

Alice Wu

These sculptures combine paper, wood, and textile remnants from my former fashion studio practice. The sewn forms are stuffed, slathered with textured acrylics, and assembled into variable compositions scaled for intimacy. Everything is lightweight and modular, in response to a lifetime of frequent moves. In 2020 I pared down my visual vocabulary to simple, monochromatic forms. I experienced such sensory and informational overload that streamlining helped create order out of confusion and uncertainty.

The surfaces are built up gradually with many layers of acrylic paint and molding paste to either obscure or emphasize seams and edges. It's a slow, laborious process that marks my time reflecting on feelings and experiences in 2020. The pandemic, racial violence, and their media coverage extended my private mourning brought on by a personal tragedy mid-2019: just as my solo-heaviness began to lift, my heart sank again with the crushing weight of global, collective grief. Still, in 2020 I had breakthroughs and a real feeling of growth and human connection. While making these sculptures, I listened, I watched. I studied death, abolition and transformative justice – new subjects for me. I discovered reserve strength I didn't know I had, received so much kindness from friends. I found ways to help and to feel a sense of belonging and contribution, even though I could not be on the frontlines, even though I could not be out there marching.

In *Thinking Out Loud* (catastrophe) the catastrophe is cut from printmaking tests, curled and bound with silver twist ties saved from Taiwanese pastries from my last familial visit, then balanced on the other forms, one sewn and the other a sawhorse-like shape cut from old photo displays.

I use a similar surface treatment in *(un)moored*; I'm reflecting on feeling adrift from family, friends, and community. I imagine the letters have enough buoyancy they might float in water. The letters can be stacked, leaning against one another, or against a wall. I'm playing with words; this is also the year that "both/and thinking" has finally made sense to me.

*Eternal Flame*, like the other sculptures, is also made entirely of things that might likely just be thrown in the trash. The elements include a sewn form made with fabric scraps and also stuffed with fabric scraps, a dotted fabric swatch, cut paper shapes, a plastic raffia tie, and a wood base on which someone marked *ON DECEMBER 4th I SOLD CHRISTMAS TREES FOR DELANCEY 2015*.

I'm thinking of conversations I'd like to have, how to describe these sculptures to someone who can't see them. What would it be like to describe to you how I made this thing, so you could go forth with confidence to make your own version? What would yours look like? If I asked you to use materials meaningful to you, what stories could you tell me about your choices? Where would your trail of breadcrumbs lead me?