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# ARTFORUM

## Amy Yao

47 CANAL | GRAND STREET  
291 Grand Street, 2nd Floor  
September 8–October 8

At the entrance of Amy Yao's exhibition here, the viewer is blocked by a chain-link fence draped with laser-cut, red-and-yellow, faux-silk brocade. Though the work's title, *Foreign Investments (Bottarga in Costa Mesa)* (all works 2017), refers to a city in Orange County south of Yao's Los Angeles home, the swags of low-rent chinoiserie index the gallery's address at the crux of Manhattan's Lower East Side and its rapidly gentrifying Chinatown. Two smaller draped fences—*Foreign Investments (Good Ramen)* and *Foreign Investments (Baked Alaska)*—likewise work as metonyms for the real and symbolic boundaries erected by real-estate capital.



View of "Amy Yao: Weeds of Indifference," 2017.

In the show's press release, Yao muses on the way that hipster fetishes of authenticity—"healthy food," "good coffee," ceramic plates "made by real craftsmen"—squire the displacement of local populations, often the merchants and consumers of mass-produced kitsch. This contradiction, explicit and racialized in that faux Chinese silk, is also manifest in the other deflationary objects that make up Yao's assemblages, such as the artificial flowers encased in Plexiglas in *Revolution Within* and those scattered on the floor alongside *Crocodile Tears Made in China*, models of the titular reptile filled with dollar-store junk.

Refusing the readymade's historical and contemporary postures—the cynical/ironic critique of the commodity form, the mystification of materials—Yao's gnomic, desublimated sculptures are sometimes puzzling and not always easy to love. Nonetheless, their difficulties reflect honest questions: "What is even real?" she asks, speaking of when "the new authentic is used to eradicate what came before." Corralled inside her upholstered fences, two desultory piles of glazed ceramic eggs and slime-green polyurethane, *Weeds of Indifference* and *Weeds of Indifference (Fertile Ground)*, conjure associations with toxic waste and environmental panic. These twin works suggest something we all know and increasingly can't escape: These days, the real—whatever else it might be—is apocalyptic.

— Chloe Wyma