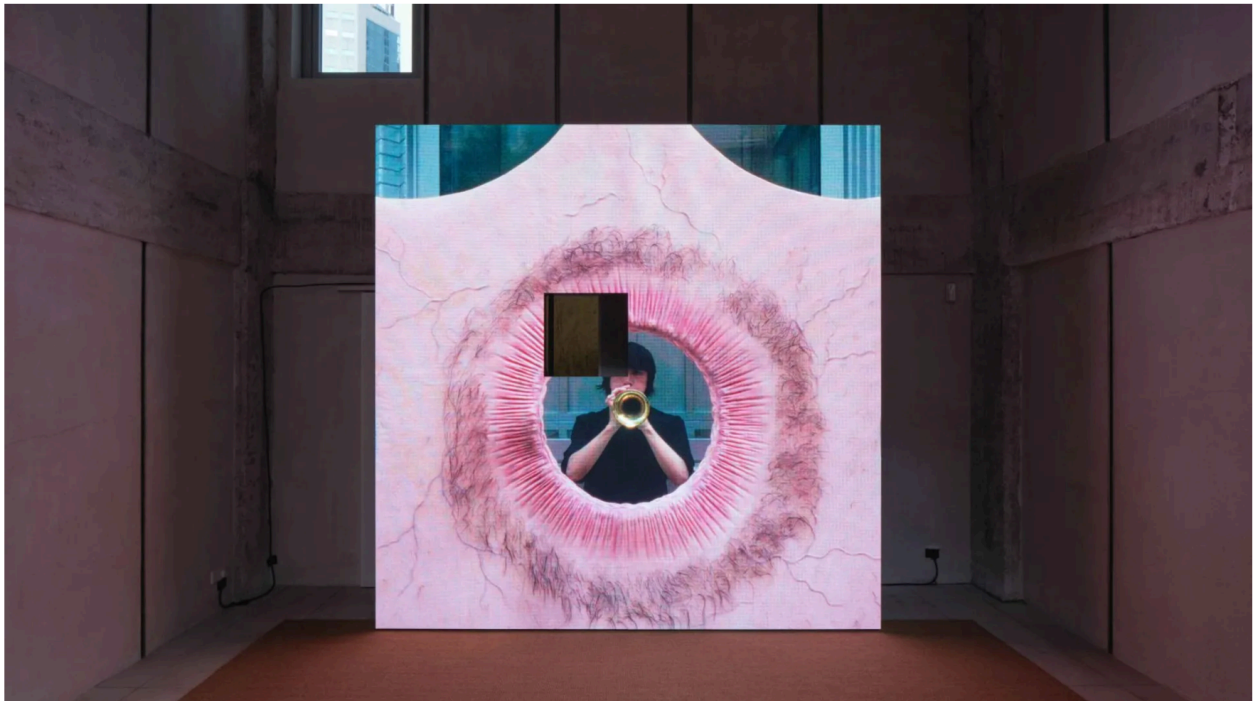
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Hong Kong Artist Wong Ping on Expanding into Film

BY MADELAINE CLARK

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After staging one of the most talked-about shows of Hong Kong’s art week, artist Wong Ping tells Prestige why he enjoys exploring new artistic mediums

For the last year and a half, Hong Kong animation and film artist Wong Ping has eschewed a typical work environment. “Artists often have studios in remote or industrial buildings, and I’d just had enough of that,” he explains from his shop-front-cum-studio in Sheung Wan’s Po Hing Fong, where he now works. As well as using the space to create, Ping also sells from it a range of memorabilia, vintage trinkets, retro T-shirts and oddities, naturally attracting a quirky and curious clientele that proves inspirational for his work.



Wong Ping Portrait (Image:South Ho)

“I decided to have fun, to play around and get the experience for a while, and now I have all these daily interactions. That’s something I couldn’t get if I had an indoor studio,” he says. He was recently visited by a French dominatrix who mistook the store for a sex shop; she later became a client after buying some of Ping’s risqué Japanese cartoons.

Since 2015, the artist has made a name for himself with his gloriously rude and crude ’90s video-game-style animations that reference everything from sex and violence to politics, using humour as a metaphor to comment on society. It’s this desire for greater connection in his work that this year encouraged Ping to move into film for the first time.

“Previously, all my shows were done on my own – writing, animating, video editing, voice-over and subtitling. Sometimes I felt frustrated or bored working alone. Even though there’s no limit with what you can do in animation, there was a missing connection.”

Debuted during Art Basel week at Kiang Malingue gallery in Wan Chai, the short film *Anus Whisper* is inspired by the 1931 text *Solar Anus* by French surrealist writer Georges Bataille. “I was in a strip club in Tokyo when the idea came to me,” says Ping. “Men were looking at the woman throughout the show as she undressed, but when the woman became totally naked, the men looked away. I immediately thought about the book *Solar Anus*, which talks about how plants and animals grow towards the sun, needing its energy, but humans sometimes hide away or shy away from sex, shame or something terrible.”



Installation View *Crumbling Earwax* (2022) (Image:South Ho)

Filmed in Hong Kong over three days and featuring artists, musicians and professional stuntmen, *Anus Whisper* is a typical Wong Ping mash-up of hilarity and nonsense, exploring the aesthetic meaning(-lessness) of bullshit. It follows a man having anal auditory hallucinations and seeking connection with strangers. The film features voiceover from Ping, interspaced with direct quotes from Bataille's text, such as "disasters, revolutions, and volcanoes do not make love with the stars."

The new work was shown alongside one of the artist's film animations, *Crumbling Earwax* (2022), as well as new sculptures and installations, including a giant copper ear titled *Blah Blah Blah* (2022), bowling balls featuring man-made hair – *Hairy Wisdom* (2024) – and a giant silicone anus installation that he placed on the gallery's rooftop. On opening night, he even got a live trumpeter to play through the hole. "Nonsense is more interesting to me than things that make sense," he says.



Hairy Wisdom (2024) (Image:South Ho)

He says working on a film set was “completely the opposite” of his previous solo endeavours. “The first thing I learned was to let go of what I could control, because in animation I can do anything. But in live action, from the camera movement to the weather, the acting quality and the dress, there are limitations and time constraints. It’s expensive and you need experience to build up your crew over time. This is my first time working with this crew, but now I have nice memories of working with a team that I never had before, such as when we all went for lunch after shooting.” He wants to continue to challenge himself by making more films. “Until I feel really comfortable, maybe I’ll move on to another medium, but for now it touches my heart more than animation.”

Such an experience has given the artist a new appreciation of other filmmakers. “These days, I feel like directors inspire me more,” he says. “Although I’ll always treasure and appreciate the talent of an artist, it’s still an individual talent. An artist can craft something until it’s perfect, but to make a film you need a certain amount of luck. It’s something really rare. It takes so much talent, work, blood and sweat to create a film for months. Rather than just one brain, you need a lot of great brains to make a film, so it’s more of a miracle when it all comes together.”

Hero Image *Anus Whisper* (2024)

Note:

The information in this article is accurate as of the date of publication.

