



OPENINGS

EVELYN TAOCHENG WANG

KAREN ARCHEY





Above: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Booklet of Bachmann_Lost Leather Shoulder Bag Refund*, 2020, ink, ink-jet print, glue, acrylic, and pencil on raw rice paper, 1'7 1/2" x 26'3".

Opposite page, bottom: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Reflection Paper no. 3*, 2013–14, HD video, color, sound, 7 minutes 31 seconds.

Below: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *So You Were Also There*, 2019, ink and mineral color on raw rice paper, 18 7/8 x 37 3/4".



THERE IS NO ONE THING that we could call the “immigrant experience,” but certainly everyone who has immigrated is familiar with how mundane misunderstandings can reveal cultural tectonics, of how humor can sometimes be mobilized to leaven pain. What’s the correct time of day to introduce yourself to a new neighbor? How earnestly should you respond to the question “How are you?” Will you come off as suspicious to the neighbors if your curtains remain drawn? The answers to these questions might seem relative or merely dependent on personal proclivity, yet one’s approach to these everyday situations constitutes, in part, the *je ne sais quoi* of national belonging. And while learning a new culture can be refined into a science, other qualities will still mark us as different, factors comprising who we are, where we come from, and our appearance.

China-born, Netherlands-based artist Evelyn Taocheng Wang takes the subject of authenticity, and how we go about performing it, as fodder for a sprawling practice that includes installation, performance, video, sculpture, and a range of painting and drawing styles. Her work often touches on Dutchness and Germanness, pairing observations on immigration and

belonging with reflections on other aspects crucial to our understanding of the self, such as our gender and class presentation or our sense of style. Yet she eschews a confrontational approach to these hot-button topics, broaching themes such as cultural assimilation and gender expression with a healthy sense of humor and poetry, making references in her work to art history, language acquisition, literature (she has a fondness for Virginia Woolf, American-born Chinese modernist Eileen Chang, and the Brothers Grimm’s “The Frog Prince”), and embodied experience (such as the way in which daylight filters through the seventeenth-century windows of the Amsterdam Hermitage). Wang knowingly emphasizes personal appearance and material possessions—her work frequently invokes clothing brands and makes use of garments and textiles—in ways that fly in the face of so much European and American art of the past fifty years, with its grounding in supposedly objective and neutral Conceptualism and cerebral claims to criticality. When speaking of her instructors at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, she expresses surprise at their analytic approach, saying, with wry bewilderment, of one (white male) teacher, “He can even explain what beauty is.”

For Wang, the conditions that create beauty are, by nature, ineffable, and when they are stated, the spell is broken.

One recent work, *Spreading Elegance*, 2019, is entirely based on Wang's affection for the brand agnès b. On Facebook, the artist offered items from her lovingly acquired collection of the label's clothing to her friends in exchange for a handwritten letter. Wang presents these notes in tabletop vitrines, placing them alongside her own photos and drawings of the corresponding articles of clothing. Lit by a small tabletop lamp and furnished with a simple stool, each table is dedicated to an individual garment set free from the artist's collection. agnès b.'s simple, understated femininity epitomizes a modern European sophistication to which many women outside Europe—and, according to Wang, Asian women in particular—aspire. The key to the work lies in one of the letters, in which a confidante describes her initial reservations about the project. "Isn't this Agnès B. thing a bit superficial?" the friend writes. "It's fashion, clothes, capitalism—I'm missing substance, a critical perspective." But then she comes around. "When I went to see the show at the gallery, everything changed. . . . It's all about the question: How can I be someone? How can anyone be someone?" Being someone, Wang suggests, is less about the expression of some authentic interiority or self and more a process of rediscovery and play, of pleasurably pretending or putting on airs.

BORN IN 1981 in the Sichuan capital city of Chengdu, Wang learned about Soviet Realism, the Russian avant-garde, and European modernism in high school. At Nanjing Normal University, she studied Chinese classical literature, calligraphy, and landscape painting, as well as mathematics and English. In 2007, Wang, who had been living in Shanghai, departed China for a residency in Germany, where she met artist Monika Baer, who advised her to enroll at the renowned Städelschule.

After graduating, Wang became a resident at the De Ateliers in Amsterdam and relocated to the Netherlands, where she has lived since 2012. As any newcomer will attest, learning to speak Dutch is a monumental task, not only because of the complex grammar and the throat acrobatics required, but because of the frustratingly friendly insistence of all Dutch people on speaking English to anyone who looks or sounds remotely foreign. In fact, it wasn't until Wang had lived in the country for several years that she found herself "immersed" in Dutch for the first time. While attending a concert at Luther Museum Amsterdam, Wang encountered a group of Dutch senior citizens who spoke the language exclusively and did not revert to English; she found that the experience made her feel integrated into Dutch society. Shortly thereafter, Wang announced via email that she had embarked upon a performance in which she would only speak Dutch or German for one year, and that friends and curators collaborating on institutional exhibitions who did not speak those languages would have to hire a translator to work with her. Communication hiccups, mistakes, and delays in exhibition preparation followed, underscoring the dominance of English as the art world's lingua franca. But more than that, Wang's action subtly challenged an institutional system that rewards artists for simultaneously occupying two irreconcilable positions: that of the outsider gazing inward at society and that of the insider able to conscientiously administer her own creative pontifications.

Wang has a long-standing interest in bureaucratic insignia of authentication. In Chinese painting and calligraphy, a finished piece received a stamp to certify its authority, indicating that it was made according to strict customs and principles of composition. Wang wondered if she could simply make the stamp herself, bypassing all the fuss of the compositional rule-book—traditional Chinese landscape painters would laugh at this ruse, she



Wang's line drawings appear almost like virtuoso drypoint etchings, emerging and disappearing from the picture plane with spectral indifference.

says. The resulting drawings, which form the cornerstone of her practice, combine Chinese landscape-painting techniques with elements, such as rice-paper scrolls, her "fake" Chinese authenticity stamps, collage, and calligraphy. For the artist's 2020 Hermitage exhibition, "*Het bloemblaadje, dat tijdens het ochtendkrieken was gevallen, pakte ik op in de avond-schemering*" (the title, which intentionally includes a Dutch grammatical error, translates to "I picked up the flower petal which had fallen in dawn in the evening twilight"), she created numerous such pieces, combining artifacts from her integration into the Netherlands, like Dutch-language homework, with paintings of everyday Dutch items: architectural elements including ornate cast-iron railings and the iconic Dutch gable; the Dutch delicacy *oliebollen* (fried dough); and the flashy faux chandeliers found in

the oliebollen trucks that serve them. Made with Chinese watercolors designed for rice paper, the paintings are further detailed with oliebollen-munching animals copied from Qing-dynasty paintings, all rendered in red, yellow, and blue in tribute to Piet Mondrian. Wang's authenticity stamps appear throughout—including one with her initials and another featuring a turtle above the word MOVE.

WANG PRESENTED additional rice-scroll pieces in “Reflection Paper,” her recent exhibition at Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, including the twenty-six-foot long *Booklet of Bachmann_Lost Leather Shoulder Bag Refund*, 2020, which recounts the story of a lost hand-bag. While Wang was doing a residency in Mönchengladbach, Germany, she left her Longchamp purse behind in a café. A good citizen found it and turned it over to the police, who then returned the bag to Wang with a five-page report. Wang collaged the report and a photo of the returned bag onto a rice-paper scroll that she also painted with a pastoral scene of sheep grazing in a Rhineland meadow. As in many such works, Wang's line drawings appear almost like virtuoso drypoint etchings, emerging and disappearing from the picture plane with spectral indifference. This effect carries over to her replicas of Agnes Martin paintings, an abundance of which here encircled the gallery and even lay on the floor; these are at once dutiful copies, with the original title noted on a placard, and playful riffs, marked with authentication stamps and referred to by the artist as “posters.”

Like most of her exhibitions, Wang's Düsseldorf show invited the viewer to literally sit and reflect. The show included four videos inspired by writer Eileen Chang. Wang has long been attracted to female modernists, particularly the tragic mood they sometimes evoke, and these works, dated 2013–14 and shot in a self-consciously amateurish, impressionistic way, combine Chang's texts as scripts with fleeting scenes caught on video. *Reflection Paper no. 4*, which was filmed in a zoo, derives from Chang's writing on marriage, child-rearing, and feelings of captivity: She was not a bird in a cage, which has the ability to escape should the door be opened, but rather a bird embroidered onto a beautiful scarf, never to be able to move again.

The rest of the show comprised a litany of other media: architectural elements such as sunshades; a gigantic, bloody papier-mâché womb laid on the ground; a set of drying racks festooned with gargantuan granny panties that double as dresses (also depicted in the drawings *Granny!*, both dated 2020). Wang installed the ersatz Martin paintings around a series of moon gates, intersecting arches in the shape of an O found in upper-class Chinese gardens. Wang has described the exhibition itself as a garden, a closed-off space for reflection—a metaphorical womb able to produce life inside of itself. The lives we envision for ourselves—be it in a faraway land, transformed like the Frog Prince, having faked it till we've made it—are, to Wang, a matter of continual becoming. □

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Opposite page, top: **Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Spreading Elegance* (detail), 2019**, watercolor, acrylic, and ink on rice paper, envelopes, ink on paper, twenty wooden tables, twenty desk lights, twenty stools, Plexiglas, dimensions variable.

Opposite page, bottom: **View of “In the Presence of Absence,” 2020–21**, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Foreground: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Spreading Elegance*, 2019. Wall: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Quoted Elegance* Nos. 1–5, all 2019. Photo: Peter Tjihuis.

Left: **View of “Evelyn Taocheng Wang: *Reflection Paper*,” 2021**, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Floor: *Thoughtless Garden*, 2020. Foreground, from left: *Clinic Agnes Martin*, 2020; *Clinic Agnes Martin*, OP. 8, 2020; *Clinic Agnes Martin*, 2020. Photo: Katja Illner.

ARTFORUM 艺术论坛

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开幕：王伊芙苓韬程

王伊芙苓韬程，《所以你也曾在这里》，2019，生宣水墨和矿物颜料， $18\frac{7}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ \"。

没有一种我们可以直接归纳为“移民经验”的东西，但每个有过移民经验的人一定都熟悉，日常的误解如何揭示出不同的文化构造，或是如何运用幽默来缓解痛苦。什么时候去跟新邻居打招呼才是合适的？“你好吗”这个问题需不需要认真回答？如果一直拉着窗帘，会不会让邻居觉得很可疑？这些问题的答案似乎是相对的，或仅仅取决于个人喜好，然而一个人对这些日常情境的处理方式在一定程度上构成了难以言喻的民族属性。虽然新的文化可以当成一门科学来学，但仍有一些特质标志着我们的不同，一些关乎我们是谁、来自哪里，以及我们的外表的因素。

中国出生，现居荷兰的艺术家王伊芙苓韬程以真实性（authenticity）以及我们如何表演真实性为素材，创作实践覆盖了装置、行为、影像、雕塑以及多种不同风格的绘

画。她的作品常常触及“荷兰性”和“德国性”，对移民和归属的观察在其中与构成我们自我认知的其他核心元素（比如性别，阶级表现或我们的风格感）彼此关联。她在处理这些棘手话题时并没有采用对抗的方式，而是借助幽默和诗意来探讨文化同化和性别表达等主题，常在作品里引述艺术史、语言习得、文学（她喜欢弗吉尼亚·伍尔夫、张爱玲和格林童话中的“青蛙王子”）以及具身经验（比如阳光如何透过阿姆斯特丹冬宫博物馆17世纪的窗户照射进来）。王伊芙苓韬程会刻意强调个人外表和物质财产——她的作品经常涉及服装品牌，也会用衣服和纺织品作材料——这与过去五十年来的很多欧美艺术创作方式相悖，后者常常立足于理论上客观中立的观念主义以及对批判性的理性诉求。谈到她在法兰克福施泰德艺术学院（Städelschule）的导师，王伊芙苓韬程说他们的分析方法让她感到惊讶，有一位（白人男性）老师“甚至可以解释什么是美”。而在她看来，创造美的条件本质上是不可言说的，当它们被说出来时，魔咒就打破了。



王伊芙苓韬程，《传播优雅》（局部），2019，水彩、丙烯、宣纸水墨、信封、纸上水墨、二十张木桌、二十盏台灯、二十张凳子、有机玻璃，尺寸可变。

新作《传播优雅》（*Spreading Elegance*, 2019）完全基于艺术家对品牌agnès b的感情，在Facebook上，王伊芙苓韬程用她精心收藏的该品牌服装换取朋友们的手写

信。她将这些信与自己为这些衣服拍的照片或者画的画以桌面展示台的形式陈列在一起。每张桌子专用于一件来自王伊芙苓韬程收藏的衣服，桌上的物件被一盏小台灯照亮，桌边还有一张凳子。agnès b简单、低调的女性气质在很多来自欧洲以外地区的女性，（据艺术家所言）尤其是亚洲女性眼里，象征着她们理想中的欧洲都市风格。这件作品的关键藏在其中一封信里，一位朋友在信中描述了一开始对项目的保留意见：“这个关于agnès b的项目是不是有点肤浅？”朋友写道。“里面只有时尚、衣服、资本主义——缺少实质内容和批判性观点。”但她很快回过神来。“当我去画廊看展览的时候，一切都变了……一切都是关于这个问题：我怎样成为某某人？任何人如何成为某某人？”王伊芙苓韬程认为，成为某人，与其说意味着表达某种真实的内在或自我，不如说是重新发现和游戏的过程，是愉悦地假装或扮演的过程。

1981年出生于成都的王伊芙苓韬程在高中时期了解到苏联现实主义、俄罗斯前卫艺术和欧洲现代主义。在南京师范大学读书期间，她学习了中国古典文学、书法、山水画，以及数学和英语。2007年，当时居住在上海的王伊芙苓韬程离开中国前往德国参加驻留项目，在那里她遇到了艺术家莫妮卡·贝尔（Monika Baer），后者建议她进入著名的施泰德艺术学院学习。

毕业后，王伊芙苓韬程成为阿姆斯特丹De Ateliers的驻留艺术家，自2012年起她移居荷兰，此后一直生活在那里。所有荷兰的新移民都能证明，学习荷兰语是一项非常艰巨的任务，不仅因为复杂的语法和各种喉音技巧，还因为所有荷兰人都过分友好，坚持对所有外国人说英语。实际上，王伊芙苓韬程在荷兰生活了数年后才第一次感受到“沉浸在”荷兰语中是什么感觉。有一次在阿姆斯特丹路德博物馆听音乐会时，她遇到了一群只会说荷兰语的当地老人，她发现这段经历让她有种融入荷兰社会的感觉。此后不久，王伊芙苓韬程通过电子邮件宣布，她要开始一场一年内只说荷兰语或德语的行为表演，在机构展览中共事的朋友和策展人如果不会说这些语言，必须聘请翻译与她合作。沟通上的坎坷、错误和展览筹备的延误接踵而至，凸显了英语作为艺术界通用语言的主导地位。但更重要的是，王伊芙苓韬程的行为巧妙地对一个体制系统提出了挑战，该系统鼓励艺术家同时占据两个彼此矛盾、不可调和的位置：既是从外向内观察社会的局外人，又是能够勤勉地管理好自身创作的局内人。



“缺席的在场”展览现场，2020-21，阿姆斯特丹市立博物馆。前景：王伊芙苓韬程，《传播优雅》，2019；墙面：王伊芙苓韬程，《引用的优雅1-5》，2019。摄影：Peter Tijhuis。

王伊芙苓韬程一直对鉴藏印章很感兴趣。在中国书画中，鉴藏印被用来证明作品的权威性，表示其遵循了严格的传统规范。她想，是不是可以自己制作印章，绕过所有繁琐的构图规则——传统的中国山水画家会嘲笑这种小伎俩，她说。由此产生的画作成为了她的艺术实践的基础。这些作品结合了中国山水画技巧、宣纸卷轴、她的“假”鉴藏印、拼贴和书法。2020年，艺术家为在阿姆斯特丹冬宫举办的展览“Het bloemblaadje, dat tijdens het ochtendkrieken was gevallen, pakte ik op in de avondschemering”（展览标题有意地包含了语法错误，译为“我在傍晚的暮色中捡起黎明时分掉落的花瓣”）创作了很多这样的作品，她将自己融入荷兰社会的过程中的产物，比如荷兰语作业，与描绘荷兰日常用品的绘画相结合：比如华丽的铸铁栏杆和荷兰标志性山形墙等建筑元素、荷兰小吃油炸面球（oliebollen）以及卖油炸面球的餐车上的人造吊灯。这些宣纸水彩画上还描绘了一些吃油炸面球的动物，它们的形象取自清代画作，以红、黄、蓝三色呈现，向蒙德里安致敬。所有画作上都有王伊芙苓韬程的鉴藏章——其中一个她的名字首字母，还有一个是下方写着单词move的乌龟。

在最近于杜塞尔多夫莱茵兰与威斯塔法伦艺术协会（Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen）举办的展览“读后感”（Reflection Paper）中，王伊芙苓韬程展出了

更多宣纸卷轴画作，包括26英尺长的《巴赫曼小册子“归还遗失的皮包”》（Booklet of Bachmann *Lost Leather Shoulder Bag Refund*, 2020），讲述了一个遗失的手提包的故事：在德国门兴格拉德巴赫（Mönchengladbach）做驻留艺术家时，王伊芙苓韬程将她的一个Longchamp包遗落在一间咖啡馆里。一位好心的市民发现后将其交给了警方，警方随后将包还给了她，并附上一份长达5页的报告。王伊芙苓韬程将这份报告和归还的包的照片拼贴在宣纸卷轴上，上面画了莱茵草原上羊群吃草的田园场景。在很多类似这样的作品中，王伊芙苓韬程的绘画线条几乎就像精湛的蚀刻版画，以一种幽灵般的冷漠在画面上浮现又消失。这种效果也延续在她模仿艾格尼丝·马丁（Agnes Martin）的画作上，展厅被这些画作包围，甚至延伸到了地板上。它们既是尽职的复制品，牌子上注明了原作的标题，也是俏皮的翻版，画面上印有鉴藏章，而且艺术家称它们为“海报”。



“王伊芙苓韬程：读后感”展览现场，2021，杜塞尔多夫莱茵兰与威斯塔法伦艺术协会。地面：《无心园》，2020；前景，从左至右：《临床艾格尼丝·马丁》，2020；《临床艾格尼丝·马丁，OP. 8》，2020；《临床艾格尼丝·马丁》，2020。摄影：Katja Illner。

和她的大多数展览一样，王伊芙苓韬程的杜塞尔多夫展览邀请观众真的坐下来思考。展览中还有四件受张爱玲启发的影像作品。艺术家一直被女性现代主义者所吸引，尤其是她们时常唤起的感伤情绪。这些创作于2013至14年的影像以一种自觉业余的、印象主义的方式，将张爱玲的文字与转瞬即逝的画面相结合。在动物园拍摄的《读后感之四》（*Reflection Paper no. 4*）源自张爱玲对婚姻、育儿和被囚禁的感受的写作：“她不是笼子里的鸟。笼子里的鸟，开了笼，还会飞出来。她是绣在屏风上的鸟……死也还死在屏风上。”



王伊芙苓韬程，《读后感之三》，2013-14，高清影像，彩色有声，时长7分31秒。

展览中的其他作品囊括了很多不同的媒介：遮阳板等建筑元素、一个铺在地上的血红色的巨型纸子宫，以及一组挂满了可以当衣服穿的大号奶奶内裤（也出现在了画作《奶奶！》（*Granny!*, 2020）中）。王伊芙苓韬程将模仿艾格尼丝·马丁的画作布置在常见于古典园林中的月亮门周围。她将展览本身描述为一个花园，一个封闭的思考空间——一个能够在自身内部产生生命的隐喻性子宫。我们为自己设想的生活——无论是在遥远的国度，还是像青蛙王子一样的转变，我们会假装已经实现，直到真的实现——对王伊芙苓韬程来说都是一件在持续形成中的事。

凯伦·阿契（Karen Archey）是一名艺术评论者，也是阿姆斯特丹市立博物馆当代艺术策展人。

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译／冯优

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