

# *Wonderland*

March 6 - May 14, 2021

*Patty Chang*

*Dominique Fung*

*Hings Lim*

*Candice Lin*

*Ani Liu*

*Catalina Ouyang*

*Sydney Shen*

*Christine Wang*

*Ziyang Wu*

*Peter Wu+*

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## *Patty Chang*

*Shangri-La*, 2005

Single-channel video with sound, virtual installation

TRT: 40min

*Shangri-La* is a 2005 video installation documenting various attempts to recreate its fictional, eponymous subject, in the real-life Shangri-La, a town in China's Yunnan province renamed in 2002 to attract tourism.

By hiring local non-actors and using the existing economies to reproduce symbols such as the sacred snow mountain, the project reflects on the link between tourism, site specific artistic practices and documentary practices. These situations, shot in a hand-held and documentary fashion, are often rendered surrealist, as when one sees a mirror-faceted mountain being driven across the barren landscape.

In some way, the growth in Shangri-la can be seen as a microcosm of China itself. The capitalist industry of tourism props up a facade of the utopian socialist ideology, giving China it's unknown and unmapped blank slate to project it's fantasies and desires. As any touristic destination is made of locals and foreigners, the question of not ever knowing another person's perspective, lingers just below the surface of every interaction.





Image courtesy of the artist and Nicodim, Los Angeles

## *Dominique Fung*

*Midnight Catch*, 2020

Oil on canvas

39.4 x 39.4 inches

In Cantonese, *jook-sing* is a pejorative term for persons of Chinese descent who live overseas and identify more strongly with western culture. The term itself evolved poetically from the word for "bamboo pole." Bamboo rods are hollow and compartmentalized, so if one is to pour water in one end, it is trapped, unable to flow through to the other side.

Dominique Fung was born and raised in Ottawa, Canada, to first-generation parents from Shanghai and Hong Kong. At home, she spoke Cantonese, at school English. Her early artistic passions were informed by Vermeer, Manet, Rembrandt, and Goya, but her sense of Chinese heritage was largely informed by vessels and objects she saw at home and on display in the Asian art section during visits to the Met in New York.

The relics in the museum, Fung thought, were *jook-sing* like her: anonymously Asian in appearance, separated and oftentimes stolen from their original contexts by oceans, hemispheres, and centuries, imbued with identity by masters long since deceased. She imagined what the objects' lives were like when they were born, what they held within their bodies, who touched and used them, how they felt about it. She began to think of them as concubines, with personalities, secrets, and stories to share. She wondered what they'd look like with hair. She realized her relationship to her own Cantonese identity was shaded by a sort of 19th century Orientalism.

In her 2018 essay "Ornamentalism: A Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman," Anne Anlin Cheng defines 19th century Orientalism as such: "that opulence and sensuality are the signature components of Asiatic character; that Asia is always ancient, excessive, feminine, available, and decadent; that material consumption promises cultural possession; that there is no room ... for national, ethnic, or historical specificities." The Asian art section at the Met is Orientalist, thought Fung. In a way, so was she.





Image courtesy of the artist and Nicodim, Los Angeles

*Dominique Fung*

c.c.c., 2020

Oil on canvas

39.4 x 39.4 inches



Image courtesy of the artist and Nicodim, Los Angeles

*Dominique Fung*

*Western Imagination, 2020*

Oil on canvas

48 x 36 inches





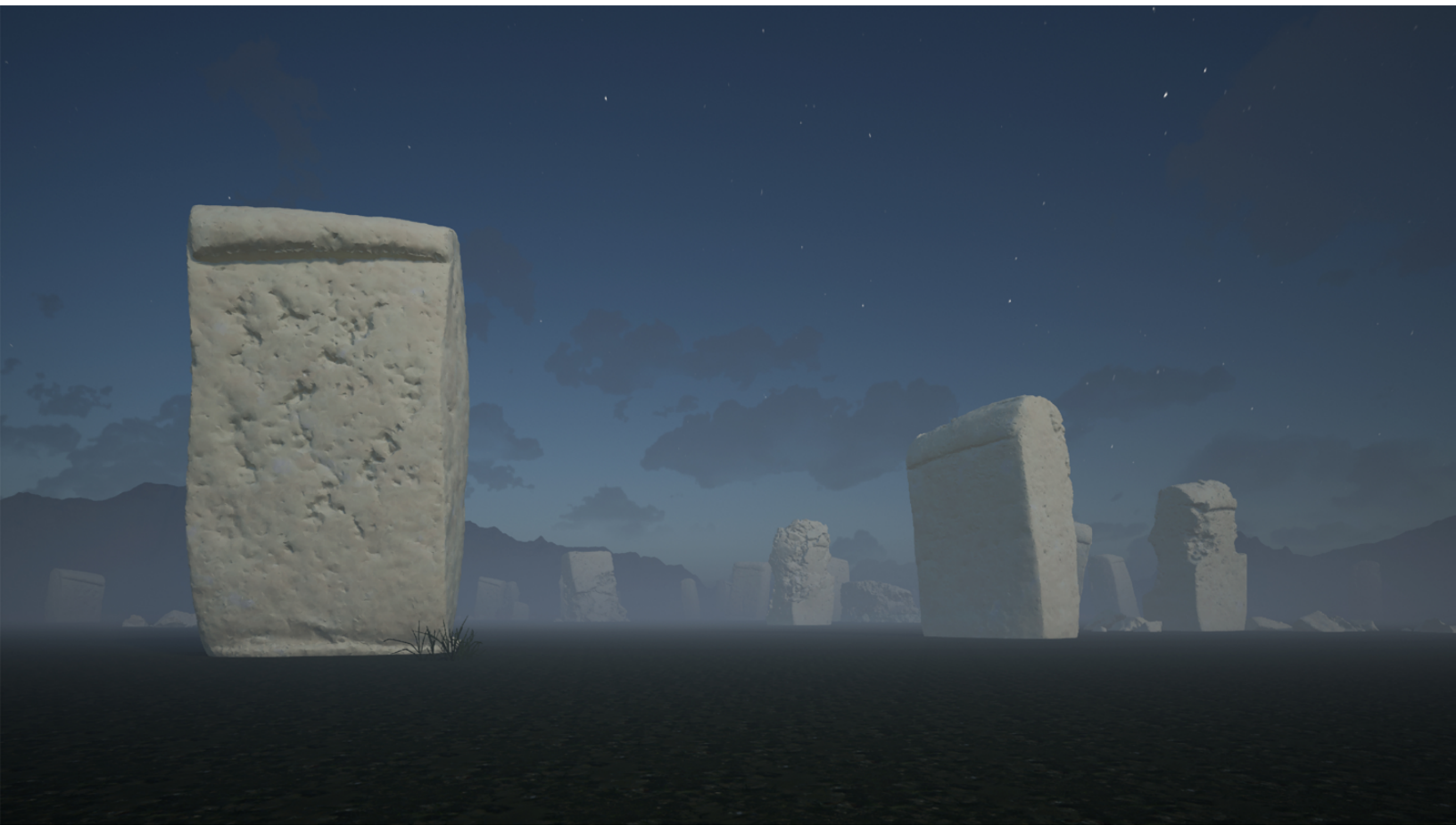
Image courtesy of the artist and Nicodim, Los Angeles

***Dominique Fung***

*Three Legged Vessel*, 2020

Oil on canvas on panel

24 x 20 inches



## *Hings Lim*

*Tofu Megalith*, 2021

3D models, photogrammetry, virtual installation

Dimensions variable

Situated in a liminal place, the seemingly prehistoric megalith of tofu enfolds the unfathomable past and the elusive future. In thinking of the origin of tofu and the history of migration, **Hings Lim**'s *Tofu Megalith* generates a monumental third space to contemplate the mutability of things and subvert the centrality of self. This project is an expansion of his performance piece *Tauhu* (2020) that recounts his distant childhood memory of growing up at a tofu factory owned by his relatives in Malaysia.





## *Candice Lin*

*A Gathering of Flesh Lumps*, 2021

3D models, photogrammetry, virtual installation with sound

Dimensions variable

*A Gathering of Flesh Lumps* is a virtual installation of three digital beings, created from photogrammetry images of wax and resin sculptures that resemble abstract carcasses of skinned, mammalian forms. These sculptures reference the bodies of humans, horses and other beings infected with the plague who were purportedly catapulted by Mongols into the city of Caffa (now Feodosia) during the 1346 Siege. It has been theorized that this early use of biological warfare contributed to the spread of the Black Plague in Europe, and is also a historical example of the way disease has been racialized and marked as Asiatic or foreign, a rhetoric that has been historically repeated and actively used by media and political leaders during this COVID-19 pandemic. As the viewer approaches these softly, breathing carcasses, they may notice that the shadows cast are mismatched in form and fleeting. These shadows are culled from the silhouettes of 19th century political cartoons which depict racist images of Chinese immigrants blamed with spreading the plague, leprosy and other diseases at the turn of the century.





*Ani Liu*

*Mind in the Machine: Psyche in the Age of Mechanical Production, 2017*

3D model of EEG textile, photo documentation, installation

Dimensions of original textile: 23 x 39 inches

This textile is generated from the EEG signals of a factory worker in China. The tenseness of each stitch reflects different emotional states of the worker throughout a working day. It is an exploration in imbuing the emotional mark of a human back into the process of mass production.

Automation has many functions, and plays a critical role in our technological advancement, but is it possible to embed automation with gestures as intimate as the mark of a brushstroke in a painting? Taking the cognitive signatures of a human via their EEG signals, brain wave activities are embedded into the CNC knitting process. Depending on the EEG signal- the tensility of the weaving is programmed to vary, reflecting the mark of the worker's "cognitive" hand. Depending on the mental stress levels over a day of work, the tensility varies and the fabric ripples in empathy.

This project stitches a portrait of the factory worker, through their fluctuating mental states throughout the day- capturing moments of frustration, focus, and meditative workflow. The resulting fabrics tell a story, and each one is unique to the worker and particular moment in time. There are many ways humans express themselves- what does this expression look like in the age of mechanical production? Is there a way to insert the mark of being human into the process? This project offers a moment of reflection- for both the consumer and the worker- to reflect on the labor, both mechanical and human, that is involved in our economy.





## *Catalina Ouyang*

*last laugh*, 2019

Single-channel video with sound, virtual installation of cathedral spires

TRT: 21min 49sec

Dimensions variable

*last laugh* is a video installation installed in an attic space, as a contemporary reference to the Gothic trope of the Madwoman in the Attic. On the ceiling, two avatars—a pug-human femme hybrid and a stone-faced cyborg missing an eye—deliver a fragmented monologue pulling from the language of the mental health industry, self-help, police interrogations, and personal memory.



## *Catalina Ouyang*

*font V*, 2020

Soapstone, horse hair, glue, abandoned wood, gifted honeycomb, raw egg, white vinegar

13 x 6 x 10 inches

This is part of a series of "fonts," or holy water basins, begun in 2016. Each "font" features a piece of hand-carved soapstone with a hollow carved into it, inside of which rests a raw egg that has had its shell eaten away by white vinegar. The egg is left as a wet, translucent, squishy bulb. Here, a mouth forms the hollow meant to hold holy water, but instead contains a porous egg in an obstructive gesture that indicates sound, speech, and silencing.





Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai

## ***Sydney Shen***

*Gunne Sax*, 2021

Wood, metal hardware

37.25 x 12 x 2 inches

These sculptures are based on violin-shaped punitive devices known as "shame fiddles" (or sometimes "scold's fiddles"), which were used in Medieval Europe to publicly humiliate people (frequently women) for petty crimes. The interior of each fiddle contains a distinctive maze—*Cicatrix* and *Haruspex* are walled labyrinths, while the nail grid of *Gunne Sax* evokes both carnival games and iron maidens. Within each maze are marbles—made from mirrored chrome or dinosaur gizzard stones—which suggests that the struggles of the victim locked into the shame fiddle are what moves the marbles around the maze in a futile game with no escape. These works are currently on view through March 13 at Sydney Shen's first solo exhibition in Asia, "Misery Whip" at Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai.



Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai

***Sydney Shen***

*Haruspex*, 2021

Wood, metal hardware

36 x 19.25 x 2 inches





Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai

***Sydney Shen***

*Cicatrix*, 2021

Wood, metal hardware, dinosaurs gastrolith stones

36 x 19.25 x 2 inches





Image courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles  
Photo: Chris Grunder

*Christine Wang*

*Volcano, 2020*

Oil on linen

48 x 48 inches

The original image is of the Mount Mayon eruption in the Philippines in January 2018. The volcano is labeled "the earth dying." The horses are labeled "you" and "me." The grass that the horses are standing on is labeled "the internet." Wang's painting *Volcano* captures the essence of the casual environmental destruction we are all facing today. The inaction taken by the horses demonstrates how many of us feel knowing that climate change will continue to get worse, but also knowing our personal actions against climate change are ineffective without drastic and global changes from within large governments and corporations.





Image courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles  
Photo: Chris Grunder

*Christine Wang*

*Looters, 2020*

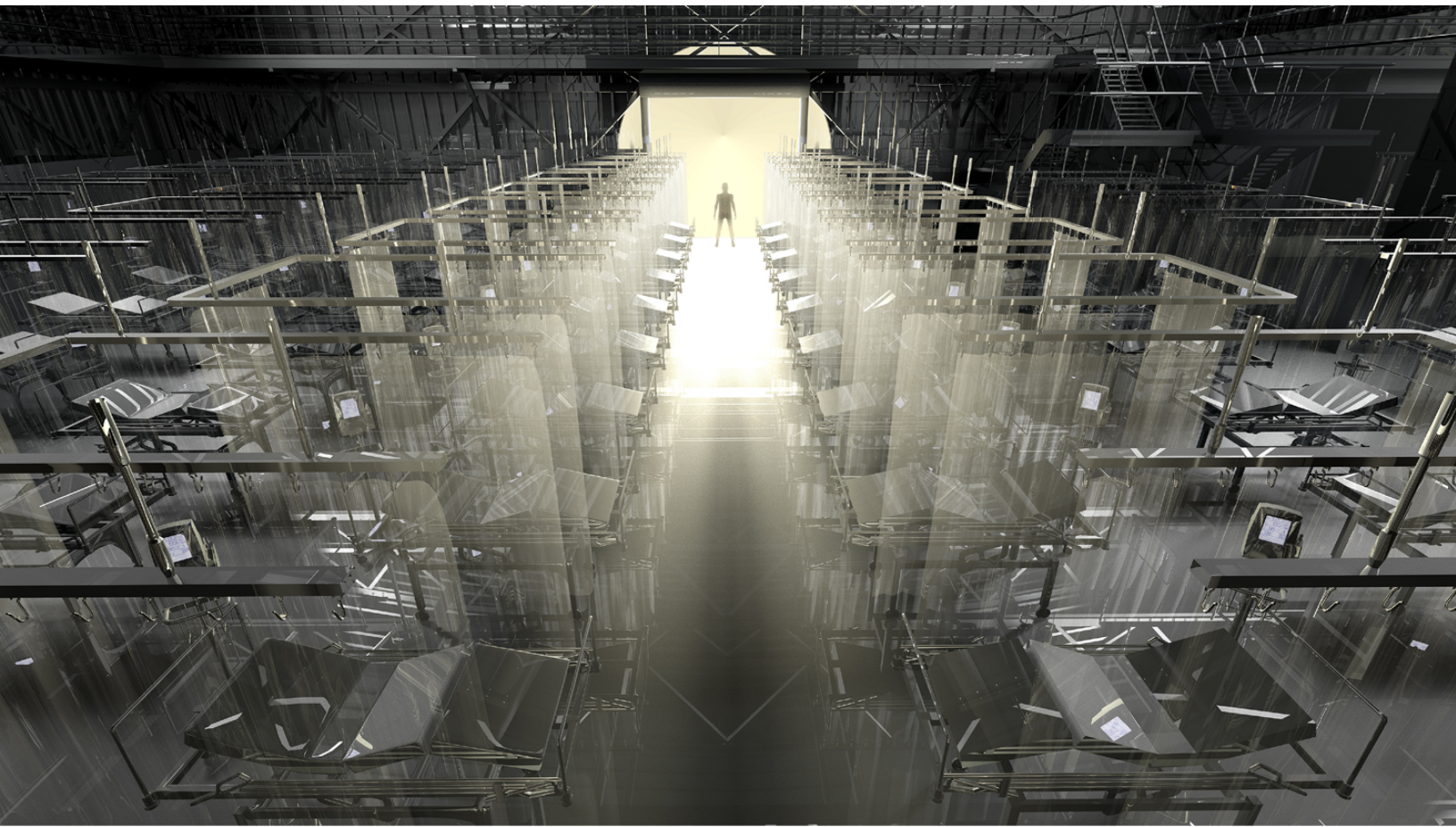
Acrylic on canvas

96 x 72 inches

Two different images equally split the frame, one on the top and one on the bottom. The top image is of figures around a store's front doors. The image is pixelated. Some figures have hoods on and are carrying bags. The bottom image is of (left to right) Nancy Pelosi, Mitch McConnell, Chuck Schumer, John Lewis, and other members of Congress all engaged in conversations with each other. They all wear dark suits with blue or red ties, and Pelosi wears a pearl necklace. Across the bottom of the top image reads "Amateur Looters" and across the bottom of the bottom image reads "Professional Looters".

Wang uses image quality to convey differing access to wealth. The top image is heavily pixelated and therefore abstracted, conflating "poor" image quality with "poor" people. The bottom image, however, is very high quality. The viewer can see the expressions of each person and the details in their clothing. The high-resolution image equates to easy access to wealth while the low-resolution image relates to lower class. Wang comments on our national beliefs around "right" and "wrong" with the top image being one lifted from an ABC7 News airing. Looting is punishable by law. Yet the folks who create those laws are getting paid much more than those who steal out of desperation. The irony here is that the working-class is punished for looting members of Congress "loot" the land and the working-class via corporate ties. The joke is that Congress is so good at looting, they made it their legal jobs.





*Ziyang Wu*

*Where Did Macy Go? (Scene 11), 2020*

3D models (still from video)

Dimensions variable

*Where Did Macy Go? (Scene 11)* is one of the last scenes taken from *Where Did Macy Go?*, an 11-episode animated video told through a series of reports of Macy's encounter with the epidemic, life during the quarantine, search for his grandfather's farm and his revival. The video discusses the collapse of old community structures, the emergence of a new community after decollectivization, Confucian obedience vs. social obedience, as well as the new tele-republic of home, "mask politics" and social justice under the pandemic. Originally posted on TikTok to challenge the possibility of online exhibitions, the work is a response to this era of volatility, complexity and confusion.





*Ziyang Wu*

*Where Did Macy Go? (Scene 6), 2020*

Color digital animated video with sound

TRT: 8min 57sec

*Where Did Macy Go? (Scene 6)* is a scene taken from *Where Did Macy Go?*, an 11-episode animated video told through a series of reports of Macy's encounter with the epidemic, life during the quarantine, search for his grandfather's farm and his revival. The video discusses the collapse of old community structures, the emergence of a new community after decollectivization, Confucian obedience vs. social obedience, as well as the new tele-republic of home, "mask politics" and social justice under the pandemic. Originally posted on TikTok to challenge the possibility of online exhibitions, the work is a response to this era of volatility, complexity and confusion.





*Peter Wu+*

*Assimilation/Annihilation, 2021*

3D neon, rubble, virtual environment

Dimensions variable

I once asked my father to write down the two words “assimilation” and “annihilation.” I noticed that my father’s handwriting was nearly identical to my own. My father, born in Hong Kong, was the first of his family to immigrate to Canada in the 1960s in hopes of building a better life. Shortly after deciding to settle in a small Canadian town near Windsor, Ontario, he opened a Chinese restaurant catering to the palate of an all-white community.

I was born in Windsor, Ontario and grew up in the family restaurant. My parents lovingly sacrificed everything for me so that I would have the opportunity to follow my own path. In this small town, however, I struggled to locate my identity and found myself culturally dissonant amidst a disproportionately white community. In an effort to adapt, it seemed easiest to try and fit in by leaning into self-deprecating racialized jokes that played on pernicious Asian stereotypes. These jokes, while an attempt to soothe the discomfort others felt with my presence, similarly sought to conceal my own incongruity while challenging the myth of the model minority.

Often times, when Asians are faced with racism and suffering there is a culturally normative tendency to default to silence. Here, the suppression of one’s pain is illustrated as a strength, demarcating the ability to endure (and presumably overcome) trauma or harm. This attribute is compounded through the generations of children that have been born through the Asian diaspora. It severs our cultural roots and masks our exclusion through invisibility.

Facing the violence and racism towards Asians which has become amplified by ignorance surrounding Coronavirus, we can no longer be silent. We must collectively voice the suffering that continues to be incited within our communities through racialized aggressions. Employing our vulnerability as a shared strength, our contestation must persist to not only combat assimilation but the cultural annihilation that will come from it.

- Peter Wu+

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