

SEEKING

PERMISSION
TO TAKE
A BREAK



Exhibition text in response to the art
Exhibition: Sharper Tools for Unripe Fruit by Lan
Florence Yee at Neutral Ground
Artist-Run Centre, June 11 - July 23, 2022.

Text by: Nima Esmailpour

SEEKING:

A PLACE

TO FEEL

QUEER

Laboured breath, of a mother without a tongue, of a father without a throat, a language was born with vowels sounding like no others. The language has grown into a child with a tangerine in hand.

Sharper Tools for Unripe Fruit, negotiates the mistrust between the viewer and the monumental, presenting a series of handmade propositions that reimagine the act of commemoration. This reimagining, however, remains skeptical and iterative, questioning the inescapable instability of the author's position relative to these larger historical narratives.

There is a saying about a hard to accomplish task as "getting blood out of a stone". The painstaking act of decolonization can be symbolically described the same. In recent years several colonial monuments and memorials were wrenched off in protest against the physical narrative and structures perpetuating historical violence. The statues were doused in red paint in protest to create a visceral image of the blood, which has long been kept out of sight under their pedestals. Within this frame of reference, the centrepiece of the exhibition, *Pseudo-Monument*, countermarks the floor marks left of the uprooted John A. MacDonald memorial a block away from Neutral Ground's gallery. While the piece aesthetically inscribes the firmness of official memorials, the use of suspended vinyl banner subverts the inertia of solid structures. The label text is bluntly prescriptive and engenders an uncritical, conformist reading of history by the viewer. The bronze casted *Pseudo-Plaque* loosely affixes the half-mast canvas to the floor, resembling a name plaque on a notary's desk, completes a pairing of *counter-monumental* template. The interplay of the commemorative and the administrative, corresponds to authority and authorship.

Following the same pattern, authority and authorship is highlighted in the *PROOF* series, with regards to the use of image and the (com)memorable. The proof imprint on images serves to acknowledge the reserved rights to the image, while it conditions attention to short-term viewership. The *PROOF* series, therefore, embraces the ephemerality of lapsed moments once captured by visual memory as a proof for personal reflection. The watermarked verse on the image of a publicly displayed work, poetically registers a personal outpouring and dampens the unresolved feelings in despair of queer longing; "*I mistook a puddle for an ocean and the ocean for the horizon and it left before the moment*" treasures wishful instances of serenity found in mundane glimpses. The meticulously embroidered words on fabrics, seamlessly colour-matched, knits together the often-undermined labour of craft with the invisibility of laboured emotions.

Previously installed in public spaces, the *SEEKING* series mocks the doomed purpose of affirmative posters and personal ads to be arranged and rearranged by the passersby: *Seeking*; "Enough distance to feel relief."—they write. *Recherché*; "Public displays of affection"—they were asking. "Descriptions of feeling rested"—they were seeking. "A ticket to the place she feels safest"—they booked, for "a place to feel queer"—they looked for. While seeking "permission to take a break," they were promised "a time to do this again" and again, and again.

Nima Esmailpour

SEEKING

A TIME TO

DO THIS

AGAIN

Sharper Tools for Unripe Fruit © 2022

Text by: Nima Esmailpour
Published by: Neutral Ground Artist-Run Centre
Treaty Four Territory, Regina, SK
Cover Image: Lan Florence Yee

SEEKING

DESCRIPTIONS
OF FEELING
RESTED