

Artist: Wong Mei Yin Hazel (**HW**, hereafter)

Coordinator: Chinatsu Igarashi (**CI**, hereafter), Sapporo Tenjinyama Art Studio

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**CI:** Can you tell us specifically about your second stay? How has it been?

**HW:** My second stay was from January to July --

**CI:** Six months. That was long, wasn't that?

**HW:** Quite long. And I hadn't imagined [about the opportunity] before because I actually came here by chance. I mean I planned, but I was confirmed just last November. So, for me, everything was so sudden. Sometimes I still think "Oh, why am I here?" It's like a dream -- just, "what happened?" because everything is different here compared to my country. And also, the people --because people cannot come from Hong Kong now, most of the time, even though I've made some new friends here. It's like another new world here because I can't see the people I'm familiar with in Hong Kong. So, for me this is like another world, and I just try to explore it from winter to summer. Have you seen the video [which was presented in the show "Sprout-colored Glasses"]?

**CI:** Yes.

**HW:** It's like a foreigner's eyes to keep exploring to see... Even though it's just snow falling, I can sit back and look at it for so long. I know for you guys maybe it sounds crazy because you've always seen it in Hokkaido, but... most of it [\*the scenery in Hokkaido] really shocked me out. How it's been... Because I had to go to school and I also had some projects in Hong Kong, actually it's been quite busy, but I always try to balance. I want to balance all the things; I want to have a good community here. I live here for one year, so I can't ignore everything here. I want to focus on the life here, but I also need to do the Hong Kong works to stay in the connection with Hong Kong and to earn money. Study [at a language school], for me, is not the priority, but it helps me sometimes to learn the culture and to talk to people. I know that in Tenjinyama, most of you speak English with me, but on the street, no one does. So, sometimes, for simple conversations, I can still understand or use Japanese to communicate, so [that is] good this time.

**CI:** Okay.

**HW:** About artmaking... I have a very deep feeling for it because I've seen so many new things here and they gave me a lot of inspiration. Also, a lot of time and space for me to focus on the works I do, this time. In Hong Kong, I always have so many people to meet. I have work, and so many things I have to do there, and I cannot concentrate on making my work. The last time I painted on an actual wood board was two or three years ago -- because after that, they had a demonstration. And I just didn't want to paint. After my last time in Tenjinyama, I couldn't paint, like, totally. I just felt, "What's the point of making paintings?" Then I started making zines because that way I can publish them and tell stories to many people. Then, this time, it was a chance for me to be back at painting. And I'm really happy -- actually, I love painting.

**CI:** Nice. I've read some articles about zine cultures in Hong Kong, and it was fascinating to learn that it's becoming something people call a movement.

**HW:** Yes, yes. There is a community [of zine makers]. Is zine popular in Hokkaido?

**CI:** I don't really think so.

**HW:** Ah. I wondered because in Tokyo it is quite popular, isn't it?

**CI:** Yes, yes.

**HW:** There are some zine shops and other things over there, I've visited some three years ago... I loved the bookstores in Tokyo.

**CI:** That's beautiful. Have you found any zine makers in Sapporo this time?

**HW:** No! Do you know any?

**CI:** I personally don't know—

**HW:** Oh, Ryotaro! (laughing)

**CI:** Ah, he's the one! (laughing)

**HW:** I think some artists make zines, like Yuya Suzuki—he might just publish artbooks not zines, but-- and Chiami [Sekine], but she's in New York now.

**CI:** I see. I've found out about this very recently, but this summer we will have NEVER MIND THE BOOKS, which is a zine showcasing event in Sapporo. And that might be the only big opportunity of presentation here.

**HW:** I see. So, we still have a zine event here?

**CI:** Yes, but I think this is one of few.

**HW:** Ah. In Hong Kong, the big zine event also hosts once a year. It's a good opportunity for us to meet artists, bookstores, publishers, and earn money. We love joining zine events, as it is part of our important annual event, and push us to make new works.

**CI:** Good to know. You said you've restarted painting after you came back to Sapporo. How did that affect your practice?

**HW:** Because I always separate zines and paintings, zines for me are really a communication with audience. So, I make them very simple to help people with understanding it. But, for paintings, I don't have to care about anyone. Painting, for me, is just for myself. I paint it, and it's done. Sometimes, if people like it, or if I can sell it, it's a bonus for me, but I'm not asking people to understand anything when they look at the painting. But this time, I made a lot of paintings. Some of them are already sent to an exhibition in Hong Kong. And some people in Hong Kong, my friends, told me that they are happy to see me painting again, and that they can feel the difference between this year's paintings and the ones from two to three years ago. They say they are so different. They can see it. I can't see it, so I don't know, but I see that's interesting.

**CI:** Have they told you how those paintings are different?

**HW:** They think my paintings before are a little more complicated, but this time, they think things are simpler. They say they are so different, but I don't know.

**CI:** You had an open studio this past winter. Can you talk about that?

**HW:** Yes, yes. It was a sudden event. There, I showed some zines from Hong Kong, and I was very happy about that. It was also the first time I used the bigger studio [=Studio Apartment C] and I felt very good. It was a good experience for me, the open studio.

**CI:** I see. Shall we move onto the next question... Have you been acquainted with anyone/anything new this time?

**HW:** Yes, many new things. Even though I was in the place I'd known, everything, to me, felt so new. Like, the people and the artists I met this time – actually, all of them were new to me. Masago san [\*Masayoshi Masago], Miyuki san [\*Miyuki Oka] ... I love Masago san's design works so much, I'd seen his design before even though I've never met him, and I was like "Oh, this design is very good!". When I finally met him in person, and every time I see him, I always say "Your design is so good, I love your design"! (laughing) I really appreciate that I get to communicate with different artists I met this year –Eiko san [\*Eiko Soga], too—and so many things. Because most of them are older than me, I learn from them and get some experience. I can also hear about Sapporo, Hokkaido, or Japan, the culture... they told me a lot. I'm really happy and thankful to them.

**CI:** This time, because of the coronavirus, you didn't get to see many general citizens [other than artists] or learn from them. But you said you learned a lot about Sapporo or Hokkaido from the artists in Tenjinyama. That's actually very interesting.

**HW:** Yes. Of course, from you guys, staff in Tenjinyama, too.

**CI:** I see. Do you think it was better if you could see and get to know more general people?

**HW:** Umm... As I know some general people from my school and from the street, so I think it's quite balanced. It's quite okay.

**CI:** Okay, I see. Now, let's talk about the exhibition. Can you please tell us about the shows/exhibitions/projects you've been involved in during this residency, outside of this facility?

**HW:** Before this past New Year's Day, I had a little freelance works, just for small events and designs, but maybe because the Covid situation is getting better in Hong Kong, art shows and events there are, now, like a boom. I think it's also because it's a pause period for demonstration now, and so people have so many things to say. That's why they want to create art events and exhibitions now. And I think that's why I have so many projects I've got to involved in over in Hong Kong last six months. Exhibitions were my promise to self because our languages are different, and you guys might not know what I've been doing. Like, "What are you doing everyday?". So, I thought, "Okay, I will make an exhibition for you guys. Or, at least for myself", to show what I've actually been doing with the last six months. And I hope it's told!

**CI:** Yes, I do see your hard work. But really, you don't have to make promise to us! (laughing)

**HW:** I know, so that's half for myself! (laughing)

**CI:** Very neat!

**HW:** I'm just this kind of person.

**CI:** I know. You are very hardworking.

**HW:** Arigato [\*thank you]. I can't stop. I always have to make myself busy.

**CI:** Can you please tell us about your solo show at Tenjinyama? The title is very interesting, first of all. What does it mean?

**HW:** Yes, it's called 'Sprout-colored Glasses'. Have you ever heard of this thing called "rose-colored glasses"?

**CI:** No, I haven't.

**HW:** You can google it.

**CI:** (While googling "rose-colored glasses") Is that a song?

**HW:** No, it's a phrase. It means, when you wear the rose-colored glasses, you will see the world very beautifully and everything seems good. It's a little naïve because you're ignoring the reality when this happens.

**CI:** I see...

**HW:** It can go both good way and bad way, just depends. As I've said, I always like to see the world like a foreigner, an outsider. And this time, I felt really like an outsider. I felt like always wearing the glasses to see the world filtered. And this color [\*sprout color], actually, is the spring color in Sapporo, I think. Of, around April or May. During that period, I always saw this color and so I thought, "Maybe I can just change the word 'rose' because rose doesn't belong to me while this color [does]", so I changed the color. It's like a Sapporo color to me. When I'm wearing those glasses, I'm in a beautiful world, but I know of course, not actually. Even though in Sapporo, we still have many things, not just those that are beautiful. We still have problems, but because I'm a foreigner, I know only a little bit of it. Especially I'm out of Hong Kong now, everything here is so beautiful. It's so good. I'm like wearing the glasses and ignore the reality.

**CI:** Reality of Hong Kong, too?

**HW:** Yes. Can we move [to the exhibition space]?

**CI:** Of course.

**HW:** These paintings, they are actually friends.

**CI:** Friends.

**HW:** Everyday I have to check the news about Hong Kong and that made me feel daunting, but everything I see outside – like, this is a fox, I saw a fox -- was very pretty. So, I thought, I always get the contrast. That's what these works are about.

**CI:** I see.

**HW:** Also, this manga. This is a scene from Hakodate, actually. After the sight-seeing, I just stayed there and saw many young people running down the mountain. They looked so happy – they were the happy ones. They were all so young and it was good. But because of their running, the gesture, I remembered the young people running from the protest in Hong Kong. Even though I see so many things here, both good and bad, I always remember things in Hong Kong

and make comparison. “Why? Why Hong Kong is like this and here it’s so different?” All these “Why? Why? Why?” ... they made me have so many ideas and inspiration.

**CI:** Interesting.

**HW:** But some of them are just small thinking about the city.

**CI:** Okay. Now I remember you’ve explained in the first interview how you’ve been attracted to small things.

**HW:** Yes, yes. This is just a tea pot in front of me and this is the first sakura, people... Everything is so small, but I believe small things are essential in our life because when they are connected together, it becomes our life.

**CI:** I see.

**HW:** This exhibition has three parts; “megane [\*glasses]”, “e [=paintings]”, and “ZINE”. And this [movie piece called ‘megane’] is very casual work. I didn’t expect to make this as a work first.

**CI:** I understand, from that you’ve said you’d always worked in two dimensional medium. Is this the first time—

**HW:** Yes, this is my first time. But, when I paint, or before I paint, most of the time I take a lot of photos or go different places to explore and see. So, this is actually my visions of the cities, from winter to summer. I also liked when Mami [\*Mami Odai, AIR Director at Tenjinyama] called it a video diary. I thought, “This term is quite good” because for me, this is not a very serious work and I just wanted to share the world I see, or how I vision.

**CI:** Through your glasses?

**HW:** Yes, yes. Some parts of it became my paintings and drawings. Maybe you can find this scene from this part, and this from that...

**CI:** Yes, yes.

**HW:** So, that’s why I call it “megane”. And these are just some doodles. Doodle dictionary.

**CI:** Okay, then these two [pieces from the section “megane”] are like sketches?

**HW:** Hmm, maybe more like initials. Very random. Very casual. Because I am not a video artist. It’s just that I always take so many photos.

**CI:** I see.

**HW:** In this part are paintings. Still very small because my paintings are very small. They are about life and of my imagination from this city.

**CI:** Ah, I see... Oh, these look like the views at Tenjinyama Park.

**HW:** Yes, they are, so that people can notice [laughing] But actually, there are so many things [in the paintings]! In my works I choose the things I like and keep them. Mostly the buildings [are edited out], because I don’t like to paint them... I don’t know why, maybe they are too artificial?

**CI:** So, nature drives you more to paint?

**HW:** Yes.

**CI:** I see. I think this is the first time for me to see your works in person—

**HW:** This one, I painted with only fifteen minutes. (laughing) It was for the poster of the exhibition, so I worked on it so casually that I don't feel like it's an actual painting. Of course, it's a painting, but in a very casual way. (Pointing over three paintings from the section "e") [In the other hand,] This kind of paintings are not that casual.

**CI:** Okay. I see a lot of textures going on in these [three] paintings.

**HW:** Yes... Texture is very important in paintings. Yes, yes. ...This is the road to my school, and this is from the time I went to eat soup curry near here and the window view was very attractive. The blue color... It was so beautiful, but it was so hard to take photos [of the color]. So, I just painted it. This is *otto*. I do it with my friend. This issue was at the artbook fair in Hong Kong around February. I had it printed in Hong Kong.

**CI:** Ah! The one you said you'd tried lithograph for?

**HW:** Yes, yes! Because I like that printing method so much. Lithograph. My friend printed it and then I received it in March to show it here because I did it here.

**CI:** How long did it take you to finish this?

**HW:** Actually, very fast. If I concentrate, I can do it within two weeks. Like most of my paintings –I do them [\*paintings] within two days.

**CI:** That's insane! (laughing)

**HW:** Yes! (laughing) My thinking is what always takes so long, but I have to paint very fast because, I have to confirm that my feeling is lasted for the whole painting period. That's why I choose the wood board and acrylic paints. I tried oil painting before, but it was totally not okay for me. My emotion didn't last for such a long painting period. I think there are "emotions of painting". When you do the painting, it's very important. It will affect your paintings. But, some of my friends, they also do paintings, but they don't have this kind of concern. It's totally different. I think it just depends on people and character.

**CI:** It's more like "your method"?

**HW:** Yes, yes. So, when I have an idea, I can do it so fast. Everything. I have to do it so fast. This manga has some scenes from the movie. I will keep drawing one thing if I'm still interested in it. I think, this one -- I will keep working on it and make a new one in Hong Kong next year.

**CI:** That sounds nice. I've also found some of the printing techniques very unique. This one, the texture is quite intricate –Is this of woodblocks?

**HW:** No, these were just printed in Hong Kong. But yes, I also love this effect. This [\*exhibition postcard], I printed in Tenjinyama. I feel so happy for this because I kept trying in the office...

**CI:** Oh, yes, I saw you struggling with all these back-and-forth... I'm also happy to see the result of it! Do you have anything to add about your solo show?

**HW:** Do you have any more questions?

**CI:** Well, what people were you imagining as the audience while preparing for this show? Were they your local people in Hong Kong, or in Sapporo?

**HW:** I think these works are not made for Hong Kong people. It's for the people here. I have some Hong Kong friends here and they will come next Sunday, but I feel a little embarrassing.

**CI:** Why feel embarrassing?

**HW:** Because they can read the message. They can understand. So, I feel a little embarrassing. But for you guys, I think we have a little distance because we have come from different places. That's why I can, sometimes, do it very directly. And even though I do it directly, maybe you may not fully understand, so I can feel free to make these artworks. But also because I want to show what I see or what a foreigner sees here, and how a foreigner get affected by Sapporo, the space, I'm doing this exhibition really for myself and also for people here. Actually, before the exhibition, I felt a little bit nervous about the movie because I'm not a professional film artist. And the film was of just daily shots. So, I felt like, "Ugh, if some film artist sees this work, what would they say to me..." [laughing] But now, it's okay as the feedback here is quite okay. It's also showing in Hong Kong, but I like the feedback here more than in Hong Kong. It's really because you guys understand where this is.

**CI:** Yes, we are familiar with the landscape itself. So, you are showing this video work in Hong Kong, too?

**HW:** Yes, yes. Just this one.

**CI:** Is that in a museum exhibition? Or, is it a gallery show?

**HW:** No, no. It's in an art center. The same thing (is screening), but different feedback. Very different.

**CI:** What did Hong Kong people say about the work?

**HW:** Some of them said they can see, sometimes, a little bit of my emotions. But, I think, maybe it just depends... because some people here also says they see my emotions. In Sapporo. From that movie. And then in Hong Kong, because they don't know the place I talk about, mostly they are just like "Oh, I miss Japan!" or something like that. This is out of my expectation, but the feedback I get here, by my friends – they live here and they saw the video – was also out of my expectation because they [said they] felt it's so touching, so familiar, but so different. Maybe because... well, I don't know why... but it's so funny to take these kinds of feedbacks.

**CI:** Okay. I think that's all for now for this show. Now, what is your next move?

**HW:** My next move? I will move out of Tenjinyama...

**CI:** You're literally moving!

**HW:** I think it's one, independent living. Because, as I said, this is my first time living alone<sup>1</sup>. And also, because I already finished my projects in Hong Kong and

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<sup>1</sup> A 2020 research by the Economist named Hong Kong as among the cities which require the highest cost of living (<https://www.eiu.com/n/worldwide-cost-of-living-paris-and-zurich-join-hong-kong-as-the-worlds-most-expensive-cities/> -Last visited by the writer on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

黃美諺 / **Wong Mei Yin Hazel**

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Tenjinyama, I can now finally focus on what I really wanted to do after them. Maybe I want to explore more in Sapporo or Hokkaido and try to enjoy the freedom. And see if there's any opportunity for my art here.

**CI:** I see. I think that is all for the second part. Thank you very much!

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According to the artist, therefore, it is common for younger adults there to live with their parents or roommates and never live on their own to afford their cost of living.