

HANNAH LIM

THE ENCHANTED ORCHID

PANGOLIN LONDON



Orchid Table
2024, Painted
bronze & steel
Edition of 3
75 x 49 x 47 cm

THE ENCHANTED ORCHID

HANNAH LIM IN CONVERSATION WITH MELONIE GAULT, MAY 2024

Can you elaborate on the inspiration behind your work and how it is influenced by your Singaporean and British heritage?

I've always been interested in using my practice as a way to connect with my mixed Chinese-Singaporean and British heritage. A few years ago I became fascinated by the design style Chinoiserie, through my research into Orientalism, 'the imitation or depiction of aspects of the Eastern world or "Orient" by writers, designers, and artists from the Western world'. Chinoiserie is/was an 18th-century aesthetic trend in which elements of Chinese design were recreated in relation to European aesthetics and tastes. Whilst I was intrigued by the exuberant, ornamental and fantastical nature of Chinoiserie I was also aware of its colonial history and its similarities to cultural appropriation. I wanted to reimagine Chinoiserie in a more appropriate way. Using the practice as a means to explore and reflect upon my own mixed cultural identity, whilst cherishing its extravagance and vibrance. Cultural designs are shared as opposed to appropriated within my work. Ultimately, I've been interested in exploring ways in which different cultures crossover and researching and responding to objects, design styles and artworks that reflect these occurrences.

Your sculptures are described as anthropomorphic and functional. Can you explain the significance of these characteristics in your work, and how do you balance the artistic and practical aspects?

Many of my sculptures are very ornamental whilst also having an element of hidden or disguised functionality. Much of my early sculptural work was inspired heavily by furniture design and so naturally many of my sculptures appeared to be somewhat functional, often resembling chairs, tables, arches and gates. I've been interested in playing with the functionality of my work, some works appear to be functional but are not, whilst others appear to be purely ornamental but in fact have more function than one might expect.

The anthropomorphic elements of my work stem from my research into Chinoiserie. Many objects and furniture pieces created in the Chinoiserie style often had features, arms and legs most notably, inspired by mythological Chinese creatures. These features included tables with claws and paws, winged chair arms and more.

I liked this idea of making my work feel more playful and peculiar by bringing in these strange anthropomorphic features. By giving my larger and smaller sculptures these arms and legs it was almost as if I was imbuing them with a life of their own.

The animated and playful quality of your Snuff Bottles is striking, almost resembling creature-like forms. Are these designs inspired by specific influences, and what emotions or responses do you aim to evoke from viewers through these pieces?

Similar to my larger-scale sculptures I was interested in having my Snuff Bottles reflect elements of the anthropomorphic Chinoiserie style. More importantly, though, the early designs for my Snuff Bottles were quite strongly connected to my own personal heritage - many of the designs featured were replications of objects and jewellery I had from my family in Singapore. After a while I wanted to slightly separate the designs of my Snuff Bottles from myself and instead envision these sculptures as enchanted, animate objects. Alongside this, I had also begun to look more into Chinese mythology and wanted my Snuff Bottles to be reflective of the creatures I had started reading about in Chinese and Medieval bestiaries. It has always made perfect sense to sculpt these peculiar, playful and intricate objects with creaturely arms, legs, paws and claws.

The Snuff Bottles feature intricate designs on the front and back as well as a hidden charm hanging inside, which can be revealed once the lid is lifted. I think these layers of mystery, surprise and playfulness are enticing and ultimately encourage viewers to read deeper into the works and in doing so they can come to understand more of the cultural history behind each of the motifs used.

This exhibition marks your first venture into creating works in bronze, and both the clay and bronze Snuff Bottles will be featured in the show. Transitioning from modelling polymer clay to working with a more traditional and substantial material like bronze, do you find yourself adopting a different approach in your creative process?

For my Snuff Bottles, I envisioned the transition from polymer clay and jesmonite to bronze would be quite a smooth one. I could imagine how the details and intricate sculpting techniques I used in polymer clay could be translated well into wax and then bronze. I liked the idea of translating these brightly coloured, lightweight sculptures into this far heavier, possibly more ornate, shiny material. I think what's most exciting is exploring the possibilities for painting or patinating

these bronze Snuff Bottles. I love the textured colour you can get from patination and I think it will provide an interesting contrast from the smooth and sometimes glossy surface of my clay Snuff Bottles. I'm also excited to be using silver to cast the charm detail inside my new bronze Snuff Bottles. I think it will help create the perfect surprise - a little piece of shiny treasure hidden inside these intricate patinated vessels.

Could you share the inspiration behind the *Orchid Table*, considering it's one of your most significant pieces in this exhibition?

I actually created the design for the *Orchid Table* a couple of years ago during lockdown. I had been experimenting with this programme called Blender, where you're able to build and view sculptures digitally. I was experimenting with translating my laser cutting files and drawings, which are usually used to create my large-scale sculptures, into three-dimensional digital objects in Blender. My original vision for the *Orchid Table* was that it would exist digitally as an image rather than as a physical sculpture. In this way many of the details and attachments I created in the original *Orchid Table* weren't necessarily designed to be created physically so when it came to recreating the *Orchid Table* in real life there were a few adaptations that had to be made. Despite this I think the *Orchid Table* looks remarkably similar to the original image I created three years ago.

Orchids have been a reoccurring motif in my work for the last five years. I think they are extremely symbolic flowers, very delicate and beautiful and yet also resilient. The orchid, specifically the Papilionanthe Miss Joaquim, is Singapore's National Flower. It's a hybrid orchid and is meant to represent Singapore's multicultural society. I think every time I've gone to Singapore to see my family we've visited the amazing botanical gardens, home to many varieties of orchids and so I've come to associate orchids with my memories and experiences of Singapore. There's also something quite creaturely and almost alien about the way some species of orchids look. I've always liked this quality and similar creaturely motifs already have a strong presence within my work. I wanted to create this table-like structure, inspired by my previous sculptures in wood, that reimagine the Chinoiserie aesthetic. The table is designed and built around this central hanging orchid. There is an interesting contrast between the very ornate and delicate elements of the work with the heavy metal chains and balls, that hang from the edges of the table and suspend the orchid from the two upper 'arms' of the table top. I like this idea of the *Orchid Table* looking somewhat enchanted and magical, it pulls together motifs and imagery from many different aspects of my research from the past five years and utilises many different sculptural processes within my practice. This includes sculpting the

orchid for casting in polymer clay as well as using my laser cutting files to create the table structure in stainless steel.

Your sculptures feature vibrant colours. How do you decide on the colours for each piece, and what considerations come into play during this process? Do you sketch or test these colours beforehand?

I have an enthusiastic approach to colour. I love using both soft pastel toned colours as well as rich deep colours. I've primarily been interested in using as much colour as possible in my work, I like to be unrestricted with the colours I use, I feel colour adds to the ornamental nature of my work. A couple of years ago I read David Batchelor's 'Chromophobia' which explores the historical rejection of colour. Batchelor describes how 'a fear of corruption or contamination through colour - lurks within much Western cultural and intellectual thought'. He goes on to highlight the historical 'attempts to purge colour, either by making it the property of some "foreign body" - the oriental, the feminine, the infantile, the vulgar or by relegating it to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential'. I think by gaining this more in depth understanding of the rejection of colour, I've felt even more encouraged to embrace it as much as possible within my work. Colour, like ornament, is extremely culturally symbolic, it tells stories, it reveals hidden meanings, it captures parts of our history.

Have you always explored a variety of scale in your work, and does your approach or mindset differ when creating pieces of varying sizes?

From the start of my degree I worked most often on a large-scale. I think people always assume you start with smaller works and then scale up, however for me this wasn't the case. During lockdown is when I began to create my much smaller Snuff Bottles. This change in size was partially due to necessity given the fact that I was making these works from home. Over time, my practice has again expanded into painting, but at this point both the large and smaller scale elements of my practice hold equal importance.

Are there any artists out there that influence your work?

There are many artists whose work I love, Tai Shani, Mariko Mori, Xadie Xa, Dominique Fung just to name a few.



(RIGHT)
The Enchanted Orchid,
Pangolin London, 2024
Installation photograph



(LEFT & RIGHT)
Hannah Lim with her
new bronze works
at Pangolin Editions,
2024



Bronze Koi Snuff Bottle
2024, Bronze and
sterling silver
Edition of 8
16 x 16 x 9.5 cm

Shards of Fire
2022, Mixed media for
painted steel
Edition of 3
140 x 135 x 65 cm





Magic Koi Snuff Bottle
2024, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & resin gloss
Unique
18 x 14 x 12 cm

*Ruby Dragon Snuff
Bottle*
2023, Jesmonite, clay,
chalk, paint & gloss
Unique
17 x 15 x 11 cm





(LEFT)
Tyger at Midnight
2023, Watercolour on
paper with painted frame
& clay detailing
Unique
45.5 x 31.5 x 2 cm





Bronze Lion Snuff Bottle
2024, Bronze and
sterling silver
Edition of 5
16 x 16 x 9.5 cm





The Jade Window Snuff Bottle
2023, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & resin gloss
Unique
18 x 17 x 11 cm





RIGHT:
A Beast Drawn Carriage
2022, Watercolour on
paper with painted frame
& clay details
Unique
61 x 75 x 2 cm



Gliding Dove Snuff Bottle
2024, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & gloss
Unique
13 x 11 x 6.5cm



Ruby Orchid Snuff Bottle
2024, Jesmonite, clay,
chalk, paint & gloss
Unique
13 x 11 x 6.5cm



Fiery Fu Dog
2023, Watercolour
and acrylic on paper
Unique
27 x 34 x 2 cm



Moon Moth Snuff Bottle
2024, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & resin gloss
Unique
18 x 16 x 12 cm



The Golden Arch Window
2022, Watercolour on
paper with printed frame
& clay details
Unique
83 x 61 x 3 cm

Spirit House Snuff Bottle
2022, Jesmonite, clay,
chalk & gloss
Unique
15 x 12 x 12 cm





Jade Lion Snuff Bottle
2024, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & gloss
Unique
13 x 11 x 6.5cm



Pearl Moth Snuff Bottle
2024, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & gloss
Unique
13 x 11 x 6.5cm



What's Caught The Tiger's Eye?
2022, Watercolour on paper,
painted frame with clay details
Unique
48 x 63.5 x 2 cm



The Lake of Beasts Snuff Box
2022, Laquered wood,
acrylic, clay, & chalk
Unique
18 x 24 x 15 cm



(RIGHT)
Flaming Phoenix
2023, Watercolour & acrylic
on paper
39 x 32 x 3.5 cm (framed)
Unique





Rainbow Serpent Snuff Bottle
2022, Jesmonite, clay, chalk,
paint & gloss
Unique
16 x 18 x 11 cm



HANNAH LIM

EDUCATION

Foundation Diploma Art and Design, Central Saint Martins
BA Hons Sculpture, Edinburgh College of Art, The University of Edinburgh
MFA, Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford

EXHIBITIONS

Solo and Dual Exhibitions

2024 Camalia, Blue Shop Galleries, London
2023 Public Sculpture Installation for Lunar New Year with
Greenwich Peninsula Bestiaries, Wilder Gallery, London
Shards of Fire, BeAdvisors, London
Alcova Milano, design fair presentation, Milan
2022 The Tiger's Gaze, Huxley-Parlour, London
Inanimate Creatures, Changing Room Gallery, London
Ornamental Mythologies, Edinburgh Printmakers, Edinburgh
In the Margins, Commonage Projects, London
Tigers and Dragons and Ghosts Oh My!, Dinner Gallery, NY
2021 Parts of Self with Courtenay Welcome, Home by Ronan Mc
Kenzie x Cob Gallery Residency Show, London
Porta Sancta with Hugo Harris, Underground Flower x
Harlesden High Street, London

Selected Group Exhibitions

2024 Material Girls and Their Muses, Vitrine Gallery, London
2023 Art Toronto with Duran Marshaal Gallery
Alcova Showroom
Unannounced, BeAdvisors x Lampo, Milan
ARRIVAL, Duran Marshaal Gallery, Montreal, Canada
When The Heart Of The Pig Has Hardened Dice It Small, Kirki
Projects, Tinos, Greece
Songs of Hekate, Pictorum Gallery, London
The Pink Room, Parlour, London

2022 British Art Fair with Royal Scottish Academy, Saatchi Gallery
Eat Drink, Man Woman, 180 The Strand, London
Red Room, Berntson Bhattacharjee, London
Bloomberg New Contemporaries, London
RSA New Contemporaries, Royal Scottish Academy
Next, Christies, London
Into the Fire, Grove Collective, London
Konomad, Tokyo
2021 Dirt and Desire, K.Halstead, London
Mouth Parts, St Margaret's House, London
Under Your Spell, Collective Ending, London
Zao Tang, Local Collective x Stigma, London
The Factory Project, Delphian Gallery, London
Origin, Delphian Gallery, London
The Holy Grail, OHS Projects, London
Final, Not Over - Again, Unit One Gallery, London
From a Safe Distance, Raen Barnsley x Auction Collective
The Graduates: Four Pillars, Tatha Gallery, Fife
Year of the OX, Steamroom East / Don't Call me Oriental,
London

AWARDS

2022-2024 Pangolin London Sculptor in Residence
2022 Selected for RSA New Contemporaries
2021 Selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries
Selected for Home by Ronan McKenzie x Cob Gallery Studio
Residency, supported by Glossier
2020 Clason-Harvie Bursary
RSA John Kinross Scholarship
Selected for Georgia Stephenson's Patio Project (funded by
The Freelands Foundation)
Selected Artist for Short Supply: Made It
Shortlisted for the Astaire Prize
2019 Hospitalfield Residency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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