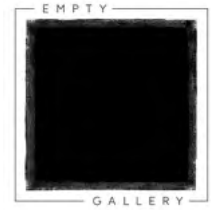


Sites of Wounding: Chapter 1

Jes Fan

18 March 2023 — 24 June 2023



Empty Gallery is pleased to present *Sites of Wounding: Chapter 1*, New York and Hong Kong-based artist Jes Fan's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Originally trained in glassmaking, Fan's practice in expanded sculpture merges a regard for the haptic qualities of form with a radically transdisciplinary approach to research and material experimentation— often incorporating unstable organic compounds such as sex hormones, skin pigments, and other biological agents. While his earlier investigations focused on the granular deconstruction of biological essentialism, Fan's recent work has turned away from these concerns to engage further with organisms and ecosystems beyond the human. For *Sites of Wounding*, Fan returns to Hong Kong to research native species that generate precious materials through processes of contamination, penetration, and incorporation. In a series of new works, he explores the affective resonance of these woundings as they relate to both the generative potential and the psychosomatic trauma of colonial subjectivity.

The first chapter of Fan's project takes the *Pinctada fucata* oyster, a species native to Hong Kong and key to several historical local industries, as its point of departure. Pearl formation might be thought of as an essentially defensive mechanism which only coincidentally happens to produce the valuable byproducts we consume as luxury goods. Occurring when a foreign object lodges itself inside the oyster's vulnerable body, the host slowly secretes layers of nacre, neutralizing the foreign matter and absorbing it into its own body. Fascinated by this quasi-alchemical transformation—the transmutation of the grotesque and threatening into a fraught type of hybridized beauty—Fan began to conceptualize pearl formation as an extended metaphor for colonial subject formation in Hong Kong—finding a kind of poetry in the linkage to the island's pre-colonial pearl farming industries and its anglo-imperial moniker "Pearl of the Orient" [東方之珠].

Staging the investigation of material history as a kind of personal and cultural mythology, *Palimpsest* (2023) poetically documents a nearly three year-process where Fan collaborated with local scientists from the University of Hong Kong to cultivate oysters and implant them with the individual characters—東, 方, 之 and 珠 — which compose the aforementioned phrase. In the process, the mollusks are forced to change the structure of their own bodies in order to survive—an undertaking with parallels to Fan's previous exploration of biohacking and body modification as methods of eclipsing normative gender ecologies. The shells resulting from this process carry the inscribed traces of this violence in the form of ideograms etched into their pearlescent internal surfaces. Merging with, or perhaps overwriting, the oyster's natural patterning, Fan's gesture could be interpreted as a form of perverse calligraphy, a kind of traumatic writing where the ground of meaning is inseparable from an originary violence.

Displayed in a metal armature reminiscent of those found in natural history displays, *C is for you* presents a selection of individual shells which have been embalmed in glass. Kiln-fired together with glass sheeting, the resulting organic forms encase deposits of ashes, evidence of where the shells have burned away. Fan has described his process of material experimentation as being both haptic and led by an interest in the shifting energy states of materials. In this case, the abstract juxtaposition of familiar mother of pearl shells—redolent with associations of luxury and empire — and their charred and blasted counterparts reads almost as a spontaneous compression of history.

These thematics are echoed in a series of new aqua resin, glass, and steel sculptures. Rendered in mottled shades of pale teal, mauve and olive, these works extend and refine Fan's method of originating forms from casts of living bodies— which he then abstracts further through hybridization, sequencing, and repetition. The final pieces at once bear the residual traces of their corporeal sources while also transmuting them into forms more animal or mineral in nature. Sequential compositions such as *Left torso, four times*, appropriate a vocabulary of reduced serial gestures in order to suggest processes of molting or metamorphosis and sort of circadian temporality. Other works, such as *Left and right knee, grafted* make explicit reference to mollusk forms, framing their accompanying glass globules as possible outgrowths of unfamiliar origins. Likewise, in *Bivalve I* and *Bivalve II*, the manner in which cyst-like glass forms seem to dangle and ooze from shell-like resin basins gestures towards an ambivalent relationality of survival, symbiosis and extraction.

Uniting the works in *Sites of Wounding* is Fan's deployment of material research and experimentation as a method for working with and through the simultaneously destructive and creative potentials of contamination. Rather than rendering these processes in purely negative terms, Fan's works locate emergent beauty within these ambivalent sites. Beyond a direct articulation of post-colonial pain, his vividly realized woundings express the resonant multiplicity of the colonial subject undergoing and processing trauma which is at once bodily, as well as cultural and historical.

Jes Fan (b. Scarborough, Canada) lives and works in Hong Kong and Brooklyn, USA. Fan originally trained in glass making, but has expanded his practice to encompass diverse mediums and approaches. From videos to sculptures, his trans-disciplinary practice speculates on the intersection of biology and identity in relation to the materiality of the gendered and racialised body. Fan is the recipient of various fellowships and residencies, including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2022), Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2017), as well as the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship (2019-2020). Recent exhibitions include MIT List Visual Arts Center, UCCA Dune (2022); Kunsthall Trondheim (2021); X Museum (2020); Rockbund Art Museum, China (2019); Hayward Gallery, UK (2019); Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (2018); and Museum of Arts and Design, USA (2017). Fan has also participated in numerous artist residencies with institutions including the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Recess Art, Smack Mellon and Pioneer Works. He also participated in the Venice Biennale (2022), New Museum Triennial (2021), Liverpool Biennale (2021), Sydney Biennale (2020), Socrates Annual (2019). In 2023, he will present a second solo show with Empty Gallery, titled *Sites of Wounding: Part 1*.

第一章：東方之珠 范加



2023年3月18日至2023年06月24日

Empty Gallery 很高興為大家帶來紐約、香港藝術家范加在畫廊舉行的第二個個展《第一章：東方之珠》。以玻璃製作為基礎訓練的范加在擴展雕塑的實踐上，融合了其以徹底跨國際方法對形式觸覺特性進行的研究和素材實驗——當中經常混合不穩定有機化合物如性激素、皮膚色素和其他生物劑。雖然范加早期的探究聚焦於生物決定論的粒狀解構上，但他近期的作品則從這些關注進一步轉往人類以外的有機體和生態系統。為了《東方之珠》，范加回到香港通過多次汙染、滲透和吸收的過程來研究生產珍貴物的本地物種。他在一系列的新作中探索此種傷患的情感共鳴，著眼在它們與殖民主體性的生產潛力與心理創傷的相關性。

范加創作計劃的第一章以原生於香港的物種馬史帆貝為出發點。它們是數個悠久歷史本地產業的關鍵。珍珠的形成或可視為一種重要的防禦機制，而只是碰巧生產了在我們奢侈消費中有價值的副產品。當一種外來之物把其身棲於帆貝脆弱的驅體時，宿主會慢慢分泌珍珠質層，中和外物並把其吸收到自己體內。出於對這種宛如煉金術轉化（把噁心及威脅換轉為一種讓人生憂的混成之美）的著迷，范加開始概念化珍珠的形成過程，把其視為一種對殖民主體在香港形成的延伸比喻——在島嶼前殖民時期珍珠養殖工業與其盎格魯—帝權綽號「東方之珠」的連繫間尋找一種詩意。

在〈*Palimpsest*〉(2023)中，范加把對素材歷史的探索搬演為一種個人與文化的神話，作品詩性地記錄了一個接近三年的過程，此期間范加與香港大學的本土科學家合作培植帆貝並在它們當中植入組成上述短語的四個字「東」、「方」、「之」和「珠」。過程中，這些軟體動物為了生存迫於無奈改變自己身體的結構——這項任務類似於范加早前藉生物植入術和身體改造作為方法以壓倒規範性別生態的探索。在這過程中產生的帆貝殼會帶著一種以表意符號方式刻蝕進它們煥發珠光內部表層的暴力印記。融合，又或可說是重寫帆貝的自然模式，范加的姿態可詮釋為反常書法的一種形式、一種創傷性的寫作，當中意義的基本是離不開原初的暴力。〈*C is for you*〉是一組置入玻璃片中而得以永存不朽的單個獨立法帆貝殼，放在一個像是那些會在自然歷史展覽中找到的金屬展示架上。與玻璃片一起窯燒後所得出來有機形態包含著灰燼的沈積物，是帆貝殼曾焚燒殆盡的證據。范加曾形容他的素材實驗是與觸覺相關，亦是出於對素材轉移能量狀態的興趣。因此，並置常見的珍珠貝母（令人想起奢侈與帝國）與它們燒焦、殆盡的相對物頓時可閱讀為歷史即時的自發壓縮。

這些主題亦在一系列新的水性樹脂、玻璃和鋼製雕塑中得到了呼應。這組淡藍綠色、淡紫色和橄欖色斑駁色塊交疊的作品延伸並改進范加從活體模型中引發形式的方法——當中他能透過混雜、排序和重覆作進一步抽象化。最後數件作品承載其物質來源的殘餘痕跡，還把它們轉化為更接近自然界中動物或礦物的形式。序列結構創作如〈*Left torso, four times*〉運用了抽象的排序連續方式來暗示蛻皮退殼或變態的過程以及某種生理節奏的時間性。其他作品如〈*Left and right knee, grafted*〉直接參照軟體動物形式，把伴隨裝載它們的玻璃液態小球體框構為可能出現的陌生外長物。就如在〈*Bivalve I*〉和〈*Bivalve II*〉中，囊狀玻璃的形態似乎是自殼狀樹脂盆形塊處懸盪並慢慢滴滲出來，漸漸走向一個生存、共生及榨取的矛盾關係。

整合《東方之珠》展覽中所有作品的是范加對素材研究和實驗的部署，他以此作為方法來處理污染同時具有的破壞性和創造性潛力。范加沒有僅僅以負面的語調描述這些過程，而是尋找在這些矛盾場域中浮現的美；在直接表述後殖民之痛以外，他透過那些真確而實在的傷口，表達了殖民主體就經歷和處理創傷的共鳴多樣性；而這種創傷的處理，既是身體上的，也是文化，和歷史上的。

范加(生於加拿大士嘉堡)在香港及紐約布魯克林生活及工作。范加的基礎訓練為玻璃製造，但他擴展創作實踐領域以涵蓋多種媒介和方法。由錄像到雕塑，他的跨科際實踐著眼於生物學與性別化及種族化身體物質性相對應身份的相交點。范加曾獲頒多個研究基金如 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2022)、Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2017) 及 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship (2019-2020)。近期展覽包括麻省理工 List Visual Arts Center、UCCA Dune (2022)；Kunsthall Trondheim (2021)；X 美術館 (2020)、上海外灘美術館，中國 (2019)；Hayward Gallery，英國 (2019)；Empty Gallery，香港 (2018)；藝術和設計博物館，美國 (2017)。范加曾參與多個藝術家駐場計劃包括 Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts、Recess Art、Smack Mellon 和 Pioneer Works。他亦曾參與威尼斯雙年展(2022)、New Museum Triennial (2021)、利物浦雙年展 (2021)、悉尼雙年展 (2020) 及 Socrates Annual (2019)。2023年，他會在Empty Gallery舉行第三次個展《第一章：東方之珠》。