

Candice Lin

GASWORKS

155 Vauxhall Street

September 22–December 11

Central to Candice Lin's current exhibition, "A Body Reduced to Brilliant Colour," is *System for a Stain* (all works cited, 2016), a distillation apparatus where popular colonial commodities, such as tea and cochineal, form a dark-red liquid in a shallow wooden tank. Slim plastic tubing emerges, snaking its way to a neighboring room, where it coils onto a floor covered with white marble laminate. As the red fluid gathers in puddles, an audio work, *A Memory Blushing with Innocence*, reveals the physiological and psychological effects of colonialism for both master and slave, as told through the macabre memories of a plantation owner's daughter. On the fate of Indians working in the mines, for example, she recalls their skin turning white, their veins silver, and their eyes blue. "They believed they finally understood what it was to be European," she notes, "as they crawled out of the earth . . . sick and slowly dying."

But the critique of the capitalist system that facilitated this history does not remain in the realm of abstract representation. *A Warner for Survivalists: White Gold* presents a small fish tank in which about fifteen giant Madagascar hissing cockroaches are offered only candied fruit and a Chinese vase made of sugar to feed on—sugar being a colonial commodity that some breeds have evolved to avoid, given its use in traps and its detrimental health effects. Horrifically, this controlled environment thus offers a limited set of choices to its inhabitants—submit, starve, or cannibalize. (When I visited, the majority appeared either dead or comatose.) In this microcosm of violence, the viewer is implicated in the cruelty: guilty of seeing something wrong within a locked structure and incapable of breaking it.



Candice Lin, *System for a Stain*, 2016, wood, glass jars, cochineal, poppy seeds, metal castings, water, tea, sugar, copper still, hot plate, ceramic vessels, mortar and pestle, Thames mud, jar, microbial mud battery, vinyl, dimensions variable.

— Stephanie Bailey