



In her exhibition, *0-Viewpoint*, Stella Zhang explores and displays the complexity of her private, feminine self. As part of the Chinese Culture Center's Xian Rui Solo Art Exhibition series, established in 2008 to highlight Chinese artists in America with exceptional artistic talent, Zhang's *0-Viewpoint* is the third exhibition in the series. Comprised of six major works, *0-Viewpoint* represents Zhang's inner perspective and her goal to achieve a balance between life and art. While the works reflect an interpretation of Zhang's emotions, they also embody her personal conflicts and struggles. This intimate exploration of the self evokes her feelings of instability in constructing identity within a gendered space. Using tension to produce unsettled feelings in the framework of female sexuality, Zhang leaves it up to the viewer to interpret her outward reflections perceived through their own experiences.

Zhang's expression of her inner self in *0-Viewpoint* reflects this controversial space of female sexuality—a place where identity and desire are often challenged and threatened by outside influences. Norms that are established within communities define proper place, which creates categories of exclusion

(often associated with stereotypes) for those who do not meet societal expectations. Instead of maintaining a place within the prescribed limits, representative of a space of acceptance, Zhang uses her work to develop a relationship with these boundaries, often surpassing them and provoking controversy to her own sense of self. While the works in *0-Viewpoint* further explore these contradictions of proper place and challenge cultural expectations, they also function to distinguish a sense of clarity. By creating a disruptive space for the viewer, Zhang is able to define her own position within this continuous conversation of sexuality and depict an identity of her private self.

Even though this space of sexuality is constantly disputed and questioned, Zhang has identified a medium that allows her to accurately interpret and reflect her "true self." Exhibiting her personal expression through these evolving and protruding masses, Zhang reinforces concepts of tension and struggle through a sculptural process of deliberate molding and forming. These works present a sense of delicacy and fragility within their designated spaces. Zhang stretches, twists, and tangles white fabric to envelop the frame of each

work. Although the fabric creates spaces of softness through its smooth, plush, and inviting appearance, it also provides surfaces of tension. Taut, bunched, torn, pierced, and tied, Zhang manipulates the material, evoking a sense of struggle within the work itself.

The works in *0-Viewpoint* engage the viewer—inviting them into the space to reflect on their own experiences and inner emotions. Each work is comprised of multiple components that compliment one another and their boundaries within the designated space. The connectedness of the objects exhibits a particular focus and precision in the construction of the pieces. While the figures present a close relationship—emerging from one another—there is a distinct individuality in these works. Overall, *0-Viewpoint* defines Zhang's exploration of an inner self within the realm of contradictions and tension. Constructing an identity from a space of insight and intuition, Zhang visually reveals her own place within the realm of female sexuality.

Emily Macenko

Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, Emily Macenko moved to the Bay Area in Fall 2009 to pursue her master's degree in Visual and Critical Studies at the California College of the Arts. As a writer and an art historian, Emily has worked with non-profit institutions and is interested in a career in arts management. Emily received her bachelor's in Art History with a concentration in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies from St. Mary's College of Maryland.