

Angelica Yudasto
with a purl
Tutu Gallery
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I was considering permanently relocating to a countryside communal castle for creatives — Of course, all this was conceived in a dream while napping in my room one Saturday afternoon. There were big colorful play structures outside, a co-farming space, and pianos for rent by the hour, all for very affordable costs. A band member from college and some city art friends were already moved in, and they wanted me to join. For some reason, the weather was always gloomy there, and the grounds around the castle were muddy during my stay. One day, I heard a knock on the front door. When I opened it, the 60-something-year-old photographer who assaulted me when I was 20 walked in with his friends. He was holding a gigantic camera, pressing the shutter at me non-stop. He said he was making an “expressive experimental series” to document the growth of all the women he had harmed. I took his camera, smashed it, and proceeded to chase him and his friends out of the door, into the rain, all while exclaiming to him that I am older now and no longer scared of him and his lawyers, if he wants to fight me, I am ready to go to death with him.

It was a much more empowering dream than those I used to have, where I would only freeze in terror. But as soon as I woke up that afternoon, I started crying in my bed for two reasons. One; it doesn’t matter how well I could fight off the perpetrator in my sleep nowadays, the fact that I am still dreaming about them means they continue to linger in my subconsciousness during waking hours. Two, I needed to have a studio visit with Angelica in an hour and I just couldn’t bring myself to continue my day after that. Once I arrive, Angelica and I would play with her dog Momo, have nice beverages, look at the things she would want to show, and talk about how she made them, and, if we talk a little bit more about the work she used to make, about why she began to make art, we would find ourselves together, back at something that is eerily similar to what still brings me those dreams. I felt like whether my mind chooses to go backward or forward in time, whether I take my body anywhere in this world, I would just be

inevitably experiencing the echoes from when it first happened a long time ago, from myself or others. I had no choice.

I am able to find some peace and a sense of normalcy in between those resounding moments now. Trivial things like vacuuming the floor, exploring the backyard with Tutu, and inviting friends over allow me to identify as a person who is just living mundane days. I believe that Angelica is also reaching these truces in her life, as she maneuvers that big printing machine gifted by a colleague, arranges the composition of her new work, and slows down at the studio to work with the intrinsic direction from how the glass wants to expand itself in space. And only after we experienced some all-consuming annihilations, we would come to appreciate the humble and quiet innate, and how important it is to extend that sense of basic being into the world.

I often find the current operations of visual art paradoxical. Things like press releases, open call applications, and grant writings require a group of people who actively chose to exist in the sphere of describing their essence with lines, shapes, and colors to go into redundant verbal cues in order to prove their legitimacy. And we are swamped by so many creations that the metrics we use for art become press mentions, follower counts, and CV items. But if we instead look inwards for visceral reactions, works with a strong optical impact, an easy reference to art history, or with a shouting backstory tend to stand out easier amid the crazy shuffling of representations. As a result, I find it hard to do Angelica justice in a situation like this. Her wish to not expose herself by repeating vivid details both in words and visuals would, at first glance, mean that we have to compress everything into some cliché vocabulary like “trauma” and “memory”, and the analysis of the work itself would also be reduced to words like “physicality” and “abstraction”. If we choose to do it this way, it would mean that not only those who haven’t been immersed in the art world rhetoric will completely disconnect from her meaning, but also those who are familiar with it deeming her aesthetics unassuming.

And so I want to give a tiny piece of myself and my possibly erroneous interpretation of the person and her work here in order for Angelica to exist as the woman and artist she is today. When you look at these entities that she created, just know that we don’t expect you to grasp what we no longer wish to dwell in, but understand that our every movement, our renewed sense of time, and each of our careful thoughts exist proudly on their own as an extension of that outside force.

April Yueyi Zhu

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