

Unit Bruises: ***Theodore Wan & Paul Wong, 1975–1979***

Unit Bruises pairs for the first time the works of two Chinese-Canadian body and lens-based artists active during the 1970s: Theodore Saskatche Wan (b.1953, Hong Kong; d.1987, Vancouver) and Paul Wong (b.1954, Prince Rupert). Working in and around Vancouver, Wan and Wong were contemporaries whose complementary practices were informed by national and international currents of conceptualism and performance. Albeit in much different fashions, due to respective differences in terms of their backgrounds and social circles, Wan and Wong both responded to dominant expectations of assimilation for individuals of Chinese-descent into white Canadian society. Notably, both artists mobilized their bodies in works that appropriated the tropes of medical and procedural illustrations, subverting the naturalized notions of objectivity that often dehumanize individuals, particularly those who are “othered.”

The exhibition is named after Wong and Kenneth Fletcher’s *60 Unit; Bruise* (1976) a disturbingly procedural yet abject video that documents the “ritualized” withdrawal of Fletcher’s blood and subsequent insertion into Wong’s body via a syringe. Wong’s works of this period are complemented by a selection of Wan’s equally unnerving photographs in which the artist performed as a patient in a series of medically accurate diagrams. During his studies at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax between 1976 and 1978, Wan created an important series of photographs that served both as instructional surgical illustrations and photo-conceptualist interventions, depending on the audience.

It is important to note that Wan and Wong brought their own respective intellectual approaches to their distinct practices. However, through their work, we can see that both artists critically asserted their othered subject positions as people of colour in intensely physical works that, in hindsight, ruminated on the topics of illness, death, and the human condition.

– Michael Dang, curator

Content Advisory: *Unit Bruises* is intended for mature audiences and contains works with sexual references, violence, and music featuring coarse language. Visitor discretion is advised.

The exhibition features artworks and ephemera on loan from the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the private collections of Sophie and Christos Dikeakos, and Paul Wong Projects. *Unit Bruises* is made with the support from the Audain Endowment for Curatorial Studies through the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory in collaboration with the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia. This exhibition is part of the 2024 Capture Photography Festival Selected Exhibition Program.



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《單位瘀青：西奧多·萬、黃柏武，1975-1979》

《單位瘀青》首次將西奧多·萬(生於1953年,香港;卒於1987年,溫哥華)和黃柏武(生於1954年,魯珀特王子港)這兩位活躍於1970年代的加拿大華裔、肢體與影像藝術家的作品一同展出。作為曾經同在溫哥華及周邊地區從事藝術的同代人,萬和黃的實踐均受到了國內外的觀念主義和表演藝術潮流的啟發,並具有一定的互補性。儘管兩位藝術家有著不盡相同的背景與社交圈,他們卻不約而同地在各自的作品中以獨特的方式回應了當時加拿大白人社會希望同化華裔個體的主流意識。值得注意的是,兩位藝術家都在作品中挪用了醫學插圖的意象並同時運用了自己的身體,此舉顛覆了客觀性這一概念,尤其是那些被「正常化」後可被用於將「他者」非人化的所謂客觀性。

展覽的名稱借鑒於黃柏武和Kenneth Fletcher 1976年的視頻作品《60單位;瘀青》,該作品紀錄了一個既冰冷又具體感的醫療程序——Fletcher的血液被「儀式化」地抽取,再通過同一個注射器注入黃的體內。黃柏武這個時期的作品與西奧多·萬在醫學圖解的語境中扮演患者的照片可謂是相輔相成;萬於1976年至1978年在哈利法克斯的新斯科舍藝術與設計學院(NSCAD)學習期間創作了一系列重要的攝影作品,取決於觀眾的不同,它們既可以是手術教學插圖,也可被視作干預性觀念攝影。

無庸置疑,西奧多·萬和黃柏武各自具有獨樹一幟的思考與實踐。然而,在本展覽中,兩位藝術家均批判性地將自己作為有色人種、被邊緣化的主體立場置於令人震撼的肢體作品當中。回顧這些作品時,我們會發現它們都對疾病、死亡和人類狀況等主題進行了發人深省的思考。

— 策展人鄧啟明

內容提醒：《單位瘀青》是一場面向成熟觀眾的展覽,包含涉及性暗示、暴力和音樂中帶有粗俗語言的作品。建議酌情觀看。

本展覽展出了來自溫哥華美術館的藏品和短期文宣品、來自Sophie and Christos Dikeakos以及黃柏武工作室的私人收藏。《單位瘀青》的策劃與實現獲得了Audain策展研究基金、UBC藝術史、視覺藝術與理論系和Morris and Helen Belkin美術館的支持。本展覽是2024年Capture攝影節精選展覽之一。



聆聽以上文字的語音

Paul Wong

All of Paul Wong's works in this exhibition were produced between 1976 and 1978, during which the artist was a member of the self-proclaimed "art gang," The Mainstreeters, that was based in and around Vancouver's Main Street on the East side. The Mainstreeters were a group of friends and self-taught artists that had met at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School and were invested in blurring the boundaries between their lives and their art. Along with Wong, the Mainstreeters included Kenneth Fletcher, Deborah Fong, Marlene MacGregor, Annastacia McDonald, Charles Rea, and Jeanette Reinhardt.

In addition to being a member of the Mainstreeters, Wong also worked as a video technician at the artist-run centre Western Front and, alongside his mentor Michael Goldberg, was a founding board member of the Satellite Video Exchange Society and its storefront Video Inn. Wong was exposed to key influences in art, video and dance, predominantly made by white artists through these new artist-run centres, and the international networks of communication and distribution that they facilitated.

Instrumental to Wong's artistic practice in this era was the contemporaneous advent of the handheld Sony Portapak, an accessible means of documenting his life and work through the burgeoning medium of video. As professional camera and editing equipment was quite expensive at the time, the Portapak allowed for practitioners such as Wong to make videos inexpensively on-the-go and to edit in-camera with match cut and/or jump transitions during shooting.

Theodore Saskatche Wan

Theodore Wan was born in Hong Kong on June 29, 1953 and immigrated to Vancouver with his family in 1967. Wan received his BFA from the University of British Columbia in 1975 where he studied under such artists as Tom Burrows, Fred Herzog, and Glenn Lewis, among others. In 1976, Wan attended the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax for his MFA. Under the leadership of then-president Garry Neill Kennedy, who facilitated visits from many prominent international artists, NSCAD in the early 1970s had a reputation as a hotbed for cutting-edge conceptual art. In Halifax, Wan developed an interest in the tropes of surgical diagrams and medical technology coinciding with a job as a photographer at the Dalhousie School of Dentistry. While the majority of Wan's work included in this exhibition was made while he was studying at NSCAD, Wan would often take trips back and forth between Halifax and Vancouver via Greyhound bus.

Wan's photographic and conceptualist practice, both in Vancouver and Halifax, was informed by newly burgeoning international artist networks of communication as facilitated by such schools as NSCAD and also Vancouver's new artist-run centres, such as Western Front and Pumps, among others. While Wan wasn't closely associated with any of the artist-run centres in Vancouver (until he opened his own gallery Main Exit in 1980), he was known to be hyper-cognizant of the currents in conceptual art. As his peer and friend Christos Dikeakos disclosed, Wan sought to find the convergence of art and life through the use of deadpan humour and irony, which often included playing with language. As a student of NSCAD, his vernacular aesthetic was very much in conversation with the photo-conceptualist style of the moment.

Wan's untimely death in 1987 at age 33 from cancer struck many of his peers as tragically ironic, in light of his earlier interests in medical science.