

Liao Wen: Trust Fall

廖雯：信任坠落



信任坠落

文：
陈寅迪

“廖雯：信任坠落”以艺术家最新创作的雕塑与参照 MACA 一层空间设计的特定场域装置，探讨身份流动与社会系统间摩擦或融合的复杂关系。

“信任坠落”是关于恐惧与信赖的游戏。一人背对人群，向后仰倒，期待他人将自己接住，其意图在于通过放大处于危险时产生的依赖感受，从而增进彼此的信任。展厅中央的同名装置《信任坠落》（2023-2025）是对于这一游戏的复刻：金属台上倾斜的人形雕塑由其胸口连接的绳索牵制，在紧绷之中保持平衡姿态。观看者可以爬至阶梯上，或在装置下穿行，于走动间切换不同的身份与体验。

作品中有关不安感的探寻源自艺术家近年的移居经历与被社会异化的感触，亦涉及她对于边缘群体生活境况的关注，以及针对不同人群的生存空间如何交叠的思考。展场的设计模拟城市中的通行系统，以闸机和围栏构建起临时的规则。可推动的雕塑《漂泊者》（2024-2025）时而阻挡道路，成为观众行进中的障碍。然而脱离系统的方式始终在场，遵循或跨越秩序，由展览的参与者试验与选择。

艺术家创作中的材料运用与形态塑造，大多出自其研习木偶制作与表演的经验。与以往作品类似，此次展出的木质雕塑同样由她手工打磨与上色，以椴木为媒介，将人类生存的张力赋予无生命的类人形态。“信任

坠落”延续廖雯对于“阈限”这一主题的思考，旨在探索居于危机与信任、伤害与保护之间的“临界之躯”如何进行制衡与抵抗。艺术家在展览中复述着人与周遭环境磨合或排斥的体验，也尝试发问：我们的身体与思维，是否仍然囿于某个既定的系统之中？

Trust Fall

Text : Chen Yindi

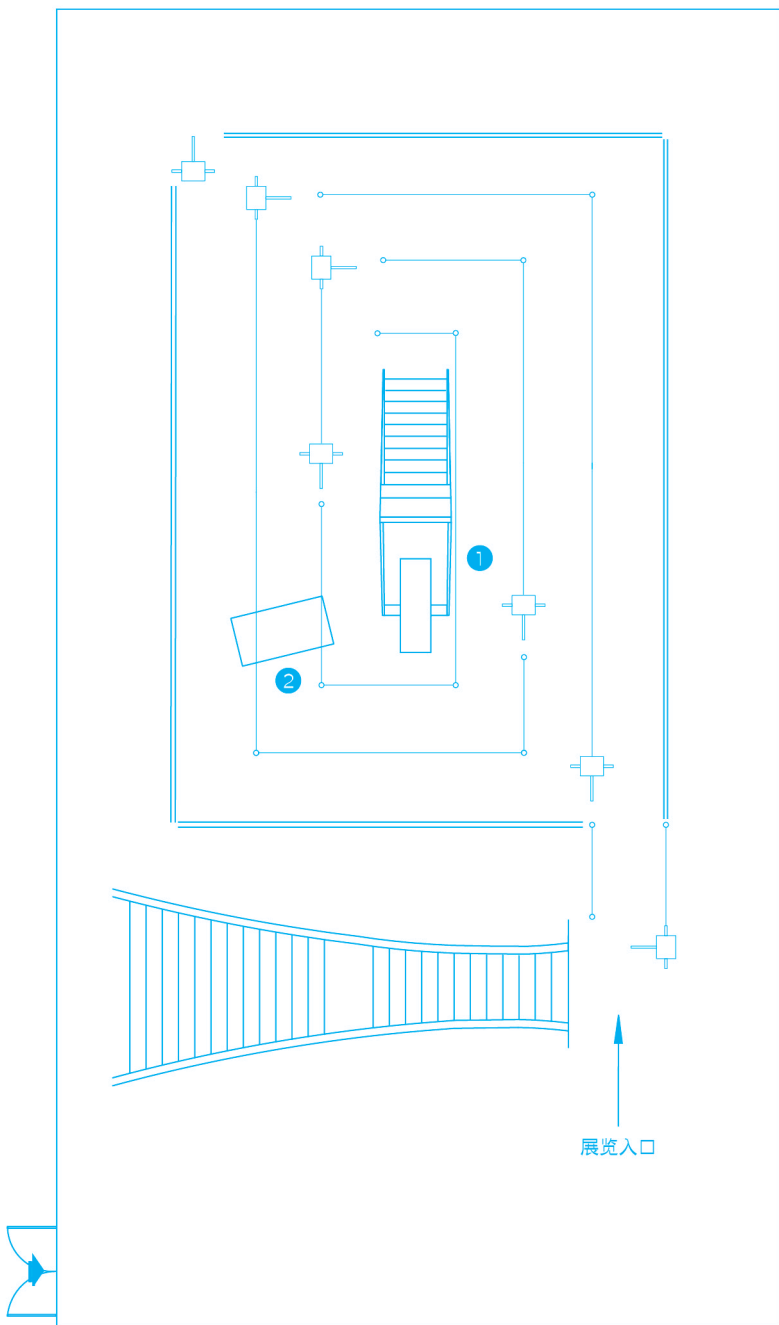
Liao Wen: Trust Fall features the artist's recent sculptures and a site-specific installation designed for the first floor of MACA, exploring the complex dynamics of friction and fusion between fluid identities and social systems.

"Trust fall" is a game of fear and trust. One person stands with their back to the group and falls backward, expecting to be caught by the others. The game is intended to amplify the sense of interdependence in moments of vulnerability to deepen mutual trust. Central to the exhibition is the eponymous installation *Trust Fall* (2023–2025), a representation of this game: the inclined human figure on the steel stage is restrained by a rope connected to its chest, suspended in a delicate balance within intense tension. Visitors are invited to climb the staircase or walk beneath the installation, shifting their identities and experiences in the act of moving.

The exploration of insecurity in the work stems from the artist's experience of relocation in recent years and her contemplation of social alienation, her concern for the living conditions of marginalized communities, as well as her reflections on the intersection of living spheres of different social communities. The exhibition space is designed to resemble an urban transit system, constructing specific temporary rules with turnstiles and barriers. The interactive sculpture *Wanderer* (2024–2025) sometimes blocks the path, acting as an obstacle as visitors move through the space. The possibility of detaching from the system, however, remains ever-present; whether to adhere to or transgress the established order is left for each participant to explore and decide.

The materials and forms in Liao Wen's works are deeply rooted in her training in puppet-making and performance. Similar to her previous works, the wooden sculptures in this exhibition are hand-crafted and painted by the artist, with limewood as the medium of expression, endowing the inani-

mate humanoids with the tension inherent in human existence. *Trust Fall* continues Liao Wen's ongoing investigation into the theme of "liminality," examining how the "threshold body"—navigating between crisis and trust, harm and protection—achieves counterbalance and resistance. Through the exhibition, the artist recounts the experience of adaptation and rejection between individuals and their surroundings, while posing a question: Are our bodies and minds still confined within an established system?



① 《信任坠落》

Trust Fall

② 《漂泊者》

Wanderer

《信任坠落》

Trust Fall



2023-2025
椴木, 不锈钢, 尼龙绳
340×450×120 厘米
由艺术家惠允

2023-2025
Limewood, stainless steel, nylon rope
340×450×120 cm
Courtesy of the artist

《信任坠落》源自与之同名的游戏：一人背对人群倒下，他人在后方将其接住。这一来自艺术家童年记忆中的游戏如今已成为当代社会进行团队建设时的活动，用唤起恐惧的方式来考验个体对于群体的信任。其场景于作品中被再现：倾斜的人形雕塑仅脚部与钢架相连，胸口由绳索拉扯以维持平衡，整体形态保持在坠落的瞬间。钢架结构容许观看者向上攀爬或从其下通过，切换视角以体验游戏中处于不同身份时的感受。

Trust Fall draws its inspiration from the eponymous game: one person falls backward, relying on others to catch them. This game, once in the artist's childhood memory, has now evolved into a team-building activity in today's society, testing the trust between individuals and the collective through the evocation of fear. This work reconstructs the game scene: an inclined human figure, connected to a steel stage only by its feet, is balanced by a rope pulling at its chest, suspended in the moment of falling. The stage allows viewers to climb up or walk underneath, shifting their perspectives and embodying the different roles within the scene.

《漂泊者》

Wanderer



2024-2025

椴木，不锈钢，聚氨酯减震泡沫，海绵，羊毛毯，弹力带，弹簧，一米栏

95×167×92 厘米；尺寸可变

由 MACA 支持制作

由艺术家惠允

2024-2025

Limewood, stainless steel, polyurethane foam, sponge, wool blanket, elastic, spring, stanchion

95×167×92 cm; dimensions variable

Supported by MACA

Courtesy of the artist

《漂泊者》的灵感源于美国设计师伊姆斯夫妇在二战时期为伤兵设计的轻便且贴合身体的木质夹板。人形雕塑躺于推车上，其腿部在受到外力冲撞时会回弹，如同人在向后摔倒时，膝盖下意识朝躯干弯曲的姿态。艺术家尝试思考人的身体与设施之间的互动与磨合，尤其是行动不便者在公共空间中的低可见性，也关照流动身份带来的漂泊感受。在展览中，观众需推开《漂泊者》才能继续通行，而作品本身亦因这一互动成为空间内能够自由穿行、游离于系统规则之外的部分。

Wanderer is inspired by the lightweight, body-molded wooden splints designed by American designers Charles Eames and Ray Eames for injured soldiers during World War II. The sculpture features a human figure lying on a wheelbarrow, with its legs springing back upon external impact—mirroring the instinctive reaction of bending one's knees toward the torso when falling backward. The artist reflects on the interaction and negotiation between the human body and its surrounding facilities, particularly the marginalized visibility of individuals with limited mobility in public spaces, while also contemplating the sense of displacement associated with shifting identities. In the exhibition, visitors are invited to push *Wanderer* to proceed on their way; and it is precisely this interaction that transforms the work into an entity capable of freely traversing the space, wandering beyond the confines of systemic rules.

艺术家采访

陈寅迪：最近几年你一直以木头为主要创作媒介，对这种材料的选择有什么考量？

廖雯：最初选择木头是无意识的决定，因为在捷克学习木偶制作时常用椴木。它的木质介于硬木与软木之间，适合雕刻且容易上手。回国后，我带着安全感继续使用这种材料，并将对身体的表现与木材特性结合。椴木可以打磨得很光滑，具有类似生物皮肤的细腻质感，非常适合表现身体感。

我通常在打磨后用丙烯一层层上色，类似特效化妆的技法，也与古典油画的罩染或版画的套色方法相似。这种技术性而非完全绘画性的处理方式是我一直以来的习惯。

但我总觉得给雕塑上色有违当代潮流。现代雕塑更注重物质的体积、材质本身的颜色、力与平衡，以及作品与空间、观众的关系。由于我未接受学院雕塑训练，而是通过民俗木偶接触雕塑，因此常感到撕扯，怀疑自己的作品是否不够当代。

迈克·凯利在他的书《污秽的完美：论文与批评文集》中提到，以自然主义的方式上色的娃娃、人偶、自动机械人偶、蜡像在被广泛接受的西方艺术史中并无立足之地，多色的宗教雕像也在艺术的等级制度中处于最低的地位。¹ 我的理解是，民间塑像、佛像或基督教雕像因面向大众，所以需要彩色，而当代艺术面向精英，更倾向于精英化、理论化的处理方式。在这种逻辑下，色彩显得多余甚至廉价。但是，我和迈克·凯利一样，对此表示怀疑。现代主义提倡雕塑应像古典希腊雕塑那样未经粉饰，以彰显“真实”和“真理”，但“真理并非永恒的，而是由社会构建的”。²

陈寅迪：你之前的作品虽然也有上色，但看上去很干净。为什么这次想要在雕塑上画出一些标记？

廖雯：我一直很难割舍雕塑“完成”（finishing）的处理方式，但也想突破。³ 这次的作品与我之前的创作有所不同。我尝试给雕塑上一层很薄的颜色，透出木材的纹理，呈现出一种介于皮肤和木头之间的质感。在一些关节部位，我画了箭头和参考线，标示出关节的活动范围，让它处在一种中间状态——既是一个被创造的、好似有生命的形象，又保留了作为材料的无生命特性。

我始终相信，雕塑需要成为独立于创作者之外的个体。它会保留手工雕刻的痕迹，比如我在创作中的瞬间感受，可能是肯定的、酣畅的，也可能是犹豫的、否定的。这些感受通过刀痕、参考线、材质拼接被反映出来。同时，材料本身也有个性，比如木材的纹理、疏密、轻重、颜色深浅。我用的椴木有时会发黑，那是木材的矿物线，是树木吸收过量矿物质形成的。而且，雨水少时，木头密实；雨水多时，木头较软。

我每次到一个新的地方（往往是更大的都市），都会重新学习语言、行为方式，甚至穿着打扮的风格。它们就像在我的皮肤上重新着色和粉饰，让我看起来和大家差不多。我过去的作品总是想要完美的表面，其实是我很努力地去追求完美。然而，我曾经为了融入新环境而做出的所有努力和改变，都在我身上留下了印记。这些痕迹是无法被遮盖的，它们烙印在我的记忆和血液中。

因此，在这次的新作中，不论是露出的木纹、铅笔的参考线，还是雕刻刀修改表面的痕迹，我都决定保留。在创作时，我也曾被这些印记打动，所以我决定将它们作为过程，也作为结果。

陈寅迪：是什么缘由促使你去布拉格学习木偶？从最初的学习到现在的创作，你觉得你的作品发生了怎样的变

化呢？

廖雯：二零一七年，我获得中央美术学院的王式廓奖学金，去捷克布拉格参加了一个为期一个月的木偶工作坊。我们制作的木偶剧改编自布莱姆·斯托克的《德古拉》，著名的吸血鬼故事，背景设定在罗马尼亚。那时我深受东欧文化氛围和审美的影响。

回北京后，大概有三四年时间，我从未想过成为一位艺术家，而是想成为一名木偶戏表演者。我特别渴望发起一个流动剧场。从二零一八年起，我还做了一个公众号，专门翻译和撰写关于偶戏、机器人、机械动态雕塑和控制论的内容。

我觉得自己这些年最大的变化是，早期我在雕塑中更注重私人感受的表达，而现在逐渐转向对关系的关注。我希望我的雕塑能触及公众，而不仅仅是一个审美对象。这次展览中就有许多互动元素，这是我以前做偶戏时非常宝贵且触动我的经验。或许，我做这种参与式装置也是对过去偶戏经验的继承。

陈寅迪：为什么是木偶戏让你开始对作品和观众之间的互动更感兴趣呢？因为在我的想象中，木偶剧场仍然是

一种仅让人观看的形式。

廖雯：我小时候在成都一个比较偏远的小镇长大。两千年初，镇上的三岔路口经常会有流动剧团来表演。他们开着一辆大篷车，背靠卡车侧面支起一个简易舞台就开始表演。有时演木偶戏，有时演杂技，比如喷火之类吸引眼球的节目。表演往往以卖“千年毒蛇酒”或跌打损伤膏结束。为了推销这些奇怪的东西，他们会卖力地表演一些非常超现实的内容。一周后，他们就会离开。我至今不知道他们从哪来，到哪去。我从小就对这种剧团充满好奇，觉得他们是流动的、神秘的存在。

我觉得木偶戏的好处在于，观众并不是带着看深奥戏剧的心态来的，而是来看直接、轻松的东西。它以喜闻乐见的方式呈现与每个人生活相关的故事，不需要保持距离观看，也不是被供奉珍藏的艺术形式。展览中可推动的装置《漂泊者》实际上也像一个偶戏剧场。

陈寅迪：听上去木偶剧对你来说有怀旧又接地气的感觉。

廖雯：从我的个人经历来看，可能是



《别离》，2020，椴木，硅胶，不锈钢，54×28×90厘米。摄影：凌卫政。
由胶囊上海与艺术家惠允



《抵抗》，2022，手工雕刻椴木，鲁伯特之泪形态玻璃，不锈钢，钢丝，55×114×68 厘米。摄影：Paul Salvesson。由弗朗索瓦·盖巴利画廊与艺术家惠允

怀旧的。但其实在中国乡村，现在依然存在这种世俗却又神秘、有力量的东西。在我成长的过程中，周围大部分人都是从小地方来的，我们一直在迁徙，适应更大的环境，试图融入更大的故事。也许是因为我来自的地方太小了，太向往外面的世界，才会对木偶剧团充满好奇和憧憬。在某种程度上，这种无论是自愿还是非自愿的流动性就是我的生活处境，也是我们这一代人在高速城市化背景下共享的经历。

陈寅迪：这次你为作品起的标题和你提到的流动性有关吗？

廖雯：我刚来香港时不太敢开口说普通话，因为一开口别人就会意识到我并不属于这里。我不再是游客，而是新的定居者。很长一段时间，我都有一种强烈的不安全感。这让我想起小时候玩过的一种游戏：让好朋友站在身后，然后朝后倒下，看对方会不会接住你。后来我发现，这种游戏已经发展成一种流行的企业团建项目，叫做“信任坠落”。公司组织一群彼此不熟悉的新员工参与这个游戏，以快速建立连接。因为当人处于危险状态时，更容易彼此建立信赖感。

作品《信任坠落》也借鉴了团建项目中的架子。通常，架子上的绳子会被教练拉住，但在我的作品中，我

抹去了起决定作用的教练角色，也抹去了下方的人，只剩下一个即将倒下的人，以非常紧绷的状态悬置在那里。我希望这个作品能让观众进入体验，从几种不同的视角去感受：站在下方时，可能会感受到上方即将倒下的人带来的压迫感；爬上楼梯时，观众离控制跌落的绳索很近。我会好奇他们站在那里时会想什么。

王嘉楠：我觉得展览中用闸机和一米栏构成的中转站，本身是一个“非场所”。在这个空间里，人们没有特定的社交属性或身份类型。在这种交通枢纽中，人与人之间处于一种匿名、无关系的状态。

陈寅迪：围栏的系统也构成了一种需要遵守的规则。为什么想把这种表现规则的形式带入展览中？

廖雯：来到香港后，我明显感受到这是一个非常有秩序的城市。无论在哪个公共空间，我几乎没见过有人插队。一些默认的规则和秩序似乎被植入了居民的基因里，我也很快适应并默认遵守。我在思考，这些潜移默化的规则是谁赋予的？在大陆生活时，我习惯了相对杂乱、缺乏规划的公共空间，不会强烈意识到生活中有许多隐形的规则。规则在某种程度上是文明的象征——正是因为这些规则的存在，我

们的公共生活才得以正常进行，少数群体的可见性也得以增强，比如无障碍通道的设置。

但在展览中，设定这些规则是意图让人去打破的。只有破坏了规则，才能生成一些新的东西。我们的最终目的并不是让人去打破规则，而是通过打破规则，意识到并看见它的存在。“看见”是很基础的，至于之后要怎么做，是比较开放的状态。跳过闸机和一米栏，不愿意交入场券，是因为我不认可你的规则。而回到现实世界，我们要越过的是什么？为什么要去突破它？

陈寅迪：香港为边缘群体设置的公共设施是如何给予展览作品灵感的？

廖雯：我经常去大家乐吃午饭。大家乐是香港一个比较实惠的连锁餐厅。有一天我在那里吃饭时，来了一位坐在轮椅上的女士，旁边还有一位照顾她的菲律宾姐姐。我当时看了那位女士一眼，惊觉她没有双腿，她的整个身躯是放在轮椅上的。我随即收起了我的目光，同时意识到我坐在了无障碍座位上，周围的人也都在看我们。我立刻说不好意思，端着盘子准备离开。她说没关系，邀请我跟她一起吃。

我们聊了几句，但大部分时间是沉默的。临走时，她突然叫住我，给了我一张大家乐的优惠券。

我当时不太敢看她，是因为害怕我的目光会刺痛她，但刻意回避又显得不礼貌。当我拿着优惠券走出大家乐时，心里五味杂陈，更多的是羞愧。我觉得她应该是在感谢我愿意把她当成身体健全的人，跟她聊几句，在一张桌上吃饭。当时我想，我好像没有在大陆看见过残疾人出门。如果有更多空间让他们被公众看见和接触，那么我们对于他们的接受度可能会更高。

在香港，尽管公共空间已经为残障人士铺设了基础设施，这些少数群体依然处于一种几乎不可见的状态，像是透明的，或者隔着一层屏障。这里也有很多外劳，除了菲律宾的女佣，还有许多来自南亚的工人，挖掘沟渠，铺设管道。他们存在，但也不存在。

《漂泊者》就是以此为启发。尚未掌握这座城市语言的、尚未找到位置的我，很能与那位坐在轮椅上的女士共情。《漂泊者》看似一直在移动，却无法完全决定自己的方向，必须通过观众的“拒绝”才能移动。它的高度正好低于我们设置的一米栏，看似超越了规则的限制，实则永远被困在这个局面之中，找不到锚点。



《逆风》，2023，手工雕刻椴木，
不锈钢，103×130×81厘米。摄影：
Flavio Pescatori。由杜卡托奖与艺术
家惠允

陈寅迪：你的很多作品都会探讨“阈限”这个概念。你怎么理解这个词？在这次展览中，它是怎么被界定的？

廖雯：阈限状态指的是人从一种状态转换到另一种状态时的过渡。

这次展览中的两件作品属于我创作的“临界之躯”系列。它们受到我过去做木偶的经验启发，作品由关节连接起来，因此可拆分、可活动。

“临界之躯”系列的身体都处于极限状态——将要倒下但尚未倒下。我利用关节自身的对冲力，让雕塑用自身的力保持不倒。

我用这个原理来表达和记录我生命中非常重要的体验。这些瞬间承载着强烈的感受，包括身心都极度不稳定的状态。比如在《抵抗》中，我用“歇斯底里之弧”的姿态表现女性的抑郁。⁴我妈妈的朋友曾遭遇严重的抑郁症。中老年女性的抑郁其实很少被看到和重视。我们两家人想尽了一切办法，希望她好起来。但作为一个没有抑郁的人，我该如何理解她呢？

一次偶然的机会，我看到了一种叫“鲁伯特之泪”的玻璃。它的形状像一滴水，尾部极其脆弱，轻轻一碰就会破裂，但头部却能承受几吨的重量。我立刻想到我的阿姨，感受到她脆弱背后强大的生命力，因为她一次次恢复，这并不容易。因此，雕塑的躯干奋力往上顶，就像为了避免那一串玻璃坠落一样。

《逆风》像被强大的、看不见的风吹倒，整个身躯和头部后仰，只有右腿支撑起身体的重量，以保持尊严。实际上，左右腿的关节卡住了身躯，让它保持在这个位置不下坠，右腿膝盖的关节承受了巨大的压力。

我想通过这种对身体的极限的呈现，探讨我们即将失去平衡，却又通过生命的意志抵御这种失衡和虚无的状态。

这次展览中的两件作品，我可能

有些残忍地让它们处于永远漂泊、永远悬置的状态。但这或许就是我们生命本身的状态，至少是我自己生活的状态——没有明确的终点和归宿，一直处于悬而未决之中。

- 1 出自迈克·凯利，《污秽的完美：论文与批评文集》（麻省理工学院出版社，2003年）第79页，《与死亡之物的游戏：论怪怖》一文。
- 2 出自《污秽的完美：论文与批评文集》第80页。
- 3 “Wood finishing”是指对木制品表面的最终处理方式。
- 4 乔治·J·普雷斯顿在一八九七年为其著作《歇斯底里及某些相关病症：其本质与治疗，特别参考静养疗法、按摩、电疗、催眠等的应用》绘制的插图，描绘了一个在床上挺起腹部、身体呈极致拱弧形的姿态。路易丝·布尔乔亚受此启发，于一九九三年创作了雕塑《歇斯底里之弧》。

Conversation with Liao Wen

Chen Yindi: In recent years, wood has been the primary medium of your artistic expression. What are the considerations behind this choice?

Liao Wen: At first, it was an unconscious decision. In the Czech Republic, where I learned the craft of marionettes, limewood was the most commonly used material. The texture of it is between hardwood and softwood, making it ideal for carving and easy to work with. After I returned to China, I continued using this material with a sense of intimacy, combining the representation of the body with the inherent characteristics of wood. Limewood can be sanded to such a smooth finish that it achieves a fine texture, similar to the skin of organic creatures, making it perfect for representing the body.

I would sand the wood and then apply the acrylic paint in layers using a technique similar to special-effects make-up, which follows the same logic as glazing in classical oil painting and overprinting in woodblock printing. This technical rather than purely painterly approach is something that I have always been used to.

Applying colors to sculpture has always stood out to me as going against contemporary trends. Contemporary sculptures often emphasize the volume of matter, the color of materials, force and balance, and the relationship between the work, the space, and the viewer. Instead of academic training, it was folk puppetry that introduced me to sculpture. While it has also left me struggling, wondering if my work is contemporary enough.

Mike Kelley has stated in *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism* that, "Naturalistically colored dolls, mannequins, automata, and wax portrait figures are not included in the generally accepted version of western art history, and polychrome religious statuary is on the lowest rung of the art hierarchy."¹ My interpretation of this is that folk statues—whether Buddhist or Christian—are given color because they cater to the needs of the masses, whereas contemporary art, being oriented toward the elite, adopts a more theoretical or exclusive approach. This logic makes color seem redundant or even cheap. However, like Mike Kelley, I also share the same reservations concerning this notion. Modernism advocates for the unadorned aesthetics of sculpture, like classical Greek sculpture, as a manifestation of "reality" and "truth." However, "Truth is not a timeless given but a socially constructed fact."²

Chen Yindi: Despite the presence of color, the simplicity of your previous works was notable. Why did you choose to draw marks on the sculptures this time?

Liao Wen: It has always been difficult for me to resist the process of "finishing" of sculpture-making, but making a break

from it is just as compelling to me.³ These works are different from my previous ones. I tried applying a very thin layer of color in order to bring out the natural wood grain, creating a texture that exists between skin and wood. I drew arrows and reference lines on some of the joints to indicate their range of motion, maintaining an in-between state—both a created, quasi-living being, and a material with inanimate traits.

I always believe that sculpture should be an independent entity of its creator. It can preserve traces of hand-carving—expressing the instant feelings during my creative process, which may be assertive and vigorous or vacillating and self-denying. These feelings are revealed through scoring, reference lines, and material assemblage. The materials themselves also carry unique personalities—the grain, density, weight, and shade. Some limewood pieces I use have dark streaks, which indicate mineral deposits absorbed by the original tree. The density of the wood can correspondently tell more or less the levels of precipitation as it grows.

Whenever I move to a new place—often large cities—I find myself re-learning vocabulary, adapting my behavior, and even altering the way I dress. It feels as if I am re-painting and re-decorating my skin in order to blend in with those around me. In my past works, I always strived for a flawless surface, which was, in essence, a reflection of my constant pursuit of perfection. Yet, all the efforts and changes I made to assimilate into new environments have left indelible marks on me. They can not be covered up and are seared into my memory and flow through my veins.

Therefore, in my new works I decide to present everything as it is: the wood grains, the pencil-marked reference lines, and the correction traces left by my carving knife. Each imprint touched me during the process of creation, so I decided to treat them not only as the journey but also as the destination.

Chen Yindi: From your early studies to your current artistic practice, how would you describe the transformation of your work?

Liao Wen: In 2017, I received the Wang Shikuo Scholarship from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, allowing me to participate in a one-month puppetry workshop in Prague, Czech Republic. The puppet show that we worked on was an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, a renowned vampire fiction set in Romania. During that time, I was profoundly influenced by the cultural atmosphere and aesthetics of Eastern Europe.

For about three to four years after returning to Beijing, I never envisioned myself becoming a fine art artist. Instead, I aspired to be a puppeteer. I was particularly passionate about

the idea of establishing an itinerant theater. In 2018, I started an official WeChat account focused on translating and writing about puppetry, robotics, mechanical kinetic sculptures, and cybernetics.

Over these years, the most significant change that has happened to me is that my early sculptures tended to focus on the expression of personal feelings, whereas now I have gradually shifted my attention to the exploration of relationships. I hope my sculptures can engage the public rather than just being viewed only as aesthetic objects. This exhibition, *Trust Fall*, features a lot of interactive elements, which originated from the precious and touching experiences I had while doing puppetry. In some ways, creating these interactive installations is a continuation of the experience that I once gained from puppetry.

Chen Yindi: What was it about puppetry that sparked your interest in the interaction between artwork and audience? Because from my understanding, puppet theater remains a primarily presentational art form.

Liao Wen: I grew up in a remote town in Chengdu. I remember that in the early 2000s, some traveling troupes would visit frequently, performing at the fork-road junction in the town. They would show up in a caravan, set up a simple stage against the side of the truck, and begin their shows. Sometimes it was puppet shows and sometimes acrobatics, such as fire-breathing or other eye-catching acts. The performances always ended up with a sales pitch for some peculiar remedies, like so-called "millennium-aged snake wine" and magic creams. To peddle these bizarre wares, they would enthusiastically stage some surreal performances. After a week, they would vanish, leaving their origins and destinations unknown. I have been fascinated by these troupes since childhood; they



Resist, 2022, hand-colored limewood, Prince Rupert's drop, stainless steel, wire, 55×114×68 cm. Photo by Paul Salveson. Courtesy of François Ghebaly Gallery and the artist

are such nomadic and mysterious beings to me.

The charm of puppetry is that, from my perspective, the audience does not come for the abstruse theater, but for something more direct and entertaining. It tells stories that are related to everyone's life in an accessible way, with no need for detachment or for treating it as enshrined high art. In this exhibition, the interactive installation *Wanderer* (2024–2025) can also be seen as a kind of puppet theater.

Chen Yindi: It sounds like puppetry holds a nostalgic yet down-to-earth feeling for you.

Liao Wen: It might be nostalgic in my personal experience. But actually, these secular yet mystical and powerful traditions still thrive in rural China today. Growing up, most people around me came from small towns. We have always been migrating, adapting to bigger environments, and trying to fit ourselves into larger narratives. Maybe coming from such a small place made me so eager for the outside world, filling me with curiosity and longing for the puppet troupe. To some extent, this mobility—whether by choice or not—mirrors my own life and the broader experience shared by my generation in the context of rapid urbanization.

Chen Yindi: Are the titles of your works in this exhibition related to the sense of mobility?

Liao Wen: When I first came to Hong Kong, I hesitated to speak Mandarin, fearing it might cause the impression that I did not truly belong here. I was no longer a tourist but a new resident. For a long time, I was caught up in a strong sense of insecurity. It reminded me of a game I used to play as a child: you stand with your back to your friend, then fall straight back to see if they will catch you. Later, I learned that this game has developed into a popular team-building game called "trust fall." Companies use it to quickly build connections among new employees who barely know each other, as people tend to trust one another when they are in danger.

My work *Trust Fall* (2023–2025) draws on the stage used in this team-building game. Normally, there would be a coach holding the rope attached to the stage. However, in my work, I have removed the crucial role of the coach as well as the people standing below, leaving a single figure suspended in extreme tension, about to fall. I hope this work invites visitors to experience it from different perspectives: standing beneath it, they might feel the overwhelming weight of the falling figure while climbing the stairs brings the controlling rope within the visitor's immediate reach. I wonder what thoughts might cross their minds in those moments.

Wang Jianan: I feel that the transit hub in the exhibition, with its turnstiles and barriers, represents a "non-place." In this space, people have no distinct social attributes or identities. Here, individuals remain anonymous and disconnected from one another.

Chen Yindi: The barrier system also embodies a form of enforced order. What inspired you to integrate this representation of rules into this exhibition?

Liao Wen: Since moving to Hong Kong, I have been struck by the city's strong sense of order. In nearly every public space, I have rarely seen anyone cut in line. It is as if unspoken norms have been embedded in the residents' DNA, and I found myself instinctively following them. I often wonder: who enforces these imperceptible rules?

Living in Mainland accustomed me to public spaces that felt relatively chaotic and less regulated, so I had not fully grasped the presence of many invisible rules in our daily lives. Rules, in a way, symbolize civilization—they allow public life to function properly and amplify the visibility of marginalized groups, such as through accessibility infrastructure.

In this exhibition, however, these rules are established to be broken. It is only through the breaking of rules that something new can be generated. The ultimate goal is not simply about "breaking the rules" itself, but rather about seeing their existence by rejecting them. "Seeing" is just the starting point—what follows is a realm of open possibilities. Jumping over the turnstiles and barriers, refusing to show the admission ticket—these acts are a rejection of the imposed rules. But in the real world, what boundaries are we trying to transgress, and for what purpose?

Chen Yindi: How do the public facilities for marginal communities in Hong Kong inspire the works in this exhibition?

Liao Wen: I often have lunch at Café de Coral, a budget-friendly chain restaurant in Hong Kong. One day, while I was eating there, a woman in a wheelchair came in, accompanied by a Filipino caregiver. I glanced at her and was startled to realize that she had no legs, and her entire body was supported by the wheelchair. I immediately withdrew my gaze, whilst realizing that I had occupied the accessible seat and that people around us were starting to look over. I apologized and started to move, but she said it was fine and invited me to stay and share the table. We exchanged a few words but mostly sat in silence. As I left, she stopped me and handed me a Café de Coral coupon.

I hesitated to look at her directly, worried my gaze would come across as intrusive, but I also felt that deliberately avoid-

ing eye contact would be impolite. Leaving Café de Coral with that coupon, I felt a swirl of emotions, but above all, a deep sense of shame. I believe she was expressing gratitude for the way I treated her as an equal, for being open to conversation and sharing the table. At that moment, it dawned on me how seldom I had encountered people with disabilities in public spaces in Mainland. If there were more opportunities for the public to see and engage with them, social acceptance would be naturally increased.

Despite Hong Kong's public spaces being equipped with considerable facilities for people with disabilities, these marginalized communities remain almost invisible, as if they are transparent or separated by an unseen barrier. This invisibility extends to many migrant workers—from Filipino domestic helpers to South Asian laborers who dig ditches and lay pipes. They are present, yet somehow absent.

The inspiration for *Wanderer* (2024-2025) came from this very experience. As someone who had not yet grasped the nuances of the city or found my place in it, I felt a deep resonance with that woman in the wheelchair. *Wanderer* appears to be in constant motion, yet it has no capacity to determine its own direction; it moves only through the "refusal" of the audience. Its height is intentionally set just below the stanchion—seemingly transgressing the constraints of the rules, yet still ensnared within the system, unable to find an anchor.

Chen Yindi: Many of your works explore the concept of "liminality." How do you interpret this notion, and how is it defined within the context of this exhibition?

Liao Wen: "Liminality" refers to the in-between state when transitioning from one condition to another.

The two works in this exhibition are part of my "Almost Collapsing Balance" series. Inspired by my past experience with puppetry, these works are connected by joints, making them detachable and flexible. In this series, bodies exist in a kind of liminal state—about to fall but not yet fallen. By leveraging the counterforces of the joints, the sculptures maintain balance through their own structural tension.

I use this logic to express and archive significant experiences in my life—moments charged with intense emotions, marked by extreme physical and mental instability.

In *Resist* (2022), I used "the arc of hysteria" to signify female depression.⁴ One of my mother's friends once suffered from severe depression. Depression in elderly women rarely receives the attention it deserves. Our families tried everything to support her, but as someone who has not experienced depression myself, how could I truly understand her?

By chance, I once came across a glass object called "Prince Rupert's Drop." Teardrop-shaped, its tail is so fragile

that it can break at the slightest touch, yet its head can withstand immense pressure. It immediately reminded me of my mom's friend—the profound strength hidden within her vulnerability, the way she tenaciously pulled herself back from pain, over and over again. Accordingly, the torso of the sculpture fights to rise upwards, as if trying to prevent the string of glass from falling.

Headwind (2023) is a response to an incident in Shanghai in 2022: a young man was taken away by authorities while holding a sunflower and reading poetry on the street. The sculpture appears to be blown over by a forceful yet invisible wind—its body and head thrown back, with only the right leg bearing the weight to maintain its dignity. In fact, it is the joints of the right and left legs that lock the body in place, preventing it from collapsing, while the right knee endures tremendous pressure to hold this position.

Through this presentation of the liminal state of the body, I seek to explore the tension between losing balance and resisting collapse and void through sheer force of will.

Perhaps it is somewhat cruel to leave the two works in this exhibition in a state of perpetual drift and suspension. However, this may be the nature of our lives—or at the very least, the essence of my own life—with no clear destination or resolution, endlessly suspended in a state of liminality.

- 1 Mike Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, MIT Press, 2003. "Chapter "Playing with Dead Things: On the Uncanny," p79.
- 2 *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, p80.
- 3 "Wood finishing" refers to the final treatment applied to the surface of wooden objects.
- 4 In 1897, George J. Preston created an illustration for his book *Hysteria and Certain Allied Conditions, Their Nature and Treatment: With Special Reference to the Application of the Rest Cure, Massage, Electrotherapy, Hypnotism, Etc.* The image depicts a body arching dramatically on a bed, forming an extreme curve. Inspired by this, Louise Bourgeois created the sculpture *Arch of Hysteria* in 1993.

关于艺术家

廖雯现居香港，2019年硕士毕业于中央美术学院。廖雯以雕塑、表演和影像为媒介，汲取来自木偶学、神话－仪式人类学、医药学、艺术史的养分，思考投射到身体上的社会秩序、技术与权力的规训。其创作兼具原始与未来感，展露身处阈限阶段的不安定，以想像未来身体的可能性。她曾在胶囊空间（威尼斯，2024；上海，2021）；蔡锦空间（北京，2021）举办个展。近期群展包括广东时代美术馆（广州，2024）；首届泛东南亚三年展（广州，2023）；Cassina Projects（米兰，2023）；François Ghebaly 画廊（洛杉矶，2022）；“飞去来器－第九届 OCAT 双年展”（深圳，2021）等。她获2023年 Frieze 纽约艺博会的 Stand Prize，亦入围2023年意大利 Ducato Prize。廖雯的作品被《纽约时报》、《Art in America》、《艺术新闻中文版》、《ArtReview 艺术世界》等刊物报道。她将于2025年在瑞士文化基金会的支持下前往瑞士进行驻地考察。

关于策展人

陈寅迪是 MACA 助理策展人、研究员。她的研究关注不同文化如何看待和展现自然，尤其涉及神话历史与生态批评的交汇。她曾为 Yamanaka Suplex（大阪）、Subtitled（纽约）等空间策划展览，并在《艺术新闻中文版》、《ArtReview 艺术世界》、《Whitehot Magazine》、《Cultbytes》、《C-print Journal》等刊物发表文章。她毕业于英国约克大学与纽约视觉艺术学院。

王嘉楠是 MACA 副策展人、研究员。

About the Artist

Liao Wen lives and works in Hong Kong. She received her MFA from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2019. Liao Wen's practice spans sculpture, performance, and video. Drawing inspiration from puppetry, anthropology of myths and rituals, medicine, and art history, she interrogates the social order, technology, and disciplining power projected onto the body. Both primordial and futuristic, her works depict the unsettling balance of the body in the liminal state and imagine future bodily possibilities. She has held solo exhibitions at Capsule Shanghai (Venice, 2024; Shanghai, 2021) and Cai Jin Space (Beijing, 2021). She has participated in group exhibitions at Guangdong Times Museum (Guangzhou, 2024); The First Trans-Southeast Asia Triennial (Guangzhou, 2023); Cassina Projects (Milan, 2023); François Ghebaly Gallery (Los Angeles, 2022); OCAT Biennale 2021 (Shenzhen, 2021), among others. She was awarded the Frieze New York Stand prize in 2023 and was a finalist artist for the Ducato Prize in 2023. Her works have been featured in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *The Art Newspaper China*, and *ArtReview*. She has been selected to be the resident of Pro Helvetia in Switzerland in 2025.

About the Curators

Chen Yindi is the Assistant Curator and Researcher at MACA. Her research explores how nature has been seen and represented in different cultures, especially in relation to the intersections of mythologies and queer ecology. She has curated exhibitions at Yamanaka Suplex (Osaka), Subtitled (New York) and among others. Yindi has contributed writings to *The Art Newspaper China*, *ArtReview*, *Whitehot Magazine*, *Cultbytes*, *C-print Journal* and more. She received her M.A. from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and her B.A. from the University of York, UK.

Wang Jianan is the Associate Curator and Researcher at MACA.

廖雯：信任坠落

Liao Wen: Trust Fall

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MACA是一个位于北京798艺术区内的非营利艺术机构，于二零二二年一月十五日正式面向公众开放。以一栋总面积九百平方米的两层建筑为基地，MACA联合全球范围内的艺术家、策展人以及泛文化艺术工作者，以多形式的持续共同工作构建一处当代艺术版图上的新形态坐标。以“艺术家的工作”为导向，以跨学科的研究为根基，MACA试图重聚热爱艺术与信仰“当代”的群体，以回应这个处于激变之中的时代。

About MACA

MACA is a non-profit art institution located in the 798 Art District of Beijing and officially inaugurated its space on January 15, 2022. Occupying a two-story building with a total area of 900 square meters, MACA unites artists, curators, and other art and cultural practitioners from around the world. Through its diverse, ongoing, and collaborative approaches, the Center establishes a new site on the contemporary art scene. Guided by the “work of artists” and backed by interdisciplinary research, the Center aims to bring together a community passionate about art and devoted to the “contemporary” moment so as to respond proactively to our rapidly evolving times.



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