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Dying for Andy Lau

Two artists have pieced together all the Hong Kong idol's death scenes into one short film

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ANDY LAU lies shuddering on the floor.

Over keening female vocals and melodramatic strings, the Heavenly King's eyes bulge. His mouth foams with too-red blood. He dies.

Jump-cut.

Andy – it is first-name basis in idol-land – jumps off a building. Dressed in a pristine white Mao suit, he lands with a thud. Blood seeps from under his aquiline profile. He dies.

And so it goes in a video-art installation which puts together Lau's death scenes from his two-decade-long film career.

Titled *Andy Forever*, it is a collaboration between Singaporean artist Emily Chua, 23, and Chinese-American Rutherford Chang, 24.

The 16 clips are arranged chronologically into a 25-minute segment, which is then shown on a loop on a television screen.

In their spartan room in a conservation terrace house in Rowell Road, shared with other artists, Chua and Chang try to explain the impetus for the project.

They met in Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut where she was studying art and history and he was reading psychology.

“We were just noticing how Andy Lau has had such a prolific career, having made 122 movies,” says Chua. “It's become impossible to separate the person from the actor.”

Watching the video, it is easy to pick out the formulaic conventions of Hong Kong cinema. But the work also addresses oblique issues, such as the making of a star, celluloid immortality and copyright.

Like Andy Warhol's soup cans and portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando and Elvis Presley, Andy Forever elevates ready-made pop culture into high art. Except, in this case, it is from an Asian perspective.

In putting the work together last month, the duo bought and borrowed Lau's movies on DVD and combed the footage for death scenes. They would sit down and watch eight movies in a row, often skipping straight to the end to see if his character dies.

Quips Chua: "Neither of us has dealt with so much pulp before."

Besides Andy Forever, they have also been showing an ongoing work, The Epic, at Tanjong Pagar MRT station since Oct 1.

In this work, they black out everything on the front page of The Straits Times every day, leaving only the human "flesh" bits. Each day, they add a page on the wall, where it has since become a continuous black line.

Chang says, "It highlights the accumulation of everyday human images which make up history."

Andy Forever is part of R(A) – Artists Take on Cinema at Plastique Kinetic Worms (61/63 Kerbau Road), which is on tomorrow until Nov 18.