

November 20, 2024–March 2, 2025

Shuang Li: I'm Not

Aspen Art Museum

I'm Not is the first institutional solo exhibition by artist Shuang Li, featuring sculpture and video installations, commissioned in partnership with New York's Swiss Institute. Li's work explores how language, relationships, and identities are formed and mediated through screens and the internet. For *I'm Not*, Li delves into her own life as a fan to ruminate on how these technologies inform the social bonds and materiality of fandom, and the complexities of building a world predicated on a fervent love of something distant. Growing up in a small town in Southeast China, Li became (and remains) an ardent fan of My Chemical Romance, a band that introduced the possibility of subcultural belonging as well as the English language into the artist's life. MCR fandom unfolds as a case study in the exhibition for an examination of faraway bodies and displaced desires.

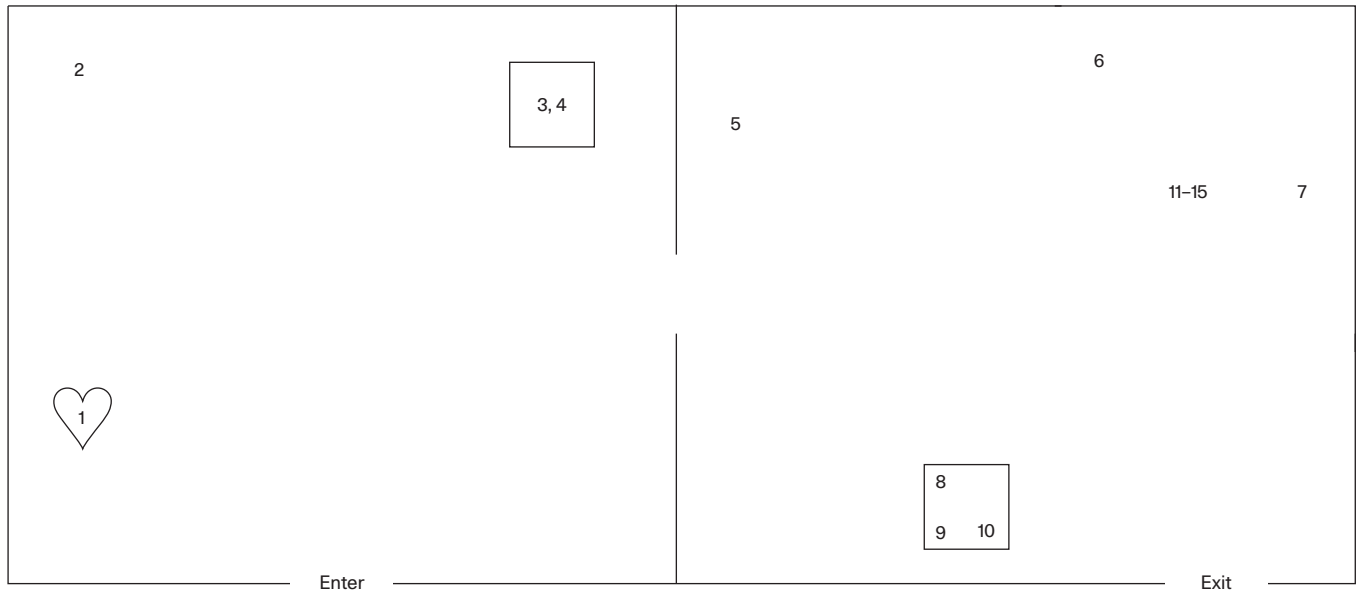
In a darkened gallery sits *Heart Is a Broken Record* (2023–24), a heart-shaped fountain evocative of wishing wells in courtyards and public plazas. Found footage is projected from above into its rippling reflection. Interspersed with stock imagery of dripping blood, erupting volcanoes, and pumping veins is a montage of shots of crowds at My Chemical Romance concerts awaiting the performers. A poem written by Li is woven through the edit as the roars of the crowds swell. Stringing together an endless anticlimax, Li cuts each recording just before the band takes the stage.

The exhibition features large-scale reimaginings of architectural models, akin to those Li would see as a child on weekend visits to real estate showrooms with her parents. Smaller models, comprising objects found on the artist's travels, are installed throughout the exhibition. Coming of age during the market economy reform of the 1990s and the rapid development of real estate concurrent with the urbanization of China in the 2000s, Li witnessed the growing and bursting of the country's real estate bubble. The gleaming towers, seemingly erected overnight, promised a future that never arrived. Left half-built and deserted when the market crumbled, their skeletons stand here as abstracted visions of home.

Embedded in one tower, *Déjà Vu* (2022) is a silent video, composed of documentation from a performance Li made during the COVID-19 pandemic. Li was kept from entering her home country for three years due to travel restrictions, and spent two of those years living in Geneva. In subtitles, a short story describes a town where people started mixing up words, then forgetting grammar, and, ultimately, losing the ability to speak. The featured performance, *Lord of the Flies* (2022), was a result of Li's not being able to attend her own opening in Shanghai due to her displacement. Outfitted as Shuang Li clones with her signature My Chemical Romance T-shirt, bangs, and platform loafers, twenty performers were locally trained to be her avatars. They were given a choreography, personalized scripts with which to talk to audience members, and goodbye letters handwritten by the artist to deliver to her close friends who attended. The shoes worn by the performers populate the gallery as vessels of Li's absence, her existence, and her multiplicity as a fan. "There are no more copies, when there's no more original . . . I can also be you," states the silent narrator in *Déjà Vu*.

For the newly commissioned video *I'm Not* (2024), Li rewrote the lyrics to the My Chemical Romance song "I'm Not Okay (I Promise)" in Mandarin Chinese and English, which was then covered by an a cappella group. In the resulting music video, a troupe dressed as an army choir conducted by a young girl melodically recites Li's version of the emo anthem. Here, the artist, who taught herself English from MCR lyrics, gives shape and tribute to the formative years in which her teen angst was echoed in a language she did not yet speak by a band of four young men thousands of miles away. Filtered through bleachers built from glowing resin panels, the installation is itself a work of fan art.

Mapping a personal history across this memory-scape of wants and aspirations, language remains elusive and ever-shifting, as if, like an idol, it can never be truly known.



Gallery 4

1. *Heart Is a Broken Record*, 2023

Video: sound, 11 min 18 secs; aluminum, acrylic, and water

2. *Leopoldplatz*, 2024

Styrofoam, concrete, steel scaffolding, resin, fabric, ring light, blank letters, and magazines

3. *Déjà Vu*, 2022

Video: 15 min 55 secs

Production: Fonds cantonal d'art contemporain, Geneva, programme MIRE, Montreal

Producer: Naomi Yu (Shanghai)

Wardrobe direction: Dre Romero

Director of photography: James Bantone (Geneva), Chen Yi (Shanghai)

Production assistant: Marguerite Mikanowski (Geneva)

Lettering: Studio Pianpian He and Max Harvey

Special thanks to Peres Projects, Berlin;

Antenna Space, Shanghai; Centre de

Réadaptation des Rapaces, Geneva;

Cherish, Geneva; and everyone who

participated

4. *Desert Song*, 2023-24

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

Gallery 5

5. *This is how I disappear*, 2023

Stainless steel, paint

6. *nobody's home*, 2023

Electroplated fiberglass

7. *I'm Not*, 2024

Epoxy resin, metal, fabric, found objects, shoes, papier-mâché, and concrete mix

Video: 4 screens, 5 min 51 secs

Music: Shuang Li and Vocalmixer

Producer: Naomi Bingjie Yu

Director of photography: Haibin Xie

Actors: Donglin Huang, Shengbo Chen,

Aji (Xiangji) Tong, Haojie Liang, Jiani Yu,

Qinyu Lu, Wenyi Zhou, and Yizi

8. *Untitled*, 2024

Steel scaffolding, epoxy resin, magazine, metal wire, paper, Styrofoam, and concrete

9. *Untitled*, 2024

PU leather, papier-mâché, concrete, and found object

10. *As Your Body Remains*, 2023

Resin, acrylic, PU leather, papier-mâché, leg warmer, found object, and glue

11. *Teenagers*, 2024

PU leather, papier-mâché, concrete mix, and found object

12. *These words change nothing*, 2023

Resin, acrylic, charms, PU leather, papier-mâché, cardboard, socks, and glue

13. *Stolen from my eyes*, 2024

PU leather, papier-mâché, concrete mix, cellophane, and found object

14. *Tell me where we go from here*, 2024

PU leather, fabric

15. *A life that's so demanding*, 2023

Concrete

All works courtesy the artist and Peres Projects

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum is a thriving and globally engaged non-collecting contemporary art museum. Following the 2014 opening of the museum's facility designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Shigeru Ban, the AAM enjoys increased attendance, renewed civic interaction, and international media attention. In July 2017, the AAM was one of ten institutions to receive the United States' National Medal for Museum and Library Services for its educational outreach to rural communities in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and its fostering of learning partnerships with civic and cultural partners within a 100-mile radius of the museum's Aspen location.

Aspen Art Museum

637 East Hyman Avenue
Aspen, Colorado 81611
aspenartmuseum.org
(970) 925-8050

Hours

Tuesday–Sunday, 10 AM–6 PM
Closed Mondays

Admission to the AAM is free courtesy of Amy and John Phelan.

Shuang Li: I'm Not is commissioned in partnership with Swiss Institute, New York.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Swiss Institute, Aspen Art Museum, and Pacific will publish Li's first monograph in November 2024. The book includes newly commissioned contributions by the artist along with Sophia Al-Maria, Olivia Kan-Sperling, Jeppe Ugelvig, and Hanlu Zhang, with an introductory text by editors Alison Coplan and Daniel Merritt.

Thanks to Peres Projects and Antenna Space. This exhibition was developed during a residency at Callie's in Berlin.

Shuang Li wishes to thank: My Chemical Romance and the fandom, Diogo Vale, Alexis Colin, Moritz Jekat, Jarrett Gregory, Isabel Parkes, Nick Koenigsknecht, Max Kraus, Naomi Bingjie Yu, Asma Barchiche, Sophia Al-Maria, Mohamed Almusibli, Tristan Gigon, and Dean Kissick.

This exhibition is curated by Alison Coplan, Chief Curator at Swiss Institute, and Daniel Merritt, Director of Curatorial Affairs at Aspen Art Museum.



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Shuang Li (b. 1990 in Wuyi Mountains, China) received her MA in media studies from New York University in 2014. Li's recent solo and group exhibitions include the Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement, curated by Andrea Bellini and Nora N. Khan, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva (2024), Paraventi: Folding Screens from the 17th to 21st Centuries, curated by Nicholas Cullinan, at Fondazione Prada, Milan, and Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai (2023–24), Zurich Biennial, curated by Mitchell Anderson and Daniel Baumann, Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich (2023–24), Kunsthall Charlottenborg Biennale, Copenhagen (2023), Field of Vision, curated by Tina Péterson, Zuzeum Art Centre,

Riga (2023), Inner Voices and Exterior Visions, curated by Hera Chan, Yang Li, and Alvin Li, Starr Cinema, Tate Modern, London (2023), 59th Venice Biennale, curated by Cecilia Alemani, Venice (2022), 14th Shanghai Biennale, curated by Anton Vidokle with Zairong Xiang, Hallie Ayres, and Lukas Brasiskis, Shanghai (2022), Deep Thought, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2022), Double Vision, curated by Tobias Berger, Jill Chun, and Daniel Ho, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2022), Cherish, Geneva (2021), How Do We Begin, curated by Poppy Dongxue Wu, X Museum, Beijing (2020), and Callie's, Berlin (2020). Li lives between Geneva and Berlin.