

Sin Wai Kin,
Essence
20 June–17 August, 2024
Soft Opening at Paul Soto,
2271 West Washington
Blvd, Los Angeles

In *Essence*, Sin Wai Kin presents a new three-channel film alongside wall-based work and sculpture.

This project continues the artist's reimagining of our relationship with our bodies and our bodies' relationship to the world, not only via an investigation into binaries around consciousness to do with gender, but similarly binaries of self/other, performance/authenticity and fantasy/reality. For Sin, the interrogation of these binaries becomes possible through storytelling and the creation of fantasy narratives, which interrupt normative processes of desire, identification, and objectification.

Extending their ongoing project of using drag as a medium of embodied speculative fiction, in each of their films Sin presents a multitude of characters who personify different themes and research. Found across various existing films and performances, these imagined figures reappear in different contexts, creating new constellations in the artist's expanding universe with each work.

In *Essence*, the character Wai King, who represents an exploration of unbridled masculinity, exists as a brand ambassador for a men's cologne of the same name. The film features the character casually riding a horse in an Arcadian rural landscape, deep in contemplative thought, while a voice asks "What are you looking for?" Wai King performs as a man on a journey in search of what is intrinsic to his nature, with the advertisement suggesting the answer can be found in *Essence*, "Something you can't see": a new scent available to purchase.

Accompanying the film in the exhibition is a large-scale billboard-style advertisement and two posters in aluminium display frames, each carrying the tagline "Your true self awaits."

Soft Opening,

This vague but irresistible promise of self-realisation is offered to any owner of *Essence*, an ultimately scent-less liquid displayed in a custom glass bottle on a plinth in the centre of the gallery space.

Sin subverts our normative understanding that the answers we yearn for can be found distilled into an acquirable solution and instead affirms that they remain precisely within the question being asked. We begin to understand that the essence of *Essence* is not to be found in the scent itself but in the constructed fantasy or narrative that has been built around it.

Essence seeks to reveal how narratives are embodied and reproduced, as well how storytelling not only represents but creates reality: “There isn’t an underlying objective reality that we uncover. What is ‘real’ is what we agree that it is.”

Main Gallery (L–R)

ESSENCE (6 Sheet),

2024

UV cured ink on
poster paper,
aluminium display case

117 × 82 cm

(46 × 32 ¼ inches)

ESSENCE (Billboard),

2024

Adhesive vinyl print

183.9 × 365.8 cm

(72 × 144 inches)

ESSENCE (Bottle),

2024

Glass bottle, archival

inkjet print on

Hahnemühle Photo Rag

metallic paper

6.35 × 11.43 × 3.18 cm

(2.5 × 4.5 × 1 ¼ inches)

ESSENCE

(Digital Display), 2024

Three-channel

HD video installation,

colour, sound

Dimensions variable

Sin Wai Kin's (b. 1991 Toronto, Canada) film, *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts* (2021) was nominated for the 2022 Turner Prize, and included in the touring exhibition British Art Show 9, as well as being screened at the British Film Institute's 65th London Film Festival.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Portraits* at Mudam, Luxembourg (2024); *It's Always You* at Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York (2024); *The Story Changing* at BAMPFA, Berkeley (2023); *Dreaming the End* at Fondazione Memmo, Rome (2023); *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts* at Soft Opening, London (2022); *It's Always You* at Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong (2021); *She's Hopeful* at Soft Opening, London (2020) and *Narrative Reflections on Looking* at Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2020). Group exhibitions include *The Art of Drag* at Frans Hals Museum, The Netherlands (2024); *The Infinite Woman* at Fondation Carmignac, Poquerolles (2024); *After Laughter Comes Tears* at Mudam, Luxembourg (2023); a collaborative presentation with Rainbow Chan at Cement Fondu, Paddington (forthcoming, 2024); *MYTH MAKERS — SPECTROSYNTHESIS III* at Tai Kwun, Hong Kong (2022); *Drawing Attention* at The British Museum, London (2022); *Interior Infinite* at The Polygon Gallery, Vancouver (2021) and *Protozone* at Shedhalle, Zürich (2021).

Sin's work is held in the collections of The British Museum Prints & Drawings; White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney; Ferens Art Gallery, Hull; The Ingram Collection of Modern British Art, UK; Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo; Sunpride Foundation, Hong Kong; M+ Museum, Hong Kong and The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore.