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Goings on About Town: “Wang Xu”

By Johanna Fateman

What was meant to be a brief visit to family in Dalian, China, for the Lunar New Year has turned into a pandemic-induced sojourn—seven months long and counting—as the artist waits to return to home to New York. Making the best of uncertainty and confinement, Wang’s online-only exhibition “Dream Animals (Lianghui)” presents small sculptures and poems—one for each month in exile—and a simple video, all of which capture the melancholy of limbo. Some of the objects are goofier than others, notably a sculpture of a deer with splayed legs and a quizzical gaze, made with a 3-D-printing pen; creatures carved from soapstone have a more sober presence. The video, “Seven Star Road,” is a low-stakes quarantine drama, in which closeup footage of the artist’s hands chiselling is intercut with innocently voyeuristic views of neighbors and maintenance workers. After thirteen serene minutes, we see the result of Wang’s handiwork: a gleaming soapstone fox, curled into itself, fittingly titled “Daydreamer.”

— *Johanna Fateman*