



Press Release

Allison C Smith presents stephanie mei huang *(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse*

Book & Printed Matter Lab
CalArts Critical Studies Residency

Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles
June 26 – August 1 2021

Los Angeles... Allison C Smith, recent graduate from CalArts' School of Critical Studies MA program in Aesthetics & Politics, presents a solo-exhibition dedicated to the work of stephanie

mei huang, entitled '(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse'. Exhibiting, programming and publishing on huang's work, Smith draws from their academic work on queer theory, parasitical drag, and feminist new materialisms in contemporary southern Californian performance studies. Smith curates new and recent works by huang regarding racial melancholia and grief as explored through a cowboy drag avatarism of the (Asian) American West. A para-narrative is met with an auto-theory that ruptures throughout huang's paintings, sculpture, photography, graphic design, performance, and video/film works, as well as collaborative works with V Haddad, Christina Huang, Nat Moonhill, Sam Richardson, and Ada Smith.

About '(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse'

Both Smith and huang follow a queer practice in their works— both bottom4bottom, baby4baby, born in 1994. The exhibition '(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse', centers, celebrates, obscures para-narrativism and auto-theory: a critical practice deeply rooted in queer research and practice. It is through the vehicle of drag, self-portraiture and biography that huang erodes the violent mythologies that perpetuate expansionist, exceptionalist, and settler colonial narratives, while excavating forgotten, erased, and partial histories. '(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse', while speaking to huang's various and fractured avatarisms, prioritizes the narrative of Stirrup Steph— the youngest and first woman to be inaugurated into the Cowboy Artists of America (CAA), a brotherhood dedicated to conserving the culture and history of the old west.

The tall and true tale of Stirrup Steph, and huang's splitting avatars, begs the question: could "cowboy drag," a form of racialized, gendered, affective drag, not unlike code-switching, an embodied passibility, provide a mimetic form of deception/self-preservation? Could it scramble systems of prediction projected upon huang's body/identity? What are the alluring possibilities that result from racial melancholia: self-contradicting negotiations with pleasure and pain, multiple selves, identity/dis-identity formation?

In the wake of the 2021 Atlanta Spa Shootings, '(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse' addresses biopolitical and xenophobic rhetoric that finds its roots in 19th century "yellow peril" and is regurgitated/perpetuated in a 21st century anti-Chinese discourse surrounding Covid-19. huang's work speaks to an urgency of visualizing melancholia and the exposure of grief— a melancholic fixation on that which excludes you: the implausibility of the Stirrup Steph.

Publication Release

MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Schindler House
19 July 2021, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

A shift/rupture from para-narrative to personal narrative and auto-theory occurs in the publication for '(self-portraits as) neither donkey nor horse'. The publication features a curator's note by Smith, an artist's essay by huang, and three letters to the artist by Lucas Baisch, Michael Ned Holte, and Ling Tiong. The letter form reflects on a larger practice within queer communities of care centered around letter writing. Each letter touches on an intimate aspect of their relationship with huang as it relates to their current body of work.

For the publication release event, huang collaborates with artist Julie Tolentino, and sound artist Amma Ateria. huang reads from their personal artist's essay, a self-theory, followed by a collaborative work engaging with Tolentino's multi-decade study and practice with Chinese herbs and Eastern bodywork through a moxibustion— the

burning of moxa, a mugwort, an artemisia (which huang spent this past spring foraging), on meridian points on huang's body in a fortification of the yellow femme's somatics— accompanied by live electroacoustic / binaural beats / equal-loudness contour sound works by Ateria.

About Allison C Smith & stephanie mei huang

Allison C Smith (they/them/their) is an independent curator and writer with an artistic and academic practice currently living in Los Angeles. They received their MA in Aesthetics & Politics from CalArts School of Critical Studies (2021) and completed their BA in Art History at Skidmore College (2017). Smith completed their thesis on the queer practices of Julie Tolentino and Yve Laris Cohen within the politics of re-performance studies. They've presented academic materials at conferences including the Cultural Studies Association (2021), and UCLA Theater & Performance Studies Graduate Conference (2021). They're the recipient of curatorial internships and fellowships at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, and Hauser & Wirth.

stephanie mei huang is a Los Angeles-based interdisciplinary artist. They use a diverse range of media and strategies including film/video, installation, social interventions, sculpture, writing, and painting. Through research and practice, they use slippery, chameleonic identity as a form of infiltration: a soft power reversal within hard architectures of power. They most recently exhibited at the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, the New Wight Biennial at the University of California, Cerritos Gallery, and the Arizona State University Art Museum. They most recently completed their MFA in Art at the California Institute of the Arts (2020), and they received their BA from Scripps College (2016). They are a contributor to the Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles. They will attend the Whitney Independent Study Program this coming fall.

About the Book & Printed Matter Lab & CalArts Critical Studies Residency

The residency provides a space for developing critical research and curatorial investigations as well as the opportunity to work in the public domain and develop working relationships with peers in the arts. Simultaneously, the residency invites the public to experience and interact with the evolution of a student's curatorial practice outside of a college or university setting. In collaboration with CalArts, the residency serves as workshop space for developing and continuing thesis work for MA and MFA students in the School of Critical Studies.

The Book & Printed Matter Lab is a project devoted to exploring the important place that books and prints occupy in the practice of artists. Building upon Hauser & Wirth's curatorial and publishing activities, the Lab presents thematic installations, displays, and programming that invite reflection, creative thinking, and further conversation about the world of printed matter and its connection to artists' ideas and objectives.



For more information about this residency and related events this summer, please visit:

www.alliesmith.org/
www.stephaniemei.com/

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Tuesday - Sunday
11 am - 6 pm

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