

## *But I Am Pretty* Wei Zhang 喂张

I stood on an iron bridge. I was in a panic. I didn't know who had locked me in this airtight iron box. I could hear the loud noises coming from the bottom of the bridge. I could feel my body temperature getting higher and higher.

I looked up at the place. Bizarre. There were so many bridges. I counted 21,196 iron bridges in total, no more and no less.

I walked to the right side of the bridge and looked down. I was shocked by the sight in front of me. A huge log was burning. The fire was blazing. The smoke was so thick and pungent that I couldn't open my eyes.

I could feel I was dehydrating quickly. I could feel my body getting hard and stiff. Yet, strangely, I was not dying.

I guess: it may be because my body is violet; it may be because my body contains quartz, clay, mica and hematite. It may be because my nails are embedded with rubies given to me by my mother.

I am not special, but I am pretty.

This personal thought angered the Flame of Jealousy. Before I could run away, the Flame of Jealousy engulfed me in a mighty blaze. But to my surprise, I couldn't feel the warmth anymore. I felt like floating in a pound of salt water, having just spent 21,196 years sailing 21,196 miles.

I tried hard to open my eyes. I found that there is another world inside the Flame of Jealousy. There were so many people in that world, and they were all surprised by my arrival. Each of them lusted for my violet body, quartz, clay, mica, hematite and rubies on my nails.

I am not special, but I am pretty.

So, I lay under a tower. I invited these people to

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step on my violet body. I was not abusing myself. I planned to ask them to appreciate the rubies my mother gave me. But they wanted to steal my rubies to embellish their crowns. They swarmed my body. Although they might have 21,196 hands, they couldn't snap my rubies.

So, I lay in their sandwiches. I planned to invite them to eat my violet body. I was not abusing myself. I wanted to see how many teeth they would knock out by my rigid body. I planned to invite them to taste my violet body. I counted a total of 21,196 teeth that had been knocked out. No more and no less.

They got angry. They denounced my behaviour to the Flame of Jealousy.

They yelled and screamed; they were furious. They claimed that my violet body was poisoned. They claimed that my quartz, clay, mica and hematite were not pretty. They argued that the rubies my mother gave me were the devil's earwax.

I got angry too. How could they say that about my body? I struggled to justify myself to the Flame of Jealousy, but it was only willing to trust its citizens.

The Flame of Jealousy had to expel me.

I stood on that iron bridge again. The high temperature made me thirsty. The smoke made me snotty. I didn't want to admit my failure. I had to break my body into 21,196 pieces and place them on each of the 21,196 iron bridges. I wanted to reflect the light of the Flame of Jealousy with my violet body, quartz, clay, mica and hematite, the rubies my mother gave me.

I would like to be the starry sky above those people.

Commissioned by Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡 in accompaniment to the following exhibition:

Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡

*neither the West nor the East can be a determinate location*

3 December 2022 – 26 February 2023

## About the Artist

Wei Zhang (b. 1991, China) has migrated to Glasgow, Scotland, for seven years. Zhang is a filmmaker and visual artist working between moving images, performance, and installation. After graduating with a Master of Fine Art from the Glasgow School of Art and an MSc in Filmmaking and Media Arts from the University of Glasgow, Zhang has solid academic and practical abilities. Fascinated with collage, Zhang blends mixed-media materials or footage to create a surreal space where queer, body, family, and trauma intertwine.

## About Satellites Programme

Satellites Programme is Collective's development programme for emergent practitioners based in Scotland. Satellites aims to support diverse practitioners to produce a new commission and includes a critical development programme of retreats, workshops, studio visits and group discussions, public exhibitions, events and publishing. Practitioners are selected from an open submission by a new panel each year. The 2021/22 participants are Stephanie Black-Daniels, Mina Heydari-Waite, Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡, Joey Simons and Camara Taylor.