

For Immediate Release

## ORA-ORA PRESENTS HALLEY CHENG SOLO EXHIBITION *KAPOK20*



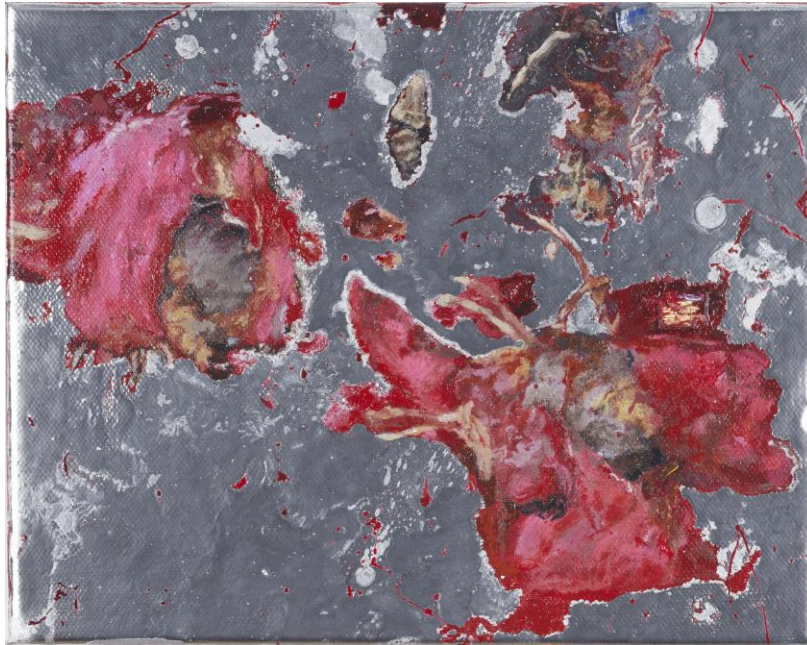
Halley Cheng, *Kapok Series*, 2020, Acrylic, sim card, mixed media on linen, 20 x 25.5 cm. Courtesy of Ora-Ora and the artist.

**HONG KONG – 10 March 2021** Ora-Ora is delighted to present Hong Kong-based artist **Halley Cheng's** fourth solo exhibition with the gallery. *Kapok20* consists of a series of more than 20 recent works, and are on view from **13 March to 17 April 2021**. The artist will be present at the opening reception on 13 and 14 March as part of the celebration of **Central West Hong Kong (CWHK) x Ferragamo**.

Those familiar with Halley Cheng will sense parallels between his past works and the present series. Besides the overarching theme of trees and nature, he is not one to shy away from referencing politics in his art. However, *Kapok20* is a marked departure from his past series. Named after the cotton tree and their scarlet flowers, it is an expression of the artist's personal journey the past year, as he came to grips with the social and political issues affecting his home city. But it is also so much more. With larger global issues at play, the artist's approach has evolved to address these broader considerations within a

universal context, choosing to make inferences that reflect a pensiveness. The exhibition signals an emotional and stylistic maturation.

In the present exhibition, all paintings are of uniform size (20 x 25 cm) and depict the red flowers of the *kapok* trees found around Hong Kong. Part-figurative, part-abstract, the works presented are portraits that tell stories not of flowers in bloom, but of flowers that have fallen, stepped upon by passers-by who pay them no attention. They embody delicate qualities that are organic, evolving, and subject to the wrath of time.



Halley Cheng, *Kapok Series No.6*, 2020, Acrylic, sim card, mixed media on linen, 20 x 25.5 cm. Courtesy of Ora-Ora and the artist.

The artist invites his audience to pause and reflect on the significance of such banal images. Indeed, his subject matter might appear commonplace, but the messages conveyed are poignant and thought-provoking – a reflection of the artist's emotions in a constant state of flux.

It would be an understatement to say that the year 2020 was an eventful one for the artist. The social unrest that gripped Hong Kong turned his world sideways and upside down, creating an anxiety and an uncertainty that seemed contagious. While normally reticent, the artist felt compelled to communicate his emotions, using the red of the *kapok* – a colour he seldom uses – to express the strife within the community. His flowers reflect these sentiments. They are hardly recognisable in their bloody, distressed state; they symbolise not only crushed hopes but also physical wounds. His works appear at once raw, visceral, and tender.

In addition, the multi-media works contain pandemic items such as gloves, sanitizer packages and sim cards, reflecting society's 'new normal'. However, they also symbolise the pandemic's role in awkwardly and superficially masking the hurt and pain that could not be vocalised. In most of the paintings, the surfaces upon which the fallen flowers lie are uneven and partly reflective, prompting scrutiny from different angles. In prolonging the viewer's gaze, they also hint towards the increasing surveillance that our world faces.



Halley Cheng, *Kapok Series No.6*, 2020, Acrylic, sim card, mixed media on linen, 20 x 25.5 cm. Courtesy of Ora-Ora and the artist.

Creating works for the exhibition was cathartic for Halley Cheng as he navigated through the emotional turmoil he was experiencing, but more importantly sought to rise above the anguish he was feeling. Yet *Kapok20* is not only a visual narrative of turmoil and healing, but a universal story all communities share of our world in flux.

The artist has come a long way from his earlier modern interpretations of Chinese paintings and live hydroponic creations. Thoughtful and multi-layered, *Kapok20* not only reflects his growth and maturity as an artist, but demonstrates his evolving range of artistic skills. The exhibition encapsulates his catharsis, visually and emotionally, resulting in a selection of oeuvres that is both poised and confident. Instead of struggling to make sense of his own perceptions, Halley Cheng knows exactly where he stands, which makes it even more interesting for audiences to see where he is headed to next.

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**About Halley Cheng**

Halley Cheng was educated at school and at university in Hong Kong, graduating in Fine Arts from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2008, obtaining a master's degree in Visual Arts, Studio and Extended Media from the Hong Kong Baptist University five years later. After winning the Hong Kong Young Artist Grand Prize in 2012, followed by a solo show at Art Basel Hong Kong one year later at the age of 27, Cheng's recognition has been unhesitating. He is avidly collected by both Western and Chinese individuals, and his works may be seen in corporate settings too, forming part inter alia of the collections of Bank of China (HK), Philippe Charriol Foundation, Cliftons Ltd, Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, The Peninsula Shanghai Waitan Hotel. Notable series of works include Cerulean, Lui's Solution of Concocted Herbal, and his solo show at Art Basel Hong Kong 2013, in which surprising combinations of ancient and modern (such as Michael Jackson in a landscape of Song dynasty painting) were arranged and harmonized on plywood boards.

**About Ora-Ora**

Ora-Ora began in Hong Kong in 2006, with globally-sourced artists who are thought-driven innovators. Our artists interpret history and philosophy to bring new perspectives to our modern world and the lively dialogues between East and West. Recognized for our support of Asian contemporary art, we have grown to represent artists from Asia, Europe and the US across a variety of media. Dr. Henrietta Tsui-Leung, Co-Founder of Ora-Ora, is also Co-Founder of the Hong Kong Art Gallery Association, which builds connections and opportunities in the growing Hong Kong art industry. The gallery continues to develop alliances and partnerships with institutions globally to enable discovery of represented artists in fresh environments. From our base in Hong Kong, we travel regularly to meet clients and participate at global art fairs and international exhibitions.

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