

# Sadie Coles

Yu Ji

*Protrude*

HQ

8 Bury Street London SW1Y

01 February – 09 March 2024

Private view: Thursday 01 February, 6-8pm

In her second solo exhibition with Sadie Coles HQ, Yu Ji returns to familiar themes of the body, the landscape and the fragile relationship between the two, presenting two new sculptures and a series of works on paper. Titled *Protrude*, the exhibition conjures a set of associations concerning presence and physicality whilst also inciting feelings of action, growth and movement. These are uneasy companions and somewhat contradictory – on the one hand, a protrusion demarks a certain stability, but on the other, a protrusion is an action, an obstacle, an inconvenience to smooth operations. This simultaneous capture of stability and movement, of certainty and fragility, lies at the heart of this new body of work. In this paradox, the exhibition speaks to the very idea of a body; the tender and precarious corporeality of the self in the world.



Two new sculptures made of concrete and soap, each standing over two meters tall, hold the gallery space like sentinels in every sense of the word. They are simultaneously stoic and vulnerable; they keep watch but also monitor their own health and stability. *Column-Untitled No.3 – 2 (2023)* resembles the ancient columns of Greece or Rome, crooked with age, its crumbling surface testament to its own ancient history. On inspection, there is a discolouration and a set of organic anomalies protruding from its otherwise man-made facade that suggests this is no ordinary architectural artefact. *Column-Untitled No.4 – 2 (2023)* is organic in nature, yet totemic in a way only nature could produce. An innate upwards growth, it appears as complex life extending to the sky, reaching for the light, exuding its transformative journey. An a-symmetrical protrusion extends outwards from its body, and together these two companion pieces speak to one another, proxies for the vulnerable body in a landscape. The artist first created her series of sculptures in conversation with plants for the High Line project in New York, specifically drawing inspiration from those in the park's renowned gardens, currently installed until March 2024.

The reference to architecture and nature in the work is explicit. Despite a clear acknowledgement that the built environment is informed by the physics of the natural world, there is a pointed analogy between the building and the body: both have skin, a structural core and a network of interior operations that keep it functioning. These are in delicate harmony with one another, and they age over time, they transform, they expose their transformation as something both lost and gained – they lose strength and beauty but gain character and distinction. Yu Ji's sculptures are no different. They are made over a long duration of research, collaboration and processual fabrication. Specific plants are 3D scanned, printed, re-modelled and added to by the artist with clay. These details are enlarged and scanned again, re-printed at greater scale and re-worked into ever complex forms. Once at the scale of a human figure, the objects are cast in concrete, reinforced with steel bars like an internal skeletal core, and the imperfect augmentations and mutations through the making and re-making process are filled with cast soap in the final form. The enduring materiality of the concrete and the sheer impermanence and fragility of soap heightens the dichotomy between nature and architecture. It undermines the anthropocentric determination to establish dominance over all else and instead accepts a type of vulnerable harmony. The oil-based soap literally fights to hold on to the water-based concrete. A singular form, in conflict, striving for unity, making its struggle visible. If sculpture often seeks to assert a permanence of form and an ossified truth about the world and ourselves, Yu Ji, in contrast, offers her works as living, changing bodies.

[www.sadiecoles.com](http://www.sadiecoles.com)

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In a complex layering of original drawing, hand printing, silk screening and screen printing, overlaid with collaged elements and handwritten text, a series of intricate works on paper collect the preparatory materials for the sculpture. Taking source images and inspirations from work undertaken as part of exhibitions on view through 2023, these 2D works become sites for conflicting and colliding research interests to converge and materialise. Traversing timelines and periods of work, the material coalesces with an a-temporality at odds with the sculpture. These sites hold ideas that traverse time, place and movement in a non-chronological way.

Together, this body of work becomes precisely this; a body. In their raw, vulnerable physicality the sculpture and printings together reveal something poignant about how we inhabit the natural world. Rather than dominating nature and attempting to keep it at bay, the works in this exhibition contend that we could learn from nature and attune to its disposition.

Yu Ji (b. 1985, Shanghai) obtained her MA from the Department of Sculpture, College of Art of Shanghai University, in 2011. Yu Ji has exhibited internationally with recent solo exhibitions including *We the singular in multiple ghosts. I the multiple as parts of whole.*, ICA Institute of Contemporary Art, NYU, Shanghai (2023); *A Guest, A Host, A Ghost*, OCMA Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa (2023, her first major institutional exhibition in the USA); *Column-Untitled No.3*, commissioned by Friends of the High Line, New York NY (2023); *Miss Shell, Delta, and Two Noughts*, CCA Centre for Contemporary Arts, Berlin (2023); *Against Shadows / 无视阴影*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2022); *Wasted Mud*, Chisenhale Gallery, London (2021, marking her first institutional exhibition outside of Asia); *Spontaneous Decisions II*, Gallery 0, Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum, West Bund Museum, Shanghai (2021); *Forager*, Edouard Malingue, offsite at Avenue Apartments, Shanghai (2020); *Stones in Her Pocket*, Project Terrace, Shanghai (2020); *Black Mountain*, Beijing Commune (2016), *Dairy of Sulfur Mining—Pataauw*, Mind Set Art Center, Taipei (2016) and *Never Left Behind*, Beijing C-Space (2014). Current and recent group exhibitions include *Sigg Prize 2023*, M+, Hong Kong (2023); *Bodily Reaction: Vitalizing the Bare Life*, TAIKANG SPACE, Beijing (2023); *ATP The 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, QAGOMA Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2021); *Soft Water Hard Stone*, Fifth New Museum Triennial, New Museum, New York (2021); *May You Live in Interesting Times*, 58th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, Venice (2019); *Soon enough: Art in Action*, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm (2018); *Entropy*, Faurshou Foundation, Beijing (2018); *HUGO BOSS ASIA ART: Award for Emerging Asian Artists*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2017); *The Eighth Climate (What does art do?)*, 11th Gwangju Biennale (2016); *Why Not Ask Again: Arguments, Counter-arguments, and Stories*, 11th Shanghai Biennale (2016); *INSIDE CHINA. L'Intérieur du Géant*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014). In 2021 Yu Ji's first artist book, *Wasted Mud*, an extensive bilingual publication in English and Mandarin Chinese, was published to accompany her solo exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery. In 2017 Yu Ji was shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize Asia and in 2023 she was nominated for the prestigious Sigg Prize.

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or [press@sadiecoles.com](mailto:press@sadiecoles.com).

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