

Allie Biswas, "The Great Camouflage' Rockbund Art Museum," *ArtForum*, February 2026

## REVIEWS

memories of Singh's solo exhibition of that name in 2010. She had stumbled upon the sentence "The skin remember" in one of John Updike's short stories. In the show, she underscored that the cityscape, much like skin, often bears marks of events that have long since faded from memory. The city, beset by manifold ills, appears to have tragically prefigured Singh's own bodily condition toward the end of her life.

Several works on display, *Pandemic*, 2020; *Lockdown*, 2020; and *Different Strains*, 2020, pointed to Singh's preoccupation with the covid pandemic. She must have been acutely aware of her heightened vulnerability to infection given her weakened immune system. In *Virus*, 2020, a dark globular mass unfurling its tentacles obviously points to the virus but could equally be an analogy for her cancerous body cells going on a rampage. Yet her work always retained a hard-won sense of humor. She pokes fun at herself and her body in *Bottom Hose*, 2016, and *Tubby chubby tummy*, 2020. *Untitled (Self Portrait)*, 2020, depicts Singh smiling, despite a crisscross of lines threatening to disfigure and obliterate her. It is a poignant reminder that her indomitable spirit is with us always.

—Meera Menezes

## SHANGHAI

### "The Great Camouflage" Rockbund Art Museum

Only in the penultimate work in "The Great Camouflage" did one encounter what the accompanying wall text defined as the backbone of the exhibition. Offering a historical framework of revolution starting in the 1920s and ending in the '80s, *Army of Negation*, 2025, is the work of Cassandra Press, the publishing and educational platform of artist Kandis Williams. Taking the form of a timeline printed onto the wall, it highlights the biographical milestones of five feminist intellectuals known (or, rather, largely *not* known) for their radical activism relating to Black liberation: Grace Lee Boggs, Suzanne Césaire, Shirley Graham Du Bois, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Eslanda Robeson, all married to widely celebrated men. These landmarks correspond with others that align the political motivations of Black American leaders with those of Chinese revolutionaries—a position exemplified by a photograph of W. E. B. Du Bois meeting Mao Zedong during a visit to China in 1959. Correlating with the impetus of this work is Hao Liang's serene ink painting *The Epitaph of Phaethon*, 2025, which

laments the decline of progressive ideals (the words RATIONALISM and HUMANITARIANISM circle a fractured sun) and opens the show. Such a beginning and end suggest that revolutionary legacies are an enduring force, even if revolutions themselves may not endure.

But that depends on how revolution is defined. The overriding theme of this exhibition, curated by X Zhu-Nowell and Kandis Williams, is Black solidarity, persuasively conveyed through a metaphor Césaire conceived in 1945 to describe the deception that allowed colonial systems to persist within Martinique, her motherland. For her, the "great camouflage" was the appearance of freedom aided by her island's exterior beauty, which concealed a devastated reality. As a counteracting device, she turned to art, specifically Surrealism, which fueled her "revolutionary feeling for life" and sustained an "army of negations." None of the works in the exhibition specifically relate to Martinique, yet many of them draw on this spirit of rebuttal.

The most memorable works here show how art can uncover what history has hidden and how a revolutionary impulse can mean a refusal of life as it exists. In *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*, 2019, Tuan Andrew Nguyen gives a voice to the Vietnamese community in Senegal, the result of hundreds of Vietnamese women and their children migrating to West Africa in the '50s. They were met with suspicion and malice by the locals, including their extended families, who looked down on these "foreigners." Their Senegalese husbands had been deployed by the French Army to combat the Vietnamese uprising against French rule. Nguyen's film considers a complex aftermath. "I learn that, in fact, my biological mother was Vietnamese," explains one of the interviewees, whose father had told him otherwise in an attempt to disassociate himself and his child from the hostility of others. Yet while suffering predominates in the stories Nguyen has unearthed, there is also defiance.

Euridice Zaituna Kala's two-channel video installation *Rendition—a moment in between 33 years of protest*, 2023, accentuates public protest as an act of resistance. The Madgermanes are at its center: employees from Mozambique who were contracted as guest workers by their government to the German Democratic Republic in the '70s. It was an agreement that resulted in the GDR making payments directly to Mozambique for its laborers. Instead of sharing these wages with the workers themselves, the money was used by the country's government to balance its debt to East Germany. The Madgermanes have been holding weekly protests in a prominent park in Maputo, Mozambique, for decades in response to this misconduct. Kala started to film them in 2023. In the opening scene, we see members setting up in the park. They stand in a circle, holding hands. Their repetitive gesture of gathering together without fail in the name of justice may not have yet led to a rupture or conciliation, but their steadfast resilience has nonetheless made a mark, both on themselves and in the city at large. The exhibition relies on this dynamic, exploring the possibilities of action even when failure is likely or even inevitable—underlining the power of existence itself, of remaining visible despite the odds.

—Allie Biswas

## PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

### Khvay Samnang SNA Arts Management

Over the past twenty years, Khvay Samnang has often activated his own body as a performative medium through which to raise difficult questions about post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia. After his participation in Documenta 14 in 2017, Khvay's conceptual gaze has shifted from a starkly political stance to a subtler mythographic approach, as he

View of "The Great Camouflage," 2025–26. From left: Cassandra Press, *Army of Negation*, 2025; Cauleen Smith, *Homegirls*, 2024; Christine Tien Wang, *That Hollywood grind*, 2015; Christine Tien Wang, *Your Look*, 2015.

