

Using ink as a conduit of time, Los Angeles-based artist **Ellen Jong** employs the ancient medium in a new series of wall works and sculpture that comprise her solo debut at Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles: **Ellen Jong: Future Eve**. Since the Neolithic period, ink has been used across cultures as a medium for transcription and a tool of expression. The ink from Jong's childhood is utilized in traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting. It is dried then ground into liquid using water on a stone, and dates back to 12th Century BC.

"I think of ink as a time machine that both inscribes itself throughout human history and, as an animal byproduct, has a lifespan all its own," says Jong, who makes the ink she uses in her studio practice by sourcing animal gelatin from a book-binding supply shop and adding powder pigments to create colors that range from day-glo to absolute black. Reversing the traditional process of preparing dry ink for calligraphy, Jong begins with liquid ink, which she dehydrates in order to create a dried and malleable material for sculpture. Because the ink is organic, it is mortal, and thus transforms over time.

"This show represents a major departure from my previous work as I confront elements of my childhood, family, culture and race," explains Jong, noting her desire to work with a material with such deep historical and personal resonance has led her to reflect on the fluidity and transience of existence as a path to recognizing and ultimately celebrating her identity. In addition to the series of wall works—velvet paintings—which reference the passing of time in their evocation of the lunar cycle, Future Eve also includes two kinetic ink sculptures—each made from interlocking pieces, like a puzzle—modeled directly from the artist's body. "Using myself as a subject and working with the time machine of ink as a medium, I explore identity and stereotype, affirming disobedience as a form of self-actualization."

The Ancient Rain references Jong's serial photographic series "Pees on Earth" (1997-2005), where she first began to explore the performance of her body as a tool of transgression. As a functional fountain, the sculpture pumps liquid ink from a source inside a Judd-like pedestal creating a minimalist eternal return. In The Yellow Looking Glass a reflective foil blanket is subtly disturbed by small exhaust fans that stream air emanating from the sculpture's head and back. As such, this meditative figure seems to vibrate and breathe, offering an image of tranquility, despite the provocation and insinuation of the work's bright yellow skin and cautionary tape on the bench. In conjunction with the velvet paintings, the works symbolize a process of coming to terms with the past in order to move forward. The dynamics of time affirm the anticipatory nature of the

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present itself, the dawning of a new era presided over by a new woman, or future eve.

**ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Ellen Jong is a Los Angeles-based artist who studied at the Parsons School of Design and The School of Visual Arts. She is the author of the photographic monograph *Pees On Earth* (Miss Rosen Edition/ powerHouse Books 2006) and *Getting to Know My Husband's Cock*, which was featured in aperture Books' *Self Publish Be Happy* by Bruno Ceschel, and in the forthcoming *Radical Intimacy in Contemporary Art: Abjection, Revolt and Objecthood* by Keren Moscovitch (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023.) The latter was the subject of Jong's exhibition at Allegra LaViola Gallery (now Sargeant's Daughters) in 2011. Jong's work has been reviewed in *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *Wallpaper* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

**ABOUT THE GALLERY**

Praz-Delavallade has a longstanding relationship with both American and European artists whose practices span a variety of mediums. The gallery was founded 1995 in Paris with an inaugural exhibition that included work by Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, Richard Petitbon, Jim Shaw, and Benjamin Weisman. In 1997, Praz-Delavallade was part of a burgeoning art scene in the 13th arrondissement on the eastern side of Paris, along with Air de Paris, Almine Rech, *Art: Concept*, Jennifer Flay, and Emmanuel Perrotin. Due to its strong connections with artists in Los Angeles, the gallery was known for bringing an international program to the growing Paris art scene, by featuring artists such as Sam Durant, Jim Isermann, John Miller, Analia Saban, and Marnie Weber, among others. In 2010, the Paris gallery moved to its current location at 5 rue des Haudriettes in the Marais and has continued its support of Los Angeles based artists by exhibiting a new generation that includes Matthew Brandt, Heather Cook, Nathan Mabry, Joe Reihsen, Ry Rocklen, Amanda Ross-Ho, and Brian Wills alongside European artists such as Soufiane Ababri, Philippe Decrauzat, Pierre Ardouvin, Thomas Fougérol, and Fabien Mérelle. In the fall of 2016, Praz-Delavallade opened a new outpost at 6150 Wilshire Boulevard—on the renowned thoroughfare in Miracle Mile right across from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art—in an effort to create a bridge between the two cities it calls home.