

# CYRUS TANG

*Time Fell Asleep in the Evening Rain*

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IMAGES > [Front cover] Cyrus Tang, *Tree Study 1* [detail], 2022, pigment print on cotton rag, 65.5 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery.



IMAGES > Cyrus Tang, *Time fell asleep in the evening rain* [installation view], 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



# CYRUS TANG

## *Time Fell Asleep in the Evening Rain*

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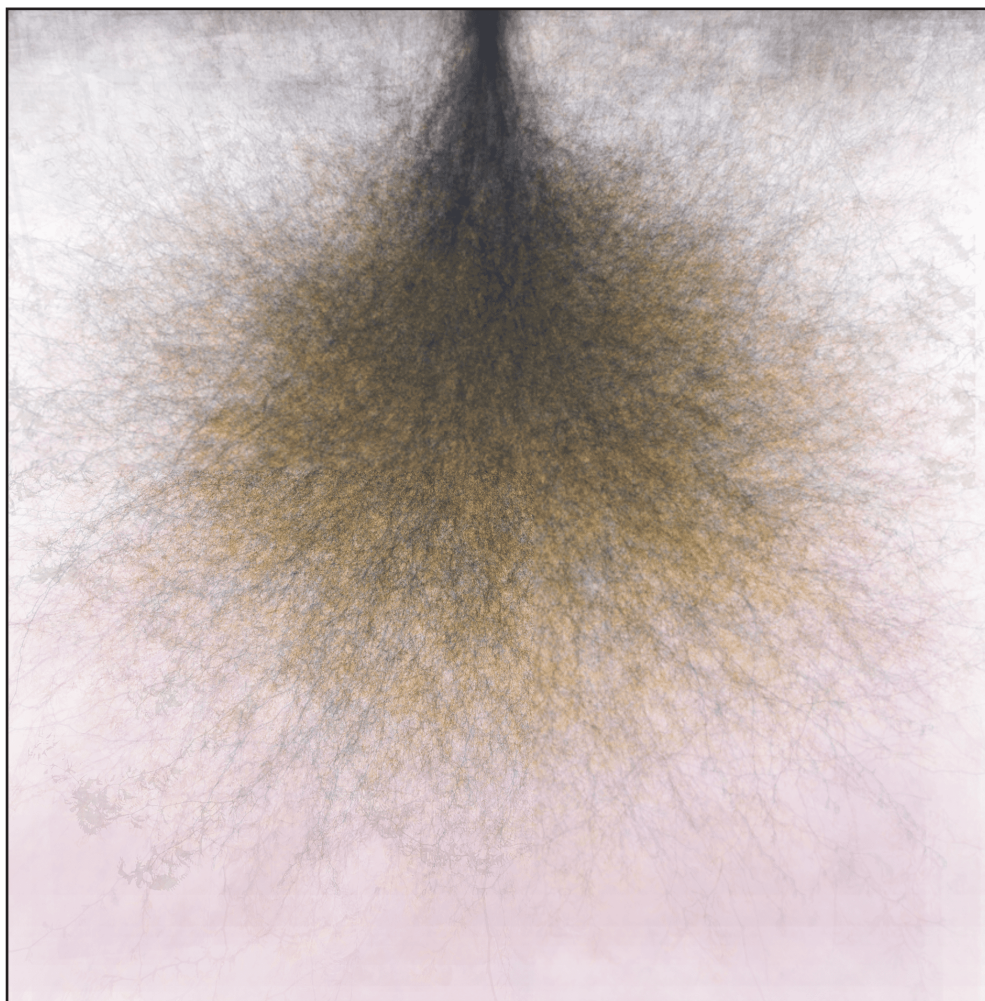
Cyrus Tang's new series of photographic images captures the hazy, complex, blur of emotions that many of us experienced during the extended lockdown periods in Melbourne. The repercussions of that experience are yet to be fully understood, but certain commonalities are already known. Primary among them is the unusual sense of time, and an inability to locate events and occurrences as the linear trajectory of days and weeks became distorted with repetition and recurring cycles. Everything felt at once very close and very far away. There was a stifling stillness and a sense of solitude, all of which is poignantly captured in each of Tang's weblike images.

During Melbourne's lockdowns, Tang was not able to access her studio, which provided her with the opportunity of focussing only on photography for close to two years. Tang embarked on a project that reflected the lockdown experience in both form and process. Every day for periods of more than 100 days, over the course of six months in 2020, Tang photographed the same subjects. Each day the subject would be subtly different. These photographs have been digitally layered on top of each other, with hundreds of images contained within each work, to produce dense, vibrating scenes from the artist's local area.



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IMAGE > Cyrus Tang, *Time fell asleep in the evening rain* [installation view], 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



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IMAGE > Cyrus Tang, *Tree study - 2*, 2022, pigment print on cotton rag, 67.5 X 100cm. Image courtesy of the artist and ARCONe Gallery. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

The lockdowns allowed Tang to see things in more detail, particularly the small changes that occurred in her neighbourhood during her daily walks. The subjects of Tang's new series are quite mundane; trees, construction sites and traffic lights. These common phenomena took on a new resonance in the context of hard lockdown. Tang has explained that she had never really considered how houses were built before focussing on the local construction site day after day. The works, poignantly titled *Almost Home 1* and *Almost Home 2*, show the growth of the building. The linear mesh of the top half of the structure is less dense because it did not appear until later. These works provide a graphic insight into how the images have been constructed.

The new unframed works, created in 2021 are an extension work that Tang made in 2020, which was presented at ARC ONE Gallery in 2021 in an exhibition titled *Remember me when the sun goes down*. A selection of the earlier works, which are framed, are included in this exhibition. There is a noticeable difference between the earlier works and the new series, though they were both produced using the same process. Though the earlier images have an ambiguity to them, the supermarket shelves and pylons are still recognisable, the images are brighter and a little more dynamic. With the new series, Tang has moved further into the realm of abstraction, the images are more densely layered, which creates less distinct forms. In some cases, the image has been inverted, for example with *Tree Study - 2*, where the tree's branches have become the roots.



Tang has described her approach to the second series as creating a “weird fantasy”<sup>1</sup> Again, there is a direct relationship between the progression of the work and the experience of Melbourne’s lockdowns. The longer they went on, and the more of them we endured, the stranger things became. The lack of clarity, the inability to focus, the haziness and repetition all became more intense. The heightened strangeness is reflected in Tang’s second series, as the images have eerily transmuted into unfamiliar scenes.

One of the most haunting images in the series is the work titled *Stop*, featuring a red traffic light within a blurred fog. The red light, synonymous with waiting, perfectly captures the mood of lockdown. It also eloquently symbolises the title of the exhibition, *Time Fell Asleep in the Evening Rain*, as it signifies a halting. It is as though this light remained red as time rested and we all stood still waiting for it to wake.

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<sup>1</sup> Tang, Cyrus. In conversation with Juliette Hanson. 25.1.2022

The evolution of this body of work is in keeping with Tang’s constant experimentation and the expansion of ideas and techniques in her practice. She credits this attitude to the freedom afforded to her in her training at the Victorian College of the Arts. Already a highly skilled ceramicist, at the VCA Tang moved into working with clay. This new medium allowed her to lean into the idea of imperfection until it became deliberate destruction. Tang firstly experimented with the inevitable mishaps of the kiln firing process and then began attacking her sculptures with a homemade air-pressured rifle, complete with a lazer-pen for accuracy. These acts of demolition were captured with photography and video, which documented the explosive moments when solid forms turned to dust and rubble.



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IMAGE > Cyrus Tang, *Stop*, 2022, multi layered backlit on light box, 35 x 35 x 12cm. Edition 3+1AP. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery.



IMAGE > Cyrus Tang, *Time fell asleep in the evening rain* [installation view], 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

Tang's work has repeatedly addressed the theme of ephemerality, particularly in relation to memory and the experience of place and time. The new series once again explores the concepts of erosion and disappearance, and just as the everyday objects around Tang took on a new significance through lockdown, these concepts also became more meaningful. In these images, the subjects appear scratched, obscured or inverted, it is as if they too experienced a rift in their existence.

Tang is philosophical when it comes to loss. As she describes it, "erasure doesn't have to be negative"<sup>2</sup>, and overall, Tang does not see the limitations imposed by the pandemic in a negative way. She would not have produced this new body of work, using these particular methods and processes, without the periods of restriction. In explaining her response to the lockdowns, she refers to a Chinese proverb, "When you lose something, you remember everything"<sup>3</sup>. She believes that when something is taken away, its absence not only makes room for something new,

but it allows us to see that thing with more clarity and focus than before. This exhibition provides an opportunity to reflect on what was lost and what needs to be remembered. Perhaps we need to let time sleep for just a little longer.

Juliette Hanson  
Curator, March 2022

<sup>2</sup> Tang, Cyrus. In conversation with Juliette Hanson. 25.1.2022

<sup>3</sup> Tang, Cyrus. In conversation with Juliette Hanson. 25.1.2022



IMAGE > Portrait of Cyrus Tang. Image courtesy of the artist.

# CYRUS TANG

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Cyrus Tang is a Melbourne-based artist working with photography, sculpture and installation. Born in Hong Kong, Tang moved to Australia in 2003. She holds an Honours Degree in Fine Arts from the Victoria College of the Arts and a Master of Fine Arts from Monash University. Tang has undertaken residencies in Finland, South Korea, France and Canada. Her work has been shortlisted for numerous prestigious prizes including the Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong (2021) and the William and the Winifred Bowness Photography Prize, Monash Gallery of Art (2020). Tang was awarded the McClelland National Sculpture Prize in 2020.

Cyrus Tang is represented by ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne.

<http://www.tangcyrus.com/>

# LIST OF WORKS

<i>Tree study - 1, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 67.5 X 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$3,300	<i>Almost home - 1, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 67.5 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$2,800	<i>Solider on, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 80 x 80 cm. Edition 5+2AP \$3,300
<i>Tree study - 2, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 80 X 80cm. Edition 5+2AP \$2,200	<i>Almost home - 2, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 80 x 80cm. Edition 5+2AP \$3,300	<i>Vermont, 2020</i> pigment print on cotton rag, mounted on dibond and framed with reflection- controlled glass, 135 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$5,800
<i>Tree study - 3, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 67.5 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$2,200	<i>Carpark, 2022</i> pigment print on cotton rag mounted on dibond, 67.5 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$3,300	

# LIST OF WORKS

<i>Sky Orchestra, 2020</i> pigment print on cotton rag, mounted on dibond and framed with reflection- controlled glass, 135 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$5,800	<i>Supermarket, 2021</i> pigment print on cotton rag, mounted on dibond and framed with reflection- controlled glass, 135 x 100cm. Edition 5+2AP \$5,800
<i>Tower, 2021</i> pigment print on cotton rag, mounted on dibond and framed with reflection- controlled glass, 90 x 90cm. Edition 5+2AP \$3,800	<i>Burwood, 2021</i> multi layered backlit on light box, 35 x 50cm. Edition 3+1AP \$4,400
<i>Sky study - 6 am to 9 pm, 2022</i> clear film on acrylic, dimensions variable POA	<i>Stop, 2022</i> multi layered backlit on light box, 35 x 35 x 12cm. Edition 3+1AP \$3,300

Prices are inclusive of GST





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IMAGE > Cyrus Tang, *Time fell asleep in the evening rain* [installation view], 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This exhibition is presented as part of PHOTO 2022.

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