



Luo Qing & Yeo Tze Yang

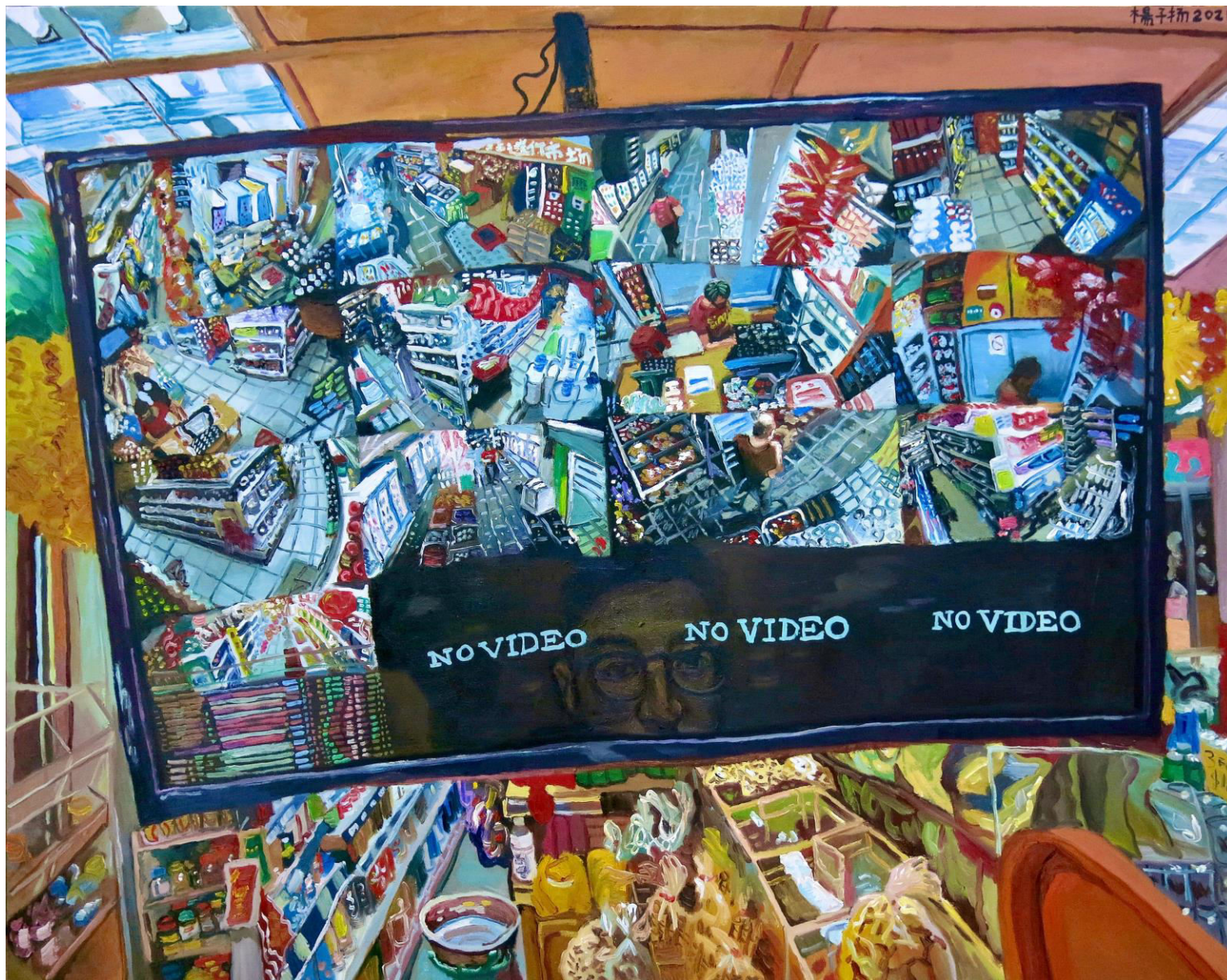
ABSENT BUT PRESENT
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When Covid-19 came, it happened very quickly, and many were caught unprepared. Personal experiences and mental reasonings of many were fractured, and perceptions of reality and life changed. In a broader sense, this pandemic has quickly changed how most of us think and live. It has changed the way we socialize and interact with people. On Facebook, one sees news and posts about migrant workers from Malaysia who cannot go home, going through mental stress over the prospect of the border not lifting any time soon. Some do make it home, and there is often a video of a mother or children bursting into tears when seeing the family's migrant return home. Or on Instagram, one often heard, one had lost his job and had to find a new one quickly, as he is the sole breadwinner of his family. Later, one would see a video of an art auction in London, selling art for tens of millions. One does not need to read economics in university to understand inequality's meaning: the distance between the haves and have-nots. Besides a form of precaution from the virus and a ubiquitous symbol of the global pandemic, the face mask obscures half the human face as well, putting another layer of distance between how people socialize and interact, became a fashion item and a wardrobe staple. In this exhibition, *"Absent But Present"*, both Luo Qing and Yeo Tze Yang works emphasized, is in the distances between people, be they physical, mental or psychological. How Covid-19 has pushed relationships remote and created more isolation between people and further creating intolerance. How the pandemic is triggering losses, be they economic, social, physical and emotional traumas in the society.

In Tze Yang's paintings, a strong personal sincerity is conveyed that offsets the depth of the subject matter that he is portraying. This is to say, behind the close observation of the current societal problems, so much more is an experienced assessment of the situation, a choice, but not aimed at the subject's profound portrayal. It is almost as though Tze Yang deliberately or unintentionally does not emphasize the composition but wants the viewer to seek the story behind the picture. Among them, the scenes are grasped within the realities of society, men in his built environment are unimportant, to our concentration, or distancing oneself from others, is within a kind of indeterminacy that completes an acknowledgement or change of status. Amongst these, the artist becomes an observer, patiently telling the story from beginning to end. For example, in this painting, "Hanging Out till Late", a portraiture of a melancholic supper scene going late into the night, and the characters look all the more alone and distanced in the absence of daylight. The people in the paintings are in various states; some are together but alone, unbothered by one another's presence. Some are with others, they may be speaking, or they may be alone, and background by a pair of migrant workers fidgeting on their handphones. In addition, this painting shows an unimaginable haunting elegance amidst the combination throbbing of life.





YEO TZE YANG, *CCTV Monitor*, 2021, Oil on Canvas, 105 x 135 cm



In a diametrically different approach to the subject matter, Luo Qing utilized a kind of anti-narrative method of composition; the theme is full of the emptiness of life. Greatly inspired by the American romantic realist painter Edward Hopper's sense of solitude and quiet reverie, Luo Qing's imagery language completes a choppy metaphor. A solo scene, an isolated sentiment, depicts the living conditions of the many seemingly insignificant beings and flooding their world with inevitable numbness and unhelpable ignorance, forming the characteristic motif of his pictorial language. For example, in the painting "Untitled 1-110", the dark and light shadows are rendered to perfection. He even excludes details that were originally in the scene. On the one hand, in the pursuit of his subject, he gives the audience emotion. On the other hand, in unearthing the inner emotions behind his subjects, it is also through this process that Luo Qing finds the essence of physical manifestation of emotion, to the isolation. This gives the painting from the mere representation of concrete depiction of things to a personal experience.



LUO QING
Untitled 1-110
2021
Oil on Canvas
50 x 40 cm



LUO QING
Untitled 3-51
2020
Oil on Canvas
50 x 40 cm

Yeo Tze Yang (1994)

Tze Yang's shaping of these life scenes shows a sense of beauty and elegance, obviously derived from his persistent pursuit of the formal language, painting. A self-taught painter, Tze Yang, is surprisingly very accomplished. The most impressive thing in his painting language is his use of brushwork – people and scenery is shaped with free and easy brushwork, free but finely controlled with an elegant sense of rhythm. Such brushwork, combined with subtle and elegant colors, offers a calm and elegant formal aesthetic independent from the forms and situations depicted, showed his skilled artistic techniques.

Luo Qing (1970)

Graduated from Beijing Central Academy of Fine Art, Luo Qing recent painting style became more impasto. He began to simplify his painting language expressly, and hence avoid many things, and at the same time, maintain and not lose a type of inertia. Among his recent work, the use of perspective, isolation of space, the confident, subtle loose rendering, the pleasant, direct visual communication, etc., see him experimenting with a bold painting language that goes hand in hand with his confidence in his art. In his paintings, the presentation of the scene is a strong model of the realities of society. However, what is presented gives a sense of light-heartedness set in a grave and heavy atmosphere. Perhaps Luo Qing is not pursuing an incredible visual impact but a clever and spiritual touch.

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