

Liminality as Battle-line

October 31 - November 5, 2018

Curated by Hejun Xu and Jingmei Yu

Curatorial Concept

While many social transformations that are taking place in the United States of America, women from another continent are battling a greater ambivalence - a question of complex self-identities as a result of the intersectional factors of national, cultural and gender identity. In fact, it is the result of a global reality, in which our present world, defined by a wide range of contradictory forces, is challenged by the constant negotiation between history and progression, the dissolution of national borders and diaspora, the emancipation and power.

Contemporary art, with an openness to a plethora of materials and inherent metaphors, embodies a narration of our reality to be constructed in the plural, and thus achieves to be perhaps the closest approach to encapsulate the contradictions of our time. *Liminality as Battle-Line* is an exhibition focusing on our contemporary reality in its exploration of the liminal realm associated with womanhood, international identities, social and cultural battles happening in the United States of America. It invites six female artists from different countries and cultures together to discuss their ideas and experiences created during their time spent in the United States.

In *Liminality as Battle-line*, the prototype of a wall is presented in a fictitious context in *Falsetto wll-002* (2018), which is the first artwork encountered by the audience. Ludovica Carbotta's artistic practice explores the notion of site, identity and participation. Her work acts as the first "threshold" of the exhibition, highlighting the presence of an imaginary structure that is in its own conversation with the space, context and surrounding objects, while also reminding the power of the unforeseen for those entering the exhibition.

The exhibition continues to Anh Thuy Nguyen's research of a more sentient subject. By investigating the "effect" of physical weight (steel) with the stillness of the ephemeral (silicone), her works transform the idea of liminality from spatial to psychological by associating the notions of connections and intimacy in works such as *Domestic Part I* (2018) and *Semiotics of Distance* (2017). The subjects of predeterminate distance and persistent connection once again appear in *Dependable Distance* (2018), where the stone object has the base to make it capable of standing, yet the metal frame has the base being bent and crooked, resulting in its dependence on the connection to the stone object's base to avoid falling.

Similar to Anh Thuy Nguyen, Jamie Shi signifies an embodied/impossible ideal that is bound by the structural and material limitation that metal provides. Erected from the wall, the antenna-like piece, *Antenna* (2018), fights against the gravitational pull while balancing itself on display at a parallel level with the floor. Signified by the extensions, power, singularity and stasis one might read into, the work gestures toward a constant struggle between the

location of genesis and newly occupied space. Liminality positioned at a precarious angle and tethered, the base projects subject identity as battleground for staging dissents, unruliness and urgency to call attention to bodies that voice differently.

Elaine Byrne's video *Borderline* (2018) focuses on a current political and social phenomenon – the growing nationalism and populism in the United States. Through the tranquility on the scenes of Tijuana border between Mexico and the U.S., the video explores the subject of nation-state border wall and the anxieties of sovereign impotence. In the corridor, a close-up shot of a concrete wall *Prototype #8* (2018) stands in contrast to *Falsetto wll-002* (2018). On top of this work, Elaine Byrne's research on the Cleveland Elementary School Shooting in 1979 is reflected in *I don't like Mondays* (2012). Byrne criticized the U.S. court's decision to the teenage female killer in regards to the female statue in both domestic environment and the wider society of the United States.

The subjects of womanhood and the female statue in the United States continue in discussion in *Noodled Pioneers* (2018), a special project created for the exhibition's opening night. Two performance artists, Pei-Ling Ho and Emily Smith, use their bodies and objects as vehicles to reflect and rethink the complex identities in the U.S. as women and witnesses. From two perspectives and backgrounds, the two artists respond to the same anxieties and confusion through nationality and daily lives. In this performance, audience will not only witness a clash of two cultures as performers interact within the exhibition space but will also experience the two characters' complex mentalities through the motion of their bodies' folding and unfolding.

The exhibition celebrates liminality as the new battle-line. In liminality, the expatriate female artist, armed with her inherited knowledge, enriched experience and trauma, finds herself at the cutting edge of her cultural battles, in which she creates art and watches it unraveling the subjects of her own battlings.