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INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW BY ATHANASÍA AARNIOSUO

OSCAR CHAN YIK LONG: FEAR, HORROR,
AND MURALS

Paris-based artist **Oscar Chan Yik Long** spent one month in early 2021 on the island of Suomenlinna. With Oscar being originally from Hong Kong, this was his first time seeing snow, and the Suomenlinna setting provided him with the perfect place to experience winter. This getaway, which he describes as “a fairytale of snow and ice,” provided a much-needed break in a complicated time: in his hometown of Paris, a full-on lockdown was in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the situation in Finland was much easier at the time. This was not Oscar’s first time in Helsinki. Approximately six years ago, he spent two months in an artists’ residency called Arteles Creative Center during the summer months. The nature and even the trips to Helsinki were much different in the summer, however.

This time, Oscar’s residency period, spent at Suomenlinna’s studio Elias, has been very result-oriented and productive. Oscar was invited to Finland by **Anders Kreuger** of Kunsthalle Kohta to research and prepare for a collaborative group exhibition taking place during summer 2021. Anders Kreuger and Kohta have invited people from all over the world to submit, via post, small objects called manuports for a festival. It is an extremely interesting idea; because of the global pandemic, group collaborations and collaborative exhibitions are currently being challenged, and how art organisations and artists think about exhibitions and travelling is changing already. Artists and art spaces are looking at collaboration in different ways, such as this

open call. The collection of manuports will be presented as part of the First International Festival of Manuports organised at Kohta, and eventually stored.



How do we know if the dead would not regret their efforts to survive? 2020, hand knitted wool carpet, 3m diameter.

Oscar will be involved in making a carpet and a mural for the festival alongside another artist, **Pavel Mikushev** from the Republic of Komi (in the Russian Federation). Oscar's way of working is direct. During painting, he tends to react to the space, painting spontaneously without sketches or too much thinking. Pavel, on the other hand, works in a very organised manner, planning ahead. Their two murals will be executed during summer, with the festival opening on the 17th of August 2021.

This is not the first time for Oscar to paint a mural. He enjoys painting and drawing directly on a wall in black-and-white monochromatic tones, often using Chinese ink. His murals are currently mostly depicting grim scenes inspired by horror films painted in great detail.

This current interest in fear and horror will also exhibit in a series of works Oscar will present in Gallery EXIT in Hong Kong during September 2021. For this solo exhibition, Oscar will combine most of

the things he has been interested in recently, such as meditative pencil drawings, quick and decisive Chinese ink paintings, carpets, fantasy world themes, and reworking images from films and old photographs with a backdrop of a snowy, icy island of the Finnish coastline.



In the Mouth of Madness (Installation shot), 2019.

AA: Do you have any horror movies you grew up with that gave you inspiration for some of your pieces? How did you become immersed in the horror genre?

OCYL: In fact, I used to be quite scared of horror movies. Sometimes I even panicked by just watching trailers or seeing posters of horror movies. At first, I thought it was a weakness, and I wanted to overcome it, so I forced myself to watch some horror movies, like zombie and ghost stories. However, the more I watched, the more I got into it. I am quite sick of those recent movies just overusing CG effects to create shock. I prefer the horror movies of the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s, such as *Suspria* (1977) by Dario Argento, *The Thing* (1982) by John Carpenter and *Brain Damage* (1988) by Frank Henenlotter. I find them inspiring because they are quite creative in the sense that the directors lacked high technological support but were still able to create horror with striking visual effects.

AA: How much detail do you like to put into your depictions of horror and how much do you imply?

OCYL: I am quite a sensitive person in some ways. That's the reason why I like to paint murals directly, without sketches, so that I can react and respond to my own emotions in a more honest way, like a confession.



of the Apocalypse, 2018, ink on wall, 3 x 14 m.

AA: What is your process when making new work, do you start with preliminary sketches?

OCYL: Normally I won't do any sketches for my new work, but instead I try to grasp a feeling or an image in my mind, and then work towards it. That's why I think my process of making art is a bit like meditation.

AA: Since 2020, social distancing has presented new challenges for the art world. How have you collaborated with other artists on long distance art projects?

OCYL: It happens more like any communication situation, but over the internet. For instance, I will have another project with an art space called White Crypt in London. They have invited 30 artists, including me, for an oracle cards project. Each of us will draw one oracle card for a collective deck. In the process, we communicate a lot, sharing ideas and even doing workshops by web conferencing. I personally still prefer face-to-face meetings, but I guess we still cannot have those now.



The King of Ghosts, 2021, alloy metal, resin, ABS plastic, 45 x 31 x 13cm, edition of 100.

Photos provided by the artist.

Read more:

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[First International Festival of Manuports at Kohta Kunsthalle](#)



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