

Naiwen Chou

Naiwen Chou(b. 1994, Taipei, Taiwan)

Based in Zurich, Taiwanese artist Naiwen's work in sculpture, installation, and performance art probes memory, identity, and perception. Her art, shaped by her experience as a 'legal alien,' challenges societal norms and transcends traditional boundaries of nationality, color, and gender. Through abstracting personal narratives into visual forms, Naiwen's work prompts introspection and collective dialogue on identity in a global context. Furthermore, her art questions conventional notions of space and societal roles, encouraging discussions about navigating identity in an ever-changing world.

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Born in Taipei, Taiwan. Based in Zurich, Switzerland

Education

09. 2021-06.2024 Zürcher Hochschule der Künste MA Fine Arts Zurich, Switzerland
04. 2015- 04.2019 Tama Art University BA Fine Art Tokyo, Japan

Work

11. 2021-09. 2022 Artist assistant of Pedro Wirz

Selected group exhibition

02. 2024 Another Paradise, Zurich, Switzerland
02. 2024 ETERNAL ELEMENTS, Zurich, Switzerland
11. 2023 WHERE THERE IS EASE, THERE IS HOME, Uster, Switzerland
11. 2023 Freestyle II, Zurich, Switzerland
10. 2023 17. JUNGKUNST 2023, Wintertur, Switzerland
07. 2023 METAMORPHING FAILURES, Zurich, Switzerland
05. 2023 NO RISK NO RISK, Bern, Switzerland
04. 2023 Kunst im Nomad 2023, Basel, Switzerland
11. 2022 MEET/ CLASH/ LOSE / FIND, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
09. 2022 The very last words from the periphery II, Zurich, Switzerland
07. 2022 Sommerprojekt 2022, Erlenbach, Switzerland
08. 2022 CITIES ON THE MOVE- We Can't Forget How To Move, Bangkok, Thailand
04. 2022 Attitude, ZHdK Annual Report, Zurich, Switzerland
09. 2019 Mitsui Fudosan Retail Management Co., Ltd Office Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan
04. 2019 Emerging Artists 2019 Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan
03. 2019 Cross Over Taiwan International Student Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan
02. 2019 Joint Graduation Exhibition of five Universities in Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
05. 2018 Textiles, people and prayer shapes, Tokyo, Japan
05. 2017 Behavior and records, Tokyo, Japan
05. 2017 20th JAALA International Art Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan

Performance

05. 2023 Flower in a greenhouse, (30 mins), NO RISK NO RISK, Bern, Switzerland
05. 2023 Flower in a greenhouse (30 mins), ACT Performance Festival, Zurich, Switzerland
05. 2022 Being a canvas (25 mins), ACT Performance Festival, Biel, Switzerland
03. 2022 Be a canvas (24mins), Terra Omnium, Zurich Sustainability Week, Zurich, Switzerland

Other experiences

07. 2022 Summer school programm by ZHdK Share Campus, Bangkok, Thailand
08.2022-12.2022 Transcultural collaboration 2022, Singapore, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
11. 2024-12.2024 Saari Residence 2024, Hietamäki, Finland (awarded)

<https://naiwenchou.com/>

01 Once upon a time

2022-2023, engobe, ceramic, dimensions variable





17th JUNGKUNST, Oct 2023, Wintertur, Switerland, photo credit: Lei Tuo



17th JUNGKUNST, Oct 2023, Wintertur, Switerland, photo credit: Lei Tuo

"Once Upon a Time" invites visitors on a captivating journey through the intricate interplay of memory, identity, and belonging. This immersive art installation delves into the ephemeral nature of memory and its profound influence on shaping our sense of self and relationships.

Inspired by the exploration of memory concepts, the artist poses thought-provoking questions: If our bodies disappear, will our memories also vanish? Does the past retain its essence once memories fade away? Are memories subject to hierarchies within the larger realm of collective memory?

In response to these inquiries, the artist conceived the idea of preserving memories in a unique manner. Unlike traditional mediums of expression like words and images, the artist sought to provide memories with space for self-growth, crafting a new form of expression separate from individual consciousness. The result is "Once Upon a Time," a multisensory exploration of memory.

Each sculpture within "Once Upon a Time" is infused with the emotional resonance of its origin. The shapes, colors, and textures are meticulously crafted to reflect the complex emotions and sensations associated with these memories. Through this process, the artist materializes the intangible, retaining a poetic aspect that is both readable and enigmatic.



ETERNAL ELEMENTS, Feb 2024, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Anna Maysuk



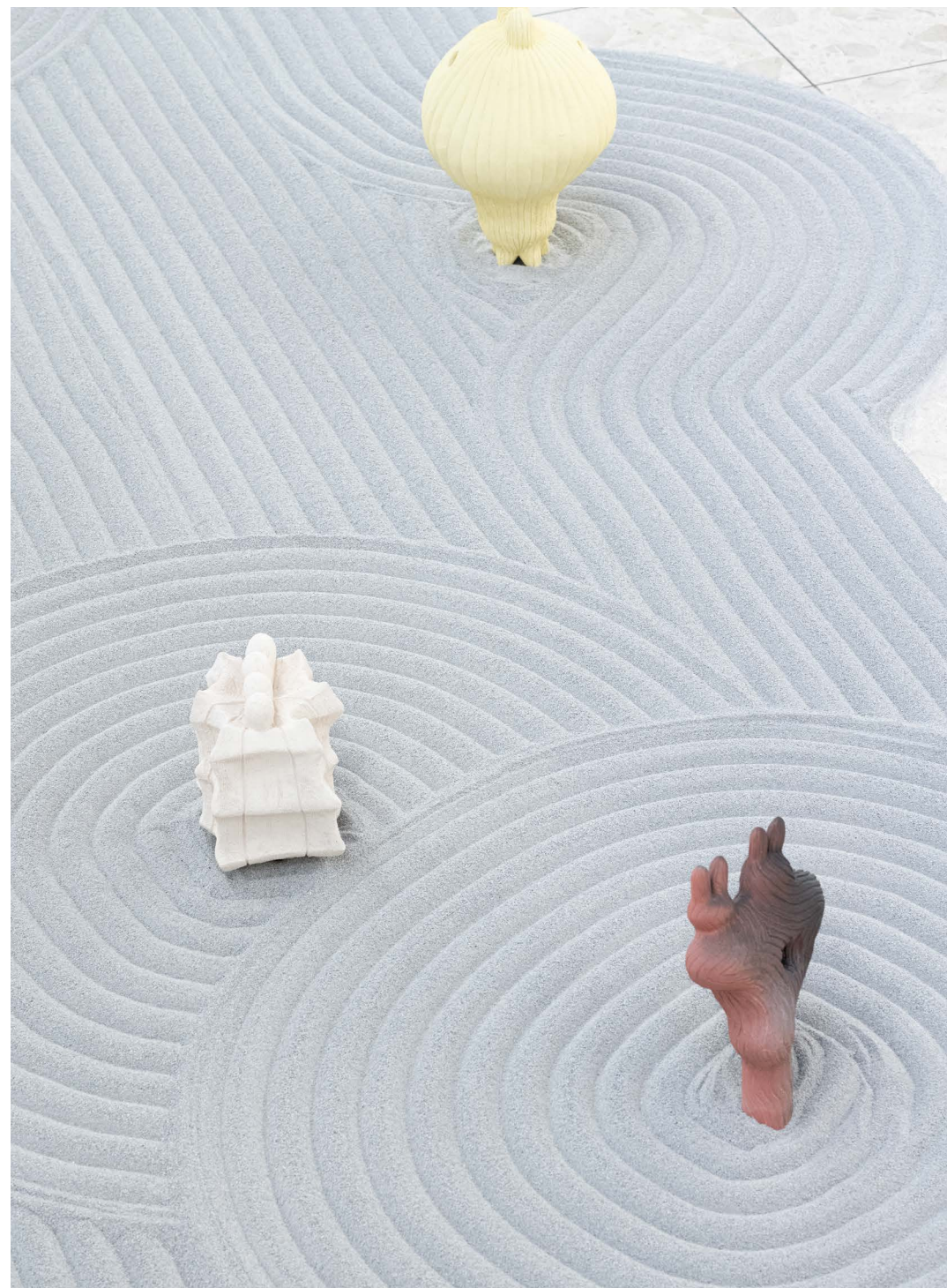
Attitude, ZHdK Annual Report, Apr 2022, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Lei Tuo (top) Kilian Schoenenberger (bottom)

The concept of water memory adds another layer of depth to the exploration. It suggests that when a substance is dissolved in water, it retains the memory of that substance, regardless of subsequent dilutions. Although debated in academia, the artist is fascinated by this romantic reading and its scientific connection, further enhancing the complexity of the installation.

Additionally, the traditional Japanese technique of Karesansui, or dry landscape gardening, is incorporated into the exhibition. These landscapes evoke the dynamic flow of water and are designed for contemplation rather than strolling. Through this expression, the viewer is encouraged to adopt another way of seeing, recognizing the intertwining of individual and collective memory while emphasizing the fluidity and fragility of time.



Kunst im Nomad 2023, Basel, Switzerland, photo credit: Lei Tuo



The very last words from the periphery II, Sep 2022, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Tuo Lei

02 10593

2023, fabric, cotton wool, thread, dimensions variable



METAMORPHING FAILURES, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Nicolas Duc

The in-situ installation, titled "10593," showcases 120 intricately hand-sewn stalagmites and stalactites, collectively forming a captivating cave-like structure. This artwork, created by the artist, delves deeply into the exploration of the concept of time, with the title signifying the number of days the artist had lived when initially exhibiting this work.

In the natural process of cave formation, the creation of stalactites typically requires an extensive period, often spanning several centuries. The natural growth rate of stalactites is nearly imperceptible, progressing at a rate of approximately 1 millimeter every ten years. In contrast, the artist's lifetime is generally not of sufficient duration to facilitate the formation of stalactites. However, whether this period is perceived as long or short depends not only on the unit of measurement but also on an individual's perception of time.

When measured against the backdrop of natural geological processes, this time frame may indeed appear remarkably brief. Nevertheless, it represents the entirety of the time the artist has experienced, imbuing it with a distinct sense of continuity and personal experience. The rapid emergence of stalactites in contrast to an individual's life journey encapsulates the essence of "10593," prompting viewers to reflect on the intricate interplay between art, time, and personal existence.



METAMORPHING FAILURES, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Nicolas Duc



METAMORPHING FAILURES, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Nicolas Duc

03 Evergreen

2023, engobe, glazed ceramic, 35x18x18 cm



photo credit: Lei Tuo

The artist drew inspiration from the traditional Japanese art form of bonsai, initially captivated by the idea of cultivating a small tree to mirror the beauty and intricacy of its full-sized counterpart. However, deeper exploration into the bonsai world revealed the meticulous control and manipulation required to craft these miniature wonders.

Enter "The Evergreen Bonsai," a whimsical and detailed ceramic artwork that reimagines the bonsai tradition. This enchanting piece showcases a small, artificial tree adorned with exaggerated forms and vibrant, eye-catching colors. The twisted trunk and unconventional leaf shapes heighten the sculpture's artificiality, accentuating the human intervention and manipulation inherent in bonsai cultivation.

Crafted entirely from ceramic, "The Evergreen Bonsai" consists of three detachable and interchangeable parts: the leaves, trunk, and pot. This innovative design underscores the creative possibilities within bonsai artistry, inviting viewers to explore various combinations and arrangements. Through "The Evergreen Bonsai," the artist not only celebrates the beauty of bonsai but also injects a playful twist into tradition, prompting viewers to reconsider their perceptions of control and manipulation in both art and nature.

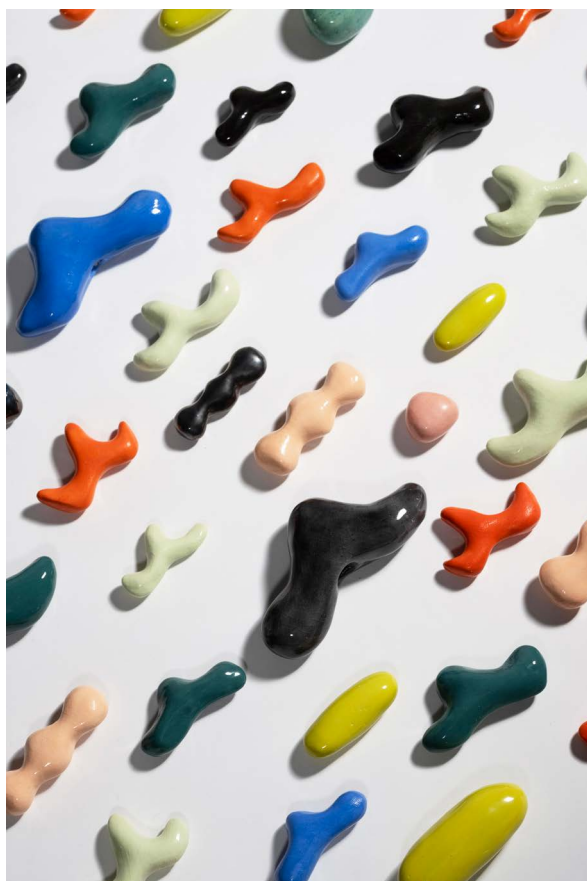
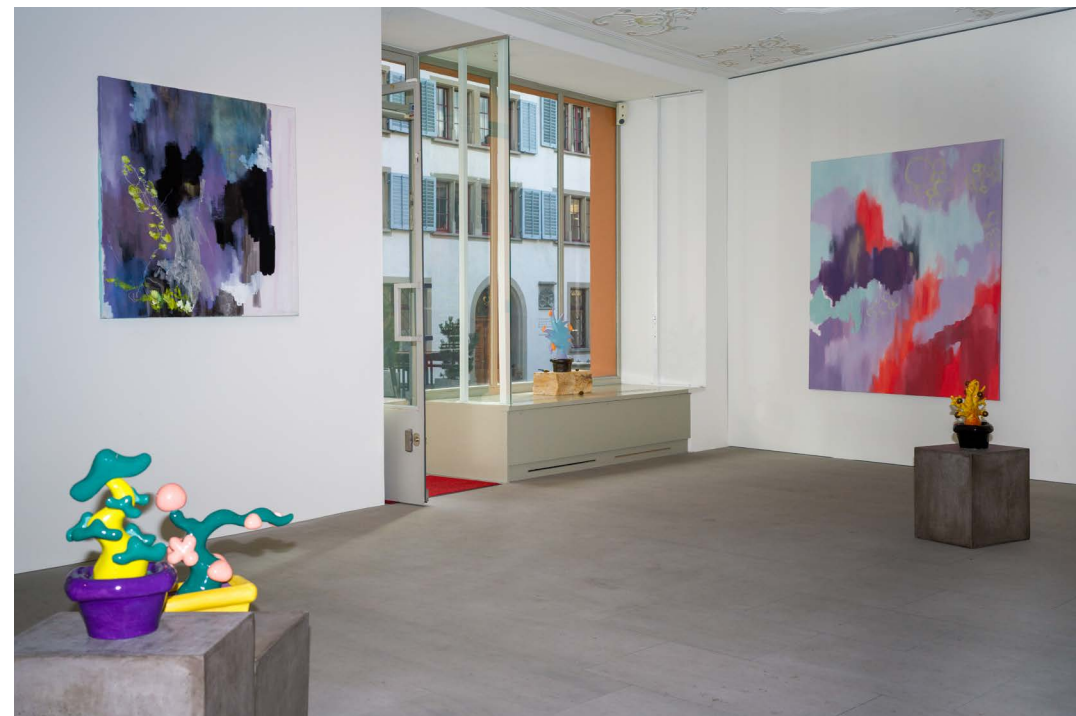


photo credit: Lei Tuo



Another Paradise, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: Steven Anggrek



METAMORPHING FAILURES, Zurich, Switzerland, photo credit: David Iselin

04 Flower in a greenhouse

2023, plastic film, 260 x 130 cm
performance duration: 30 mins



"Flower in a Greenhouse," the sculpture crafted by the artist delves into the metaphor of 'greenhouse flowers' within the Chinese context, symbolizing individuals raised in sheltered environments, devoid of exposure to external challenges and lacking in independence and adaptability. This concept intrigued the artist, prompting an exploration of its broader significance across diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Taking the form of a transparent inflatable mushroom, the artwork visually represents diversity and growth. Inspired by nature's mycelial networks, which foster symbiotic relationships and support systems, the sculpture draws parallels to human society's reliance on familial and communal networks for sustenance and growth.

In today's world, the artist observes that the emphasis on individual pursuits often over shadows the importance of communal connections, resulting in feelings of isolation and vulnerability. "Flower in a Greenhouse" seeks to underscore the significance of social support and balance, encouraging viewers to contemplate their relationship with society and venture beyond their comfort zones.

Engagement with the sculpture invites viewers to explore alternative perspectives and strategies for personal growth. By fostering introspection and encouraging viewers to expand their horizons, "Flower in a Greenhouse" reinforces the notion of self-protection amidst the journey of self-discovery and societal integration.



Flower in a greenhouse (30 mins), NO RISK NO RISK, Bern, Switzerland, photo credit: Nicola Rossi



Flower in a greenhouse (30 mins), NO RISK NO RISK, Bern, Switzerland, photo credit: Nicola Rossi



how cultures are distributed over space,
how places and identities are produced,
how people make sense of places
and build senses of place,
and how people produce
and communicate knowledge
and meaning.

From the 9-week residency in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as part of the Transcultural Collaboration 2022, the artist's work delved into the myth of Siluman (shape-shifter) originating from the close surroundings of the volcano in Indonesia, Mount Merapi. The White Tiger of Mount Merapi is believed to be a mythical being—an apparition of the protecting ancestor of the villagers beneath Merapi.

In further research, the artist discovered that Siluman is known as a figure with a fluid identity. Local inhabitants interpret and understand Siluman differently; its form and behavior vary from village to village. The hidden history and fluidity of interpretation captivated the artist's attention.

The artist's interpretation focuses on the fluidity of concepts surrounding collective memory, the Siluman myth, and intersections between myth and geography. The work explores how this myth has emerged from people's desire for a connection with the past and things that have passed away. Furthermore, the artist investigates how collective memory can be transformed into a figure or object. Through this exploration, the artist aims to provoke contemplation on the nature of myth, memory, and cultural identity.



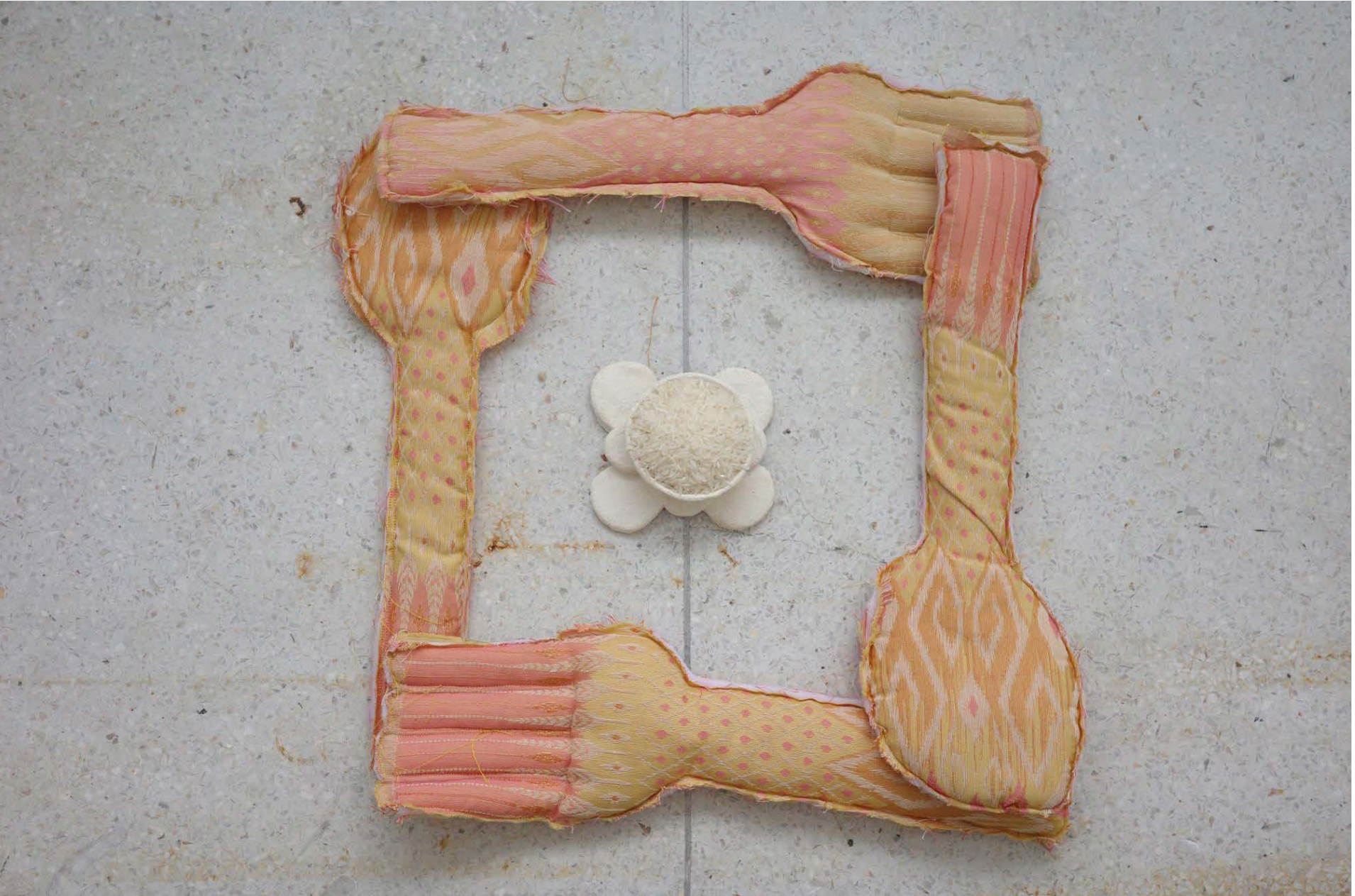
view on a human body, 2022, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. photo credit: Teck Lim



view on a human body, 2022, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. photo credit: Teck Lim

06 The pagoda of food

2022, benjarong cotton, cotton wool, raw rice, bowl made of traditional Thai stucco, 80 x 50 cm



During a two-week residency in Bangkok, Thailand, the artist was struck by the prevalent use of forks and spoons, even when consuming dry stir-fried noodles, which contrasted with the predominant use of chopsticks in Thai restaurants worldwide. This observation sparked the artist's interest in exploring cultural customs and perceptions, particularly why Thailand, despite never being colonized, adopted utensils that didn't align with its local cuisine. This inquiry led to a deeper investigation into Thailand's post-colonial influences and the reasons behind the king's embrace of Westernized habits, shedding light on how imperialist history continues to shape everyday life.

Inspired by the architectural symbol of the pagoda—a tiered tower common in Asian countries, typically with religious significance—the artist embarked on a creative journey to integrate rice, a staple of East Asian culture, into the artistic narrative. Pagodas historically served as sacred spaces housing Buddhist or Taoist artifacts and scriptures, contributing to the spiritual fabric of their communities.

In the final artwork, the artist aims to underscore the significance of rice in shaping the landscape, economy, and people of East Asian nations. Through a playful juxtaposition of rice with the religious and historical context of Thailand, the artwork serves as a reflection on cultural identity and the enduring impact of tradition in a rapidly evolving world.



CITIES ON THE MOVE- We Can't Forget How To Move, Aug 2022, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand



CITIES ON THE MOVE- We Can't Forget How To Move, Aug 2022, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

07 Being a canvas

2022, canvas, cotton wool, ceramic,
performance duration 25 mins



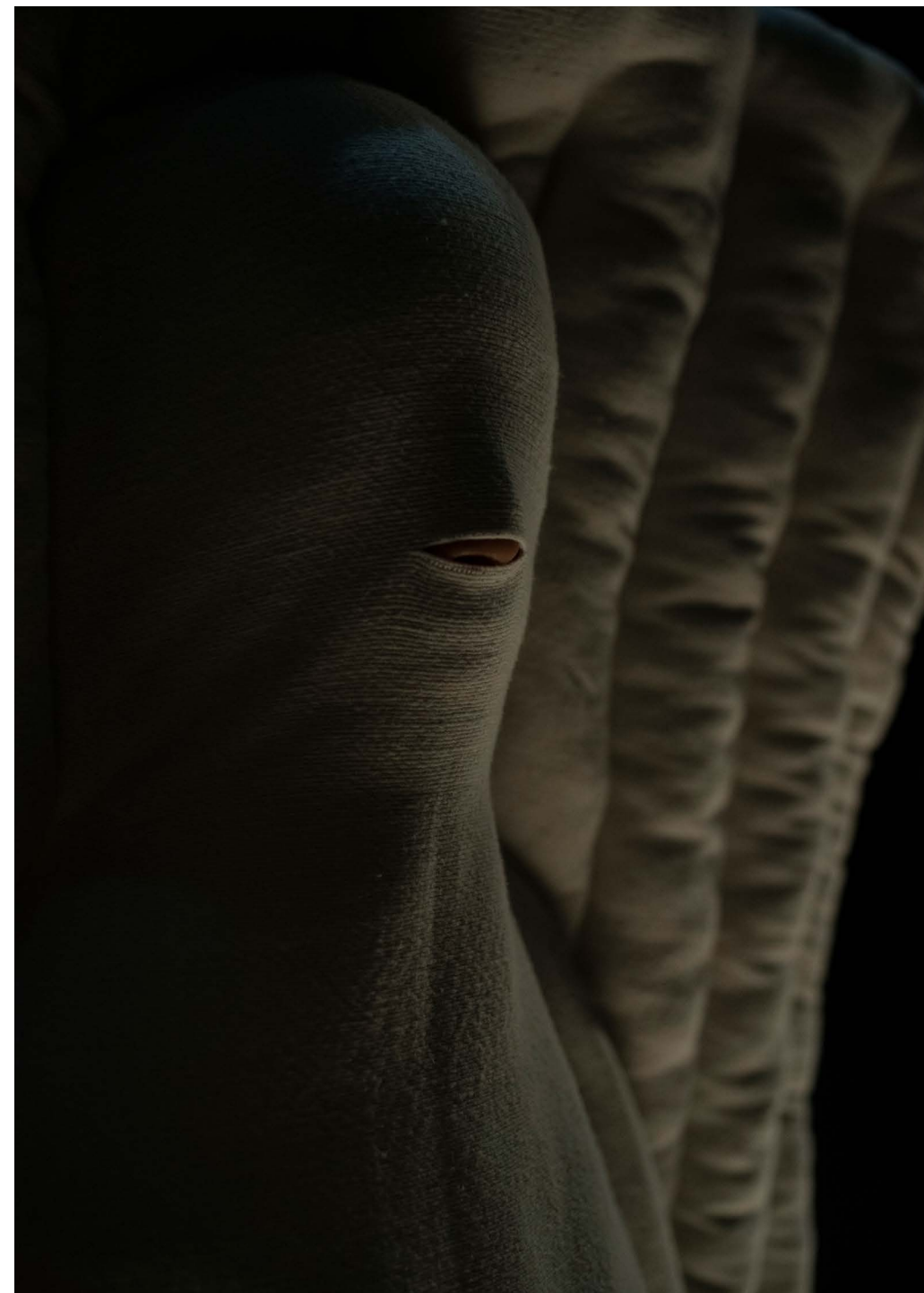
The aim is to explore the weight of words. By objectifying oneself as a canvas, it emphasizes the behavioral patterns of human society that are forced to receive information. Upon entering the room, the audience is presented with a request for instructions from the performer, who waits on a ceramic stage composed of ceramic pieces and gives no feedback to the viewer.

Aiming to create this unnatural one-sided ton the most, leaving only breathing space for the performer and increasing the sense of oppression between them.

3 mins video link: <https://youtu.be/sPpmYSEnrvk>



public place in Biel, duration 25 mins, May 2022, Biel, Switzerland, photo credit: Tuo Lei



public place in Biel, duration 25 mins, May 2022, Biel, Switzerland, photo credit: Tuo Lei

08 Be a canvas (performance)

2022, canvas, ceramic, velcro tape, transparent thread, soil, flowers, plants, performance duration 25mins



Clothes are objects that have been with us every day since we were born, an essential second skin that reflects our status, age, personality and preferences, and sometimes is a flag that carries the symbol of nationality. Until the mid-19th century, almost all clothing was custom-made by hand, either by ourselves or by professional tailors, and it usually took weeks or even months to produce a piece of clothing. Clothes used to be our spiritual sustenance, passed on by our ancestors to carry family hopes and history. But after the industrial revolution, the rapid development of the textile and manufacturing industries, globalization and consumerism, and the growing interest in satisfying needs as quickly as possible gave birth to fast fashion.

In the performance through the combination of objects, music, scent and movement, the performance evokes the senses of the viewer, and through the movement of the performer interprets the elements of "awakening", "growing", "recovery", "confronting" and "absorption".

At the end, the audience is allowed to interact with the performers through the plants and flowers distributed when they enter. The act of giving is regarded as a poetic act, and the act of receiving by the performers ends the performance.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/l2agEPyufj0>



Terra Omnium, Zurich Sustainability Week ,Mar 2022, Zurich, Switzerland, duration 24 mins



Terra Omnium, Zurich Sustainability Week ,Mar 2022, Zurich, Switzerland, duration 24 mins