

LIFESTYLE | ART & CULTURE

OWNNESS EXHIBITION : THE SLEEPING RAGE OF EAST ASIAN WOMEN

Text by **Holly Chau**

In 2017 , the global METOO movement awakened the slumbering anger of many East Asian women as it exposed the injustices that went unmentioned and muted . For example, Japanese journalist Shiori Ito sued TBS TV director Noriyuki Yamaguchi , Xianzi accused Chinese TV host Zhu Jun of sexual harassment , and the case of Room N in South Korea . These complaints have been considerably hindered , and there has been a phenomenon of condemnation of the victims , and women's voices are still subject to all kinds of resistance . In the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum , Japan ranks 120 out of 156 countries, the lowest among G7 countries , while China ranks 107 and South Korea ranks 102. in Hong Kong ,A survey shows that 1 in 7 women has experienced sexual violence .

The "OWNNESS" exhibition sponsored by the New York art space APEXART not only points out the society's interpretation of the female body , but also wants to show how women use " body autonomy " to refute the social expectations imposed on them . The event showcases the work of five East Asian women artists , reflecting not only their cultural backgrounds and experiences , but also the challenges that East Asian women are facing – historically , socially and culturally , men and Western cultures have been viewed as superior .

Dong Jinling

Dong Jinling 2-1 & 2-2 (2012)

It is not uncommon for a breastfeeder to have an uneven supply of milk to both breasts , which can lead to asymmetrical breast size and shape . After giving birth in 2011 , Chinese artist Dong Jinling deliberately used only one breast for breastfeeding , resulting in unexpected asymmetry and what society considers " imperfect " . It reflects the contradiction and struggle between " body autonomy " and " social expectations " . In the film " Dong Jinling 2-2" , she even released breast milk into the air , transforming behaviors about " love and practicality " into aimless , rhythmic and fun personal activities , and regained control of her body .



KAAI OGAYA

THE STARS AND SKY (2018)

KAAI OGAYA from Japan believes that " body beauty " is a " problematic concept " imposed on women by society . This concept advocates an idealized female body image that denies the original bodily functions , such as body hair growth . In the work , OGAYA turns the black chiffon fabric into a piece of " sky " , and the " stars " in the sky are the incision scars caused by shaving (black chiffon is a popular material for translucent stockings in Japan , and it is the pursuit of women's legs when wearing it. hair).



THE STARS AND SKY (2018)



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The works of Dong Jinling and OGAYA both express the tear between " society's expectations for women's bodies " and " physiological reality " . Body hair and the ability to breastfeed are physical characteristics of adult women , but society expects hairless bodies and " perfect and admirable " breasts .

Jung Na Young

CATCH OR THROW (2017)

Korean artist Jung Na-young , who has lived overseas for many years , discusses the Western gazes and expectations of Korean women . The performance work "CATCH OR THROW" reproduces the " preset " (STEREOTYPE) of the outside world when she lived in Western society . Although she tried to grab the dirt thrown at her , it was eventually covered , symbolizing her body and identity being covered . The performance left Zheng Naying's silhouette on the wall , like an " unknown " negative .



Huang Jiaying

AIN'T NO YOUR FORTUNE (2019)

Huang Jiaying , who grew up in Hong Kong , used a box of oversized fortune cookies to question the commodification of the female body . Fortune cookies have long had the impression of " from East Asia " , but this is the " imaginary birthplace " of marketing strategies. In fact , the first fortune cookies were produced in California , and to this day they are also mostly made in American factories . The artist juxtaposes fortune cookies and Asian female images , using cookies as a metaphor for female genitals , bringing out the false associations and exotic marketing methods behind the two . They are all products of capitalism , deified to satisfy consumers' exaggerated and stereotyped imaginations of East Asia .



AIN'T NO YOUR FORTUNE (2019)



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BETTY APPLE

VIBRATOR LOVE OF SOUND (2012 - 21)

"Bad" noise by Taiwanese artist BETTY APPLE is also one of the exhibits. The video work "Sound of Love" uses a variety of imaginative musical instruments, such as shaking eggs and wigs, and is not bound by "good" music, and the arrangement is chaotic and bold. When the body interacts with objects, and goes from a passive state to active exploration, a feminine and rebellious state of chaos is created. BETTY APPLE has performed in many cities around the world since 2012. The three performances selected for this exhibition are: Taipei #02 (2012), Berlin #06 (2014) and Bergen #14 (2019).



VIBRATOR LOVE OF SOUND (2012-19)

At first glance, these exhibits have nothing to do with feminism (whether creating a classical starry sky , creating a breast milk fountain , throwing mud , displaying cartoonized fortune cookies , or singing to a shaker egg), the playful or satirical depictions of the female body , all hide sharp criticisms of patriarchy or Western norms .

Finally, I have to mention the twists and turns of the " development " process of the OWNNESS exhibition . The exhibition was originally scheduled to be exhibited in Tokyo last year , but due to the repeated epidemics in Japan at that time , it was moved to Hong Kong . But who would have thought that the local fifth wave would come violently again ? However, Shanren has his own plan , and the curator specially took a 3D virtual space for everyone to " watch the exhibition at home " .

👉 <https://bit.ly/3qCu9IS>.