

## Collecting Dissonance

CFGNY

20 May – 22 August 2021

Auto Italia is pleased to announce *Collecting Dissonance*, a newly commissioned exhibition of sculpture, image and garment works by the New York collective and label CFGNY.

The exhibition takes a new capsule collection of garments as its starting point. The clothes explore how personal and collective intimacies, relationships and agencies have been reshaped by the restrictions and instability caused by the ongoing pandemic, and the consequent heightening of power differentials along the lines of class and race.

The garments are presented as a part of a sculptural installation, which employs motifs and visual languages drawn from the group's ongoing examination of the economic and social contexts of 'cuteness': subcultural commodity aesthetics that include *kawaii* (かわいい) in Japan, *Kě'ài* (可爱) in China and *Aegyo* (애교) in South Korea. These cultural phenomena have been transformed into global economic exports, which are readily consumed and appropriated across Asia, the US and other Western economies.

This aesthetic is expressed through material, consumer and lifestyle cultures that focus on qualities associated with vulnerability, emphasising physical and emotional attributes characterised in the mainstream as infantile, diminutive and weak. This builds on inherent and ambivalent power differentials between an object and its keeper, one that is designed to provoke an instinctive response of affection, caregiving and ownership.

The 'cute object' has come to dominate Western expectations of aesthetics, identity and cultures across Asia and its diasporas, conflating multiple cultural identities into a non-threatening, non-confrontational and generalised idea of 'Asian-ness'.

In an act of disidentification, CFGNY embrace this flattened image of 'Asian-ness' to build a dialogue on race and community. In this show, cuteness is a collective language and a lens through which to explore experiences of cultural alienation and mistranslation. The capsule collection emerges as a relational project between CFGNY and their extended networks, exploring issues surrounding care, intimacy and safety.

In this show, haphazard and patch-work sculptural constructions highlight an experience of hijacking, misusing and bootlegging authenticity, questioning established understandings of value and time. Through the use of atypical, recycled materials, these works embrace incongruity and polyvocality.

Accompanying the exhibition is an upcoming programme of digital commissions by an international community of artists and scholars, exploring issues surrounding labour, value and identity. This includes one day of guest programming on Montez Press Radio, produced between their London and New York studios. Collaborators TBA.

**CFGNY (Concept Foreign Garments New York / Cute Fucking Gay New York)** began in 2016 as an ongoing dialogue between Tin Nguyen and Daniel Chew on the intersections of fashion, race, identity and sexuality. Joined by Kirsten Kilponen and Ten Izu in 2020, CFGNY continually returns to the term 'vaguely Asian': an understanding of racial identity as a specific cultural experience combined with the experience of being perceived as other. CFGNY does not wish to represent what it means to be 'Asian' in the singular; instead, it encourages the visualization of the countless ways one is able to be in the plural. Recent presentations include Etage Projects, Copenhagen (2020), Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (2019), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2018), 47 Canal, New York (2017).

### Visiting information:

Preview: Thursday 20 May 2021, 2-8pm

Exhibition continues until Sunday 22 August 2021

Opening hours: Thursday – Sunday, 12-5pm

Due to the limitations and restrictions on public spaces imposed by covid-19 we will be admitting no more than five people to the project space at a time. Reservations can be made via the Eventbrite that can be accessed on the Auto Italia website.

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