

LYDIAN STATER

For Immediate Release

Alisa Yang

sometimes doing nothing leads to something

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“No one seems to know how useful it is to be useless” -Zhuangzi
(translation by Thomas Merton from *The Way of Chuang Tzu*)

Lydian Stater is thrilled to present an exhibition of new works from interdisciplinary artist and independent filmmaker Alisa Yang, her first solo exhibition with the gallery.

There is evidence that humans have not always had a name for the color blue and some pre-modern cultures did not even distinguish between the colors green and blue. It was not until the color blue was named that humans began to actually discern it. To Yang, this theory is an analogy for the way society treats invisible disabilities like chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, and neurodivergence. Using this conceptual framework, she explores a range of concerns related to her ongoing investigation of her own invisible disabilities.

Upon entering the blue-soaked space, a tatami mat sits at the far end of the gallery and the earthy smell of Japanese rush grass fills the room. Much like Yang’s research-based practice, wandering is encouraged, whether it is itinerant introspecting or roaming from piece to piece. A looped video of the artist practicing Zuowang meditation projects on the wall, recorded within the gallery prior to the exhibition and displayed life size. Positioned opposite, a familiar “blue screen of death” plays on loop while bouncing off the edges of a screen, referencing a device that is no longer functioning as desired.

A triptych of textured photographic prints alluding to meditative waves or suffocating cling wrap sits adjacent to a sculpture consisting of a slab of concrete resting on a replica of an egg. The stone was found by the artist at the demolition sight for a new condo complex in a rapidly gentrifying area of Chattanooga, TN. The egg supporting the weight of the rock without being crushed is a metaphor for how Yang traverses through the world and references a the Chinese proverb 以卵击石 meaning “to strike a stone with egg” — to attempt the impossible.

Yang is an advocate for a social model of disability; the idea that a person’s impairment is not what disables them, but the inaccessibility of the world around them that is disabling. This advocacy requires a reframing of inadequate and ingrained systems. For her part, Yang works to reframe unproductivity and stillness into something tangible, valuable, and respected.

In *sometimes doing nothing leads to something*, Alisa Yang invites you to be useless. To take a break from the social, political, and financial demands that often seem to organize our existence and decompress in an intentioned sensory space. But she also wants to remind you that being useless is powerful. It is a protest against a flawed economic system that privileges able-bodied and neurotypical individuals.

Alisa Yang is an interdisciplinary artist and independent filmmaker with a research-based practice exploring alternative ways art can be a currency for care. Centering the body as a site of geopolitical and social conditionings, she works across video, installation, and situational specific projects in orienting oneself towards social change. Her films focus on the experiences of Asian women navigating cultural identity and generational trauma, mining personal narratives with humor and vulnerability. Yang earned her BFA from Art Center of Design in 2009 and MFA at the University of Michigan in 2016. Her work has been exhibited and screened internationally including MoMAPS1, Aesthetica Art Prize, New Mexico Museum of Art, and Beijing’s Art Nova 100 with reviews in LA Times, Hyperallergic, and Huffington Post. She is the recipient of fellowships from Yaddo, Uniondoc Summer Lab, Artpace San Antonio, and Vermont Studios and her awards include the 2018 Special Arte Laguna Prize, Best Regional Filmmaker at 2017 Ann Arbor Film Festival, and the 2017 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival Golden Reel Awards for Short Documentary.

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