

G A S W O R K S

Candice Lin

A Body Reduced to Brilliant Colour

22 September – 11 December 2016

Gasworks presents *A Body Reduced to Brilliant Colour*, the first UK solo exhibition by Candice Lin.

The exhibition explores how histories of slavery and colonialism have been shaped by human attraction to particular colours, tastes, textures and drugs. Focusing on how the desire to wear, ingest or become enraptured by certain substances preceded the will to trade them as commercial goods, *A Body Reduced to Brilliant Colour* traces the materialist urges at the root of colonial violence.

A low-tech installation of tubing, porcelain filters, hot plates and other hacked household objects boils, distils, dyes and pumps liquid containing colonial commodities such as cochineal, sugar and tea. 'Fed' two litres of fermented tea per day, this contraption – which the artist describes as a 'flayed circulatory system' – produces a red fluid that collects in a basin of Vitruvian proportions and is gradually siphoned off, congealing in a pool on the marble-effect laminate floor in the adjacent gallery.

Titled *System for a Stain*, this work combines organic processes with DIY mechanics to create a metabolic machine that echoes the unrelenting flow of bodies and matter in colonial trade. Incorporating various handmade trinkets and curios, such as glazed cochineal vases and a tea strainer based on the upturned bust of Scottish botanist Robert Fortune, the installation transforms prized, historically loaded goods into a blood-like stain.

Amplified over this burdened secretion, the audio work *A Memory Blushing with Innocence* begins with a woman's voice describing the body as an abstraction, which she eventually relates to her childhood memories as the daughter of a plantation owner. She speaks, for example, about the thousands of disembodied hands that would dance above her bed at night and stroke her 'silkworm' eyebrows, or her shallow pride in the merciless retribution afflicted upon the slaves that once killed her beloved cat, la Rajah. According to the artist, the narrator's tainted naivety reflects, to some extent, her own sense of guilt as a US citizen whose privilege is rooted in slavery – an idea that is taken further in other works, where cockroaches and silkworms are subjected to disciplinary practices and implicate the artist, uncomfortably, as a kind of slave-owner or punisher.

In *The Worm Husband (Our Father)*, for example, a silkworm colony is held captive within a rectangular terrarium. They live in the shadow of a light-turquoise ceramic sculpture, which spells out the opening lines from the Lord's Prayer in Formosan – a constructed language invented by George Psalmanazar, a Frenchman who claimed to be a native of Formosa (present-day Taiwan), during a trip to the British Isles in the early 18th century – highlighting the disciplinary function that religion served during colonial times. In *A Warner for Survivalists: White Gold*, cockroaches are disciplined by other means. They are fed sugar, a popular colonial commodity of which they have grown weary, due to its common use as bait for traps. Will these cockroaches go against their basic instincts by eating the candied fruit or the sugar-paste replica of a Chinese porcelain vase in order to survive? Or will they choose to eat each other instead?

Also penned in Formosan, a single-copy, richly illustrated book bound in fleshy leather is titled *Physiologus* after a medieval bestiary or 'a catalogue of marvellous things, real or not'. The text, available in English at the front desk, offers an idiosyncratic history of the various colonial trade goods that the artist has put to use in this exhibition. As is typical of her writing, however, anachronistic references to Youtube videos and recent events, such as a man that turned 'the greyish-blue colour of old smurfs' by regularly ingesting small quantities of liquefied silver, reveal the book's contemporary origins.

Similarly faux-historical, the oil painting *Reproduction of a Reproduction* is a recent Chinese-made reproduction of Willem Kalf's 1669 painting *Still Life with a Chinese Porcelain Jar*. Alongside the porcelain jar of the work's title, the original painting includes a red, cochineal-dyed tablecloth and a silver platter: signs of luxury and excess that the 17th-century Dutch middle class would have aspired towards.

Finally, the etchings *The Roots of Industry* and *The Tea Table* both appropriate historical popular engravings. The former depicts a potato mine based on the Potosí silver mines in Bolivia, highlighting the fact that while silver fuelled the rise of industry, potatoes fuelled the labour force, whereas the latter shows a group of upper-class ladies sitting down to afternoon tea. In both instances, the Europeans that were originally depicted working the mines or at leisure, are replaced, surrounded or haunted by slave bodies, instruments of torture, and other more or less harrowing images from the artist's imagination. Through these and other works, Lin brings fraught histories of conquest, slavery, torture and theft back to life, exploring what happens when materials and bodies so burdened with history and meaning are situated in – and produce – new systems of relations.

Gasworks' 2016 Exhibitions Programme is supported by Catherine Petitgas.

Related Events:

The Intricate Speech of Intimate Objects

Saturday, September 24, 2pm

Los Angeles-based artist and psychic Asher Hartman leads an exhibition tour using psychometry, the art of channeling extrasensory perception to read the histories, energies and associations attached to objects.

Eating the Edifice

Saturday, November 12, 3pm

Food historian and artist Ivan Day presents an illustrated lecture outlining the evolution of edible table art from the early Renaissance to the 19th century.

All events are free to attend. Please check our website for further information and booking details.

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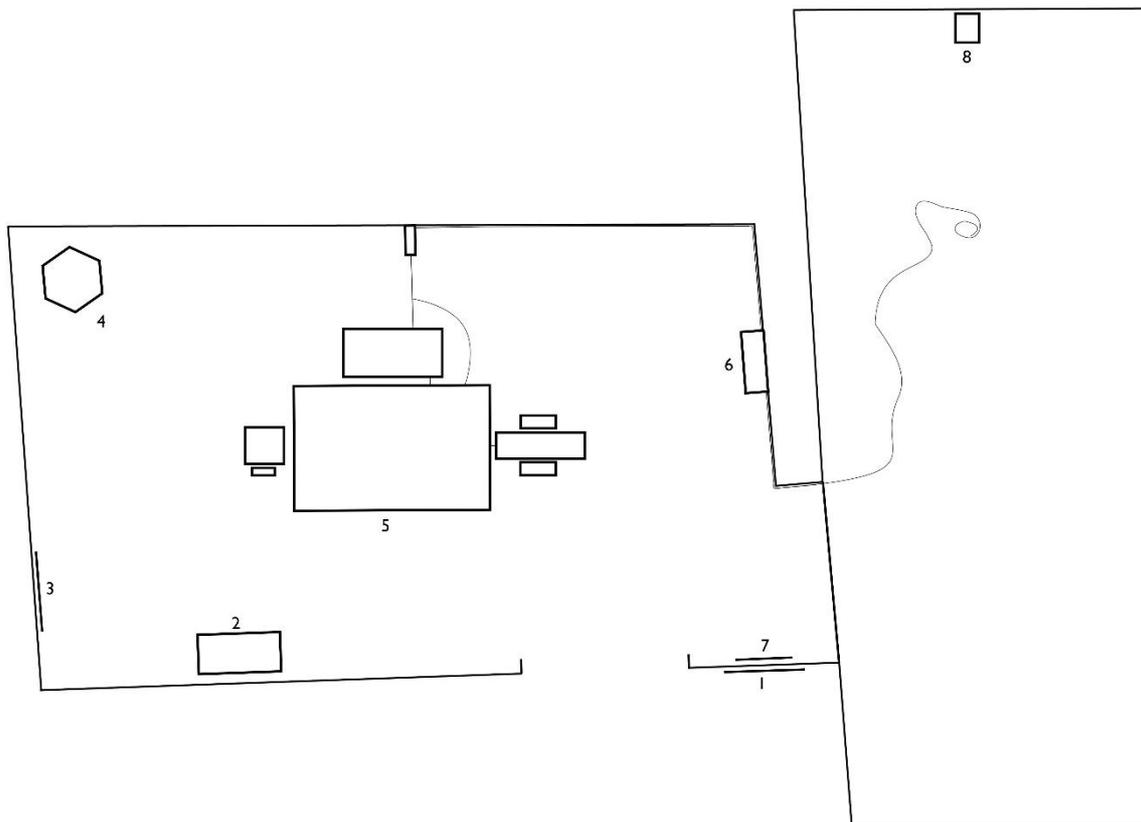
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List of Works

1. *The Tea Table*, 2016. Etching. 74 x 63 cm. Edition 1/6 + 2 AP.
2. *The Worm Husband (Our Father)*, 2016. Silkworms, tank, glazed porcelain, plaster and heating mechanism, miscellaneous plant material. 61 x 31 x 150 cm.
3. *The Roots of Industry*, 2016. 74 x 63 cm. Edition 1/6 + 2 AP.
4. *A Warner for Survivalists: White Gold*, 2016. Cockroaches, tank, sugar, gum tragacanth, edible pigments, glucose, candied fruit and leaves. 45 x 45 x 160 cm.
5. *System for a Stain*, 2016. Wood, glass jars, cochineal, poppy seeds, metal castings, water, tea, sugar, copper still, hot plate, ceramic vessels, mortar and pestle, Thames mud, jar, microbial mud battery, vinyl floor. Dimensions variable.
6. *Physiologus*, 2016. Artist book. Binding and transcription by Joel Freeman. 17 x 16 x 4.5 cm. An English translation is available at the front desk.
7. *Reproduction of a Reproduction*, 2016. Oil on canvas (Chinese reproduction of Willem Kalf's 1669 painting, *Still Life with a Chinese Porcelain Jar*). 66 x 76cm.
8. *A Memory Blushing with Innocence*, 2016. Audio, 06:36, read by Lauren Mackler.