

beyond the third dimension

Victor Tan is shaping his artistic direction

It took the tragedy of blindness to open Victor Tan to his artistic potential. "I'm a Buddhist and we believe that nothing is permanent," says the La Salle-SIA undergraduate and former architecture student who lost his sight two years ago. "Going blind made me face the truth of life — that anything can happen at any time. But I'm young, so I have to do something with my life. There's no point in waiting for miracles to happen."

Instead, Tan set out to create them. "I felt a lot of fear initially, but I forced myself to do something that I really enjoy: art." It hasn't been easy for him — the course presented challenges for both Tan and his teachers, as they sought to find ways for him to complete the curriculum.

"I had to do studio and life drawings, but I couldn't use paper and pencil, so I started to use wire," he says by way of example. "We were supposed to do transparent drawings, so this had the same effect." Tan's sinuous sculptures of twisted wire explore spatial relationships as a metaphor for emotional ones.

Forms, especially cubes and rectangles, have become something of a preoccupation. "A lecturer said blind people couldn't do cubes or angled objects; I wanted to show her that I could do them if I wanted to."

His new dependence on touch has not only made Tan more conscious of shape and texture, it has also given him a greater awareness of his emotions "and how I feel about the outside world". These humanist leanings find physical expression in a series of balls, spheres and three-dimensional faces that pucker and fold, rising upwards as if in search of some unattainable goal. "Life is not a simple shape; there are small wrinkles on the surface — like skin. It is important to look below the surface to what is underneath."

He continues: "Life is like a ball. We have to push it along in front of us. If we stop pushing it will roll back and hurt us." With the momentum Victor Tan has already built up, there seems little danger of that happening. ●

BY STEPHANIE GREEN

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Victor Tan (pictured below with one of his sculptures) enjoys working with wire. "I don't need to worry about firing or about colour. I just worry about form. 'Visual' to me is something that I can feel with my hands."