

ARTERREAL

**Louise Zhang**



Louise Zhang is a Chinese-Australian artist who has developed a cult following for her alluring and fascinating paintings, sculptures and installations which mash together references as diverse as horror films and Chinese mythology, all articulated in the artist's signature sugary palette. The seductive relationship between attraction and repulsion is key in Zhang's practice - she is an artist who has become known for work which explores the dichotomy and tensions which exist between the beautiful and strange, the monstrous and cute. Louise's work may be familiar from her collaborations with the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, 4a Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, the City of Sydney and Carriageworks. Having showcased her work since she first emerged in 2014, Arterreal is excited to present the work of an artist whose unique artistic vision is now immediately recognisable.



Louise Zhang\_ *Clyde*\_2016  
Plywood, acrylic paint, oil paint, polyurethane, Epoxy clay\_120 x 47cm



Louise Zhang\_ *Feed you pink #1*\_2018\_polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay\_49 x 46 x 43cm. Photograph by Felicity Jenkins.

*“Louise Zhang creates objects that are designed to allure and repel. Depending on your proclivities, her paintings and sculptures could have either or both effects simultaneously. Zhang’s paintings and painted sculptures are blob-like in form, slippery in texture and lurid in colour. Their brightness and playfulness are striking and their ambivalent forms can be unnerving, in the same way that the wobble of jelly evokes terror in some. In one sense Zhang’s works are entirely abstract – they do not represent forms from the real world. They are, however, representational in that their infinite mutability reflects that of the blob. If ‘the blob’ can be defined as a real object, then Zhang’s works are not so abstract after all.*”

*Zhang is working in a long tradition of representing the grotesque in art. From Hieronymus Bosch’s early 16th century masterpiece *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, to Hogarth’s satirical etchings, right through to Patricia Piccinini’s hybrid silicone creatures, imagery of the not-quite-recognisable has always inspired conflicting responses of fascination and horror. When forms are somewhat bodily but not quite as we expect them to be, there is a response of fear and abjection. In Zhang’s work, an additional layer of confusion is introduced by her use of colour. Her saturated neon pigments are eye-catching, seductive, even cute and friendly... Her colour palette and playful sense of the grotesque take their cues both from art history and contemporary culture. The legacy of cartoons such as *Ren and Stimpy*, that bastion of gratuitous snot and slime and decaying flesh (which first aired the year Zhang was born), and the more sanitary but equally globular subaquatic world of *SpongeBob SquarePants*, can be seen in the icky textures and monstrous bulges of Zhang’s expanding polyurethane, silicone and enamel sculptures. We are initially attracted, which makes it all the more disturbing when we do come to contemplate the underlying forms and substances...”*

Rebecca Gallo, Independent Arts Writer,  
2015.



Louise Zhang completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours (First Class) at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales in 2013, before completing a Masters of Fine Arts by research at UNSW Art & Design in 2016. Since 2012, she has been invited to exhibit as part of curated exhibitions including: Closing the Distance, curated by Sophia Cai, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre; From Old Ground, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery; Ereignis, curated by Lizzy Marshall, Cessnock Regional Gallery, Cessnock; Work, rest, PLAY!, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery; Right Here, Right Now, Penrith Regional Art Gallery; Biggie Smalls, Casula Powerhouse and Chinese Whispers, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery. Louise has also collaborated on projects with institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (who invited her to curate MCA Art Bar in January 2017) and 4a Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (who commissioned Louise to create a work as part of their 2017 Chinese New Year program).



Louise Zhang\_ *We're all gonna burn in hell for a little bit*  
2016\_acrylic, oil and plastic on plywood and mdf  
100 x 112cm

Zhang has been awarded residencies via the Australia Council for the Arts at the Institute of Provocation in Beijing, China, and the Two to Three Residency Program in association with Organhaus in Chongqing, China. Louise has been a finalist in numerous prestigious art prizes and was the winner of both the 2015 Fisher's Ghost Art Award – Sculpture category and the 2015 Yen Staedtler Female Art Award. Her work has been exhibited at Sydney Contemporary, Melbourne Art Fair and Art Central Hong Kong, and can be found in numerous private collections both nationally and internationally. In 2017 Louise was a finalist in the NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship at Artspace in Sydney.



Louise Zhang\_ *Pinky\_2015\_Polyfoam*, polyurethane, enamel, glitter, resin, plastic and glass\_35 x 49 x 29cm.

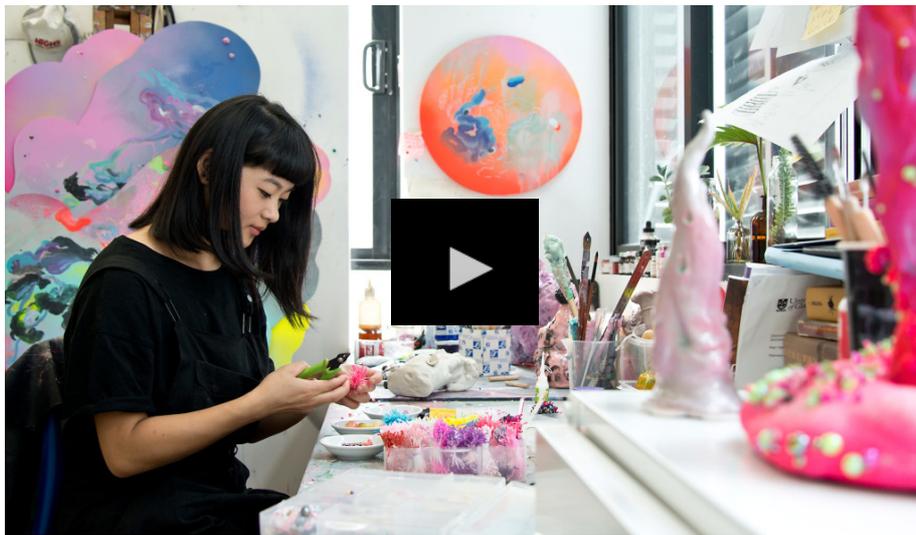


Louise Zhang\_SLOSH SAMPLES #1\_2014\_flubber, pva glue, acrylic, oil paint, resin plastics, polymer balls, polymer clay, pigment, water, varnish, 100ml serum vials\_61 x 47 x 9cm.

# Videos



Louise Zhang speaking as part of  
TEDxYouth@Sydney.  
Press play to watch!



Louise Zhang's episode of 'Art Bites: Third Culture Kids' streaming live on ABC iview.  
Press play to watch!

# **Available Works 2020**



*Bury the sun and all its demons 2019*

*"For me this new body of work has been about gathering my thoughts and working through my position as a Chinese-Australian human being. Growing up in a strict Christian family, parts of my identity felt at odds. For example many cultural aspects of Chinese heritage concerned with mythology and tradition were considered taboo and remained shrouded in mystery. Likewise my personal fascination with horror movies was seen as blasphemous and was forbidden. Through my paintings, sculptures and installations, I am now able to begin to reconcile my personal histories with my own lived experiences of the world as a third culture kid. Populated by scholar rocks, moon gates, skeletal remains, dragons and Chinese demons, these new works are a mash-up of my ongoing fascination with horror movies, obscure references to the darker side of religion and visual references to Chinese culture."*

Louise Zhang



Louise Zhang's candy-coloured latticed Moon Gate is a tantalizing portal into the push-me-pull-you beauty and repulsion of the demi-realms of *Bury the sun and all its demons*.

Her visual language is complex and ambiguous.

Seductive pastels from Pop culture and the screen based technologies of her 'digital native' generation sugar-coat and mask the psychological intensity of an underbelly of supernatural narratives, ghouls, skeletons and hellfire from old school horror exquisitely rendered in a fusion of Chinese Literati painting style and the cut-outs and linear overlays of cartoon.

Her art is a continuing dialogue. Transformation is at its essence and reflects her personal history as 'not quite Australian, not quite Asian'. She describes "... being a kid from a migrant family, born in a country where your parents aren't originally ... it births a new culture. I am a Third Culture Kid."

Discouraged in childhood from engaging with the traditions, superstitions and mythologies imbedded in Chinese culture by her Christian upbringing Louise perversely immersed herself in Western and Chinese horror cinema, particularly body horror, with Kronenberg's *The Fly* an absolute favourite.

The concept of metamorphosis is absorbed into Zhang's practice, with the visceral pervading her negotiation of horror as an art form, as medium, method and symbol. It manifests in the melding, moulding and reforming of viscous solidified slime and the bulging abattoirs bondage aesthetic of her trussed, suspended and skewered 'blob' sculptures.

Their uneasy grotesquery is ambiguously shrouded in saccharine lollypop pastels.

Undertaking a Beijing artist-residency in 2014, disparate influences were a way into navigating identity and her evolving distinctive style. Louise embraced the sculptural possibilities of scholar rocks, ancient, weathered and porous objects related traditionally to the mystique of mountains and prized for their asymmetry and awkwardness. She engaged with the rich decoration of embroidered robes and the symbolism of flowers like chrysanthemums and lotus and the celestial significances of the circular motif of the moon in garden architecture. And indulgently explores folklore and the depths and macabre ordeals and monsters of Chinese Hell, a maze of eighteen layers and ten courts with a king in each. Everyone goes to Hell but stays or leaves on the court's assessment of deeds.

Calligraphic text is a recent element in her works. *Bizarre titles, Happy Death* and *Skeleton Romance* hang as solid colour strip banners in paintings, the traditional characters embellished with hell-fire flames. Homilies are written in both English text and Chinese characters and inscribed on cartouches at the apex of the arch above the circular doorway of Zhang's Moon Gate sculptures.

Louise Zhang's *Bury the sun and all its demons* is a fantastical and macabre installation of beauty and strangeness of playfulness tempered with tradition; a contemporary parable of the quest of a third culture kid.

Barbara Dowse  
Curator





*Feel my bones crack in your arms*  
2019, Acrylic on board, 90cm diameter, \$4,000  
Photo: Silversalt Photography





*Nostalgic longing of nature 1*

2019, Acrylic and oil on wood, acrylic frame, 51 x 46cm, \$2,500

Photo: Garry Tring





*Scholar Mound Study #1*

2019, Foam clay, polyurethane on acrylic pole, 115 x 30 x 30cm, \$4,000

Photo: Silversalt Photography





*Scholar Mound Study #2*

2019, Foam clay, polyurethane, wood, flatpack pearls, 145 x 34 x 34cm, \$4,000

Photo: Silversalt Photography





*Scholar Mound (Lattice) Study*

2019, Foam clay, polyurethane, wood, flatpack pearls, 166 x 50 x 41cm, \$5,000

Photo: Silversalt Photography





*Scholar Mound (with Rope) Study*

2019, Foam clay, polyurethane, wood, flatpack pearls, 33 x 85 x 25cm, \$2,000

Photo: Silversalt Photography

## *Art eats its young, 2018*

In her body of work *Art eats its young*, Zhang continues to explore the monstrous and the grotesque, drawing on elements of traditional iconography and symbolism associated with 'Diyu' - the Chinese version of Hell.

Referencing this Taoist mythology, Zhang's new paintings, sculptures and scroll-like banners incorporate demons, dismembered body parts and organs drawn from anatomy books, and cartoon-like 'gore' - overlaid with delicate illustrations of peonies, koi fish, scholar rocks and lunar imagery - all painted in the artist's signature sugary palette. The resulting visual cacophony (a confused and disjointed mash-up of symbols and imagery) represents an attempt on Zhang's part to reconcile and make sense of the fissures and contradictions that define her own identity.

As a 'third culture kid' with a strict Christian upbringing, Zhang was discouraged from engaging with or learning about the superstitions that form such an inherent part of Chinese mythology and culture. Likewise, her teenage love of western horror films and gothic subculture, and her art making practice in general, were derided by her family as being sources of anxiety and depression. By researching and integrating these seemingly disparate sources of artistic inspiration into her latest series of works, Zhang documents her attempts at both constructing and deconstructing her own personal and cultural identity.





*The Devils Crayons #1*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers 40 x 20 x 15cm

\$1,250



*The Devils Crayons #2*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

23 x 26 x 13cm

42 x 20 x 15cm

\$1,750



*The Devils Crayons #3*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

50 x 15 x 15cm

\$1,250



*The Devils Crayons #4*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

32 x 14 x 14cm

\$1,750



*The Devils Crayons #5*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

29 x 28 x 20cm

\$1,250



*The Devils Crayons #6*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

23 x 25 x 21cm

\$1,250



*The Devils Crayons #8*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

22 x 21 x 20cm

\$1,250



*The Devils Crayons #9*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay, synthetic flowers

28 x 14 x 13cm

\$1,250



*The Devils Crayons #10*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay

18 x 50 x 28 cm

\$1,750



*Feed you pink #1*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay

49 x 46 x 43cm

\$2,000

\*Can be installed as a plinth based work or suspended\*



*Feed you pink #2*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay

16 x 83 x 16cm

\$2,000

\*Can be installed as a plinth based work or suspended\*



*Feed you pink #3*

2018

polyurethane, resin, spray paint, acrylic paint, foam clay

82 x 27 x 13

\$2,000

\*Can be installed as a plinth based work or suspended\*



*In Hell we...*  
2018

oil and acrylic on wood  
50 cm diameter (each)  
\$4,000 (sold as a diptych)



*Hungry ghosts*

2018

acrylic, oil on plywood

90 x 60cm

\$4,000



*Sinners into fragments*  
2018  
acrylic, oil on plywood  
90 x 60cm  
\$4,000



*Lend me a hand*  
2018  
acrylic, oil on plywood, rope  
54 x 90cm  
\$4,000



*Soft Horror #1*  
2017  
digital print on polyester, acrylic rod  
190cm x 87cm  
\$2,500



*Soft Horror #2*  
2017  
digital print on polyester, acrylic rod  
190cm x 87cm  
\$2,500



*Soft Horror #3*  
2017  
digital print on polyester, acrylic rod  
420cm x 90cm  
\$3,500



*Soft Horror #4*  
2017  
digital print on polyester, acrylic rod  
420cm x 90cm  
\$3,500



*Soft Horror #5*  
2017  
digital print on polyester, acrylic rod  
420cm x 90cm  
\$3,500

## *Monstrous Masses, 2016*

The seductive relationship between attraction and repulsion is key in Louise Zhang's works. Her beautiful but strange paintings and sculpture are manifestations of excess while navigating the fine line between the monstrous and the cute and metamorphosis and mutation. Hi-viz synthetic hyper-colours, the allure of shiny plastic and Pourfoam, with accretions of beads, glass and plastics, fuel the alchemy and artifice of the 'beyond real' objects and multi-panelled, works that Louise Zhang creates. Cryptic narrative titles like *I went to Mars* and the isolation and the red speckled color of winds eroded my sanity and it was beautiful further add to the magicking and fantasia of this meringue-like sculptural confection.

Aspects of horror, typically a genre within film and literature but sporadically within the visual arts, are the source for the 'noir-based' works in *Monstrous Masses*. Louise Zhang mines the themes, potentialities and materials of the visual effects and makers of cinema sets and fantasy theme-parks. *Inferno* (maquette) is constructed as a folding polyptych, hinged as in an oriental screen. It is suggestive of darkness, ritualistic masses, and altar-pieces. The artist envisages it as a maquette for a monstrous Gothic film or rock opera set. it can be floor or wall mounted and uses the exaggerated silhouettes common in German Expressionism with its dark looming shadows redolent of taboos, mystery, and threat.

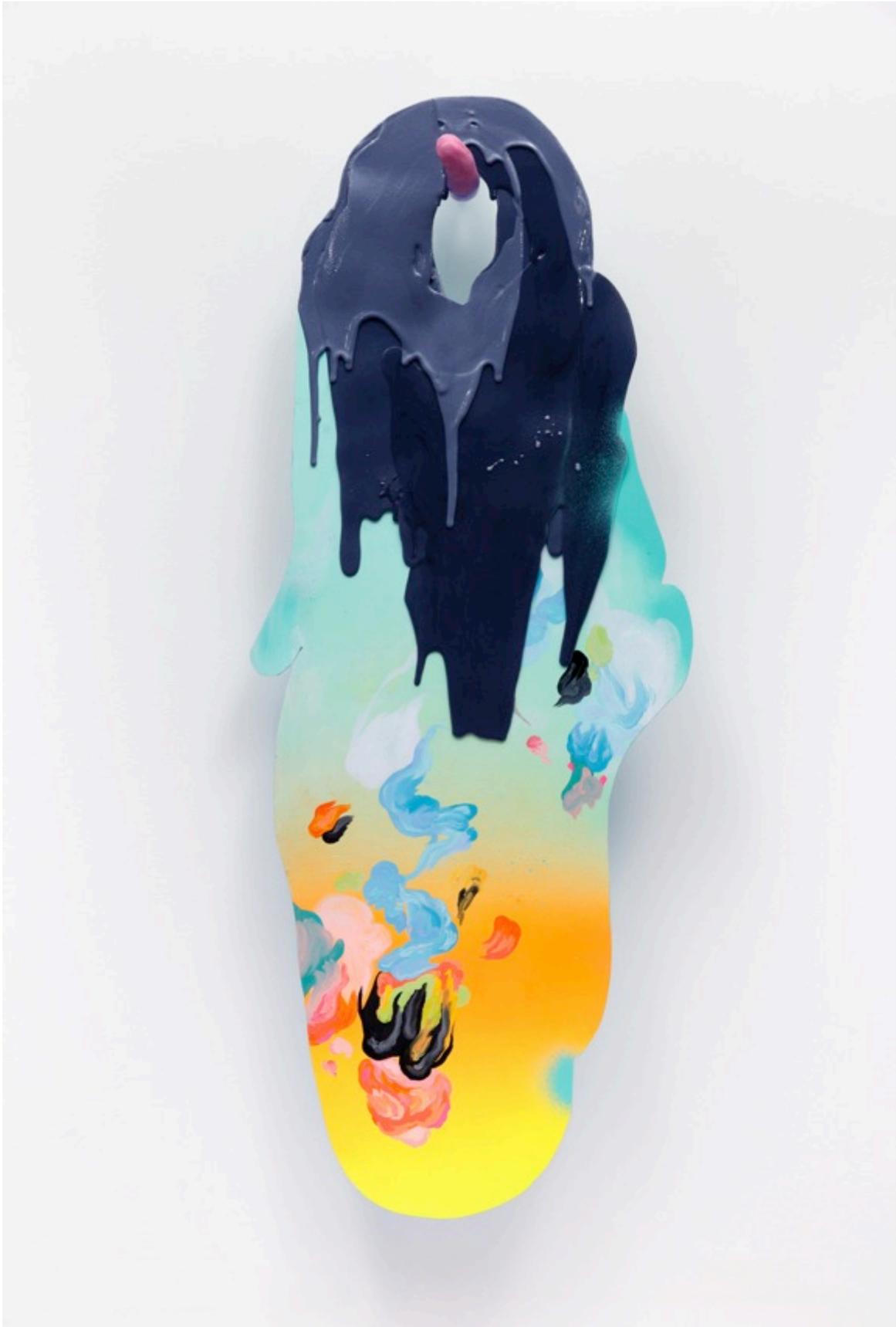
A trio of technicolour 'ghouls', cascades of solidified 'ooze' that hang suspended from metamorphic hooks exemplifies the ambiguity in Louise Zhang's works. Although predicated on horror, on alienation, distortion and disgust, her works are inherently so very, very, seductive.

Zhang's *Ascent of the Blob* is a wry riff on Heironymous Bosch, *More than a few moons*, a fantastic outer-galactic playful cosmos and *CANDY CANDY SWEETIE CHEWING SO CANDY LOVE* is a cabinet of curiosities from the likes of *Dr Caligari* and German Expressionist cinema with its dark and twisted visual style, oblique forms, structures and landscapes that lean and twist.

The formless monster, the amorphous Blob, its association with stickiness, oozing wetness, and slime is integral to horror. It is ambivalent and un-nerving. When combined with a spectrum of deep, dark velvety blacks and synthetic, hyper-saturated candy colours, this recurring motif in Louise Zhang's works intensifies the paradox of repulsion and attraction in her practice.

Barbara Dowse Curator





*Clyde*  
2016  
plywood, acrylic paint, oil paint, polyurethane, epoxy clay  
120 x 47 cm  
\$5000



*Ghoul*  
2016

plywood, acrylic paint, oil paint, polyurethane, epoxy clay

120 x 47 cm

\$5000



*Just Offal*

2016

plywood, polyurethane, acrylic, oil & chain

113 x 44 cm

\$5000



*BELIEVE ME*

2014

vinyl, acrylic and oil on birch wood

50 cm diameter

\$900



*Phantom Underground*  
2015

acrylic, oil, glitter and resin on canvas

152 x 91cm

\$4000



*Inferno (Marquette)*

2016

plywood, acrylic paint, oil paint, Perspex, resin, glitter, plastic, metal hinges

170 x 237 x 3 cm

\$4500



*Ascent of the Blob*  
2016  
acrylic, oil, glitter and resin on canvas  
183 x 107 cm  
\$5000



*Somewhere that you think is good but it's actually evil and then you die*

2016

acrylic, oil, plastic, glass on canvas

180 x 120 cm

\$5000

# Louise Zhang

Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

## Education

- 2014 – 16 MFA by Research, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales  
2009 – 13 BFA with Honours (First Class), College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 *Bury the sun and all its demons*, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
2018 *Art eats its young*, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
2016 *Monstrous Masses*, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
*New Year Rot!*, Gaffa Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
2014 *Plomp*, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney

## Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2019 *Parramatta Lanes Festival*, Parramatta, Sydney, NSW  
*Sydney Contemporary Art Fair*, Arterreal Gallery Stand E03, Carraigeworks, Sydney, NSW  
*Ecologies of Being*, curated by Tanushri Saha & Naomi Segal for Peril Magazine, Kudos Gallery, NSW  
*Monkey Tower*, Sydney Lunar Festival 2019, Commissioned by City of Sydney  
*ROCO@LONIAL*, curated by Gary Carsley, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Bathurst Art Regional Gallery, NSW
- 2017 *NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship* exhibition, Artspace, Sydney  
*Closing the Distance*, curated by Sophia Cai, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Bundoora, VIC  
*Sydney Contemporary*, Arterreal Gallery stand, Carriageworks, Sydney  
*Art Central Hong Kong*, Arterreal Gallery Stand, Hong Kong
- 2016 *Ereignis*, curated by Lizzy Marshall, Cressnock Regional Gallery, Cressnock, NSW  
*X/II*, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney NSW
- 2015 *Work, rest, PLAY!*, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Hawkesbury, NSW  
*From Old Ground*, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, NSW  
*New Physics*, online, curated by Roslyn Helper  
*Sydney Contemporary Art Fair*, Arterreal Gallery, Carriageworks, Redfern, NSW  
*A robot attempts to eat a chicken nugget*, Firstdraft Gallery, Woolloomooloo, NSW  
*2015 Yen Stadler Art Award*, Gaffa Gallery, Sydney  
*Right Here, Right Now*, Penrith Regional Art Gallery  
*Paint 15*, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney  
*Biggie Smalls*, Casula Powerhouse, Casula, NSW  
*Irreverent Robot Research Lab*, Firstdraft Gallery, Woolloomooloo, NSW  
TBA, Bathurst Art Regional Gallery, Bathurst, NSW  
*Home and Away*, Twenty Thirty Seven, Sydney, NSW
- 2014 *Chinese Whispers*, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Goulburn  
*Sydney Painting Now*, MOP Projects, Sydney  
*Fisher's Ghost Art Award*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney  
*Kudos Emerging Artist & Designer Award*, Kudos Gallery, Sydney  
*NO WERK*, Trocadero Art Space, Footscray  
*Sugarcoated Realness*, with Terrence Combos, Archive Space, Sydney  
*Stockroom Works*, Melbourne Art Fair, with Arterreal Gallery, Melbourne  
*Danger Will Robinson!*, AirSpace Projects, Sydney

- 2013 *#FOMO*, Artereal Gallery, Sydney  
*I.C.A.A*, Archive Space, Sydney  
*The End Is The Beginning*, Galleries UNSW, Sydney  
*Unforeseen*, Inexplicable, F124F Space, Sydney  
*KUDOS Emerging Artist + Designer Award*, KUDOS Gallery, Sydney  
*FRESH CUTS*, Edwina Corlette Gallery, New Farm QLD  
*HYSTERIA Issue 1 & 2 Artists*, Black Penny, Sydney  
*Morphology*, KUDOS Gallery, Sydney  
*Jenny Birt Award*, COFA Space, Sydney  
*Equilibrium*, Gallery Eight, Sydney  
*Proximity*, KUDOS Gallery, Sydney
- 2012 *COFA Annual*, Roundhouse UNSW, Sydney  
*KUDOS Emerging Artist + Designer Award*, KUDOS Gallery, Sydney  
*Blue (mark&henry for beyondblue)*, George St, Sydney
- 2011 *Oxford Art Drawing Award*, COFA Space, Sydney

### **Commissions**

- 2020 Commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art to design Moon Gates for property NSW, Darling Harbour and Darling Square for the Lunar New Year  
 Commissioned by UNSW to create a large scale painted mural on level 2 of UNSW Library

### **Awards**

- 2017 NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship
- 2015 Winner, Fisher's Ghost Art Award - Sculpture category, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, NSW
- 2015 Winner, Yen STAEDTLER Female Art Awards, Gaffa Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2014 Finalist, Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney  
 Highly Commended, Kudos Emerging Artist & Designer Award, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
- 2014 – 16 The Australian Postgraduate Award
- 2013 The John Cage Award for Colour

### **Residencies**

- 2019 Parramatta Artist Studios Resident, Parramatta, Sydney
- 2017 Two to Three Residency Program, Organhaus, Chongqing, China
- 2016 Institute of Provocation, Australia Council, Beijing, China
- 2015 Throwdown Press, Paddington, NSW
- 2013 The Green House, Fowlers Gap, Broken Hill NSW

Fascinating. Alluring.  
Metamorphic.  
Experience. Louise Zhang.

Experience.

ARTERREAL