

REVIEWS

Candice Lin

FRANÇOIS GHEBALY GALLERY

Candice Lin's latest solo show awkwardly fractured the slick, guided exploration of the typical history exhibit and awkwardly reassembled it across François Ghebaly's two-tiered space. The sixteen sculptures and videos that comprised "It Makes the Patient See Pictures" excreted



Candice Lin, *Corn HW (White)*, 2012, platinum body-grade silicone, bell jar, 8 x 5 1/2 x 5 1/2".

tar, silicone, even dead fish. There were no talking heads or lengthy wall labels to provide context; instead, an informational stop-action animation was projected from a pig's asshole. *Bacium:Sub Cauda (Kiss Under the Tail)* (all works 2012 unless otherwise noted) presents an allegory about the mass killing of the domestic pig's hardy, adaptable brethren in Haiti, Cuba, and Egypt, and its subsequent replacement by coddled European varieties—through the subtitled snorts of black, spotted, and pink clay swine. (Quips one pig, "Hmph, some Arab Spring. More like Harvest Slaughter.") Elsewhere, another video, *Inanimate Object*, related a Yoruba legend of a golden woman (a recast Queen Victoria), while a greatly enlarged Xerox of a field ethnographer's image (*Framing Device*, 2011) doubled as a scrim. Lin pro-

vided a surfeit of art-historical and ethnographic interconnections here, most of which likely evaded the casual viewer. But the deeper one plunged into the show, the more its weird, crude museology asserted its terrible hybridization of concepts.

Lin's objects advance a contentiously puerile analysis, obscurely tied to rituals surrounding their materials. A desiccated, life-size Eskimo figure, *The Lingering Smell*, hiding out in the back hallway, wore a coat quilted with anchovies and shriveled roots carved into fertility fetishes. The figure's fur leggings were decorated with salt cod, while a chili pepper and a pair of dates, covered with plastic wrap, formed his exposed cock. The postcolonial critique behind Lin's theatrico-primitive aesthetic was most rawly apparent in *Exploited Painting*—a veiny sculpted penis dangling from a verdant Haitian landscape painting, dribbling into a punch bowl on an antique table. Related iconography reappeared in a set of nine individually titled dildos lined up on a white ledge and encased in bell jars. The three models on view (each produced in pink, white, and black—hyperbolic "skin tones") were based on a nineteenth-century Nigerian carving of Queen Victoria, an ear of corn, and Brancusi's *Bird in Space*, respectively. Without supporting reference material, these works came across as bad jokes—modernist sculpture as erection, for example. But such crossbreeding contributed to the nuanced history finally described in *A Future Ethnography of Power*. Its components laid out in small mounds on a fleshy white silicone mat, this tabletop piece incorporated a collection of fabricated artifacts, including three maquettes for the aforementioned dildos, a mouth and tongue sculpted from chewed Wonder Bread, various roots and tubers carved into (even more) phalluses, and two herbs (one medicinal, one deadly), also placed in bell jars. A short text embedded in the mat noted the prohibition of plants that gave women control over their own bodies or over their masters. Allusions to such historical episodes as the New England witch trials and the 1791 Haitian revolution, during which female slaves poisoned their overlords with herb-laced stews, suggested that the objects Lin displayed were not just shocking or revolting, but linked by deeper psychosexual themes.

These dream-logical connections may be less than rigorous, but no matter. We believe them just the same, as the exhibition's savage metaphors subsumed any single line of political didacticism, confronting

various colonialist and patriarchal figurations on their own twisted terms. In *Displaced Pig (Cornfield)*, cornstalks are covered in dark hair and tar. Eerie little rows of canines and molars sprout from the leaves—a humanoid, GMO nightmare, a vision of molecular colonization. And Lin, mercilessly and crucially, offers no way to act on her work's provocations—no cause to support and no agitprop to cram into a backpack. Nothing, in short, to assuage our conscience or to otherwise distract from the cruel fantasies of our ancestors and descendants. Instead, we get acres of blackened, toothsome corn and the stink of tar.

—Travis Diehl