

UTSANGA

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Dong | Performances

Performances

by Chun Hua Catherine Dong

I have been There – Miami



I have been There Performance & Photography : Miami, 2016 “I have been There” is an on-going performance that explores relationship between death, belonging and diaspora. Every time I ... [Continue reading](#)



Chun Hua Catherine Dong

I have been There

Performance & Photography : Miami, 2016

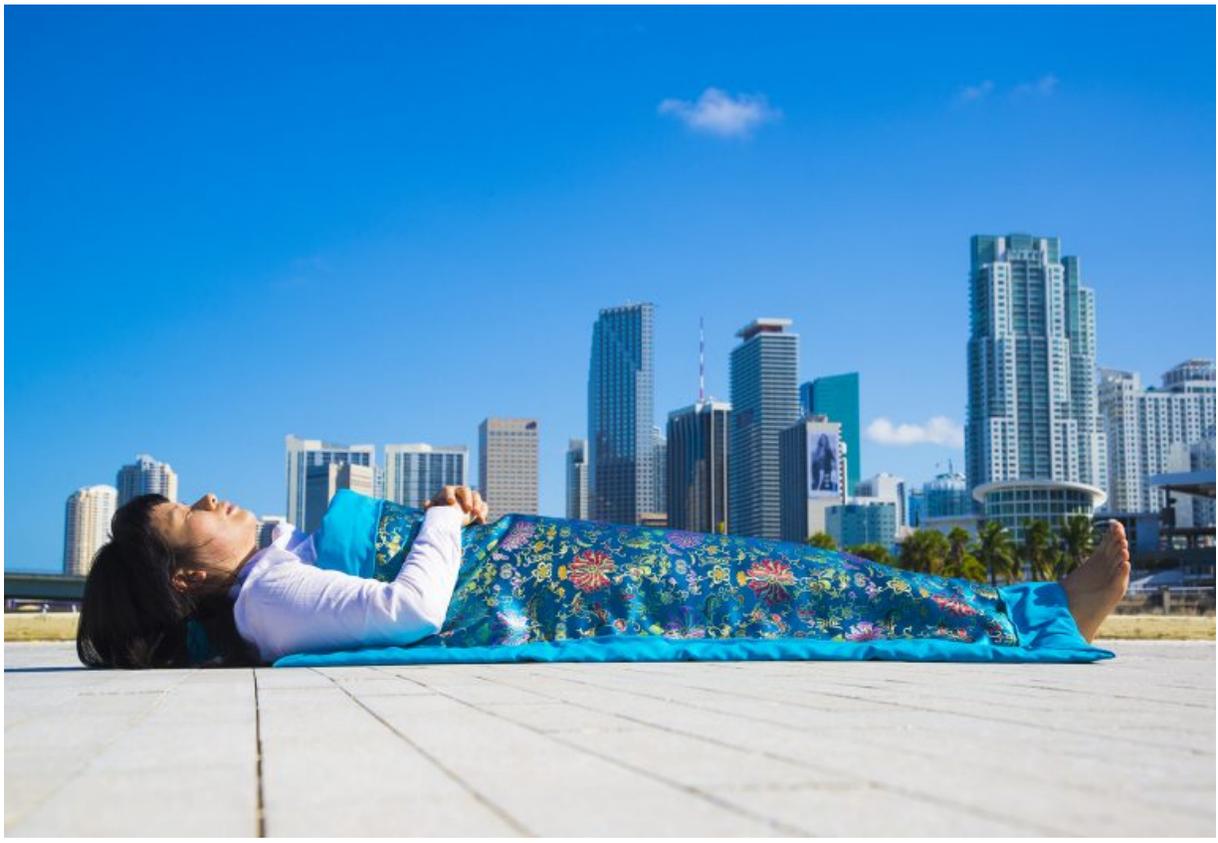
Each time I travel to a new city, I make a new duvet cover with Chinese silk brocade fabric. I take photographs of myself lying in front of historical and tourist sites, covered by the corpse sheet.

In villages of my hometown, when an elder is dead, each daughter will make a silk duvet cover, called Corpse Cover, and cover her parent's dead body, which represents how her parent took care of her when she was young. If this elder has six daughters, he/she will be covered by six duvets, one on top each other. I also think about death. I live alone in a foreign country, the question of who will bury me comes to my mind very often. I decided to do this ritual in wherever I go, burying myself in the beautiful places I visit. When the real death is coming, maybe I won't be afraid anymore.

photo courtesy of the artist







The Inner Circle



The Inner Circle Performance: 3 hours at The New Gallery, Calgary, Canada, 2016 I use salt to build circles around a Gardenia twig, and lay in front of the circles, ...
Continue reading



Chun Hua Catherine Dong

The Inner Circle

Performance: 3 hours at The New Gallery, Calgary, Canada, 2016

photo credit: Ashley Be

positioning shame as a feminist strategy of resistance—an ethical practice that seeks altered states of consciousness that possibly leads to restore dignity and humanity.

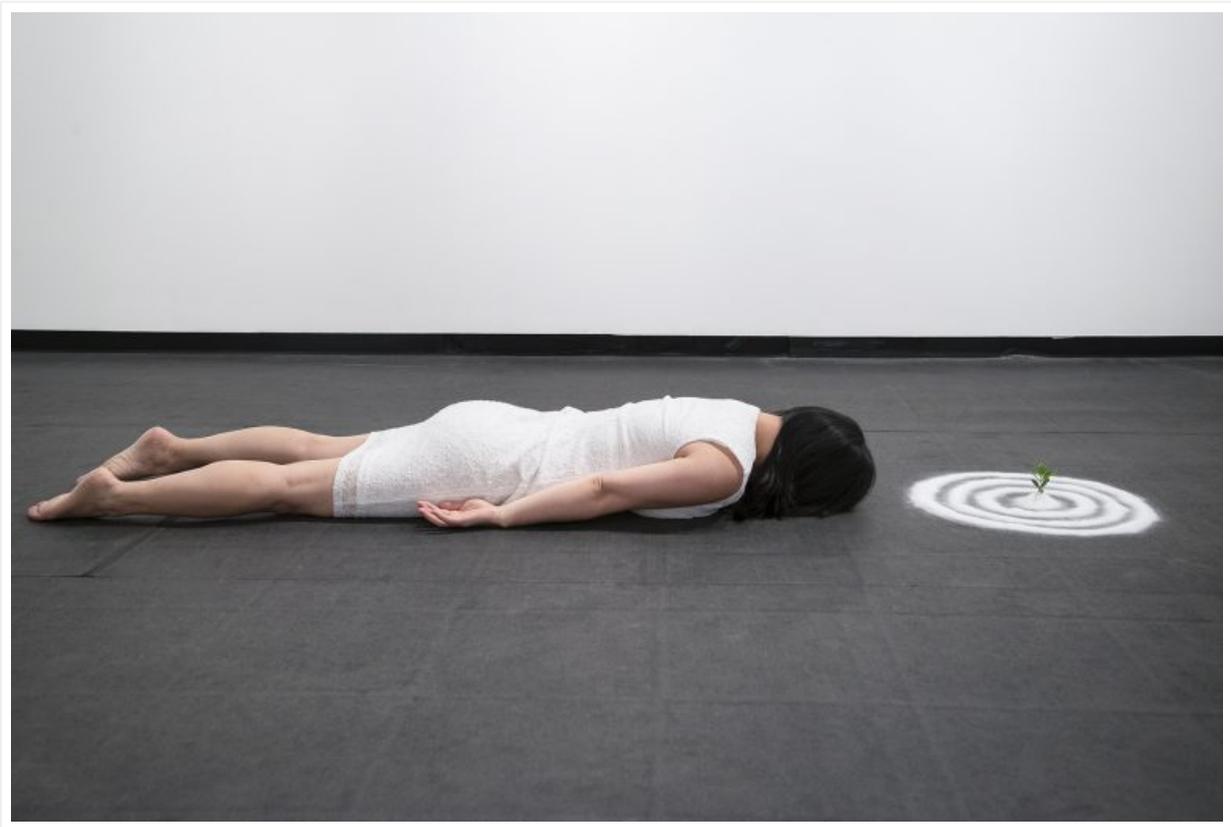
Shame is a complex, universal and often painful affect connecting subjects to social relations. It is an innate human reaction rooted in childhood experience, and it is linked to sexuality and the cultural norms that regulate the body. Shame operates on the relation between self and other, between the emotional and social. The etymology of the word shame is derived from the Old German meaning, “to cover” or “to hide” oneself. The dynamics of shame revolve around the world of sight and of being seen. Freud suggested that visual pleasure is related to shame, as the physical gestures of blushing, downcast eyes and slack posture are projected on another—the subject imagining herself as seen by the gaze of the other. This aspect of shame as located at the interface between a vulnerable self and an outsider, between cover and discover, makes it significant in visual art.

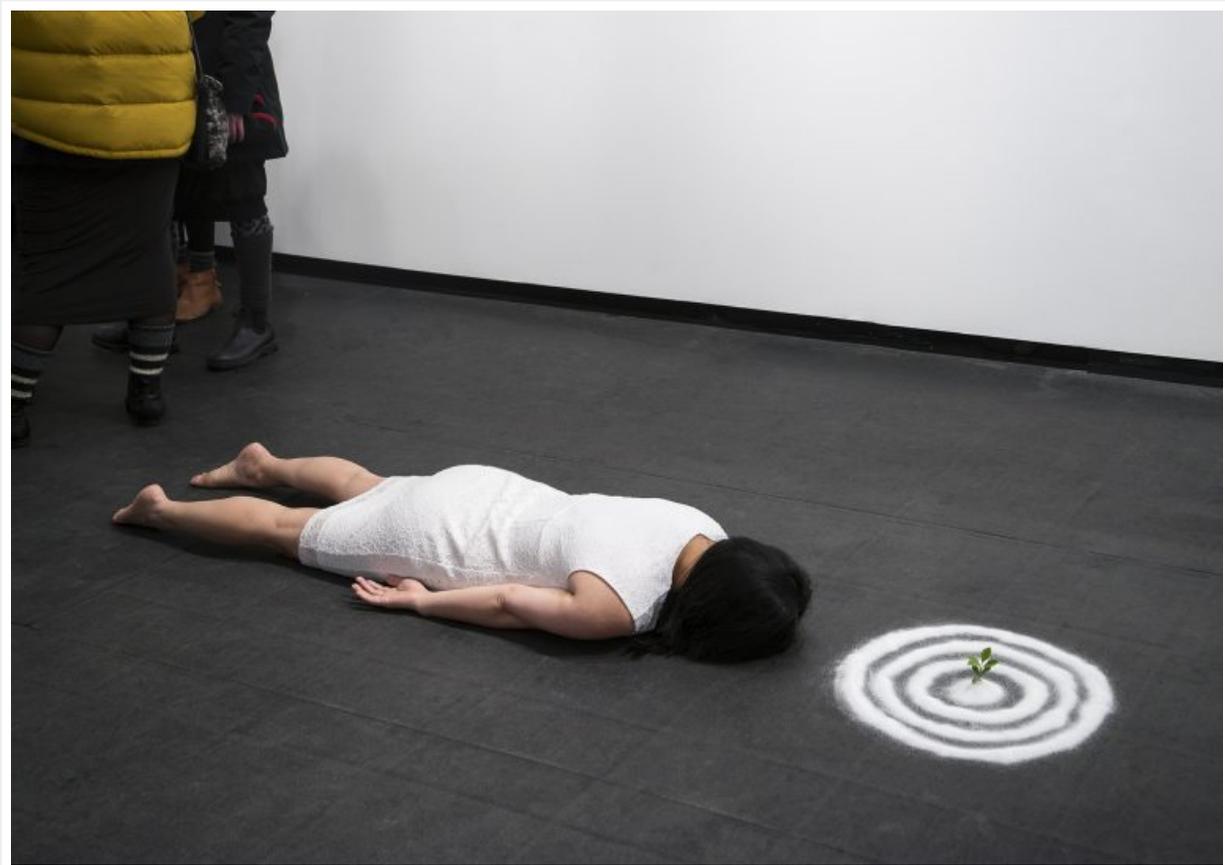
But Freud didn’t consider eastern cultures. Asian societies are associated with “shame culture.” In this context, on the one hand, shame can involve honour and positive change. On another hand, it is an insidious social control mechanism playing on the emotion’s negative aspects. Despite the rise of feminism and many acts of aesthetic, theoretical and cultural transgression that have attempted to challenge taboos, the deep structure of shame has not been significantly undermined. Shame is, therefore, a central feminist issue, and an important one to rise within my artwork and its associated research.

The Inner Circle is part of my solo exhibition, Visual Poetics of Embodied Shame, at The New Gallery, Edmonton. CA.

For catalog essay about this exhibition, by Jenna Swift, please visit <http://www.thenewgallery.org/visual-poetics-of-embodied-shame/>







The Other Words



The Other Words Performance: 3 hours at Katzmann Contemporary as part of Duration and Dialogue Festival, Toronto, 2016 I set a desk and two chairs in an indoor space. ... Continue reading



Chun Hua Catherine Dong

The Other Words

Performance: 3 hours at Katzmann Contemporary as part of Duration and Dialogue Festival, Toronto, 2016

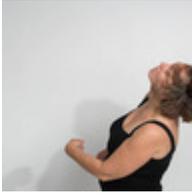
performed with Robert Black

photo credit: Johannes Zits

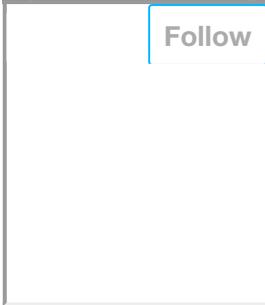
The Other Words is a durational performance that explores the otherness in translation and issues of communication and linguistically phenomena with minimalistic gestures. Translation is political, and translating a text is like chewing up rice and then feeding it to somebody else. It refers that the sense of authenticity, integrity and beauty of resource language get lost in translation. The rice in this performance is a metaphor of text. I am sitting on a desk, translating a big plate of text to my reader who is devouring this plate in its translated form. My reader may understand the subject, but the quality of what he has consumed is definitely not the same as the original once. In fact, translating a text is like chewing up rice and then feeding it to somebody else. In performance, what I feed to the man is still rice. However, this transformed rice has already lost its flavor and nutrition. It is the same in translation, clarity and fluency of source text might still be kept in a target text. However, the source text and the target text can never be the same because fidelity in translation is the root that a translator strives to approach but it can never truly be reached.

I am interested in transfiguration and transformation – the shape and form of languages, and how translation cuts across cultural barriers and begins to address how we relate to the world. The processing of eating and feeding rice to the others is a process of self-translation, a communicative situation, from one cultural context to the other. My body in this performance is a cross-cultural mediator, rendering my experiences into the both languages. In this performance, I am not producing another original, but a reflection of difference that tailors reality and identify to suit conscious ideological needs. What I offer is not unbiased textual fidelity, but a taste of the otherness in cultural communication.

for the interview about this piece, please visit



[mywildarchive-blog](#)



translation

Interview with durational artist [Chun Hua Catherine Dong](#) who i met at the Duration and Dialogue Festival a month ago.

1. how did it feel to perform this piece? is it a piece you have done before? what was the greatest challenge or pleasure or insight?

This piece is from an old piece I did at Western Front in 2010. But instead of feeding a real man, I fed a male mannequin when I performed the first time because I assumed there were no one would eat pre-masticated food from my mouth until I met Bob couple of years ago. I was grateful about the trust and friendship we have built these years.

In terms of challenge, I think it is more at Bob's side because he has to swallow all the food, but since we were only asked to do two hours, there was not much challenging. We wish we could do at least four hours to see how we both felt.

Regarding pleasure or insight, I am very interested in boredom in durational performance, the irony of bore oneself to death really fascinates me. I think boredom is sublime; the repetitive and silent gestures, the stillness, the feeling of no way to escape gradually drives me away to somewhere empty and vast, I keep going and going until I get totally lost, and then I feel the moment of death or I feel I could die at that moment. I guess I enjoy the pleasure of boredom.

2. words as food, something that comes into and then from the body, as a translation, that words might have that visceral and tangible shape... that words become part of our body, our physical being and constitution... and translation as something intimate and yet somewhat distasteful... these are the thoughts that come to mind for me as i read the short description of your action. is that what this action means to you? or is there another political aspect that i am missing?

You have very beautiful interpretation about the piece, I like it.

Regarding the political aspect of this work. First of all, I need to mention that this piece is about translation. Translation is deeply

mention that this piece is about translation. Translation is deeply political, but whereas most theories look at translation for meaning, I am interested in transfiguration and transformation—the shape and form of language/ words. This connects translation to practice—making and doing—rather than to cultural languages of belonging/exclusion, and hierarchies of essentialist meaning. Forms cut across cultural barriers and begin to address how we relate to the world. In this performance, I am not producing another original, but difference that tailors reality and identity to suit conscious ideological, sexual and human needs. What I offer is not unbiased textual fidelity, but a taste of the otherness in cultural communication.

3. you have done work about “embodied shame” - it seems to me your piece today might also reference how language in translation feels, both internally on the level of sensation and externally when performed, how it feels to be in front of people experiencing this sensation... would you say this is how you relate to this work?

ah, that is interesting, I never thought about. But yes, shame relates to loss, such as loss of youth, loss of loved one, loss of home due to wars, loss of self (physical, emotional, or mental, like injury, weight gain, depression) etc.. In this performance, the loss of culture and language due to immigration triggered me to do this performance. Actually, in the past of five years, I have created a series of rice performance that manifests the urgent needs to renew the lost culture and tradition. After living aboard as a Chinese for 12 years, I noticed there is a tremendous change inside me: something that has nurtured and cultivated me has gradually faded and forgotten. Rice, an everyday food that nurtures me when I grow up, becomes a symbol of artistic expression in my work. “The Other Words,” is part of this series.

4. did any new thoughts or ideas come to mind about your work today during the conversation with the audience?

Yes. After the conversation, Bob and I decided to do more collaborative work in future because we thought we are a good pair. I also really like Johanna Household’s method about how to start conversation and get audience’s actively engaging with dialogues: she actually reversed traditional way of approaching conversation: asked audiences questions first rather than asking us. She is very caring and thoughtful by doing that. Having conversation right after a durational performance is quite challenging because one is still not out of that “performance zone” yet. By asking audiences questions first, it really provided time to pull myself out of my performance. Also, it was very cold when we did the performance. In our conversation, Johanna offered me her coat, and her partner offered Bob his jacket, which was very sweet and kind.

5. is there a link or reference or theorist that/who is particularly resonant in the seeing/reading/thinking about your performance practice? either a link or reference or citation to your own work or from another artist or theorist?

There are some articles/ essays online, but for some published on paper are not there yet, I am building my new website right now, they will be up soon. Attached links below are some articles/ essay if you are

up soon. Attached links below are some articles/ essay if you are interseted.

1. Catalog essay about “ Visual Poetics of Embodied Shame,” a solo exhibition at The New Gallery, written by Jenna Swift

<http://www.thenewgallery.org/visual-poetics-of-embodied-shame/>

2. Catalog essay about “ Visual Poetics of Embodied Shame,” a solo exhibition at Hamilton Arists Inc, by Vicotria Sung

<http://www.theinc.ca/exhibitions/chun-hua-catherine-dong-visual-poetics-of-embodied-shame/>







