

Art Show | Fou Gallery Presents Artist Meng Du's Solo Show: Shadow of Day, Shadow of Night

BY EDITORIAL TEAM | FEBRUARY 6, 2022



Design: Granny Liu

New York – Fou Gallery is pleased to announce that we are presenting glass artist **Meng Du's** solo exhibition ***Shadow of Day, Shadow of Night*** from January 28 to April 16, 2023. This is Meng Du's third solo show at Fou Gallery, and it features her cast, blown and Tiffany glass works created between 2020 and 2022. This is also the first collaboration between Meng Du and Fou Gallery partner and Art Director, Lynn Hai. When curating *Shadow of Day, Shadow of Night*, Hai hopes to explore unprecedented perspectives in Du's creation than the past art critiques on her works. Thus, Hai focuses on the narrative depth and literariness of Du's glass sculptures. Hai attempts to refine and emphasize this view adequately in both curatorial writing and the visual and spatial presentation, and manifest the poetic "constellation" structure in the narrations implied by Du's works.

Du's glass sculptures are a tangible reflection of spontaneous narrativity in visual art. Hoping that the stories and experiences will escape from the conventional fading and receding, she values the enshrinement of personal recollections. Meanwhile, she pays much attention to discovering how memory is complexly linked to context through time and space.

The works displayed in this exhibition are six series: *People Sitting by the Window & Grow Secretly in A Boundless World*; *Drift Through the Forest, Silence In the Valley*; *Hello, Again*; *Apartment*; *A Cat See the World Leaping Away*; *Cat in the Corner*. The flat sculptures *People Sitting by the Window* is

made by small panels of sheet glass and mirrors collaged by the Tiffany glass technique, with delicate hand-engraved drawings on some of the mirror surfaces. The image of the works just resembles the windows in our everyday life that reveal many mundane worlds and the restless cycles of seasons. They share the atmosphere of the night city with tiny lights described by Chinese writer Wang Anyi, "The world is embedded in some sporadic corners of the citythat



People Sitting by the Window No.4, 2022. Glass, mirror, copper foil, 11.4 x 6.5 x 0.3 inches ©Meng Du, photo by Jingxin Hu, courtesy of Fou Gallery

beauty is just like fireflies, ephemeral and glimmery. But these shines are already the utmost struggles of those free spirits." In the visual language of the works, the glass is pieced together to form the imagery of windows; the mirrors reflect the ever-changing surroundings at every moment; the slender line of the drawings on the mirrors depict meaningful objects that elicit memories; the different colors such as cold green or warm red render different emotions. All kinds of these visual descriptions form the particular narrative of *People Sitting by the Window*.



Apartment - A Pair of Cups No.2 - Apt 410 (part), 2022. Glass, tea, handkerchief, button, Each 5.3 x 4 x 2.8 inches, total installation variable ©Meng Du, photo by Jingxin Hu, courtesy of Fou Gallery

In this exhibition, *Apartment - A Pair of Cups No.2 - Apt 410* is an installation of tea-dyed translucent glass cups suspended above an old wooden chair, surrounded by dim pendant lights and floating handkerchiefs. Another version of this work, *Apartment - A Pair of Cups No.2 -*

Apt 685, is concurrently on view at the Shanghai Museum of Glass. The titles of this series allude to the apartment numbers of the locations where the works are exhibited. The light and shadows of the glass solidify the impressions of old objects easily overlooked in everyday life. They appear under different times and places, telling stories of intertwined moments. A sufficient sense of old stories flows through Du's works, precisely because her works utilize a rich visual language to unfold vivid pictures.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) argued that time has two faces. He termed the concept of time recognized by common sense as "objective time" and the time of our inner subjective experience as "la durée (duration)", the "lived time". Only the "duration" is the "real" time felt, lived, and acted, which properly describes the interpenetration of moments and articulates the intensity of consciousness. Bergson believed that the more we enter the recesses of our consciousness, the less the concept of "objective time" applies. Writers and artists often concentrate on and manipulate the "lived time" when they tell stories, either by expanding a few minutes to a large volume of content or by compressing a long period of time to a brief sketch.



Drift Through the Forest, Silence in the Valley No.07 (part), 2022. Recycled glass, tea, stone, 11.8 x 12.2 x 0.8 inches
©Meng Du, photo by Jingxin Hu, courtesy of Fou Gallery

Du's series of 10 works, *Drift through the Forest, Silence in the Valley*, are just like 10 sections of her "lived time." Having been working closely with glass as a creative material for many years, the artist has developed a tender empathy and self-projection towards the material's qualities. She feels that she can "see herself in the glass bottles that can be found everywhere in life." As a consequence, the artist collected discarded glass bottles that have ended their functional life to create *Drifting in the Woods, Silent in the Valley*, expecting their journeys to continue forward. In this group of works, the order and time of creation is inessential. All that really matters is the context in which each piece was created, such as the empty wine bottles that cluttered the corner of Du's friend's house on the day of her material selection; the hazy and pale sunlight that crept into the window pane on an efficient afternoon and so on. From the perspective of "objective time," a scene may only last for a few seconds. But in terms of "lived time," the experience is replete with the flow of consciousness, interspersed with recollections, imaginations and emotions, and therefore appears to be significantly weighted. Objective external events are colored by our reflection and become distinctive as the inner realities, while relatively simple events can be perceived and experienced in subjectively complicated ways.

If one observes several works by Du simultaneously, one will find that these fragments of narratives can vaguely form a holistic structure with implicit interconnections. This nature of narrativity in Du's works can be compared to the narrative style, "constellation", mentioned by the 2018 Nobel Prize winner, Polish author Olga Tokarczuk, in her award-winning book *Flights*. Instead of using the linear passage of time as the clues to the story, this narrative style weakens the importance of the sequence of events and disrupts their order to build the narrative connection from other aspects of the events. For example, the narratives of events linked by space, characters, and elements of the event can be placed in adjacent chapters, but the

chapters are not chronological at all. In Tokarczuk's own words, "Constellation, not sequencing, carries truth."



Hello, Again No.1, 2022. Glass, tea, button, 12 x 9.8 x 12.2 inches ©Meng Du, photo by Jingxin Hu, courtesy of Fou Gallery

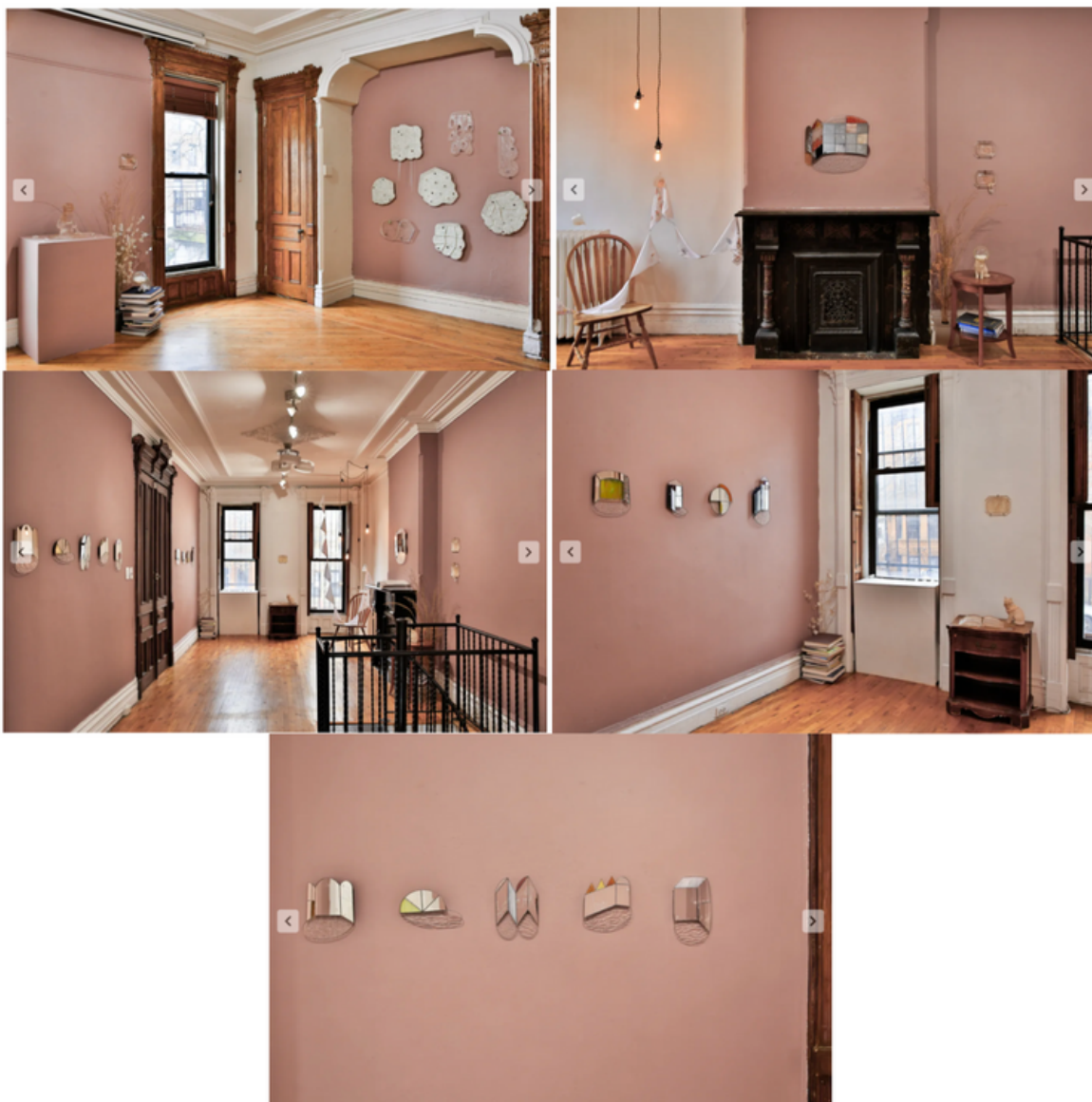
The exhibition *Shadow of Day, Shadow of Night* aims to refine and emphasize this "constellation" narrative structure in Du's works to a conspicuous and compelling level through a visual presentation that can only be achieved in real space. Rather than arranging the works in a sequential way, the exhibition intends to detect hidden bonds and resonances between the works and between their creative narratives. Interspersing stories and sparking conversations, the show puts the view in the midst of a constellation of stories, oblivious to the laws of advancing time. "There is no beginning and no end, just a constant change of new forms, from formation to decomposition, from decomposition to formation, from birth to extinction, from extinction to birth, ad infinitum." The spatial atmosphere of the exhibition is similar to a mysterious private room, with old furniture and books as the display pedestals for the artworks. Lighting is slightly dark, and many details are perceptible as hints of the presence of stories and memories. Quietly, books are spread out wordlessly on the old desk, the sunset penetrates through the dappled and transparent thick glass, cats look around discreetly from unnoticeable cornersFragments of narratives are dispersed all over the room, and the room exists silently amidst the alternation of day and night.

Entering the exhibition and reading the stories is like stepping into a journey where one can freely choose time and space. Piecemeal information and disordered events may implicitly coincide with the way people recognize things in this era: we all live in independent consciousness and discrete moments, and often need to rely on abstract thinking to reconstruct narratives. *Shadow of Day, Shadow of Night* seeks to stimulate the obscure connections between those seemingly fragmented things, and to build up a constellation that "carries truth" little by little.

*The press release is based on Lynn Hai's article *Constellation Narrating in Visual Art*

LI TANG

INSPIRATIONS FROM ASIAN CREATIVES



Exhibition Dates

January 28 – April 16, 2023

Opening Reception

Saturday, January 28, 2023, 3-7 pm

Venue

Fou Gallery

410 Jefferson Ave #1

Brooklyn, New York, NY 11221

Curator

Lynn Hai

Curator & Artist's talk

January 28, 5 pm

Curatorial Assistant

Barbara Song

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For more information, please visit:

<https://www.fougallery.com>

About Artist



Meng Du and the *Ripples* series, ©Meng Du, Photo by Fang Fei

Meng Du graduated from the Graphic Design program of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing (B.F.A.) in 2008 and the Digital Art program at the Department of Glass Program of Rochester Institute of Technology (M.F.A.) in 2013. Currently, she is living and working in Beijing. Her work has continued to exhibit in China, Europe, and in the United States. Her recent exhibitions include: *Meng Du: Echo from the Highland II*, Genesis Foundation, Beijing (2022); *Finding Hidden Genius: Vivian Maier*, Today Art Museum, Beijing (2021); *Mind the Gap*, The Delaware Contemporary, U.S.A. (2020); and *Meng Du: The Room*, Shanghai Museum of Glass, Shanghai (2018). Her work has been widely featured in *China Daily*, *People's Daily*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, *Yitiao*, *Art China*, *CAFA Art Info*, and other media platforms. She was invited to give lectures at YiXi (2020) and ROG International Art Project Online Symposium (2020). In 2016, she won the Honorable Mention for The International Exhibition of Glass Kanazawa (Kanazawa, Japan). In 2018, she won the Saxe Emerging Artist Award at 48th Glass Art Society Conference (Venice, Italy).

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About Curator



Lynn Hai at Fou Gallery ©Lynn Hai, Photo by Echo He

Lynn Hai graduated from Architectural Association (London) in 2014 and gained her Master's in Design Studies at Harvard University (Boston) in 2017. She is a partner and the Art Director of Fou Gallery, also a staff writer at Harvard CAMLab (Chinese Art Media Lab). She initiates and curates art exhibitions for Fou Gallery Artists and refines the artists' creations in academic form. Her selected curatorial and design experiences includes: November online group highlights on PLATFORM by David Zwirner Gallery with Cathleen Clarke and Shuling Guo (New York, 2022); *Wei Jia: Good Times* (Fou Gallery and Chambers Fine Arts, 2021); Together in Distance benefit art auction for the relief of COVID-19 (New York, 2020); Dwelling At the Present Interior Design Exhibition and Forum (Harvard Club, New York, 2019); *Flow Fields – Confluence in Urban Picnic* (Matedero, Madrid, 2013); *Flow Fields – Dilution* in 2013 Lisbon Triennale (Sinel de Cordes Palace, Lisbon, 2013) et al. Her writings are published on art periodicals including *ArtChina*, *CAFA Artinfo*, *Tussle Magazine* and *ArtPulse* et al.

About Gallery

FOU GALLERY is an apartment gallery and creative lab based in New York. Fou is dedicated to promoting creative talents and projects of our time. As suggested by its name, Fou is both a denial of the mainstream commercial gallery model and an active contributor to a new, organic art community. With the belief that the enjoyment of art is an essential part of everyday life, Fou offers a vibrant, inspirational selection of original works in art and design, and hosts various events to create a diverse and accessible art space.

(text & photo courtesy of FOU GALLERY)