



Lotus Laurie Kang, 'In Cascades', 2023, installation view

Lotus Laurie Kang: In Cascades

Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2 June to 30 July

A suspended structure, demarcated by hanging swathes of coloured film affixed with magnets to metal beams known as SuperJoists, has set up camp in the gallery like a transitory cloister. Its margins lead in and out of a cluster of room-like enclosures whose absent walls and blind alleys alternate between privacy and openness. Like dormant screens, the lengths of glossy film bear evidence of previous use and reflect their surroundings. The photosensitive material picked up colour when it was exposed to light in New York, Los Angeles, Toronto and in a purpose-built greenhouse in nearby Milton, Ontario. In London, the unfixed film will continue to change or, as Lotus Laurie Kang calls it, 'tan', as it registers ambient light from windows and spotlights, as well as shadows cast by architectural features, the artwork itself, and the bodies and belongings of visitors. While the stacked horizontal bands of colour on some of the film seem to sketch out minimal landscapes, their muted hues of red, sulphur yellow and milky browns also evoke organic tones found inside the body. The life of this sensitive material will continue to play out imperceptibly slowly until it becomes exhausted and turns a ghostly white.

Loosely modelled on the inner courtyards of traditional Korean homes, this filmy architecture is one of several elements from 'In Cascades' that refers to Kang's family heritage. Planted around the gallery, reception area and outside the building is an array of bronze and aluminium casts of ingredients typical of Korean cuisine, including anchovies, ginseng, cabbage and perilla leaves, kelp knots and mushrooms, as well as slices of lotus root; a self-referential element not just by virtue of being a namesake for the artist, but also because, as a food she grew up eating, it has partly shaped the person she is today. A rhizome that grows under water and gains its strength from the hollow channels running through it, the lotus root's lacy

structure is echoed in that of the SuperJoist, whose perforations also serve to distribute weight.

Kang is concerned not only with physical holes; she is also motivated to explore the occurrence and consequences of gaps in memories and histories. On the floor around and amid the hanging photosensitive films, a series of *Receiver Transmitter* sculptures made from folded tatami mats enhance the domestic feel of the situation, and establish a connection with Kang's grandmother, who used to sleep on a tatami at her grain and seed shop in Seoul, where she settled after fleeing North Korea before the war. Tangerines veiled in tissue paper, mung beans and sesame seeds, as well as metal casts of foods are among the items sandwiched into the mats, which are then wrapped in translucent sheets of silicone that summon up wax paper.

The installation fuels a dynamic of seeking and looking, a willingness to stare into blinding gallery spotlights to find the elusive works listed in the gallery handout, a hit of dopamine on locating some, and an acceptance that others must remain hidden in plain sight. Kang explains in an interview accompanying the show that she has concealed a set of prints from *Fleshing Out the Ghost* within the folds of the tatami used for *Receiver Transmitter (Intervertebral)*. The prints document a private performance ritual connected to the number 38 that Kang photographed in her studio on her 38th birthday - her grandmother's age when she crossed the border from North to South Korea (the 38th parallel is also the common name for this zone). The performance, in which she moves between standing and lying down on one of the tatami mattresses, was also 38 minutes long. In the gallery, Kang has laid out on an unfolded section of the same mat a set of aluminium casts of intervertebral discs, the gummy tissue that holds the spine together by keeping the vertebrae apart. Kang has arranged these bean-like forms in the double curve of a spinal column, interrupting their sequence with an occasional lotus root cast, as if to delineate a spectral sleeper.

Kang's activation of materials, delicate deployment of personal and cultural objects, and interest in the meeting points between reality and scientific theory are crystallised in a series of uncanny and alluring sculptures of rat pups distributed at the edges of the gallery. Made from cast glass, tinted yellow and red, they gleam at the periphery like dropped candy, their oozy translucency mimicking blood serum. Their title, *Sticky Pup*, refers to the condition of a pup whose mother has repeatedly licked it in order to bolster its health and resilience, but also to the ubiquity of rats even in modern society. They encapsulate Kang's tendency to move between a thoughtful engagement with filiation and its unknowns, and a reckoning with how the vagaries of experience shape us in spite of our familial predispositions.

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