

Dominique Fung

The Trace of Things

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MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to present *The Trace of Things*, the first solo exhibition in Italy by Dominique Fung, a Canadian artist of Chinese descent. The exhibition brings together a new body of work – paintings, jewellery boxes, and, shown for the first time, her drawings. A trace is what remains after the thing itself is gone: the imprint of a leaf in stone, the outline of a wing, the mark a hand leaves on a page. Each of these works is, in its own way, a trace.

The exhibition is, in the artist's own words, "a continuation of everything" – a deepening of her long study of how history is mediated and mythologised, traced through Chinese antiquities, from Shang dynasty bronzes to Tang dynasty objects. Fung paints these as subjects rather than props, recalling the writer Anne Anlin Cheng's observation that "personhood might be indebted to objects," the point where a thing and a being become hard to tell apart. Following that thought, she looks further back, past recorded history, to the earliest creatures ever preserved: "the first plants that were categorised and fossilised," one of the first fossilised butterflies, strange fossilised fish. What she notices is a rhyme between what nature kept and what people made – antiquities on one side, insects crystallised in rock and lava on the other, all of them "stuck in time."

And yet the work brims with living things. The butterfly returns from canvas to canvas; cranes rise from the same bronzes once buried among the terracotta warriors; birds gather at the edges of the paintings. What was preserved begins, here, to move. And as it does, a landscape opens around it: Fung sets her objects into open ground and weather rather than onto a table, so that a painting reads at once as a scene and as a study of things. She wants to "bleed those two things together" – to let still life and landscape become versions of each other, the object as alive as its setting, the setting as composed as any arrangement.

The drawings work differently. If painting lets her blend and revise, drawing allows neither: "your mistakes are your mistakes," and the paper is unforgiving. A painting can hold many thoughts at once; a drawing is closer to "a single thought" – more

direct, a way of finding "the source of where my ideas come from" before it grows into something larger.

Fung's attention to objects reaches the foo dogs, too – guardian figures that have long stood at the thresholds of homes, temples and palaces, set to protect a household and turn harm away. Like the bronzes and the fossils, they are old things still charged with a role, and there is a rightness to meeting them in a building that was once a private Milanese home: guardians of a house, returned to one.

Where a thing belongs is, in its way, Fung's real subject – how objects are arranged, written about, "categorised in history," how a timeline decides what sits where. Her jewellery boxes press on exactly that. A box is a small machine of classification: it keeps and it sorts, deciding what is worth storing and what stays out of sight. To bring these boxes into the room is to turn that sorting over – to loosen the categories objects are usually given, and to let these ones claim, at last, "a category of their own".

Dominique Fung

Dominique Fung (born 1987, works in New York) is a Canadian artist with ancestry in Hong Kong and Shanghai, whose practice explores the subliminal liminal territory in which tradition, memory and legacy seep through our collective subconsciousness. Through her interest in casting light on overlooked or forgotten stories and her use of specific historical artifacts she infuses with living qualities and complex non-linear narrative paths, she models a new, broader, alternative space of belonging.

Fung's work is included in the collections of the M+, K11 Art Foundation, Pond Society, Yuz Foundation, Aishti Foundation, Cantor Art Center of Stanford University, East West Bank Collection, Hammer Museum, High Museum of Art, ICA Miami, LACMA, LA MoCA, The Huntington Library among others.