NICOLA VASSELL

JULIA CHIANG SALT ON OUR SKIN



Opening JAN. 12 6-8pm

Gallery Hours For press inquiries Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm 138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011 Hannah Gottlieb-Graham, ALMA Communications — hannah@almacommunications.co

NICOLA VASSELL

January 12 — February 25 2023

I grew up with parents who didn't throw things away. Sometimes out of thrift, but a lot because my dad would give old things a new life. An old chair leg would become a new railing. A hand-painted wood carving would show up as a holder for some new kitchen gadget. Piles of newspapers in Chinese and English would be twined together, waiting for recycling, but there were too many piles to ever really disappear. There were textures and materials of all kinds put aside for later use, we just weren't sure what. The idea of transformation, including our own, seemed to always be coming. To be better, to assimilate more, to be Chinese but more American.

It was a strict household and making art was my time. I never got into trouble if I was drawing, making something, practicing handwriting. Doing it over and over, over and over, attempting to make the same mark and never quite reaching perfection. The calm in my day, when I was a child and busy making, is a sensation I still hold onto. Slowly making and feeling impenetrable in the process of making; transforming materials, memories, pain, into something else.

Clay and paint as bodily forms and fluids, all the bits, the spills, the overflowing and the confined. Trapped and released, memory and loss. Exploding and deflated, barely holding ourselves up, while holding up others.

I'm constantly looking and listening. In my day-to-day I'm inspired by the people I pass on the street, my kids and their friends, the books we read together and the stories I hear in passing. All of us connected.

Mother nature and all her glory. Always seeing our connections to her, how little we matter in her future and how much she matters in ours.



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My kids have been writing and reading Odes in school and inspired me to read along with them. I'm sitting with Neruda's Ode to Things, and from that:

I love all things, not because they blaze or are fragrant, but because I don't know, because this ocean is yours, is mine; buttons, wheels, small forgotten treasures, feathered fans on whose feathers love spreads its orange blossoms, cups, knives, scissors, everything rests on the handle, in the contour, the trace of fingers, a remote hand lost in the most forgotten of oblivions.

I'm always interested in our bodies as vessels, what we contain and what we cannot. All that comes out of us, all that is within us. The borders both real and imagined. Existing in the in-between. Not American enough not Chinese enough, not enough enough.

I imagine the millions of tiny bits that make up our bodies and everything around us. I sit with images of plant life, animals, anatomy. How we merge and push against one another, how new forms emerge and how we transform. One bit, one move, slow by slow, marking time and space.

- Julia Chiang