

Hong Kong shark art protests at fin trade

June 27 2017, by Elaine Yu



George Wong (R), Parkview Arts Action founder, and his son Alex pose in front of Chinese artist Zheng Lu's artwork

A towering shark fin sculpture is the latest addition to Hong Kong's harbourfront as part of an artistic push against the infamous trade.

Hong Kong is one of the world's biggest markets for [shark fin](#), which is viewed by many Asians as a delicacy and is often served as a soup at expensive Chinese banquets.

The eight-metre-high (26 ft) stainless steel fin was created by Chinese artist Zheng Lu as part of an exhibition to highlight the threat to shark populations from human hunting.

Hosted at the Maritime Museum in central Hong Kong, it is a stone's throw from the neighbourhood of Sheung Wan, where dried seafood stores sell the fins.

Conservationists are becoming increasingly vocal about the trade, with some dressing in bloody shark costumes and lying down in front of one of the city's best-known restaurants earlier this month.

The new exhibition, entitled "On Sharks and Humanity", features paintings and sculptures as well as multimedia and interactive art.

Scarred and bloodstained ceramic sharks printed with Chinese-style motifs stand next to a shimmering electric blue installation in the shape of the fish.

Hong Kong-based Ho Siu Kee is one of 36 artists taking part in the show.

"People in my generation—their impression of sharks mainly comes from 'Jaws'," said Ho, who noted that humans kill sharks at vastly higher rates than the other way around.

Ho created a metal cage in the shape of a fin for the exhibition, inspired by an attack scene in the classic Steven Spielberg film, and photographed himself standing inside it in the sea during low tide.

George Wong, real estate developer and founder of Parkview Arts Action, commissioned the artworks and told AFP that finning "breaks my heart".

He has stopped eating shark fin and says he is trying to persuade his friends to follow suit.

More than 70 million sharks are killed every year, according to the World Wildlife Fund. Huge quantities of fins are exported annually to Hong Kong and most are then sent on to mainland China.

Hong Kong's consumption of sharks' fin soup has dropped over the years as activists campaign against the trade.

The government in 2013 said it would stop serving sharks' fin soup at official functions as "a good example".

Flag carrier Cathay Pacific banned the carriage of shark fins on all its flights in 2016.

But it is still readily available in seafood stores throughout the city and regularly appears on restaurant menus.

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