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Biography

Annabell Pu (b. 2002) is a sculpture artist from the United States currently residing in London, just receiving her MA in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art this August. With a BFA in General Fine Arts and Art History from Maryland Institute College of Art, her practice focuses on labor intensive inquiry and exploration of material, to study and work with the many adaptations the medium can be utilised for. As an artist that curates, her curatorial focus is exploring how exhibitions can represent invisible artistic and curatorial labour, both in content and form. Her research interrogates the balance between the extensive labour behind curation and art-making and the brief visibility of the work during exhibitions. Her goal is to create a practice that is network-building and dialogical, holding a dynamic space for experimentation and reflection.

Statement

My work is rooted in the tactile process of hand carving and burning into plywood. An artificial derivation of nature, I am drawn to the layered construction and utilitarian purpose of the material, as well as its temporary quality, often used to support, conceal, and shelter the labour that maintains the cities we live within. When thinking about the process of art making, plywood becomes both a shelter and a canvas, used to build forms from shipping crates to luggages, commonly used to transport artworks, becoming a part of the final product. The plywood as a canvas becomes a stand-in for my body, and I approach the material with a chisel and gouge. I am only able to chip off small curls of material, calling to mind the small investments of time, energy, and labour that comes with being present, in direct juxtaposition with all of the fast-paced demands of the art world.

Before beginning, selecting an image to carve is an acknowledgement of all of these things, but the image is tied to a memory in which I felt grounded, or truly present. Through physically exhausting methods, I subvert the material's intended use. What was once cheap, industrial, and structural is transformed into something intimate and contemplative. I work from photographs of these fleeting but significant moments, focusing on mundane objects and stills of everyday life: two bottles of beer and a cigarette in front of a friend's window, walking up a mountain to see a beautiful view at night, laying in the grass, looking down a winding road. Calling upon quickly captured impressions of memory, and rendering them slowly, allows time for reflection and a careful hand. The natural grain of the wood still active in the ply becomes an active collaborator. Each cut and burn mark is guided by the wood's own voice, revealing its unpredictable patterns. With the addition of pyrography to the board, I am able to outline the details in which I can still feel my own presence in the moment, the details that remain with me.