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ArtReview

“Wong Ping’s Shit Talk”

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Wong Ping’s Shit Talk

Stephanie Bailey Reviews 08 July 2024 ArtReview Asia



Wong Ping, *J'*, 2024, silicone, hair, 280 x 280 cm. Photo: Lai Ka Kit and Tsui Lai Wah Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue, Hong Kong

Sometimes contemporary art is a giant silicone anus

anus whisper announces itself before visitors have entered Kiang Malingue’s Wan Chai gallery, with a giant silicone anus that has been installed onto the building’s street-facing balcony. This installation of splayed skin cut into the shape of the sun invokes Georges Bataille’s *The Solar Anus* (1931). The surrealist text rejects the projection of ideas onto phenomena for the purposes of achieving ‘total identification’, given the instability of matter on a ‘terrestrial globe’ that ‘often violently ejects the contents of its entrails’. Hence the equalisation of the sun with the anus, which destabilises a hierarchy of generative entities and articulates the view that ‘life is parodic’.

In keeping, *anus whisper* resists narrative cohesion. *blah-blah-blah* (2022), a giant copper ear positioned on the ground floor, brings to mind Bataille's interpretation of Van Gogh's self-mutilation as a 'fuck you' to polite society's wholesome ideals, with balls of 'earwax' shot out from a ping pong machine accumulating around it. Displayed nearby is *hairy wisdom: RADICAL* (2024), the first of four bowling balls covered in pubiclike hairs included in the show, each inscribed with a word indicated in its title (these include *The Closer*, *BLACK HOLE* and *Zen*). 'People sadistically abuse the balls by sticking three fingers into the holes,' Wong writes in his exhibition text, reframing an unremarkable act as a moment of extreme bodily presence: 'is it too much, bowling on a first date?'



hairy wisdom: RADICAL, 2024, bowling ball, hair, 20 x 20 cm. Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue, Hong Kong

The riddles continue upstairs, where *Crumbling Earwax* (2022) is projected onto three walls in an orange-carpeted room. The looped animation opens with a locomotive riding over the earthlike peaks of a man's bald head that has been flattened into a fleshy map projection, echoing Bataille's 'image of a continuous metamorphosis'. The man offers up a string of reflections: about earwax as a barrier against, and waste product of, things heard; Pantone's celebration of 2020's colour of the year, Classic Blue, as emblematic of a new day; and Hans Christian Andersen's penchant for masturbating in private after chatting to prostitutes, using those same hands to write some of the world's best known fairytales. He rants about art critics being "alcoholic keyboard warriors"; wokeness as the reason Jesus won't return; and capitalism as the creator of paralytic choice. As his image is cut in half like a cake, and sonic rumbles of collapse increase amid toxic rain, he admits to becoming accustomed to working from home: "The gaming headset blocks the sound of the air-raid sirens outside."

In *anus whisper* (2024), a live-action video screened on the next floor, the protagonist describes replacing the flowers whose petals he once picked to make decisions – think ‘love me, love me not’ – by consulting the anus and its wrinkles for help in seeking answers to his questions. (“I hate making choices. Lucky me, I live in a one-party state,” he deadpans.) Lifting lines from *Solar Anus* – including Bataille’s assertion that humans are incapable of looking directly at the sun, sexual intercourse or corpses – a conversation with a woman becomes a debate about whether holes are channels, amplifying connections that Wong teases out between *Crumbling Earwax* and *anus whisper*. The mention of Pantone’s colour of 2020 in the former creates a portal to the latter’s introduction of 2024’s chosen hue, Peach Fuzz, by a student delivering lines drawn from Pantone’s media statement about the colour (“recalibrating our priorities” is one) in the manner of a propaganda speech.

‘Bullshit is for me the genesis of wisdom’, Wong writes, hinting at what is driving his shit talk. Creation is messy – it can erupt from above and below, without shape or reason, and even unite opposing poles. Departing from his characteristic solo-made animations, Wong embeds that understanding into *anus whisper* and its ‘accumulation of blood, sweat and flesh of the crew’. The collective energy in filming the work, Wong continues, was revelatory: ‘even the lunch we had as a team on a shooting day made me feel alive’. Perhaps that’s why the protagonist’s final lines describe a woman’s disinterest in throwing stones at policemen because she wants to throw stones at the world. “I don’t want to become the stone thrown at her,” the narrator admits, hinting at Hong Kong’s recent protest history amid a general global clusterfuck, the divisions that have emerged therein and a resistance towards reinforcing them; “when diarrhoea particles disperse in the air, the urge will descend slowly”. Besides, just because shit settles doesn’t mean shit’s over.

***anus whisper* at Kiang Malingue, Hong Kong, 25 March – 4 May**