

Annette Hur + Elnaz Javani
EXO
January 2 - January 30, 2021

Devening Projects

It is our great pleasure to invite you to *EXO*, an exhibition featuring recent work by Annette Hur and Elnaz Javani. Curated by Chicago artist and Devening Projects Gallery Associate Azadeh Gholizadeh, *EXO* opens January 2nd and continues until January 30th. The exhibition may be seen in person by appointment on Saturdays from noon to 5 pm. We are happy to make accommodations for special viewing on alternate days of the week. Go to deveningprojects.com/appointments to schedule your visit.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes.”
- Marcel Proust

The process of defining identity is complex. Like floating on choppy water, one is repeatedly absorbing and navigating the effects of outside forces while seeking solid ground; it's a precarious journey shaped by context and perception. Often, identity is defined by “the body”, where the inhabitants of those bodies become the mirrors through which we see ourselves. But what occurs when one's place isn't easily located or reflected within typical social frameworks? What if one's place is missing? Nonexistent? Withheld?

EXO examines how artists explore the implications and effects of the “self” as defined by social, political, historical and familial influence. By reclaiming the body as a vehicle for discourse, *EXO* reflects on self-exploration rather than external characterizations. This process can be seen as an exotic adventure—a conversation of openness and flexibility between home and away, familiarity and strangeness.

To navigate this discourse, we should examine exoticism beyond definitions of geography or colonial ideology. *Exoticism*—a transliteration of *exotikos* which comes from *exo-*, according to Julia Kuen, “...in its most general sense, implies distance and displacement beyond the immediate and toward the foreign: everything that lies outside the sum total of our current, conscious every day even, everything that does not belong to our usual ‘mental tonality’.”

In their work, Annette Hur and Elnaz Javani tell stories of familiarity and strangeness. Common materials and accessible forms are concealed, revealed, stained and punctured to express the nuances of an encounter. The artists' use of pierced, dyed and cut fabric suggests the endless cycle of suffering and healing. Javani plays with the notion of foreignness through her embroidered drawings and sculptures. Thread brings together the familiar and strange while her hand simultaneously pierces and sutures to heal the wound. Hur's *Moth* series suggests imitation as a form of camouflage. There's a subtle beauty in how her forms blend into the surrounding natural environment to adapt, are protected and ultimately find safety.

Often, to claim a place, one leaves home. Decamping from one's physical or psychological place to join another often requires transcending multiple dichotomies such as the symbolic and the material, the inner and externally defined perceptions, or the need to both insulate and belong. Where and how one finds place is what ultimately defines so many of our desires.

Elnaz Javani is an Iranian artist and educator living in Chicago. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Tehran University of Art and a Masters in Studio Art from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she received the New Artist Society Merit Scholarship. She works between the mediums of textiles, drawing and print. Her practice revolves around the fragmentation of identity and place, power, labor and storytelling. She is a former fellow at Define American and current fellow at Kala Art Institute. She has exhibited in Colombia, France, Germany, Iran, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

Annette Hur was born in South Korea and lives and works in Brooklyn. Her work has been featured in recent solo/group exhibitions at 33 Orchard, Assembly Room, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Regular Normal, Times Square Space, Urban Zen Center and Wallach Gallery, all in New York; Fairleigh Dickenson University in New Jersey; and Heaven Gallery, Chicago Artists Coalition and boundary, in Chicago. Hur was a nominee for a Rema Hort Mann Foundation grant in 2019 and a Chicago Artists Coalition BOLT resident in 2016-2017. Hur holds a BA from Ewha Women's University in Seoul, a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a MFA from Columbia University.

Azadeh Gholizadeh is a Chicago-based artist, educator and curator. Born in Tehran, she received her MA in architecture from Iran University of Science and Technology and her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Interested in the relationship between landscape and memory, Azadeh explores body, landscape and fragmentation of memory as a way to navigate the idea of home.