

CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY



Above: Wanxin Zhang, *Aircraft Carrier*, 2021; high-fired stoneware with glazes; 34 x 48 x 16 inches.

Wanxin Zhang: *Witness* 见证人

March 5 – April 16, 2022

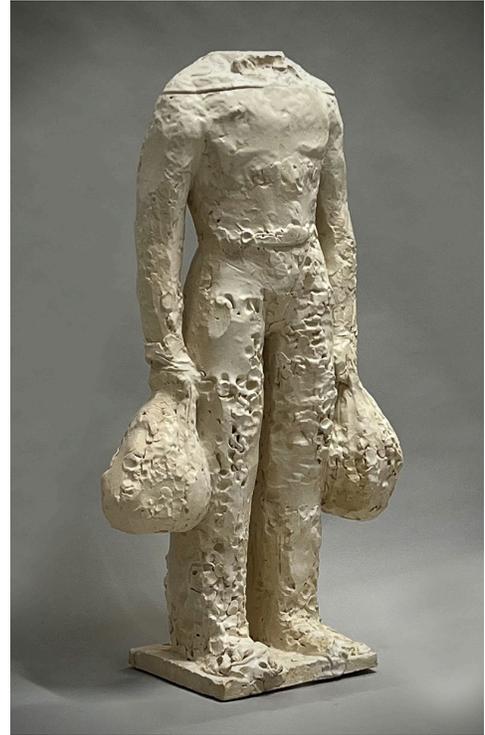
Media Room Presentation: TT Takemoto: *May 35* and *HK Uprising*

Viewing Room: *Chester Arnold: Mini-Survey: 1971-2022*

Opening reception: Saturday, March 5 from 11am – 2pm; artist talks at 12:30pm

San Francisco, CA: Catharine Clark Gallery continues its 2022 program with *Witness* 见证人, a solo exhibition of recent sculptures by Wanxin Zhang. Encompassing both representational and abstracted forms, Zhang's work invites reflection on what it means to stand witness to social change. Upon entering the gallery, viewers encounter a rainbow-hued scholar's rock, a sculpture that evokes the natural stone formations historically revered by Chinese intellectuals, but with bright, streaking glazes that suggest a landscape – and a historical tradition – in a state of flux.

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An exploded teapot – seemingly a composite of smaller cups and objects – bursts at its side with broken shards trailing onto the pedestal below, an intervention that signals a cheeky disruption of domestic craft. By contrast, an oversized, jade green teapot without a handle reimagines the familiar household object as one of purely aesthetic – and no obvious “use” – value. Standing and seated figures hold watch throughout the gallery, referencing the travelers, philosophers, and disciples who reappear throughout Zhang’s work. A headless figure holding two bags, by contrast, evokes the protestor who faced the oncoming tanks at Tiananmen Square, a haunting evocation of an act of civil disobedience and its violent suppression that continues to resonate today.

Zhang writes that “after living through one of the most devastating periods of destruction during the Cultural Revolution, I arrived in the United States, where I finally felt the permission to express my ideas through my art. Having now lived half my life in China and half in the United States, I’ve increasingly reflected on what it means to be a ‘traveler,’ whose understanding of history and tradition reflects an experience of hybridity. Clay, my medium of choice, has an inherent tension: though it is limited as a raw material, it is endlessly malleable and expressive when formed, glazed, and fired. This tension evokes a parallel to the push and pull that many of us feel living in a politically and culturally divided world. I created much of this work during the pandemic, and as I kept thinking deeply about human fragility – and about life, death, and disease – I kept asking key questions: *where are we going*, and *where did we come from*? In my role as a witness to this moment, I try to mediate on these core questions, drawing them across history and geography to a place where we can collectively reflect on our shared humanity.”

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In conversation with Zhang’s exhibition, the gallery features two video works by TT Takemoto in the Media Room, *May 35* (2019) and *HK Uprising* (2021). Drawing on found footage from historic and contemporary protests, Takemoto explores the gaps and fissures of memory through a range of experimental cinema techniques.

Takemoto writes that “‘May 35’ is a phrase used by activists to evade censorship pertaining to the violence that took place in Tiananmen Square on June 4th, 1989. This cameraless film was made from a single image showing peaceful protesters days before the violence ensued. I spent several days scraping and burning the surface of photographic prints and attaching fragments onto clear 16mm film leader with paint, ink, glue, and tape. I wanted to spend time looking at the faces of the thousands of people whose lives were irrevocably transformed by this upheaval. I was also struck by how difficult it is to look at these iconic Tiananmen Square photographs today without the knowledge of the violence that was to come.

HK Uprising, by comparison, is a tribute to the ongoing protests in Hong Kong that are taking place three decades after the Tiananmen Square uprising. It was made from several protest photographs from 2019. Both films speak to the difficulty of remembering in the absence of memory, especially when so many traces of protest have been overlooked, censored, or obscured.”

The gallery’s Viewing Room features *Chester Arnold: Mini-Survey: 1971-2022*, an intimate presentation of work across every decade of Arnold’s career, which will be on view simultaneously to *Reports on the Contrary: A Persistent Vision – Painting 1971-2021* by Chester Arnold, [on view at the Fresno Art Museum through June 26, 2022.](#)

Join us for an opening reception on Saturday, March 5 from 11am – 2pm, with artists’ talks at 12:30pm.