Chun Liao’s beautiful new vessels evoke her feelings on the subject of time. Her subconscious thoughts are traced by her minimal, richly coloured and captivating work, through which a highly personal poeticism radiates.

Liao’s vessels act as markers of her experiences, and through them she leaves something of herself behind, as time moves on. She explains,

‘When I was making these works I was thinking about time, and how it changes our outlook on life. At every stage of life there are certain things that are so important to us, which we care about so much, which we cannot live with or without. But given some time, they might have become insignificant and trivial. When all the dust is settled and passion, love and sorrow are gone, what is left, I wonder.’

Pieces of April I & II, a green and white pair, are what is left of this April, 2012. Blue February, with its intense blues and deep blacks, punctuated by stunning red vessels, echoes the dark and brooding time of year in which it was made. These pieces reveal unique, inimitable moments, which have been captured and preserved in her work.

But it is not just Liao’s own life that is marked with and by these vessels. She invests in them a devoted compassion, and although her work is made with a high level of skill and control, she sees each piece as having its very own existence, one that is not within her command. In Blue with Silver, a piece of silver, placed on the vessel as subtle decoration, has run down to the bottom of the piece during it’s firing. Usually this would have caused it to break, but by chance the piece survived. The perfectly smooth, white vessel of Pieces of April I is scarred by a green trail across it’s surface, created by a piece of impure silver wire being fixed to the piece before it is fired, which then evaporates with the heat to leave a rich green trace of itself. Of these incidents, Liao says ‘porcelain is like white paper, with the silver and gold imprints marking the imperfections, writing a life in the pieces I make.’

This personification is extremely important to Liao. She spends long periods of time musing on her work, and looking at, living with, and getting to know each piece is essential to her. The large installation Lament was put together over more than a year, with deep thought going in to each piece included, of which there are over 100. Intuition is highly important in all of Liao’s work, and if a vessel seems ‘lonely’, she will add more to accompany it. This piece evolved slowly as she sensed what was needed to complete the set, to make it ‘feel right’.

The individual pieces that make up all of her installations, such as the vibrant For You, are treated in this way. In this installation brightly coloured miniature bowls are juxtaposed against each other, often with minuscule traces of gold or silver fixed upon their surface. The scale of the elements in her installations encourages close scrutiny and quiet contemplation, but taking a step back and seeing these as one piece incites a completely different reaction. The assortment of colours, sizes, shapes and markings lend her vibrant installations a lively energy, and although the parts are so different, they can be perfectly understood as complete whole.

In her new work Chun Liao has created a metaphor of the passing of time itself. Her vessels are made whilst she deals with everyday life, the significant events and the trivial, and it is only after time has passed that she can stand back and gain perspective, appreciating the flaws, chances, twists and turns that make up our existence. By marking the moments of her life through her vessels, she leaves a beautiful account of a highly creative and extremely intuitive mind.

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