

ART &
CULTURE

Artist Kenny Wong's installation *Squint* features 51 randomly moving mirrors to simulate light reflections from everyday city life. Wong, below and below right, who has used light in previous installations, will be joined by sound artist Dennis Wong, right.



IN A NEW LIGHT

An art installation inspires a fresh look at beauty in everyday life, writes *Apple Lam*

A WALK around Central on a bright day may find one squinting against the glint of sunrays bouncing off shiny windows.

But while that feeling may last just a few seconds, local artist Kenny Wong Chi-chuen has extended the moment with his light installation *Squint*.

The three minimalistic white boards look unassuming at first as they bask in the bright white light.

But as you move closer, you notice more than 50 miniature mirrors rotating and reflecting bright light in random directions, sometimes right into your eyes.

"The mirrors simulate what it's like to live in a city where light bounces off, for example, glass windows, or the shiny surfaces of mobile phones. Or between buildings, where you could be sitting in your office and light reflects off the building across from you," Wong says.

"There are plenty of unexpected light sources in the city and I want to extend these serendipitous moments."

The mirrors are hooked up to a motor controller, which is in turn run by a computer program.

Based on each viewer's eye movements — tracked

by an inconspicuous video camera — the program randomizes the movement of the mirrors to give the installation an extra dose of spontaneity.

Wong coded the program himself but it is not the first time the 26-year-old artist has used technology in his works.

His 2011 installation *10Hz* was made up of a chair where the viewer experienced the sounds of tuning forks and the impact of colorful lights.

In 2012, *The Canvas of Resonance* created sound art using a metal sheet made to vibrate by motors attached to it.

Wong sees *Squint* as a spin-off from *10Hz* that completes the trio, because it focuses exclusively on light — just as *The Canvas of Resonance* emphasized the texture of sound.

The two sensory elements are taken out of the context of *10Hz* and explored separately.

For Wong, there is much more to white light than meets the eye.

"When light passes through a prism, a rainbow

of light is generated. A ray of light hitting a seemingly empty space could reveal dust particles.

"And when you close your eyes in the face of bright light, you would see traces or patterns of images even after the light is gone. These are all hidden textures of light."

Although we encounter light on a daily basis, we may not pay much attention to it. Wong hopes viewers will see their seemingly mundane experiences in a new light.

"When someone experiences something similar to flickers of light after seeing my work, maybe they will think about, for example, their commute on the train to work, differently," he says.

"They may even begin to enjoy that part of their daily life and appreciate its beauty."

However, the very technology that gives the installation an element of surprise also imposes limits.

"Because I have to track the position of the viewer, it would be difficult if the space was really big. You would expect the camera's sensor to be very accurate but actually it's not. The scale of the work is limited."

On January 18, Wong will be running a special sequence of mirror movements to match a sound performance by fellow artist Dennis Wong. The sound artist will be incorporating tracks recorded on 13 old streets in Kowloon's Ma Tau Kok.

Kenny Wong thinks the minimalistic setting of the installation, with its all-white color scheme and neatly aligned mirrors, provides the perfect backdrop for a sound performance.

"This way, the audience can focus on the sounds, which will synchronize with the mirror movements and the light they reflect," he says.

"One thing that Dennis and I have in common is that we both enjoy removing the context of something and highlighting its texture to tell a story."

Squint will be on show from tomorrow, running until January 31 at Videotage, Unit 13, Cattle Depot Artist Village, 63 Ma Tau Kok Road, To Kwa Wan.

Two afternoon workshops at Videotage on how to make musical instruments using secondhand electronics will be run by Dennis Wong and Kenny Wong, on January 11 and 18, respectively.

Registration is required.
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