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**An Unenviable Obsession: The Failure of Superficiality in Southern Chinese Contemporary Art**

This paper will consider the work of 3 contemporary Chinese artists; Yang Yong (Shenzhen), Wilson Shieh (Hong Kong) and Cao Fei (Guangzhou). Of particular interest are the distinct and idiosyncratic ways these artists seek to engage with, and to some degree represent, contemporary popular culture. In their concerns with youth culture and popular stereotypes we find a revealing diversity of views on personal politics, self-representation and escapism. Focusing on Cao Fei's cos-play and "China Tracy" works, Shieh's "Fitting Room" and Yang's "The Cruel Diary of Youth," the paper explores the obsessively superficial quality of the works and how they, overtly or implicitly, speak to conditions of contemporary China, shifting between Hong Kong, Shenzhen and mainland-China.