

# ARTFORUM



Catalina Ouyang, *The Passion*, 2021, steel, marble stolen from the Skull and Bones Society, horse radius, oil paint, and *The Passion According to G.H.* (Clarice Lispector, 1988, University of Minnesota Press), 33 1/2 x 10 x 18".

## CRITICS' PICKS

NEW YORK

### Catalina Ouyang

LYLES & KING

21 Catherine Street

September 1–October 16, 2021

Catalina Ouyang's new work in "White Male Ally" interrogates the psychosomatic links between trauma, memory, and the body. The installation *ego death*, 2021, built around a replica of a trench toilet, is the show's eerie centerpiece. This type of communal latrine was popular in China during the 1980s and '90s, disposing of waste via one long, open channel of water that passed between doorless stalls. Ouyang's structure is psychically charged and raises myriad questions about privacy,

"dirtiness," and shame. In the piece's individual stalls are small sculptural tableaux, such as *The Passion*, 2021, which is made up of a steelrod and a red-stained lump of marble—swiped by Ouyang from the Skull and Bones society at Yale University, where they were once a student—carved to resemble human ears. This ominous, weapon-like instrument impales a horse bone and a copy of Clarice Lispector's 1964 novel *The Passion According to G.H.*, which is open to a meditation on hell.

*Devotion*, 2016–21, is the most vulnerable and, by extension, darkest work in the exhibition. A doll bearing a resemblance to the artist sits at a children's school desk, stabbing an obscured document—perhaps a photograph?—with a knife. Facing the desk are seven framed drawings of a young, bearded, and pale-skinned man, which are based on selfies taken by Ouyang's former lover—pictures the artist received after they were raped by him.

*Ego death* recalls Louise Bourgeois's 1991–2008 series of "Cells" sculptures, and it's fair to say that Bourgeois, who once claimed that "memory itself is a form of architecture," haunts Ouyang's work. The influence, however, produces something more generative than derivative. Both artists ground their practice in a desire for catharsis through art and wrestle with the violence of heteropatriarchy through a psychoanalytic approach. Yet Ouyang also explores the ongoing horrors of colonial dominance—something that still painfully metastasizes across the relational spectrum, from the intimate to the collective.

— Ana Tuazon