

# PAPERSNEAKER DESIGN STUDIO



creative & art direction — natalie wong

Natalie Wong is a mixed-media creative based between Hong Kong and London. Collaborating with the world's largest brands and agencies, Natalie delivers innovative projects that engage international audiences.



VICTORIA'S SECRET



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# BIOGRAPHY

Natalie Wong is the Creative Director of PAPERSNEAKER, a multidisciplinary design studio based in London and Hong Kong. The studio's main practice is divided between Commercial Client Projects and Fine Artwork.

As a mixed-media creative, Wong has extensive experience using a wide range of mediums including: LEDs, paper, textiles, sneaker-fabric, electronics and recycled plastic. Wong's work has been featured in several international publications including: GQ, Esquire, HYPEBEAST, Highsnobiety, Marie Claire, ELLE, MISSBISH, CreativeBoom, Business Insider and Lifestyle Asia.

Wong is known for her artwork – '100 Paper Sneakers', a massive art project that went viral in 2016.

Commercial clients include: NIKE, Monster Energy Drink, Victoria's Secret, Astrazeneca, KFC, HongKong Land and Henderson Land.

Wong has exhibited internationally including Johannesburg and London. In February and March 2018, Wong held her first solo exhibition of her work - 'Neon Rap Portraits', at the Hive Spring in Hong Kong. In March 2019, Wong participated in the International Women's Day Exhibition with

Creative Debuts in Shoreditch, London. In September 2019, Wong exhibited her first large-scale interactive installation - 'PLAYLOOP' at Hart Haus in Kennedy Town, Hong Kong.

Wong was interviewed and her artwork, '100 Paper Sneakers', was filmed by Emmy award winning film director, Seth Epstein, for a 90-minute documentary - 'Unbanned: The Legend of AJ1'. The documentary features global icons such as Spike Lee, Michael B Jordan, Tinker Hatfield, Mark Wahlberg, DJ Khaled, Russell Westbrook and Michael Jordan. The documentary premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film festival in New York and is now streaming on HULU.

A passionate public speaker, Wong has also guest lectured on art and fashion at international colleges, including the Savannah College of Art and Design.

Wong was one of the fashion buyers for the female leads in Warner Brothers' 2018 hit film – 'CRAZY RICH ASIANS'. Crazy Rich Asians was the first Hollywood produced movie with an all-Asian lead cast in 25 years.



01

# MONSTER ENERGY DRINK/ SNEAKER EXCHANGE

## NOVEMBER 2016

Monster Energy Drink (Powerplay) sponsored Wong to exhibit her artwork '100 Paper Sneakers' at the Griffin Sessions in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Griffin Sessions is one of Africa's largest street-culture events showcasing local street-wear designers, rappers and musicians, fashion pop-ups and artist exhibits.

In collaboration with Sneaker Exchange (one of Africa's largest sneaker trading organisers), Wong was also commissioned to make three new sneaker sculptures incorporating local and cultural history relevant to South Africa and the street-conscious youth.

Over 5 days, a film crew took Wong around major landmarks in and around Johannesburg to experience and be inspired by local architecture, historical sites and street market culture. Wong also met with influencers

in the sneaker and street scenes to learn more about the development of sneaker-culture in Africa.

The 'making of' the three new paper sneaker sculptures was filmed as a time-lapse and presented for the first time at the Griffin Sessions alongside the '100 Paper Sneakers'.

To promote the event, Wong appeared on local radio and TV networks including YFM and Vuzu TV. Both platforms are hugely popular youth entertainment platforms whose content is broadcast across the African continent.





1

Three new sneaker sculptures were made based on the NIKE Air Jordan 4, the adidas Superstar and the Yeezy Boost 750.

3



2



—— 1

The NIKE AJ4 used colours of the national South African flag and a purple jumpman. The meaning behind the colour selection was to reference an event in 1989 called 'The Purple Rain Protest', where protestors demonstrating against Apartheid were sprayed purple by police water cannons. 1989 was also the year the sneaker was released.

—— 2

I cut the skyline of Johannesburg into the outsole of the Yeezy Boost sculpture - I saw this simple but beautiful idea in a graffiti spray painting on one of the buildings in Braamfontein.

—— 3

The adidas superstar adapted a Johannesburg court logo which showed 11 people gathered beneath a tree. The 11 people represent the 11 official languages of South Africa and it symbolised the concept that all people (regardless of race, gender or beliefs) were afforded the same protection. I replaced the famous 3 stripes with silhouettes of people, both black and white.



# 02

## NIKE LEBRON PROJECT

### SEPTEMBER 2017

NIKE commissioned Wong to create a sculpture celebrating LeBron James' tour of Asia. A 2m tall sculpture was made from 50 pairs of deconstructed sneakers. Using LeBron James' 'Soldier 11s' sneakers, Wong came up with the idea to construct 'A soldier from soldiers'.

An interactive element was included where a space was created in the heart of the sculpture allowing LeBron to complete it by placing a basketball at its center. Magnets were placed on the basketball and on the semi-circular cavity to facilitate this.

In collaboration with two other local artists, the team created this large sculpture within one month at NIKE headquarters in Hong Kong.

### SCULPTURE DETAILS:

'Sneaker Soldier'  
Deconstructed sneakers on a metal wire and wood core  
200cm x 100cm x 67cm  
September 2017

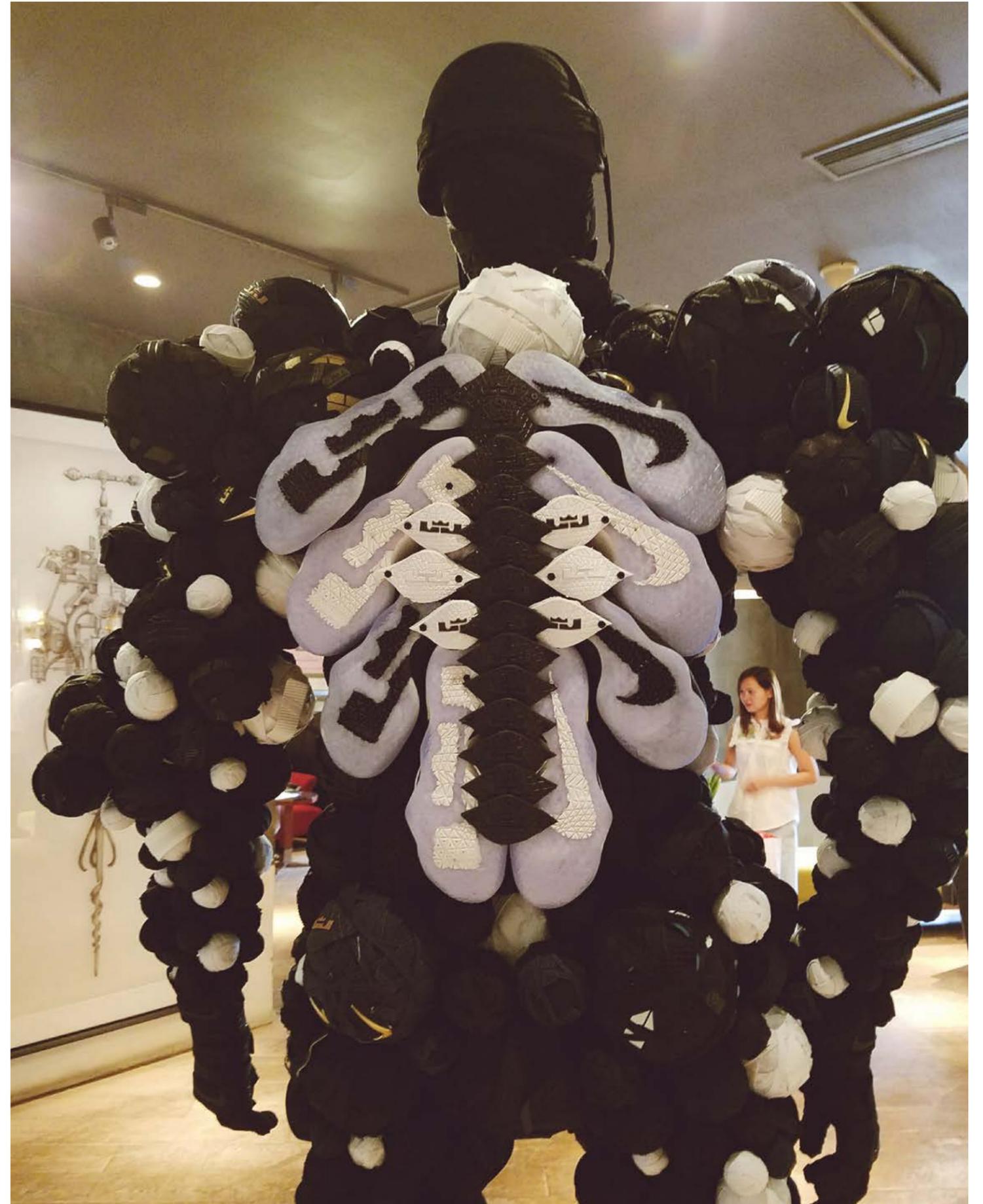
The sculpture is currently on display at NIKE headquarters in Hong Kong.



I had seen sculptures made using sneakers before but they were usually constructed using very large segments of the sneaker. I wanted to take the deconstruction method one step further and strip the sneaker down to its core elements. Wrapping the strips of sneaker fabric into different-sized balls would provide us with building blocks to build the sculpture. By using hundreds of spherical objects in the sculpture's construction, it also had that immediate and obvious connection to the shape of a basketball.



On a conceptual level, the sculpture implied that a great basketball athlete was the accumulation of practice, experience and a fighting attitude.





In order to fulfil the brief and be consistent with the NIKE brand and LeBron James' image, the sculpture was designed to appeal to a male basketball audience with related interests.

The sculpture's hands were constructed to appear like direct contact sporting gloves using the ribbed velcro sneaker straps going around each glove. The back-piece has a distinct sci-fi/transformers aesthetic whilst also having an 'exo-skeleton' armour feel to it. The head's design elements referenced Darth Vader's iconic helmet from the Star Wars franchise.

In terms of a colour scheme, only three main colours were used - Navy, Black and White. This decision was made to enable the viewer to focus on the complex construction method of the soldier's body.



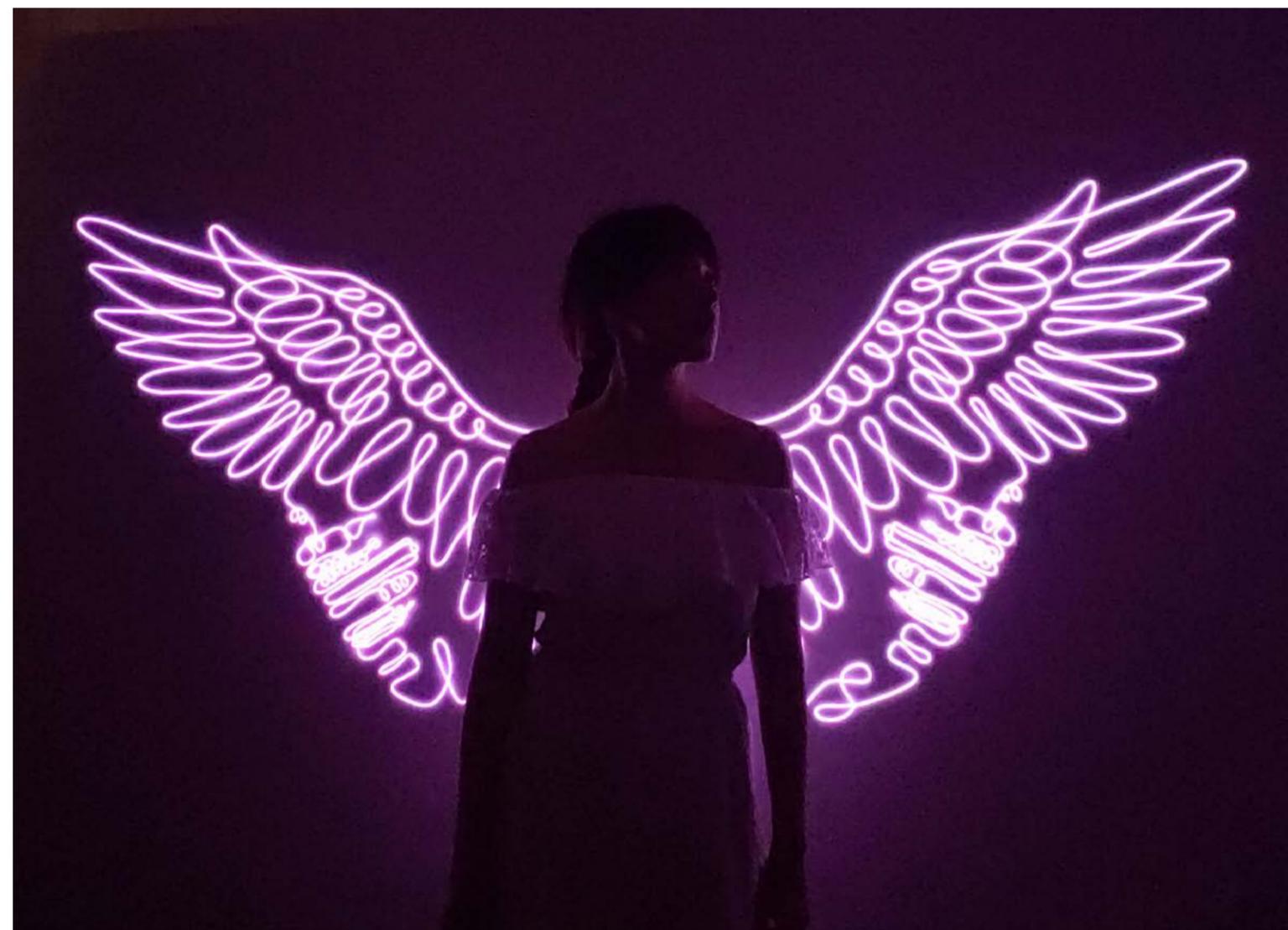
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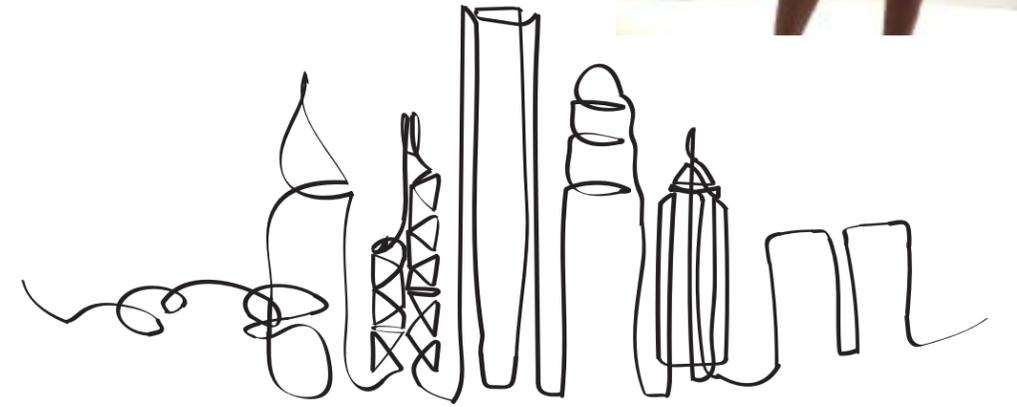
## VICTORIA'S SECRET

**JULY 2018**

To celebrate the opening of Victoria's Secret first flagship store in Hong Kong, Wong collaborated with the brand to create a pair of large-scale Neon Angel Wings. To adhere to the brand's image, Wong created a feminine, fun and elegant design. To make the wings relevant to the location of the store, the design incorporated the iconic skyline of Hong Kong. The wing set was made from electroluminescent wire mounted on a wood frame.

The wing set was unveiled at the VIP opening night with two prominent VS angels Martha Hunt and Josephine Skriver. During the event, top Asian influencers and KOLS with a combined social media following in the millions posted several photos and videos with the wings on social media.

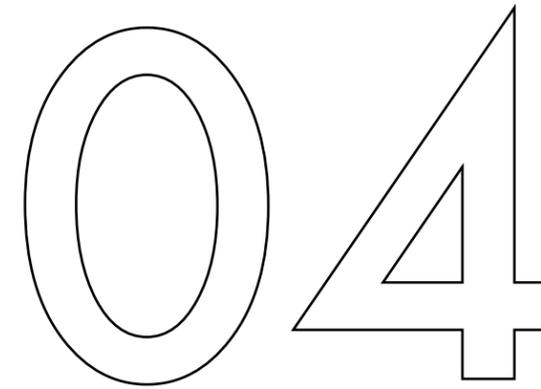




For the VS store opening, it was important to come up with something that people would rush to take photos with and post on social media.

VS Neon Wings  
EL wire on wood  
190cm x 75cm





## 100 PAPER SNEAKERS

The sneaker represents one of the most complex contemporary clothing items known today. Shoes function as metonyms for individuality and as markers of identity both by choice and unconscious coercion. They are a rich source of information of a person's age and gender, occupation, economic and social status, religious and ideological position, as well as a host of personal characteristics.

Today, people buy the meaning of an object rather than the object itself. What we choose to wear is a non-verbal communication to society about how we want to be perceived by the people around us.

Sneaker culture has made the sneaker into an art form. Sneaker fans buy sneakers but do not wear them. Instead they collect them and display them at home - just like art collectors. The rich cultural history, multi-layered meanings and worldwide popularity of the sneaker inspired Wong to make the sneaker into a literal work of art.

The artwork consists of 100 individual sneaker sculptures made from thickly textured paper and card. Each sculpture

is a re-interpretation of Nike's Air Jordan 1, the sneaker that many believe launched sneaker culture in the mid 1980s.

Each sculpture is made from 23 individual parts. A technical feature specifically designed to pay homage to the number Jordan wore during his time with the Chicago Bulls.

The reason for making 100 sculptures is to reflect a 'collection of sneakers' - similar to what sneaker collectors would do. On a conceptual level, influenced by Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup Can series, Wong also uses repetition as an applied technique. Warhol has his 32 soup cans. Wong has her 100 paper sneakers. Within the 100 sculptures, the majority of the sculptures follow colourways actually released by the Jordan brand. There are a select number of colourways chosen by the artist. Additionally, colourways released only for women are included within the 100.

The sneaker design was first created using 3D modelling software, printed, cut out and finally re-assembled. The card used to make each sculpture is lightly textured and pre-coloured. The method used to make the artwork follows a similar technique used by actual shoe designers working on a commercial level.





The artwork should be displayed with all 100 individual sneaker sculptures together. 20 sneakers displayed on one row, with 5 steps in total. The size of the artwork measures approx. 210cm x 80cm x 43cm when fully displayed.

In June 2016, a video clip of the 100 Paper Sneakers project was shown on HYPEBEAST's Instagram page. It received over 100,000 views in less than 24 hours. The project went viral, appearing on the landing pages of GQ and ESQUIRE. It also appeared on hundreds of websites, blogs and social media platforms in multiple languages.

05

## NEON RAP PORTRAITS

"NEON RAP PORTRAITS", is a series of individual portraits of famous rappers made from electroluminescent wire on fluorescent acrylic.

Wong's work is inspired by the contour drawings from artists such as Egon Schiele and Picasso. Using the traditional drawing technique known as continuous line drawing, where a drawing is produced without lifting the drawing instrument from the page, Wong combines both technique and subject matter.

Each image is produced using one single and unbroken line. The freestyle drawing of each portrait mirrors the way in which rappers freestyle lyrics, both lines and words are constructed instantaneously.

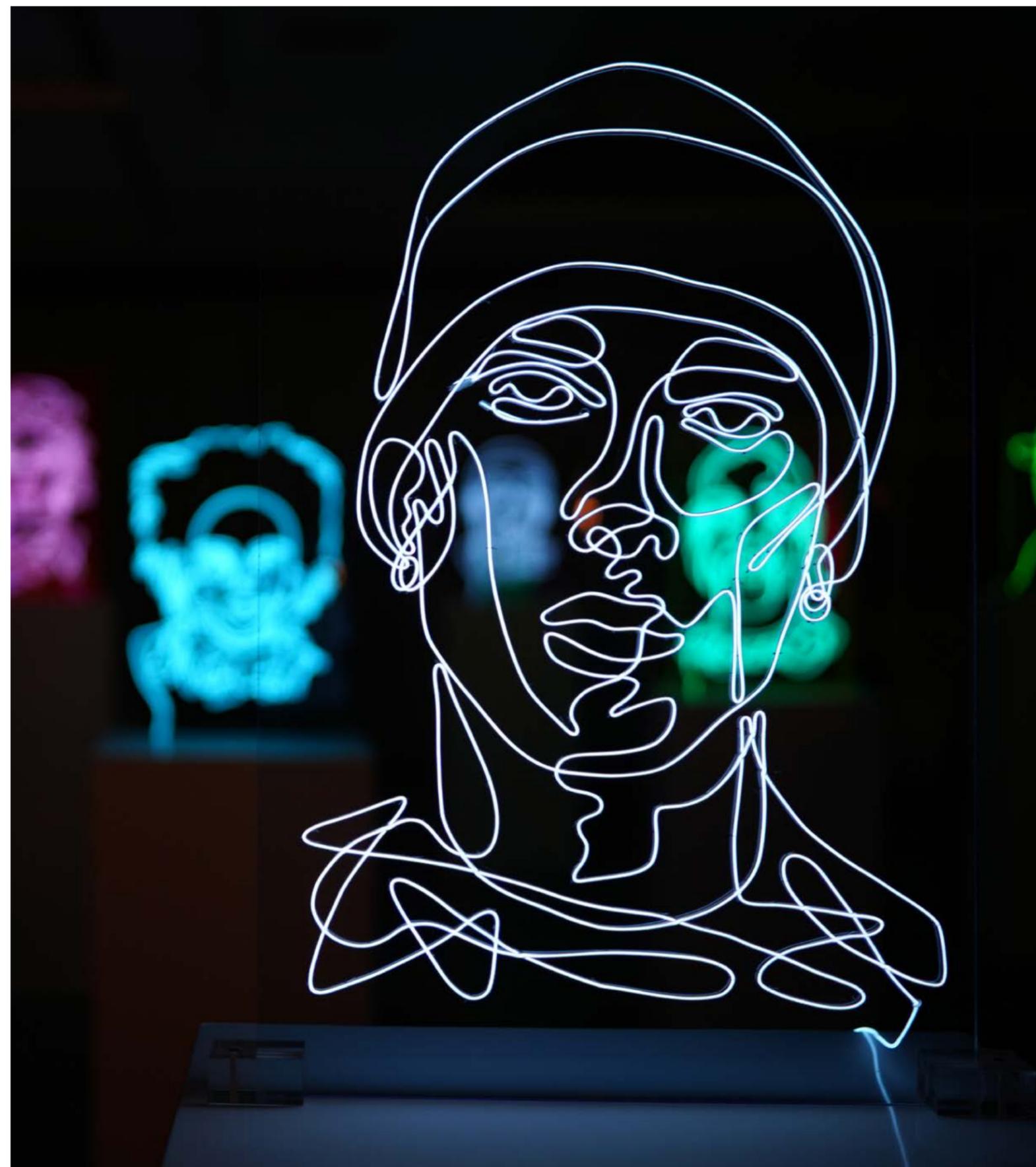
Furthermore, Wong notes that for rappers to prove they are freestyling as opposed to rapping pre-memorized lyrics, they will usually reference something in

their immediate environment. Reimagining each portrait in neon form incorporates Wong's immediate environment, Hong Kong.

"I wanted to pay tribute to the neon signs of Hong Kong which are an inherent part of the city's cultural heritage. Neon signs are an integral part of the urbanized personality of a city and they have this natural ability to draw the human eye."

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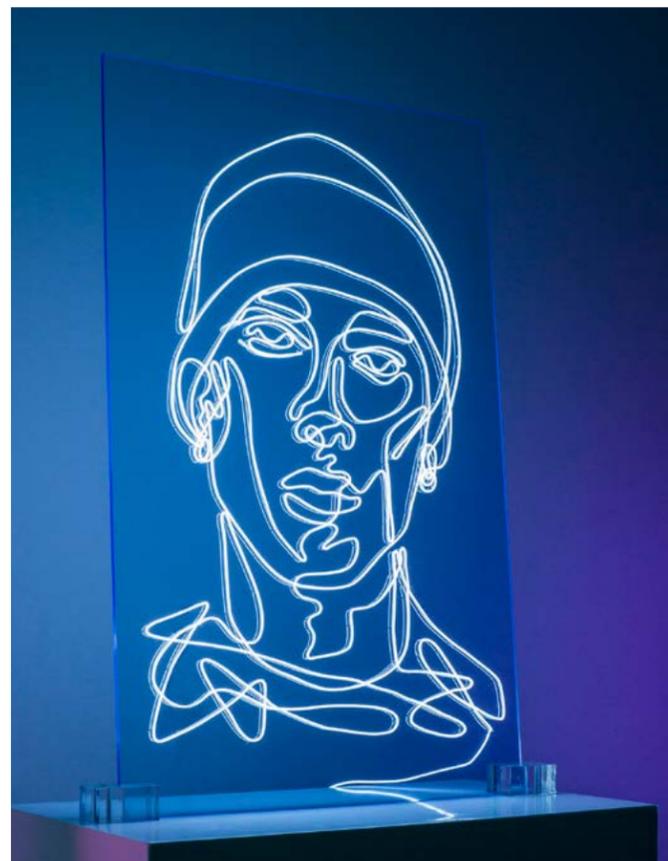
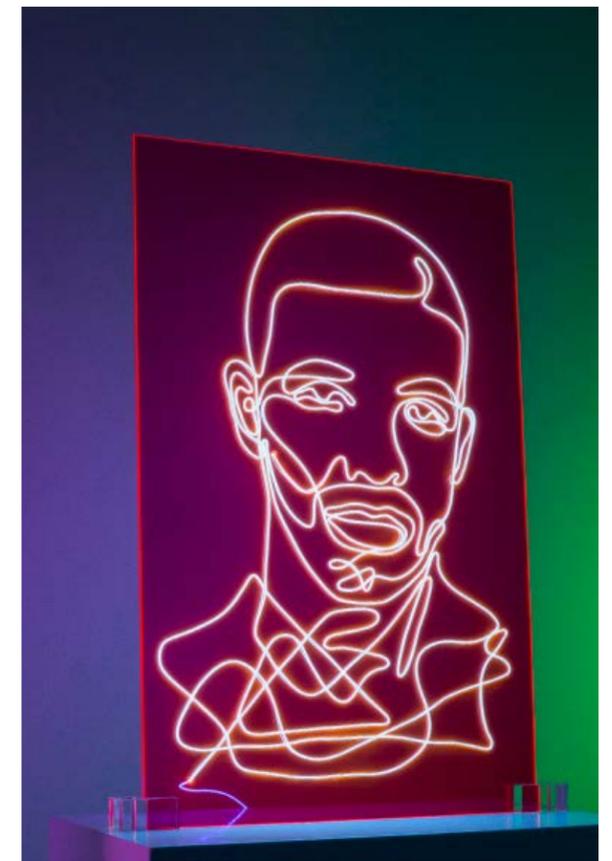
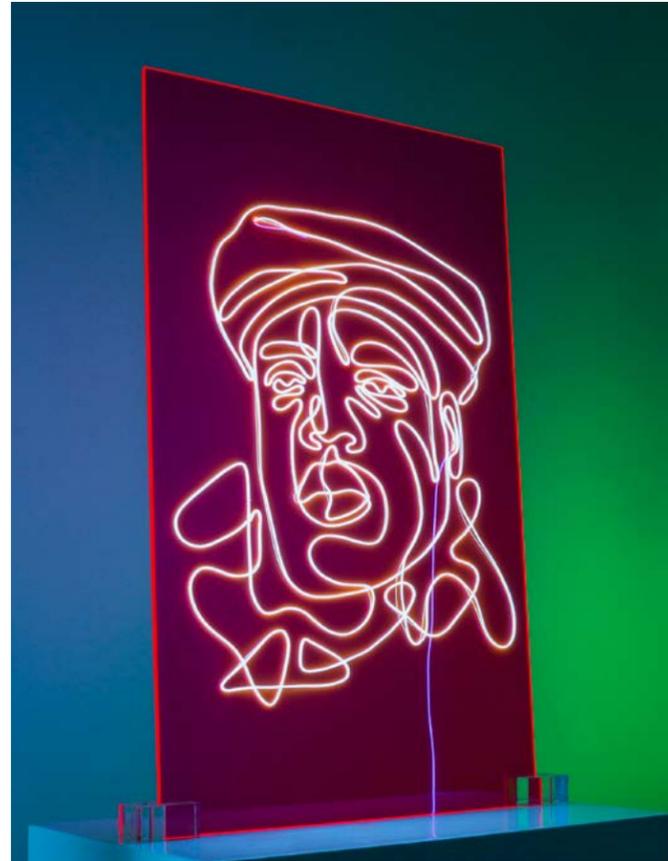
'Neon Rap Portraits'  
A Solo Exhibition  
HIVE SPRING, Hong Kong  
22.02.18 - 22.03.18

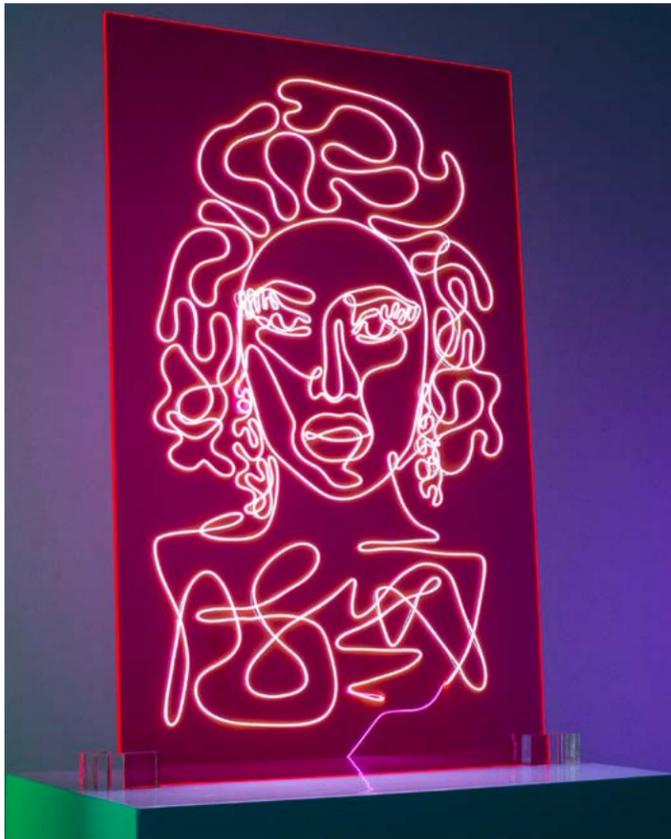
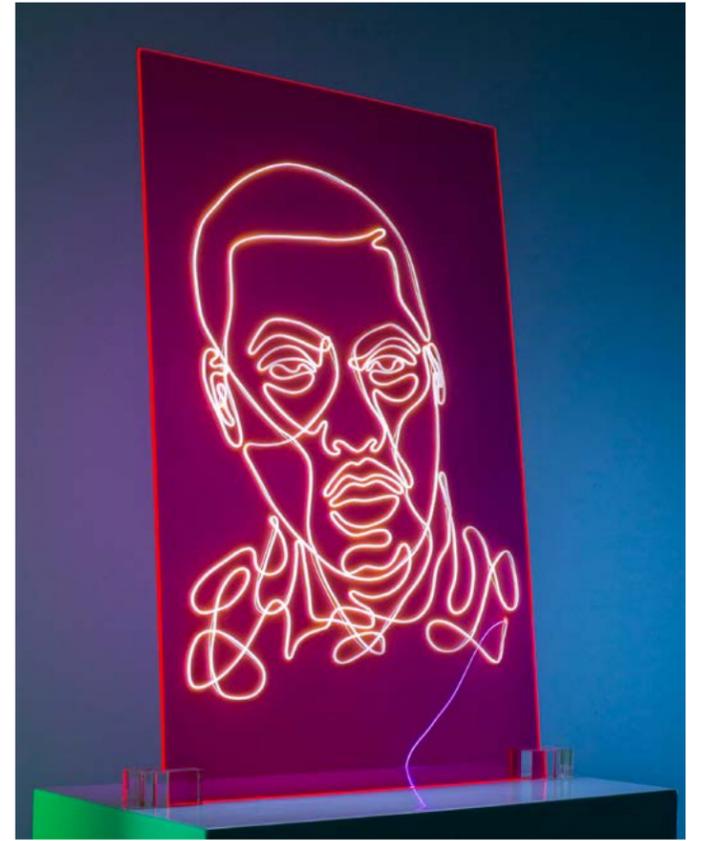


'Neon Rap Portraits'  
December 2017  
70cm x 45cm  
El Wire on Fluorescent Acrylic

Street culture and street art are things I am particularly interested about. It is currently the most dominant cultural movement of post-postmodernism and can be compared to past movements like Romanticism, Art Nouveau or Pop Art.

My hope is that my exhibit authentically contributes to the developing street culture scene by bringing together common elements shared by rap and hip hop with the philosophy of design and art.







**FEATURED RAPPER  
PORTRAITS**

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**Kanye West**

**Jay Z**

**Dr Dre**

**Nas**

**Pharrell**

**Missy Elliot**

**Lauryn Hill**

**Tupac**

**Biggie Smalls**

**Snoop Dog**

**Nicki Minaj**

**Eminem**

**Drake**

**50 Cent**



06

## KFC SEA TURTLE

**OCTOBER 2018**

To kick-start KFC's expansion of its plastic reduction program, the brand commissioned Wong to create an art piece made entirely from recycled straws and lids. Wong created a large-scale portrait of a sea turtle to draw attention to environmental protection and marine life.

The art piece combined multiple weaving and layering techniques to construct the sea turtle. The construction of the art piece incorporated methods used by local communities when upcycling disposable plastic materials.

Wong also helped the brand storyboard and produce a 'making of video' to highlight the fun and creative ways to re-use plastics.

**PHOTOS BELOW**

Artwork Launch Day  
with Janet Yuen, CEO of  
KFC Hong Kong,  
with KFC Executives.



Over 2,000 recycled plastic straws and lids were used to make this artwork. For the hind flippers, the straws were first ironed flat then weaved into a traditional criss-cross weave and glued down in segments.

For a section of the shell, the straws were cut in half, inserted together, looped and woven into place. For the fore flippers, the lid was cut into quarters and eights, then pieced together forming circular mosaic patterns. For another area, the sides of the lids were cut and curled together then individually glued in place.



‘Sea Turtle’, Sept 2018  
Upcycled plastic straws  
and lids on a wood base  
180cm x 120cm  
On display at KFC Ma On Shan  
Store in Hong Kong



07

# KORÁLLION

'KORÁLLION', was a privately commissioned artwork made entirely from hand-cut paper and cardstock.

The display was inspired by the ocean's naturally forming coral reefs. The work is made entirely from coloured paper using a variety of techniques including scoring, detail-cutting, overlay folding and paper-sculpting. The artwork references the organic shapes and textures found in the diverse environment of underwater flora and fauna, such as foliose and digitate corals.

Taking over three months to complete, the artwork features 26 individual coral types.

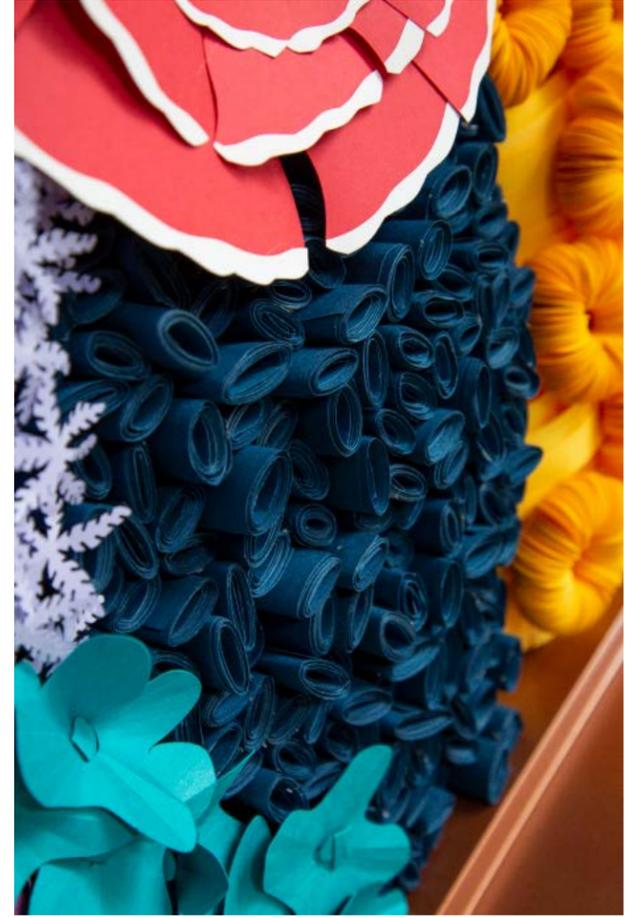
Korállion is Wong's most labour-intensive project to date. Regarding the process behind the artwork, Wong stated "The first stage involved researching a range of different coral types to allow for shape variations within the piece. For example, staghorn coral is interesting for its cylindrical

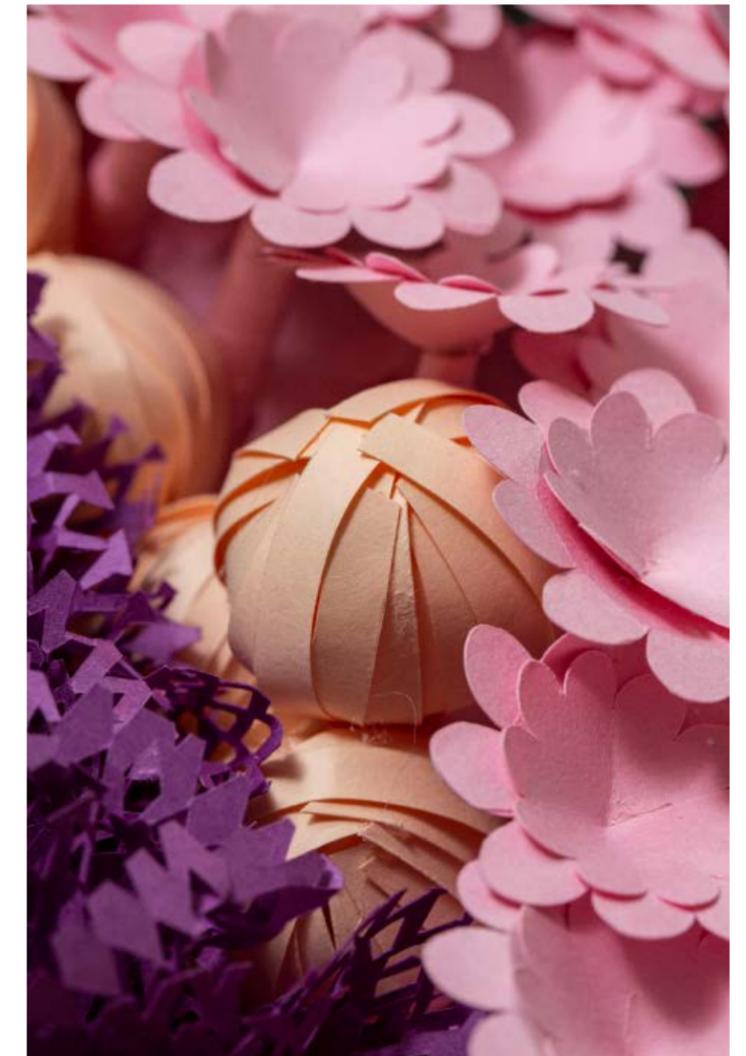
branches whereas the great star coral has fascinating circular cluster formations. The next stage was colour-blocking the display and figuring out the precise position of each coral segment. It was visually important that each section contrasted to the coral next to it. The third stage took the longest time and involved the careful and precise production of each individual piece. Some sections took a full week to complete. The final stage involved the assembly into the display and ensuring the coral parts structurally 'blended' into each other naturally."

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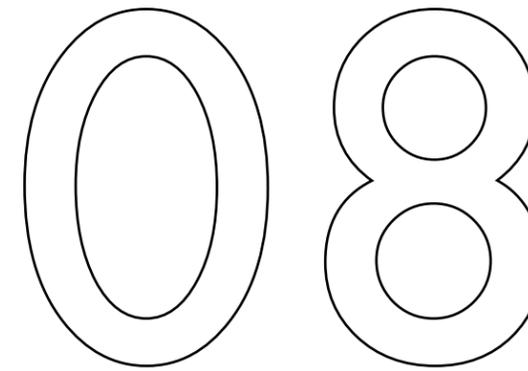
'KORÁLLION'  
Paper and Cardstock  
76cm x 136cm  
August 2019, Hong Kong







'KORÁLLION'  
Close up photographs  
Paper and Cardstock  
76cm x 136cm  
August 2019, Hong Kong



## PLAYLOOP

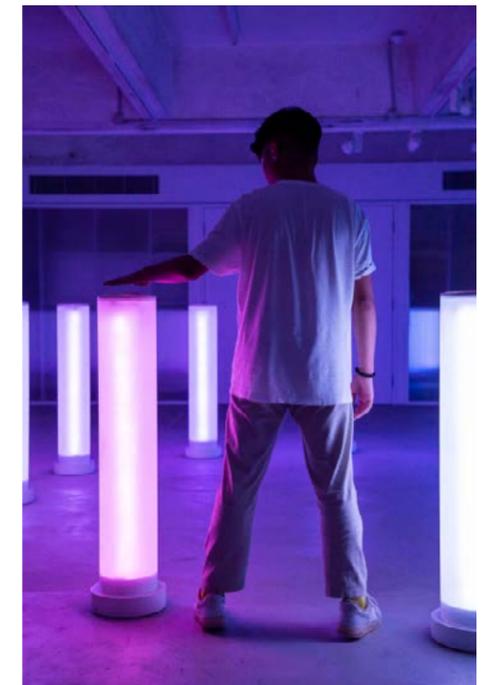
### SEPTEMBER 2019

PLAYLOOP is an interactive sound and light installation which took over eight months to complete. The installation allows participants to physically create a distinct sound using multiple audio loops in an interactive soundscape. PLAYLOOP was created using over 1,000 LEDs and motion-activated sensors.

The installation utilizes a variety of motion sensors and specifically designed speakers within twelve cylindrical structures. Putting the work into context, Wong explains: "A lot of the current sound art focuses on sound as an abstract concept. Contemporary work exploring sound in art tends to blur the distinction between sound, music and noise. Instead of focusing on the deconstruction of sound, I wanted to focus on the construction of sound. A significant proportion of today's music uses audio loops as building blocks; I wanted to explore this idea by attempting to physically represent audio loops that can be motion-activated in real-time."

### PHOTOS BELOW

Snapshots of dancers from Southeastwood Dance Crew interacting with PLAYLOOP



The twelve custom designed structures are arranged in a circular formation, mimicking the face of a clock – a visual reference implying sound’s relationship with time. The silhouette of each structure was inspired by the name commonly given to layers in music production - ‘stems’. When no motion is detected, the installation remains silent and the stems emit one uniform colour.

On approach, the lights within each stem begin to change. Participants interact with “PlayLoop” by placing their hands over each stem which activates and then deactivates the audio loops, whilst also triggering the light transitions. As each individual interacts with the work, they saturate the physical space with both ambient colour and sound. The activation of different sounds and lights alters each participant’s perception of the space they are in and acts a constantly evolving disrupter of that experience.




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PLAYLOOP  
Electronics & Mixed Media  
460cm x 355cm x 110cm  
September 2019, Hong Kong

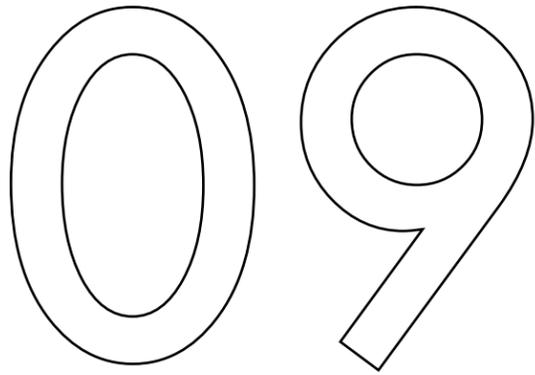
To demonstrate the full potential of the installation, Wong invited dancers to interact with the work. Explaining the rationale behind this decision - “Dancers, like musicians, are able to easily synchronize together but they have the additional skill of knowing how to perform with their entire bodies. It is expanding the concept of using physical motion to activate the sound. Their movements activate the sound then that sound informs how they move their bodies. It’s a circular co-dependent experience.” After some experimentation, the artist created her own range of synthesized electronic loops for exhibition.

For the project, Wong was inspired by the visuals of American minimalist light artist, Dan Flavin. The audio loops used in the installation were influenced by the ambient sound references often used by electronic musicians such as Sam Shepherd (aka Floating Points).

There are two central ideas within the work. The first con-

cept is ‘Group Creation’. Wong explains that “The installation is designed to accommodate multiple participants. The more people interact with the installation, the richer and more complex the sound will be. It encourages people to work together, whether to find harmony or dissonance; rhythmic or irregular beats; minimal or complex sound structures.” The second concept is ‘Co-Creation’. “It’s the idea that I am creating art with you. We create together. Without your participation, you would just see twelve unremarkable white lights. But the minute you step into the space and interact with the installation, your physical movements define what you hear and what you see. You dictate your auditory and visual environment. You as the participant become a creator yourself. And that, I think, is something special.”

*PLAYLOOP was exhibited at Hart Haus in Kennedy Town, Hong Kong in September 2019.*



## FAST LOVE

"FAST LOVE", is a series of works that playfully blend iconic fast food staples and intimately human objects - creating a visual parody of contemporary dating culture.

Inspired by the comic book stylings of Roy Lichtenstein, the colourful and bold digital artworks cover themes of swiping addiction, instant gratification, hookup culture and the paradox of limitless choice. I noticed distinct similarities between the ease of access, disposability, addictive and consumer-orientated nature within fast food and dating apps. These references made for compelling visual cues within the narrative I wanted to explore.

Although apps have revolutionised the way people connect and are one of the most impactful social disrupters in decades, dating apps have sacrificed romance at the altar of technological efficiency. Whilst the idea of having more choices seem beneficial, it may, in fact be detrimental to dating. When faced with multiple options, apps make it too

easy to discard matches over minor issues because the environment provides a feeling of abundance for better dates.

In *Glazed and Confused* (right), we initially see strawberry doughnut with sprinkles. On closer inspection, the sugary decorations are in fact multi-coloured pills with dating app logos. When using dating apps, there is the promise you will match with someone great, and you frequently receive positive reinforcements to keep looking. Swiping can become addictive and users get a continual 'hit' of validation each time someone matches with them.

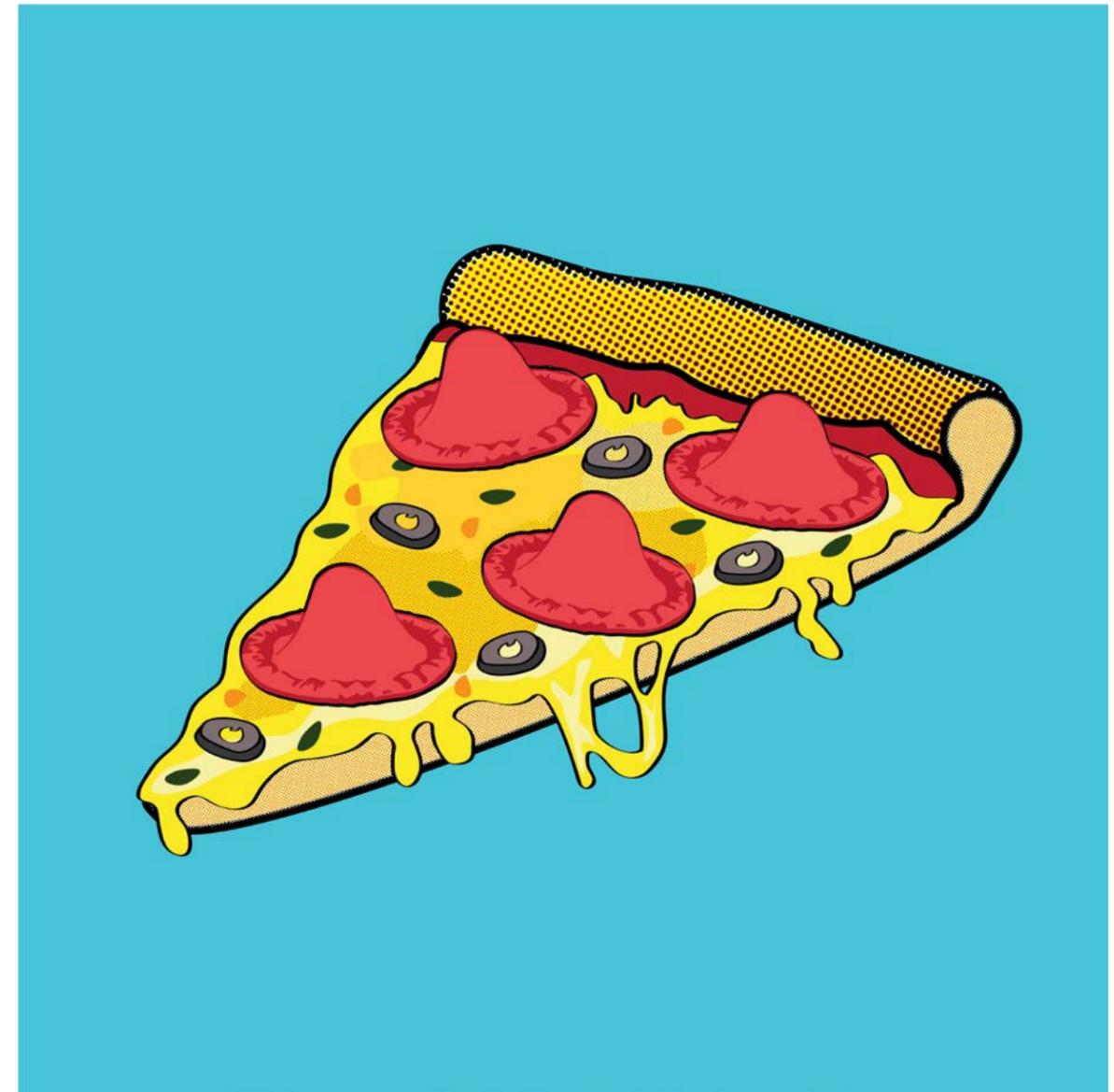
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**'Glazed and Confused'**  
 Online Exhibition  
[www.fastlove.online](http://www.fastlove.online), London  
 June 2020





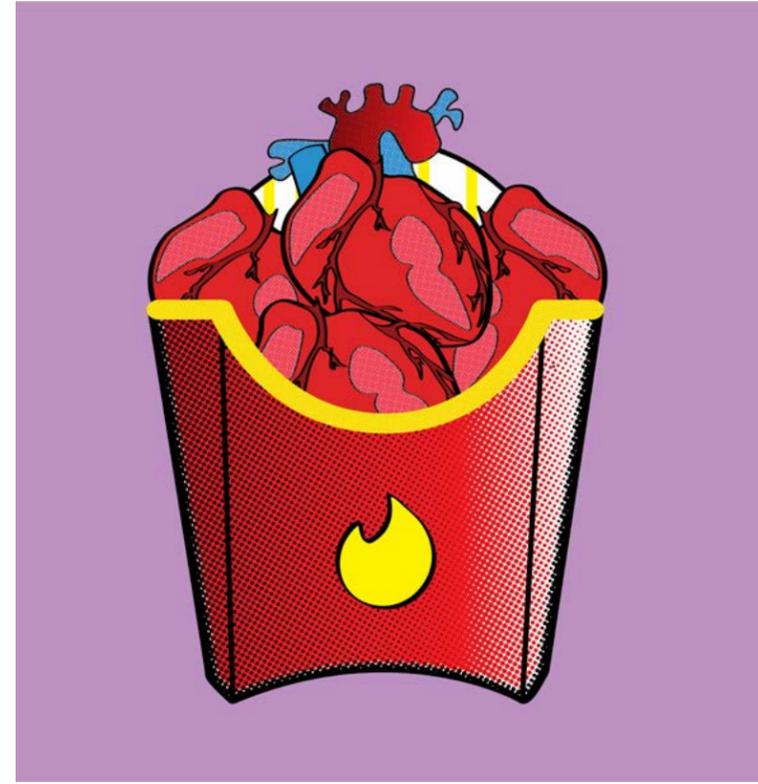
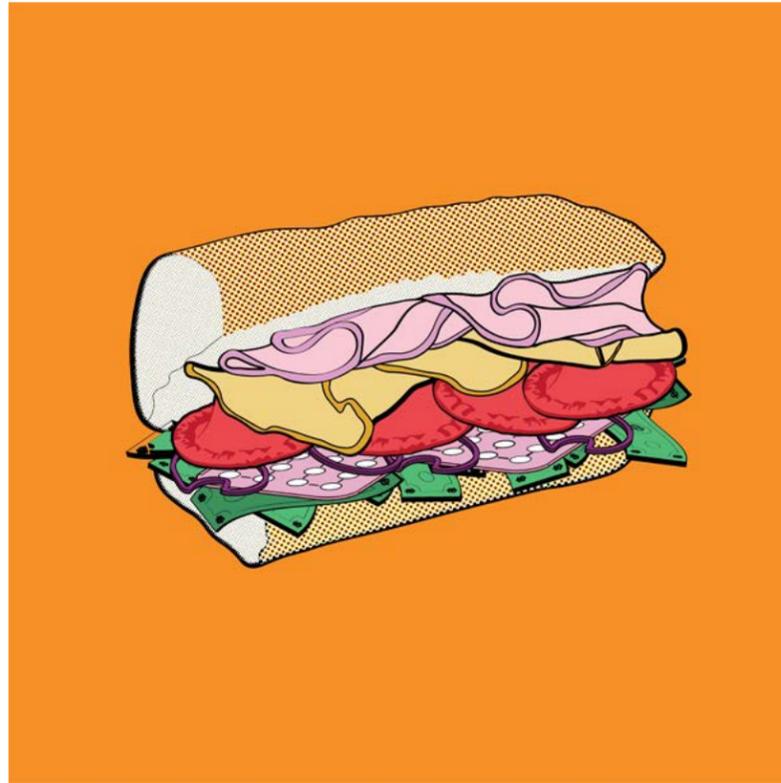
**'Taste the Feeling'**, 2020

'Taste the Feeling!' is a direct reference to Coca-Cola's 2016 campaign which aimed to combat the trend of declining soft drink sales following consumers' health concerns about sugary drinks. The slogan was based on a core message: "The simple pleasure of drinking Coca-Cola makes the moment more special." Coca-Cola's label is used as the focus point to demonstrate the negative side-effects many experience whilst dating online. Labels in themselves are a construct within romantic relationships as they are used to define where each person is in the relationship, their expectations and desires. The words in this artwork are direct statements as to the undesirable consequences both genders may experience and encourages the viewer to question whether the hours spent swiping is inherently a valuable use of time and a beneficial experience in the long term.



**'More Pepperoni Please!'**, 2020

In 'More Pepperoni Please!', there is the conspicuous connection between male genitalia, condoms and pepperoni. The cut olives have tinder logo-shaped depressions at their centres and the dripping of the cheese is also mildly suggestive. Dating apps have been the biggest contributors to the growth of hook-up culture in the modern age. This work makes the most explicit connection between sex and fast-food within the series. The visual references within the work imply both the gustatory satisfaction of both the sexual experience and in the consumption of food, but also that they are both pleasurable and sell the idea of 'guilt-free indulgences' for casual sex or fast food cravings. The appetite for sex has always existed, but it had controlled availability; with technology the limitations are being chipped away and we see people going into overdrive with it. The same thing is happening with an unfettered access to sex partners. People are gorging and developing a form of psychosexual obesity.



from left to right  
 Swipe Fresh  
 Thirsty!  
 Matrimony and Sleaze  
 I Don't Want to Taco 'Bout It  
 It was all in Vein  
 Instant Connection

Digital Prints  
 50.8cm x 50.8cm  
 June 2020, London

## PRESS

[Hypebeast.com – 100 Paper Sneakers Natalie Wong](#)

[GQ – Nike Air Jordan 1 gets Colourful Paper Reimagining by Artist](#)

[Esquire – 100 Paper Sneakers Jordan 1 video](#)

[Lifestyle Asia – Artist interview Natalie Wong 100 paper-sneakers](#)

[Hypebeast – Natalie Wong Neon Rap Portraits](#)

[Missbish – Mixed Media Artist Natalie Wong brings famous rappers to life with her neon portraits](#)

[Hong Kong FP – Event Hive Spring soft opening featuring Neon Rap Portraits Natalie Wong](#)

[Highsnobiety – Facebook videos](#)

[Buro 247 – Exclusive Crazy Rich Asians Fashion Buyer Natalie](#)

[Forbes.com – Crazy Rich Asians Costume Designer Mary Vogt on Sartorial Storytelling](#)

[Business Insider.com – KFC Hong Kong Expands Single Use Plastic Reduction Movement](#)

[KFC Launch Day – Facebook Video](#)

[KFC Sea Turtle – Youtube Video](#)

[Creative Boom – Korallion: Fantasy Paper Coral Art](#)

[PLAYLOOP - Exhibition Highlight Video](#)

[‘The Making of PLAYLOOP’ - Short Documentary](#)

[PLAYLOOP - Performance Dance Video](#)

[Creative Boom - Fast Love series](#)

## CONTACT



NATALIEWONG@PAPERSNEAKER.COM



@PAPERSNEAKER



+44 7802 500618/ +852 6403 3038



WWW.PAPERSNEAKER.COM

