



No Footsteps Return

Curated by Chiarina Chen

Itziar Barrio
Enrique Garcia
Kosuke Kawahara
Phoebus Osborne
Tiina Pyykkinen
Frank Wang Yefeng
Connor Sen Warnick
Echo Youyi Yan

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They say horror is a form of fear. True, but it is also more than fear. Fear tells us to run. Horror makes us pause. It compels us to stare, to question what we thought we knew. If fear is immediate and alarming, horror can be slow, existential.

We are no strangers to alarms today. Our minds are saturated with algorithmic feeds, breaking news, and relentless social churn. Horrors unfold daily like spectacles, but something still feels off. The images are too sharp. The timelines too fast. Monsters appear only as distant others — grotesque, consumable, quickly replaced. *No Footsteps Return* begins by shifting this tempo, turning away from immediate spectacle and toward a quiet, immanent tone. It explores the aesthetics of what I call 'slow horror.'

There is no shock. No alien intrusion. Varied in mediums, works in the show disorient the viewers and invite them into a space where perception gets loose, where certainty slips. Each piece holds a small ecology of change: forms warping under pressure, bodies distorting, consciousness fading. Together they reveal a kind of horror that seeps gradually, through the textures of lived material experience. One that does not arrive from the outside, not elsewhere, but everywhere and here.

At its core, the show is driven by a desire to explore how horror might reside in the hidden and intimate shifts that shape our world, our bodies, and our sense of self. We ask: how do we stay with what is unresolved? How do we live with states that are in ongoing metamorphosis? Could slow horror be a new aesthetic form that guides our senses to things in the peripheral, the imperceptible? Could it be a method of survival in a world filled with division and spectacle?

That said, you won't hear screams when no footsteps return, only the quiet awe of realizing we are always in transition, already other to ourselves.

In the works of Tiina Pyykkinen and Frank Wang Yefeng, the stability of perception and subjectivity is undone. In Tiina Pyykkinen's *Floating House* and *Sweet Dreams* series, her layered, reflective surfaces make it impossible to fully grasp the unified self or the image. Pigments intra-act with the steel, pulling the viewer into a field of fleeting flashbacks and mirrored fragments. In this perceptual slippage, a sense of eerie emerges as she disturbs that visual certainty. The work echoes how memory, time, and subjectivity blur, and how that blurring can bring a deep unease, where the self, no longer stable, begins to dissolve.

The similar disorientation emerges in Frank Wang Yefeng's *Cosmic Tree*, where a walk in the uninhabited desert turned into a lost, near-death existential detour. The desert, often romanticized as vast and sublime, is rendered here as something entirely immanent. In this speculative unfolding, the floating 'world tree' resists rooting or any fixed symbolism. Rather than depicting the landscape from afar, Wang moves through it, morphing with it, becoming part of a nomadic terrain where perception falters and identity unmoors. As with Pyykkinen's mirrored surfaces, Wang's work brews slow horror through the steady erosion of coherence. It is not a search for revelation but a witnessing of disintegration, of being caught in the in-between, transitioning into forms that refuse grounding.

In Connor Sen Warnick's *Fainting*, a personal episode of collapse becomes a microcosm of becoming-other. The portrayal of a momentary loss of bodily control opens a portal to the psychic unknown and the image-as-affect. The horror, then, arises not from outside, but from the instability of one's own flesh and consciousness, from encountering the alterity within. Shot on Hi8 tape, a now-obsolete magnetic format that records analog video onto a cassette, the film carries a material vulnerability of its own. The tape doesn't just capture the image. It intervenes, it drags, and its grain, noise, and temporal bleed become part of the work's

sensorial language. In the film, there are hardly any fixed configurations, only a hypnotic, spiraling immersion in sensation. Time folds, vision flickers, screens get haptic, and the body becomes this strange, glitched vessel extracted from the sanity of the everyday.

Where Warnick's work maps an internal spiral, Enrique Garcia's turns toward the layered debris of colonial pain, where the ground itself bears witness. In *Zócalo*, tree roots overtake Hernán Cortés's house; Catholic re-plannings are laid atop pre-existing Indigenous grounds. Found pipes, earrings, worn metals, small anonymous artifacts are soaked in daily life and decay. Using photography and bricolage, he stitches together historical violence, political erasure, and material testimony. In his sedimented, looping, asynchronous time, the piece slows you down by the force of absence. What's shown here are both witnesses and open wounds, ones that are neither healed nor actively bleeding, but insist on being felt, even when the story is forgotten.

In continuation with perceptual dissolution, the works of Itziar Barrio and Phoebus Osborne bring us closer to the embodied, showing that what breaks down first is also what begins to mutate. In a world filled with all-too-smart devices and invisible networks, Itziar Barrio's "not-so-smart" looking sculptures *Dirty Feet*, *Was on Low*, and *Artifact* series dwell on monstrosity through the lens of the crippled and the outcast. Made of spandex taken directly from the artist's own clothing, concrete, tubing, pumps, and data sourced from her collaborator Laura Forlano's insulin pump and sensor system, the robotic sculpture becomes a small "monster" carrying bodily residue and traces of daily life. It inflates and deflates like breath, urging us to pay attention to the nearly imperceptible transformations happening within and around us.

Unlike the smooth, sexy, highly functional cyborgs in sci-fi films that serve the spectacle, Barrio leans into the aesthetics of *CripTech*, where the pieces appear heavy, obtuse, and hard to read. It resists conventional ideals of beauty and perfection, and it takes disability as a starting point to rethink embodiment, agency, and relationality.

This resonance carries into Phoebus Osborne's *Ursula*. What began as an electroplating experiment turned into an accidental shrine to contamination, resistance, and intimate failure. In parallel with Barrio's sculptures, *Ursula*, the hybrid sea witch from *little mermaid*, resists the sleekness of technological wonder. The crystallized copper sulfate clings to its surface like an organism that has just survived. Around it, a manipulated soundtrack from *Le Songe des Chevaux Sauvages* seeps through the space, turning a violent tableau into a mournful homage to lives that endure. Like electroplating itself, *Ursula* performs a kind of material seduction that invites desire while simultaneously eroding the self's coherence. It holds space for the unwanted, the queer, the misfit material. Even though the tank is no longer functional, its coppered skin still softly echoes of *Ursula*'s tentacular crossings, where body, identity, and agency continually transgress the porous threshold.

If Barrio and Osborne's works trace monstrosity on a molecular and abstract register, where bodies glitch and mutate, Echo Yan and Kosuke Kawahara bring us back to the domestic interior. Created for this exhibition, Echo Yan's sculptural *Screen* shifts the lens to the ordinary home. Composed of pine, resin, lace tablecloths, and bits of household debris, this four-panel divider presents not a boundary but a zone of slow absorption. Across each panel, bodies blur into objects: limbs contort into chair legs, furniture sprouts skin, tools begin to breathe. The household swallows the figure until it's no longer clear where one ends and the other begins. Her materials soften, bend, and cling, calmly staging the horror of the mundane. Here, metamorphosis is not explosive but held, erotically contained, folding struggle, ambiguity, and power into its own shape.

Following Echo Yan's quiet architectures of containment, Kosuke Kawahara's works treat deformity as a locus of creation. Drawn from daily life, deep-sea organisms, and disfigured body parts, his work is already a breeding ground for "becoming monster". Evolving through improvisation, Kawahara embraces the accidental and the unknown, allowing them to take shape over time. In *Sleep Paralysis*, a tiled surface starts to grow legs, awkward and animal-like, as if caught mid-transmutation. There is no clear boundary between body and ground; everything leaks into everything else. In *Underwater*, the canvas is indistinguishable from skin, and the cavity at the center becomes a luscious screen that absorbs the viewer, much like Yan's container. Hovering between erosion and regeneration, the result is always uneasy yet oddly still. You are not sure what is happening, but you can feel it has already begun.

Across the show, what binds these works together is a willingness to sit with the uncertain, to stay with the fragile, the partial, the unfinished. They show us that slow horror is not a one-off event but a rhythm. It moves through rust, silence, glitch, through breath and absence. In this space, monstrosity is no freak, it marks a condition, a threshold, or what Rosi Braidotti calls a "zone of becoming", where new subjectivities stretch and emerge at the edges of form.

While new materialist thinkers often highlight the joyful side of becoming, of breaking traditional rules and boundaries, *No Footsteps Return* hopes to remind us to remain attuned to the disconcerting side: the sense of loss, opacity, or dread as the old self or world slips away. It insists that we not romanticize monstrosity to the point of forgetting the real affective weight that comes with each transformation, with what we turn to every single time.

Text by Chiarina Chen

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About Chiarina Chen

Chiarina Chen is a New York-based independent curator and writer. From a criminal psychology and art history background, her curatorial practice explores the intersections of nomadic subjectivities, critical posthuman theory, and forensic aesthetics. Her notable curatorial projects include *The Tale of Errantry* at Chain Theater, New York, *Poetics of Inquiry: How to Stay with Trouble*, at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, *Collecting Anxiety*, presented in multiple venues worldwide, *Is This Intimacy?* at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna, *Magic Back to Town* at Cyborg Foundation, and the Posthuman Research Center, New York University, New York, and *The Wasteland of the Future*, at the Shanghai Himalayas Museum and Art and Philosophy Center, Fudan University, Shanghai. Chen is the presenter at the 25th World Congress of Philosophy in Rome and founding member of the New York Posthuman Research Group. She has served as a visiting critic and juror at various institutions around New York City such as ISCP, ASMP, School of Art at Pratt, among others.

About the Artists

Itziar Barrio (b. 1976) is an interdisciplinary artist producing long-term research-based projects that involve different agents and collaborators. By rewriting the dominant narratives through which our societies, identities, and realities are constructed, her work opens up new futures. Her survey exhibition was curated by Johanna Burton in 2018, and her monograph was published by SKIRA in 2023. Barrio has recently been awarded a 2024 Guggenheim Fellowship and 2024 NYFA/NYSCA Artist Fellow. Barrio's work has been presented internationally at the 14th Shanghai Biennale, Salt Istanbul, Onassis ONX, e-flux, MACRO, MACBA, Museo del Banco de la República, tranzit Romania, and Havana Biennial. She has been a New Museum's NEW INC (Art and technology incubator) member since 2020 and has received awards from Brooklyn Arts Council, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Spanish Academy in Rome among others. Barrio's work has been written about in the Brooklyn Rail, BOMB, ARTFORUM, Art in America, The New York Times, ART PAPERS and other publications. She has lectured internationally and most recently at Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program and Harvard University. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts and Sarah Lawrence College in NY.

Enrique Garcia (b. 1995) is an artist working across photography, sculpture, and installation. His work centers on the paradoxical relationship between creation and destruction while touching on history, colonialism, and the consequences of technology. His photo compositions combine scavenged and appropriated materials to create networks of symbols, recontextualized through scale and juxtaposition. Through its varied references—from ancient ruins, celestial objects, to modern technology—his work elicits the sublime while provoking reflection on the meaning of human progress. Garcia studied Sculpture at Pratt Institute. His work has been exhibited at SculptureCenter (NY), N.A.S.A.L. (MX), and Material Art Fair (MX). He lives and works between New York and Mexico City.

Kosuke Kawahara (b. 1980) was born in Kyoto, Japan, and moved to New York in 2011. Kawahara currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. His intuitive/impromptu gesture generates site-relevant imagery through its multi-layered structure. Kawahara's works speak to notions of growth, decay, modes of communication and perception, spiritualism, interdependent relationships, and human behavior in ever-shifting environmental conditions. The whole process of creating a work from the start to its end is a process of the artist constantly exploring and (re)constructing the alternative space around darkness. Kawahara earned his BFA in Design from Okayama Prefectural University, and graduated with an MFA in Painting and Drawing from Pratt Institute in 2020. He has exhibited at RAINRAIN, Brian Leo Projects, Smack Mellon, Kunstraum LLC, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, Trestle Gallery, Paradise Palace, Susan Eley Fine Art, and Super Dutchess Gallery. He has been awarded the Café Royal Cultural Foundation 2022 Visual Grant, the 2021 City Artist Corps Grants, and First Prize in Works on Paper at The Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts & Sciences in 2021. He completed an artist residency at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Governors Island Residency Initiative and has been a member artist at the EFA Studio Program since 2021.

Phoebus Osborne (b. 1984) is a Queens-based interdisciplinary artist and thinker assembling matrices of video, sculpture, performance, drawing, writing, and sound. Osborne has exhibited across the US and Europe, including commissioned works at Transmediale Berlin, La Caldera Barcelona, SFMoMA, Oakland Museum of California, and Lenfest Center for the Arts in New York. His work has been presented at The Poetry Project, e-flux Bar Laika, Ortega y Gasset, Southern Exposure, and The Boiler | Pierogi Gallery, as well as in solo exhibitions at A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn and City Limits Gallery in Oakland. Osborne has been awarded the 2017 ImpulstanZ DanceWEB Fellowship, 2018 Hercules Art Studio Residency, 2021 A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship, and 2024 Artist Research Fellowship at the Academy of Theater and Dance in Amsterdam. Since 2023, a selection of his video works are streamed by Lucid, an online performance art platform. Osborne holds an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University (2018) and an MA in Choreography from DAS Graduate School in Amsterdam (2021). He is an adjunct faculty at Parsons, The New School and Columbia University in New York City and at DAS Graduate School and the Academy of Theater and Dance in Amsterdam.

Tiina Pyykkinen (b. 1983) is a Helsinki-based visual artist who works primarily with paintings and installations. Her practice is focused on the themes of communication, individual and collective memory, and time and its disorder as a bodily experience. Pyykkinen uses various combinations of material and light creating multi-layered works that engage in a dialogue with space, movement, and the viewer's perceptual experience. Her works are temporal and spatial, in which visibility is in constant flux. Pyykkinen graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2014. She was named as the Young Artist of the Year in 2017, an honor organized by the Tampere Art Museum and the City of Tampere. Her works have been exhibited in various exhibitions, for instance at Z33 House for Contemporary Art (2025), the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma (2024), Tampere Art Museum (2024), Serlachius Museums (2024-2023), among others museums and galleries in Finland and across Europe. Her works are part of the collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Maastricht University Collection in Netherlands, Saastamoinen Art Foundation (EMMA, Espoo Museum of Modern Art), Serlachius Museums, Tampere Art Museum and Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation (Rovaniemi Art Museum), among others. Her latest site-specific work was completed in 2021 to the main façade of Nova, Jyväskylä Central Hospital. At the moment Pyykkinen works with two different projects: her painting series called *A Room That Lost Its Shapes* and a research-based collaboration with a Laboratorium, the biolab of KASK & Conservatorium in Ghent, Belgium. The collaboration with the biolab focuses on development and production of ecological structural colors.

Frank Wang Yefeng (b. 1984) is a transdisciplinary artist, researcher, and digital nomad situated in between New York City and Shanghai. Yefeng earned his MFA in Art and Technology Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2011. His projects have been featured in exhibitions internationally, including the BRIC Biennial, the OCAT Biennial, the Bangkok Art Biennale, Art Basel Hong Kong Encounters (HK, CN), Art Basel Hong Kong Discoveries (HK, CN), The Armory show (NY), CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art (NY, USA), Gasworks London (LDN, UK), Pylon Lab (DRS, DE), Hyundai Motorstudio Beijing (BJ, CN), Shanghai K11 Museum (SH, CN), etc. Yefeng has also been awarded solo exhibitions, residencies, and fellowships at the “Annealing” program of the Shanghai Museum of Glass (SH, CN), K11 Art Foundation (WH, CN), Smack Mellon (NY, USA), International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) (NY, USA), Tsenpo Museum (Nangqian, CN), New York Art Residency & Studios (NARS) Foundation (NY, USA), Pratt Institute (NY, USA), Asia Art Archive in America (NY, USA), MacDowell (NH, USA), and Vermont Studio Center (VT, USA), among others.

Connor Sen Warnick (b. 1996) is a filmmaker, artist and writer based in NYC. Connor received his B.A. in both Film Studies and Fine Art from Columbia University in 2018. He was unanimously selected as the 2022-23 A4 Van Lier Fellow in Visual Art. Previous work has been featured in the New York Times and exhibited / screened at the Guggenheim Museum, Anthology Film Archives, Metrograph, and CAAMFest, among other venues.

Echo Youyi Yan (b. 2000) is a sculptor based in Brooklyn, NY. She holds a BFA in Studio Art at New York University (2024) with a minor in Philosophy. Her practice synthesizes evolutionary biology and eroticism to explore transgressive forces driving physical metamorphosis during the domestication process. She has recently exhibited her works in a three-person exhibition at Eli Klein Gallery (New York, 2024); and has shown at Zepster Gallery (Brooklyn, 2024); DeCA Foundation (New York, 2024); Light Up Globals Project Space, (New York, 2024); Accent Sisters, (Jersey City, 2024); theBLANC Art Space, (New York, 2023); Sotheby’s Institute of Art, (New York, 2023); LATITUDE Gallery, (New York, 2023); Chambers Fine Art (New York, 2023); Stilllife Art Fair (New York, 2023); Commons Gallery at New York University (New York, 2023); 80WSE Gallery (New York, 2023); Rosenberg Gallery at New York University, (New York, 2023). Yan has received reviews and interviews from Impulse Magazine and White Hot Magazine, and has given talks at New York University’s BFA Alumni panel.