

Dominique Fung

(Up)Rooted

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MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to present *Up(Rooted)*, a solo exhibition by New York-based artist Dominique Fung. The exhibition marks her first solo show in Europe. *(Up)Rooted* alludes to an allegorical journey where seashells metamorphose into blossoming flowers, enigmatic figures emerge from shadowy shores, sculptural rocks pulsate with life, and the atmosphere radiates with a warm, honeyed glow.

“My ideas flow from one painting to the next and from one body of work to the next, like a long, continuous journey or timeline”, says Fung. In fact, *(Up)Rooted* builds upon themes and concepts she previously explored in her installation works at the Rockefeller Center, which opened earlier this year. *(Up)Rooted* captures the essence of both the familiar and the surreal, conveying the universality of human emotions. Featuring both paintings and sculptures, the exhibition encourages the viewer to imagine the creation of a new context and a fresh visual narrative, seamlessly transitioning from Western art vernacular to historical East Asian cultural and art references.

The series of works presented takes us on a journey through a spectrum of emotions, shifting from a more introspective and melancholic tone, reminiscent of somber memories, to moments of radiant and dreamlike expressions. This journey, however, transcends the boundaries of time and memory, leading us into an ancestral past that has left us with scant traces. Fung employs corals, marine life, seashells, and water as symbolic elements that guide us back to the primordial, to our ancient origins.

Fung's exploration is vast, ranging from sea life to artifacts from the Tang and Shang Dynasties. Her curiosity also leads her to delve into the world of Dunhuang frescoes. Through these multiple sources, Fung finds a way to reconnect with a distant past that resides across oceans and centuries: her sense of Chinese heritage is deeply influenced by the objects she encountered both at home and during visits to the Asian art section at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Fung reflects on these museum relics as akin to herself, distanced and often removed from their original contexts by vast oceans and the passage of time.

In *To Walk Towards/Away*, Fung draws inspiration from her recent visit to the Uffizi in Florence, where Botticelli's *Primavera* left a lasting impression. The artist found herself captivated by Botticelli's evocative and enigmatic style, evoking a sense of wonder. On Fung's glossy canvas, a multitude of lower limbs, feet, and legs come to life in dynamic motion along an otherworldly shoreline. *To Walk Towards/Away* displays a profound subversion at its core, as the figures within Fung's painting appear as if we are looking upward at the scene, with the central Venus gracefully descended to the shorebed.

In *To Leave a Place/Memory*, Fung references an 1873 woodblock print showing female performers from Tianjin, housed at the British Museum. Employing canvas, she reimagines the woodblock's action-packed scene, where mysterious hands and legs emerge from the background. This work delves into a rich historical tradition where images were pasted up at the beginning of each New Year, only to be replaced the following year as the colours faded, signifying the passage of time. *To Leave a Place/Memory* reflects on the transient nature of existence, highlighting the emotional challenge of leaving people, places, and things behind. It encapsulates the human inclination to reach for fleeting memories, attempting to grasp them even as they slowly slip through our fingers.

Alongside her series of paintings, Fung delves into the realm of sculpture, crafting pieces that resemble ancient relics inspired by Scholars' rocks – geological formations with deep historical significance. Scholars' rocks are often referred to as the "bones of the earth" and likened to the "petrified roots of clouds." They not only represent landscapes like mountains but also embody nature itself. Eroded into intriguing shapes, scholars' rocks have been cherished since ancient times by China's intellectual elite as objects of contemplation. Their original name is *gongshi*, a word written in Chinese using the characters for 'worship' and 'stone.' Fung's own *gongshi* sculptures are designed as living entities, engaging in activities like fishing, blossoming flowers, and hiding fish.

Fung's creations in *(Up)Rooted* serve as portals to ancient memories and drifting reveries. They beckon

the artist to revisit her own roots, anchoring her to a specific era, geographic origin, and emotional state.

Hailing from Ottawa in Canada, with family roots extending from Shanghai, Hong Kong to Kano in Nigeria, Fung elaborates: “My family lineage has these multiple layers of disconnect due to language and location; we are in search of the ability to communicate and connect with one another. In my art practice, I yearn for that missing piece, that history, and connection, and my works embody a profound sense of longing and distance.”

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.

Her solo exhibitions include: A Tale of Ancestral Memories, Rockefeller Center, New York, USA (2023); Objects for Comfort in the Afterlife, Pond Society, Shanghai, China (2023); Coastal Navigation, Nicodim, Los Angeles, USA (2022); It's Not Polite to Stare, Jeffrey Deitch, New York, USA (2021). Group exhibitions include: Orizzonti, Casa Masaccio, Arezzo, I (2023); In Bloom, MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique, Paris, F (2022); Luncheon on the Grass, Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles, USA (2022); Women of Now: Dialogues of Identity, Memory and Place, Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, USA (2022); My Secret Garden, Asia Art Center, Taipei, PRC (2021); Friends and Friends of Friends: Artistic Communities in the Age of Social Media, Schlossmuseum, Linz, A (2020).