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Four below-the-radar art galleries in Hong Kong

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Artists and art fans are opening small, often self-funded exhibition spaces, some in unexpected locations and sometimes combined with things such as coffee shops

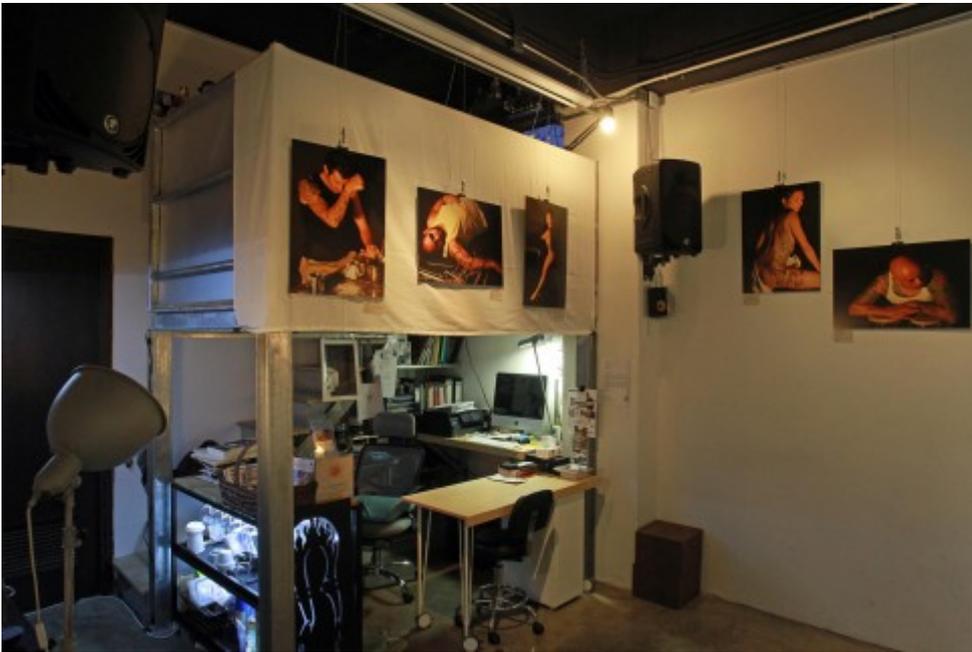
Artouch

"I think seeing artwork shouldn't be so serious that people are scared to go to galleries," says Sze Chow, owner of Artouch. "I want people to feel comfortable, have a glass of wine and look at the art."

Hollywood Road is an art hub, with various galleries and antique shops filling almost every available space. Nestled in a small alley away from the hustle and bustle is tattoo artist Sze Chow's pride and joy, Artouch.

With weekly music performances on Fridays and monthly documentary viewings in addition to art exhibitions, the space attracts a variety of visitors.

"I want people to think that when they come here they can do many things," says Chow. "I have no interest in it just being a gallery. It's too boring for me."



By drawing different people to her space, Chow gives emerging artists exposure to more people than those in the art community.

"I like to discover artists who are good, but don't know how to market themselves," says Chow. "I rent the space for people who need it, I help them do exhibitions here, and I also help them sell and promote their work."

To generate more public interest, Chow offers an Artouch membership for HK\$200 per year. Members can enjoy advance booking for events as well as complimentary drinks.

LG/F, shop C2, 89-94 Hollywood Road, Central, tel: 9780 1853, artouchsze@gmail.com [1], artouchk.com [2]. Opening times based on event, or by appointment

Things That Can Happen

Co-founded by Chantal Wong of the Asia Art Archive and local artist Lee Kit, the two long-time members of Hong Kong's art community are ready to see a positive change in the local art scene.

"There are so many commercial galleries," she says. "I think they are great, but without proper balance they become a very dominant form and aesthetic."

In order to ensure that young local artists have the opportunity to develop their own style, Wong hopes to challenge the artists who show in this space.



Room to move: interior of Things That Can Happen gallery in Sham Shui Po. Photos: Dickson Lee



"We want to take them out of their comfort zone," says Wong. "I think it's a platform for everybody to push each other just a little bit."

According to Wong, the space will feature a mix of two-month exhibitions and shorter two- or three-week displays.

In addition to viewing the artworks, visitors can take advantage of an extensive library of books that have been recommended by the artists and other members of the art community. These are available to be scanned, so interesting articles can be taken home for further perusal, says Wong.

"The idea is to show that art is an ongoing conversation and not something that ends with what you see on the wall," she says.

Although it is not officially open, the space is currently exhibiting the works of Chloe Cheuk and will celebrate its grand opening on September 5.



1/F, 98 Apliu Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon, tel: 2406 9800. Open: Thursday-Sunday, 1pm-8pm. info@thingsthatcanhappen.hk [3]

Floating Projects

Located in Wong Chuk Hang, Linda Lai's new alternative art space is in a neighbourhood already known for its association with cool art. A professor at Hong Kong City University's School of Creative Media, Lai opened the space this month with the goal of helping young artists learn how to sustain their careers.

The no-frills decor of salvaged furniture, reflects the "waste not want not" concept behind the space. The grand opening will feature a group exhibition with artworks constructed from waste materials picked up in the area.

Despite its bare-bones appearance, the space is equipped with a fully functioning coffee corner, Wi-fi reading room and leisure area, making it a great place for artists and members of the community to gather.



Full of beans: coffee corner (above) and artworks on display at Floating Projects in Wong Chuk Hang. Photos: May Tse





The space will feature exhibitions designed by 15 young artists selected by Lai and is also available for alternative events such as movie screenings.

Lai says she has noticed that young artists struggle to find balance between making artwork and securing opportunities to show their pieces to "a broad and open-minded critical community. In this place my role is really to experiment with running a space," says Lai. "I'm not the artist and I don't plan to show my own artwork, it's for them."

Unit 8D, Kwai Bo Industrial Building, 40 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, tel: 9040 6333/6421 8378, floatingprojectscollective.net [4], contact@floatingprojectscollective.net [5].
Open: Tuesday-Sunday, 12pm-8pm

100ft Park

Picture Apliu Street: LED signs, flatscreen TVs and every other electronic item imaginable. Primarily known for gadgets, it seems odd that there would be anything related to art in this district. However, South Ho and Stanley Siu, founders of 100ft Park, feel otherwise.

"If you ask the people in Sham Shui Po if they've been to an art gallery they will tell you 'no', but we are injecting an art scene right into the heart of the neighbourhood," says Siu.

After spending the past two years sharing space with other businesses, including a second-hand bookstore and a bike shop, this is their first stable location, says Siu.

The converted flat includes an outdoor terrace where gatherings will take place for exhibition openings and closings or if people just want a place to hang out.



Show and sell: the interior of 100 ft Park in Sham Shui Po. Photos: Dickson Lee



"It's very simple," says Siu. "We want a space for the local artists to chill, talk and drink."

Despite the display area only being 300 sq ft, Siu and Ho have an "all are welcome" policy towards artists looking for a place to exhibit their work.

"Not every work is good looking or good for selling," says Ho. "Some pieces don't appeal to local tastes, so we thought about making a small space for artists to show what they want."

The exhibition is an unconventional installation project created by local artist Chloe Cheuk, featuring a bubble maker and a light show.

"We want artists to just forget about costs, forget about selling work, and just try to do something unique," says Siu.

1/F, 220 Apliu Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon, tel: 9013 9723, 100ft.park@gmail.com. [6] 100ftpark.hk [7]. Open: Thursday-Sunday, 2.30pm-8pm

Four of Hong Kong's hidden art galleri... ☆



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