

Chan Wai-lap

Some of us are looking at the stars

Mixed-media sculpture and installation (Mosaic tile, wood, steel, fiberglass)

2023

Since 2016, swimming pools have featured in the works of Hong Kong artist Chan Wai-lap. Apart from being places to relax, they are also sanctuaries for Chan, spaces in which to meditate and introspect. Almost always, he finds that creative inspiration strikes while he is swimming. Exploring themes such as the public and the private as well as the relationship between self and strangers, his first paintings of swimming pools were serene, aerial views of structures with particular clarity. More recently, he has extended his creative work into other fields, such as installations and happenings (a type of performance art).

In a recent series of the artist's paintings, drained swimming pools are depicted from a perspective inside the pools' interiors to show the distance between public and private. In his new installation, *Some of us are looking at the stars*, the artist "unboxes" his work by the harbour, inviting the audience to step into the 4-metre high, 5.5-metre wide and 11-metre long swimming pool that he has constructed there. As they move closer to the artwork, the audience experiences a shift in perspective that generates a feeling of greater intimacy.

Drawing on his personal memories and experiences of swimming pools, Chan has created an intriguing tone that gives this swimming pool a unique aesthetic. The layout, sound, play of light and dark, weather, and audience involvement all contribute to an ever-changing scene within the open space. The result is orchestrated encounters between strangers that enrich the work's empty quiet. The mosaic tiles on the pool walls shimmer day and night, while sun loungers and irregularly timed broadcasts gradually draw out a previously hidden, more subtle atmosphere in this public area. In a space that embraces diverse possibilities and is imbued with our longing, sense of intimacy, and emotions, the artist invites everyone into the pool to enjoy themselves.

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Based in Hong Kong, Chan Wai-lap is a graduate of Birmingham City University, where he majored in Visual Communication. Chan has participated in artist residency programmes in Istanbul, New York, and Hong Kong, the latter at Tai Kwun Contemporary. His recent solo exhibitions include "The Lonesome Changing Room" (Hong Kong Art Central, 2021), "I Will Always Be On Your Side" (Tai Kwun Contemporary, 2020), "I Cannot Wait For Three Months" (Halka Sanat Projesi, Istanbul, 2019), and "I Say Marco, You Say Polo" (Fringe Club, Hong Kong, 2019; School of Visual Arts, New York, 2018). He received the Award for Young Artist (Visual Arts) of Hong Kong Arts Development Awards in 2019.