Asia Society show marks its 30th year in Hong Kong

Artist Isaac Chong Wa’s Falling Carefully is a multimedia installation that connects the act of losing balance with street protest such as those that have taken place in Hong Kong. Installed in a large, bright gallery space at the Asia Society Hong Kong Centre, three figures of the same man—models of the artist himself—appear to be falling to different positions, adjacent to red text on the wall that reads “Falling Carefully.” Metal railings are embedded in the walls around the exhibition space.

“We tend to think of falling as a failure, but there’s something to be said for the solidarity in falling collectively,” the sculptor-artist-activist says. “The street is our stage, our Fell, our site for exposing those who are vulnerable.”

Chong’s piece is part of a group exhibition called “Neat Act: Contemporary Art from Hong Kong” that marks the 30th anniversary of the Asia Society Hong Kong Centre. Most of the works are new and address the city’s history and collective memories.

Artist Andrew Lek addresses the history of the Asia Society with his work on Justice Drive. Amazingly, a former explosives magazine of the old Victoria Harbour built on land that was claimed by Britain’s Royal Navy in the 19th Century.

Lek has used molotovs as a pun for the history of the site, using the different materials—charcoal, ink, salt, blocks, and copper—each of which has historical connotations. The copper version is copper used to make shell casing for bullets. It is enamelled with red from de-classified US and Hong Kong government documents, including an invitation to a dinner hosted by the Asia Society in 1964 that read: “The Future of Hong Kong.”

Christopher H. Ho, who has a background in architecture, focuses on the site’s location and architectural features in his work, “Always Stay Fighting While You’re Still A Little Hungry,” which explores the theme of militarism.

The outdoor work consists of four monochrome boxes designed in intricate detail and referencing historical American spectacles.

Viewers look through the model and an image of Mary Lousellston, an American gymnast, a symbol of militarism, during the 1967 riots 50 years later to photograph the sky in black and white.

The exhibition also includes works by recent Sigal Prouvost, Samson Young, Cui Wei, Urban Queen, and collective Zheng Minxie.

“Neat Act: Contemporary Art from Hong Kong,” until September 22, Asia Society Hong Kong Centre, 9 Justice Drive Admiralty, Hong Kong, 10am-10pm. Free admission.