

Shuang Li on finding the wrinkles in technology

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In the Chinese artist's hypnotic works, digital consumerism meets desire

'The idea of having a body makes me cringe,' says artist Shuang Li, speaking via Zoom from her chilly Berlin studio. 'Once you have a physical form, you're trapped. I've always felt that – both when I make work and in daily life.' So, it comes as no surprise that Li feels more freedom online than in IRL. Born in 1990, Li grew up in a factory town in Wuyishan county, China. Throughout her childhood, she tried to escape her surroundings by playing pirated video games, watching YouTube, and listening to her favorite American rock band, My Chemical Romance, on *dakou* (damaged, black-market CDs).

Today, Li uses performance, interactive websites, video, and sculpture to delve into the complexities of our digital lives. Through hypnotic video works featuring protagonists like an AI sex doll, a cam model, a *mukbang* vlogger (someone who gorges on junk food) and a Taobao sock retailer, she pushes issues of sexuality, desire, and online commodity culture to the surface.



Left: Shuang Li, 2023. Photograph by Majid Al-Remaihi. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects. Right: Shuang Li, Famous Last Words, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.



Shuang Li, Helena, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.

In 2022, while stranded in Geneva due to pandemic travel restrictions, Li remotely staged the performance *Lord of the Flies* as part of the group show 'Where Jellyfish Come From' at Antenna Space in Shanghai. Unable to attend the opening of the exhibition herself, the artist sent 20 performers dressed like her instead. Donning My Chemical Romance T-shirts, silver backpacks, and spycam glasses, the performers mingled with gallerygoers and read personal letters to Li's friends on her behalf. Mid-conversation, they'd suddenly break into five-second, TikTok-style dances 'acting like glitches implanted in reality,' as the artist puts it.



Left: Shuang Li, The portrait of the Artist as a young man, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects. Right: Shuang Li, All the letters I've ever written, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.



Left: Shuang Li, You should've raise a baby girl, I should've been a better son, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects. Right: Shuang Li, Stand up fucking tall, don't let them see your back, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.

The performers resembled fan girls. 'It made me realize that fandom is a big part of my practice, which I work with subconsciously,' says Li. The work inspired her upcoming exhibition at Peres Projects in Milan. At the show's core is *Heart is a Broken Record* (2023), a heart-shaped fountain onto which is projected a montage Li compiled from footage shot by My Chemical Romance fans over the past 20 years of the moment before a concert begins. The video culminates in visuals of an erupting volcano. 'There's an idea of absence in fandom – this idol who you project so much onto is actually not there physically. All of this is something you created in your head,' she says.



Shuang Li, Vampires will never hurt you, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.



Left: Shuang Li, Can you stake me before the sun goes down, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects. Right: Shuang Li, As Your Body Remains, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.

Surrounding the fountain, 'cutesy fan-girl' paraphernalia is embedded into transparent resin wall reliefs evoking milidewy, oversize phone screens. 'They are grotesque and mutating,' she says of the objects, which almost bleed out of the resin. Also on view are squashed photographs of the *Lord of the Flies* performance printed onto fabric trapped between plexiglass panels – images that confront our growing screen reliance and notions of control and freedom. 'Technology is a seemingly smooth surface or process, but actually there are so many wrinkles,' she says. 'My practice is similar to the damaged *dakou* CDs dumped in Asia as digital waste before somebody realized the punctured holes would hurt only one song, and they started reselling them...It's about finding wrinkles and working through them.'

Shuang Li is represented by [Peres Projects](#) (Berlin, Milan, Seoul).

Shuang Li's exhibition 'Forever' is on view at Peres Projects Milan from December 12 – January 24, 2024.

She will also exhibit in the Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement, Geneva, January 24 – May 16.

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Captions for full-bleed images: 1. Shuang Li, *Heart is a Broken Record*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects. 2. Shuang Li, *Meet me in the Morning Light*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects.

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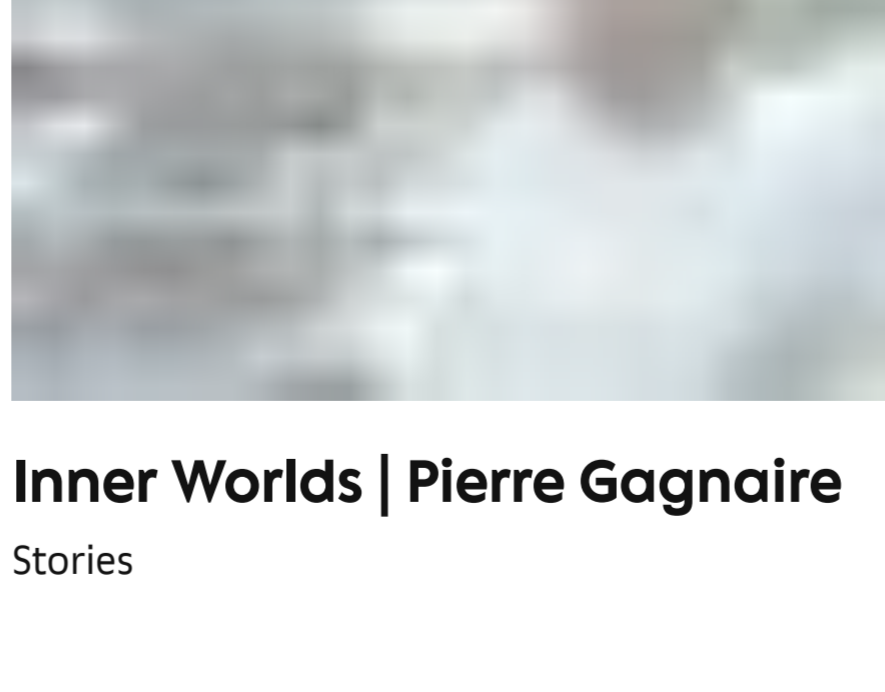


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