



Throngs

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by

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Ceramic is an important element of my artworks. It is a material with strong bearing capacity, and at the same time, it is a tool with the attribute of nature and social function, for the similarity with humans can be found in it. Thanks to its characteristics, I am able to transform the forms, colors, and quality to complete my works. Collected from nature, carved with human hands, the clay is cultivated and my expectation of the outside world is satisfied.

Early Works: Life as My Inspiration

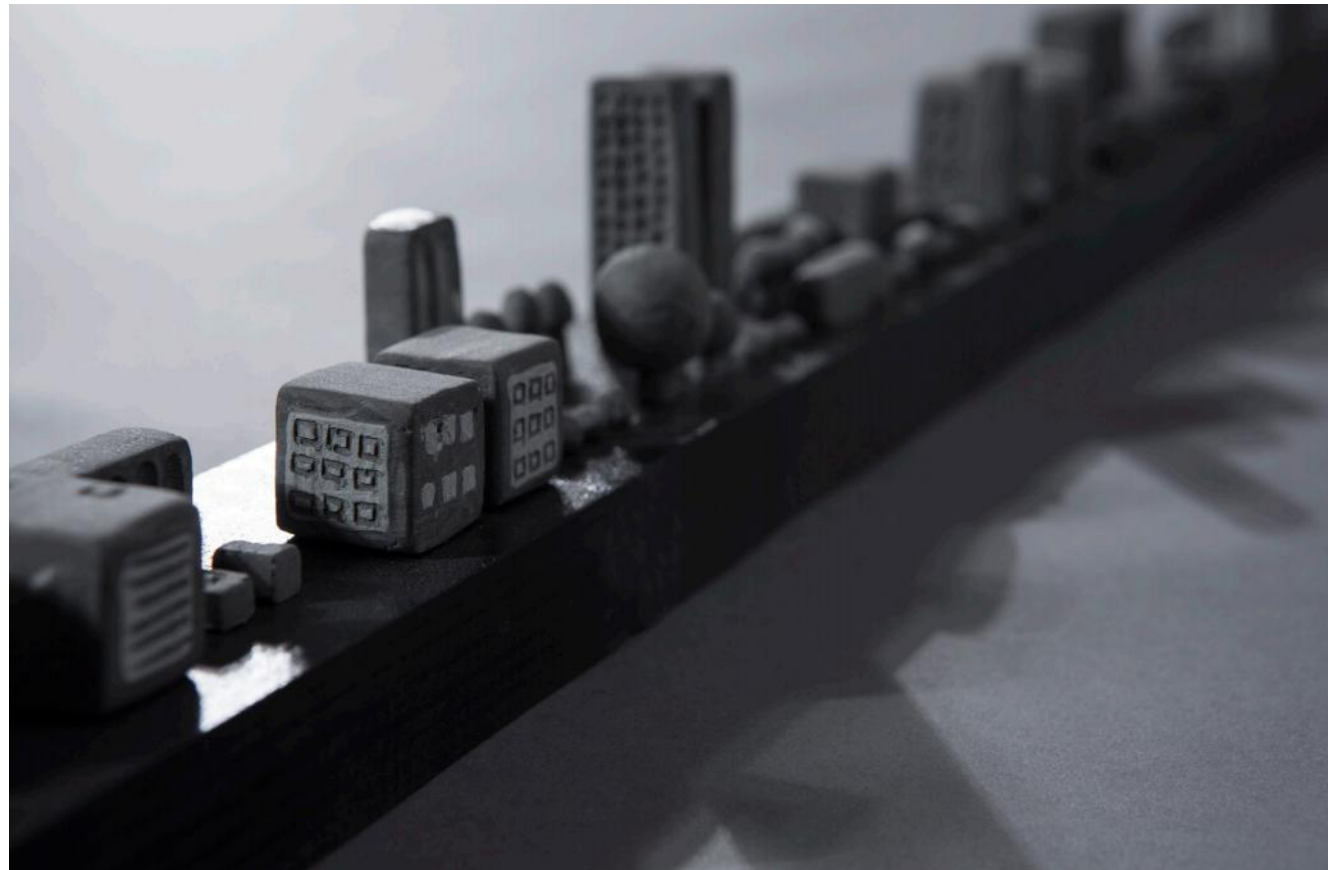
My process of creating a work is a process of inspecting society. I am trying to convey the world seen through my eyes, which is also my understanding of art. Artists should lead people to the ideal world they create. From my point of view, our track of life is like a mixture of complication and simplicity. Our life seems regularly repeating the process of eating, drinking, playing, sleeping, studying and working. However, when you explore the essence of life, every single second can be different, which is the reason for us to do regular things, record and make changes.

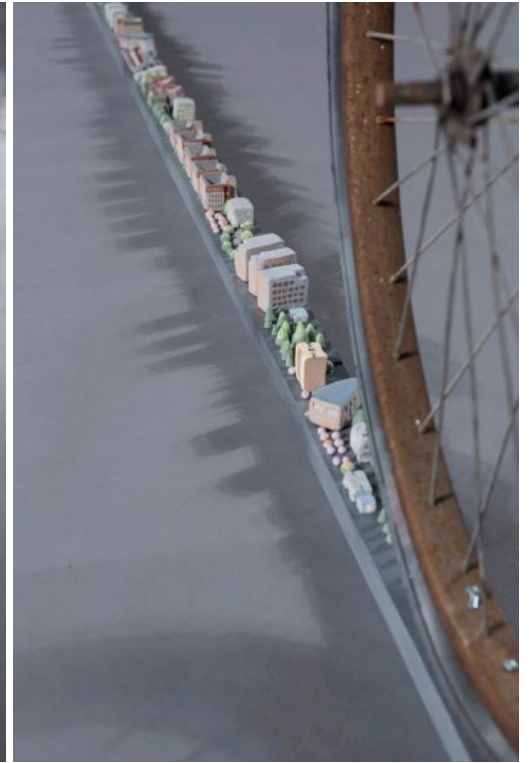
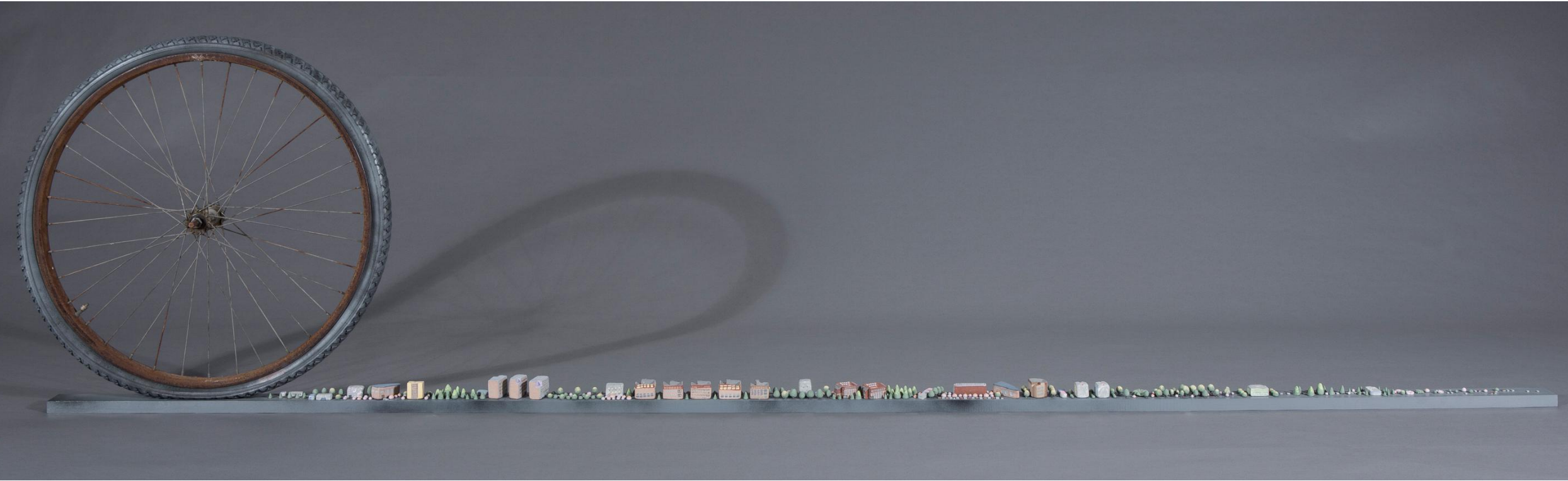
The only way I know how to create is to start from something I know very well. By relying on familiarity, I can go beyond the constraints of aesthetics and existing ceramic experiences. Greatness in trivialness, seeing big things through small ones. The path of a tire - Track represents the gradualness of space and time, recording the orbit of life; All creatures are generalized as fish, and the Coagulation state of concrete represents industrial elements. Ecological balance is being torn by modern industry. A combination of diverse animals and plants is integrated into an ideal clay Homeland in which an original environment of pure, freedom and joy exists, as well as unsteadiness and fragility.

In my works, I simplify practicality into symbols, manifesting them in complex compositions. I make abundant texture and place regular arrangements of units to form the whole work. Colors are also applied. Most works of mine mainly consist of bright and pure colors, or sheer black or white. When it comes to space, I would achieve the combination of complicated form and monotonous color or unchanging form and multiple colors.

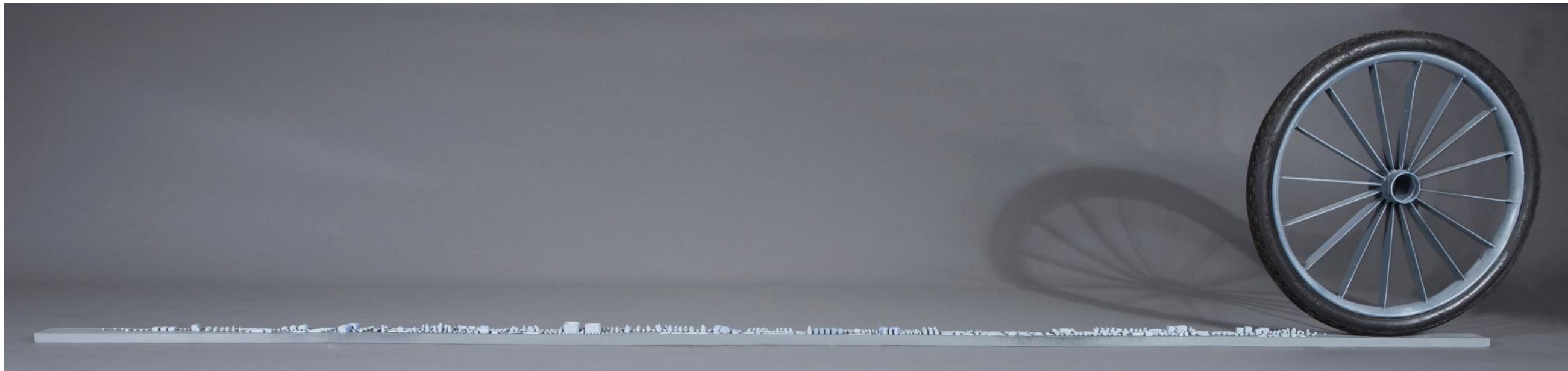
Track NO. 1
2016
porcelain, wood, wheel
390cm×5cm×67cm







Track NO. 2
2016
porcelain, wood, wheel
260cm×5cm×67cm



Track NO. 3
2016
porcelain, wood, wheel
325cm×7cm×67cm



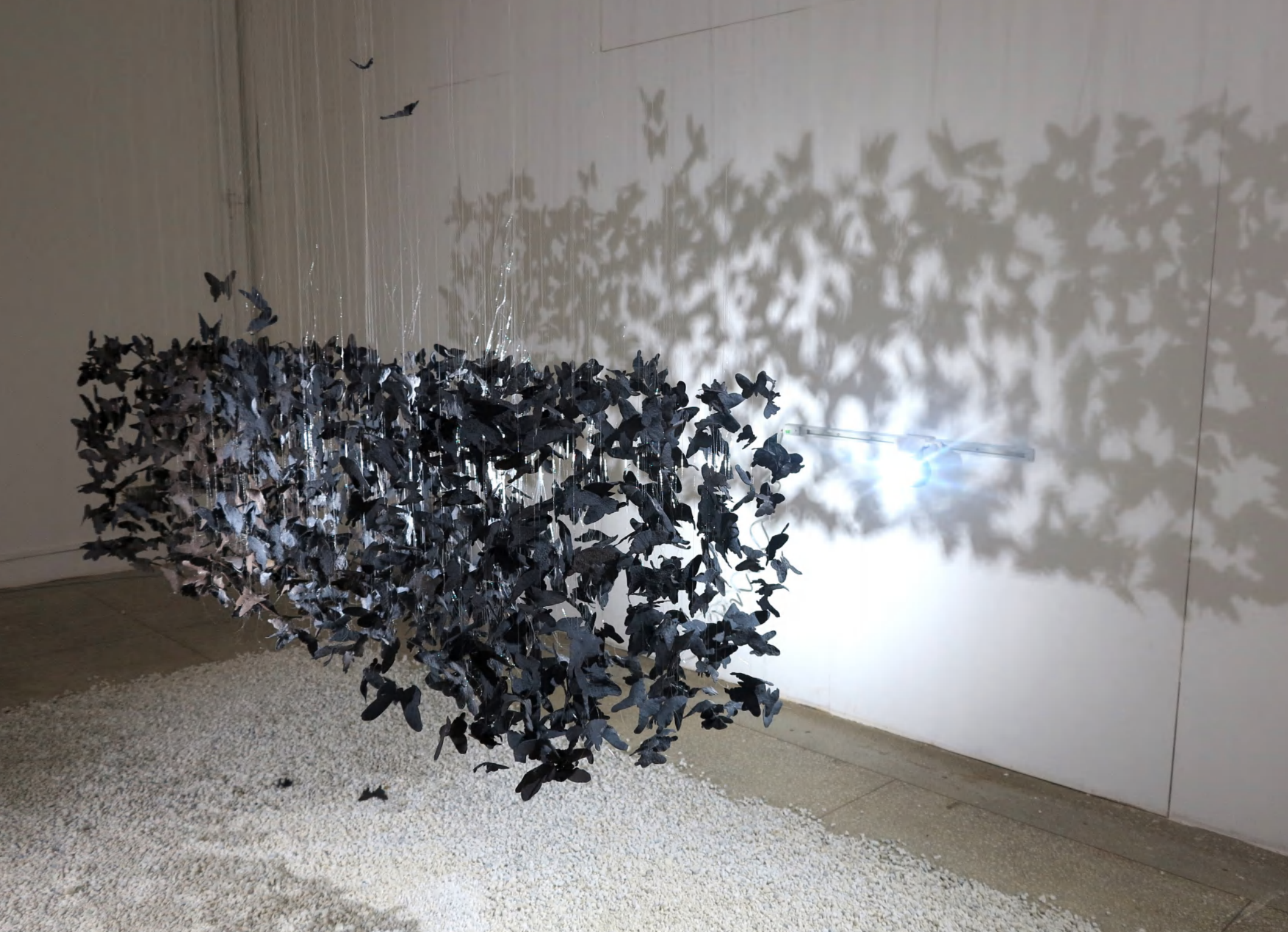
COAGULATION
2016
earthenware, concrete
20cm×20cm×60cm



Coagulation 4
2016
earthenware, concrete
12cm×6cm×10cm



Coagulation 3
2016
earthenware, concrete
6cm×6cm×9cm



Butterfly as Myself

The suspense fiction named Butterfly Cemetery by Cai Jun is well-known in China. In the story, there is a Yinyang Die, a kind of toxic butterfly, named Beauty Ghost. The wings of Beauty Ghost are different, with the face of a beautiful woman on one side and a skull on the other. People cannot resist being attracted by it but at the same time, they are terrified. I see all butterflies as Beauty Ghost. I have been afraid of butterflies since I was little, the more beautiful, the more attractive, the more terrifying. I find inspiration for my work in my terror to colorful butterflies, and my fear becomes deeper according to the colors. My installation, also titled Butterfly Cemetery, is created through my understanding and special feelings toward butterflies. I created the black butterflies in different sizes with deep textures, manually made of lightweight ceramic materials. The butterflies take the form of a suspending coffin. Moreover, the butterflies are not static, fans are placed at each corner of the room, blowing wind to make the butterflies collide with each other, producing a melodious sound. My feelings about beauty and fear and awe of life are evoked via sound, light, electricity, and shadow in a closed space.







Butterfly as the “Ink”

Later, the butterfly becomes a symbol in my artwork. I use the butterfly as the “ink” to create my pieces and installation. As a painter and ceramist, I have always been interested in space, whether it is a 2d or a 3d space, or the connection and transformation between the two.

Leaving a blank is a type of expression technique that artists often use when they are making their creations. Poets often call “blankness” “subtle”, calligraphers call it “flying white”, musicians call it “mute sound” and traditional Chinese painters call it “Liubai — blank-leaving”. Leaving a blank space is an important artistic technique in Chinese painting composition. As the name suggests, leaving some blank space in a painting leaves the viewers with spaces for imagination. The blank space can create an image space through the aesthetic association and imagination of the viewer so that the painting can achieve a stronger expressiveness and vitality, forming a perfect composition. The blank space between the waterfall and the mountain rock can show a dynamic waterfall; In a river fishing canvas, the water around the fisherman is a large blank, which can give people unlimited space for imagination; The blank spaces in a butterfly painting can give the butterfly space to spread its wings...

The creation of blank space in Chinese painting is also deeply influenced by traditional Chinese philosophy. “The Bodhi tree itself has no trees, the mirror itself is not a dressing table, there is no such a thing in reality, how it can attract the dust.” Zen Buddhism advocates for inner reflection on objective things, emphasizing the internal reflection and experience. Chinese painters use their paint brushes to express their inner feelings, extract objective things through their own feelings and leave blank spaces for the viewers’ own hearts so that the viewers can bring their own imagination through the blank spaces. Confucianism advocates the “moderate” way, pays special attention to the harmony of all things and abandons extremes. “After the full moon, the moon eclipse will occur; When the water is full, it will spill over.” Confucian aesthetics also follows the same principle. When the Chinese painting stroke is applied, it also pays attention to the management of negative space and displays the “moderate way” on the paper. “Nothing to draw is a wonderland” is the unique aesthetic view of the Chinese painting. The special space formed by the blankness includes the physical and psychological, in which the psychological space is more artistic than the physical space.

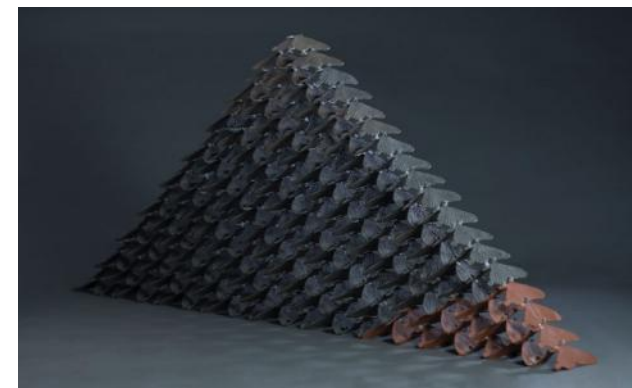


Wax and Wane, 2018, earthenware, steel, 70cm x 30cm x 200 cm



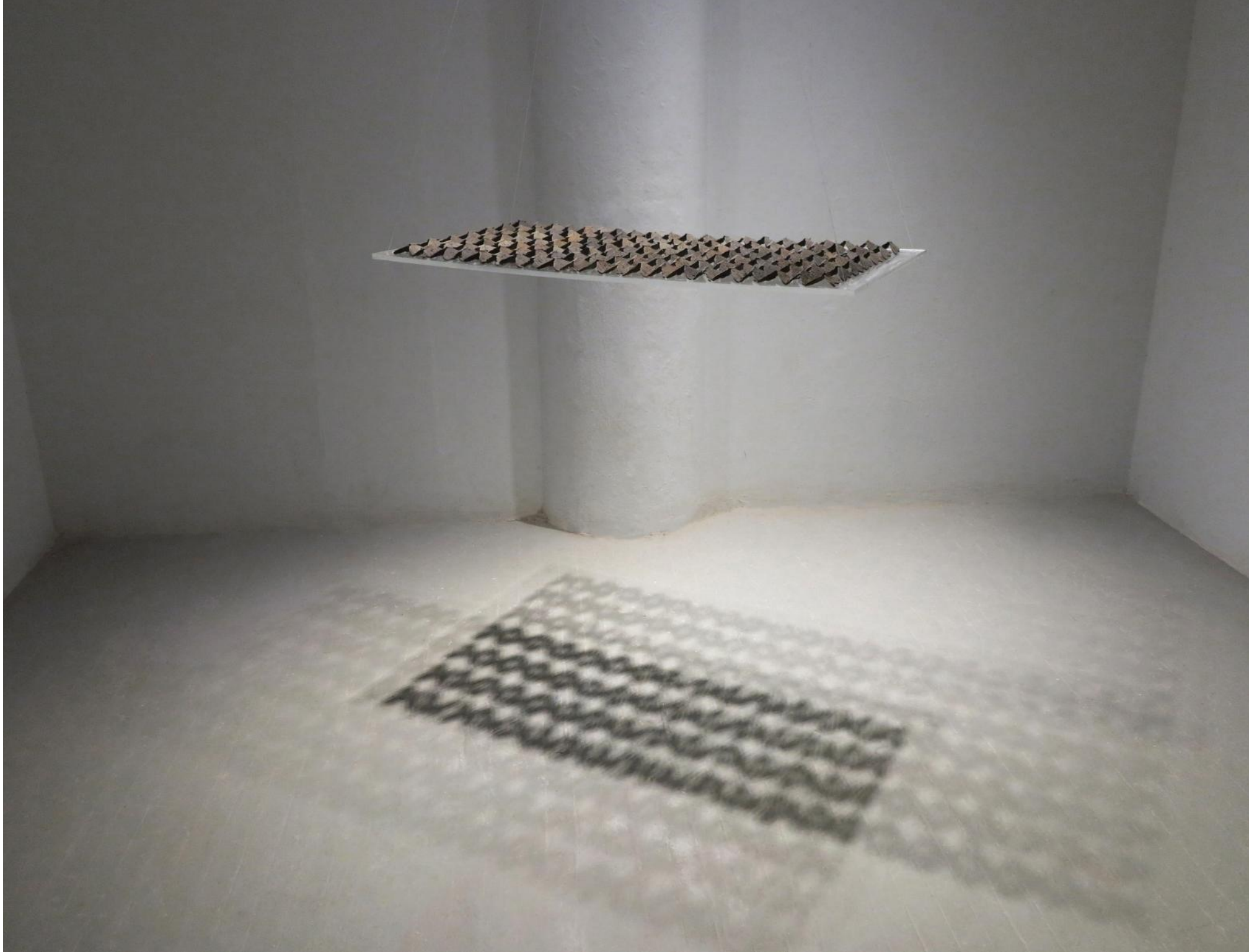
Butterfly as Human Beings

For a long time, I have been making art for myself—recording my life, addressing challenges and then making changes. At present, I explore the connections between butterflies and humans which have a couple of similarities, including identity, beauty, camouflage, community, and migration. Each butterfly is regarded as each individual. I translate human living conditions into my works using the symbolic element of butterflies.





Above the Shadow
2018
ceramic, acrylic plate
120cm x 60cm x 10cm





Migration and Immigration

Each fall, the Monarch butterfly flies about 5,000 kilometers from Canada and the United States to a valley in Mexico. A monarch butterfly typically has a lifespan of nine months, with at least five months spent on the long flight. This means that no monarch butterfly can complete the journey back. The whole process of migration contains the life and death of two generations of Monarch butterflies, and the next generation can return to their origins in the north. Later they must set off again to Mexico to spend the winter. Most surprisingly, when they return to the butterfly valley, they will land and stay in the same tree where their parents used to stay.

In my piece titled Throngs, I arranged hundreds of black clay “dead” butterflies and colorful paper “living” butterflies on burned tree stumps in the water exhibiting in a wide and open space. The whole piece is built in a shallow depression filled with inked water, like a pool. Visitors are invited to step into it. People from different cities, states, and even countries who live, work or study in Providence will leave their footprints around the work when they walk in and walk out, which mirrors the traces of throngs of migrating Monarch butterflies.



Throngs
2018
porcelain, paper, stumps, ink, water, plastic, wood
240cm x 240cm x 150cm





Settlers
2018
porcelain, paper, windows, wood
80cm x 80cm x 160cm





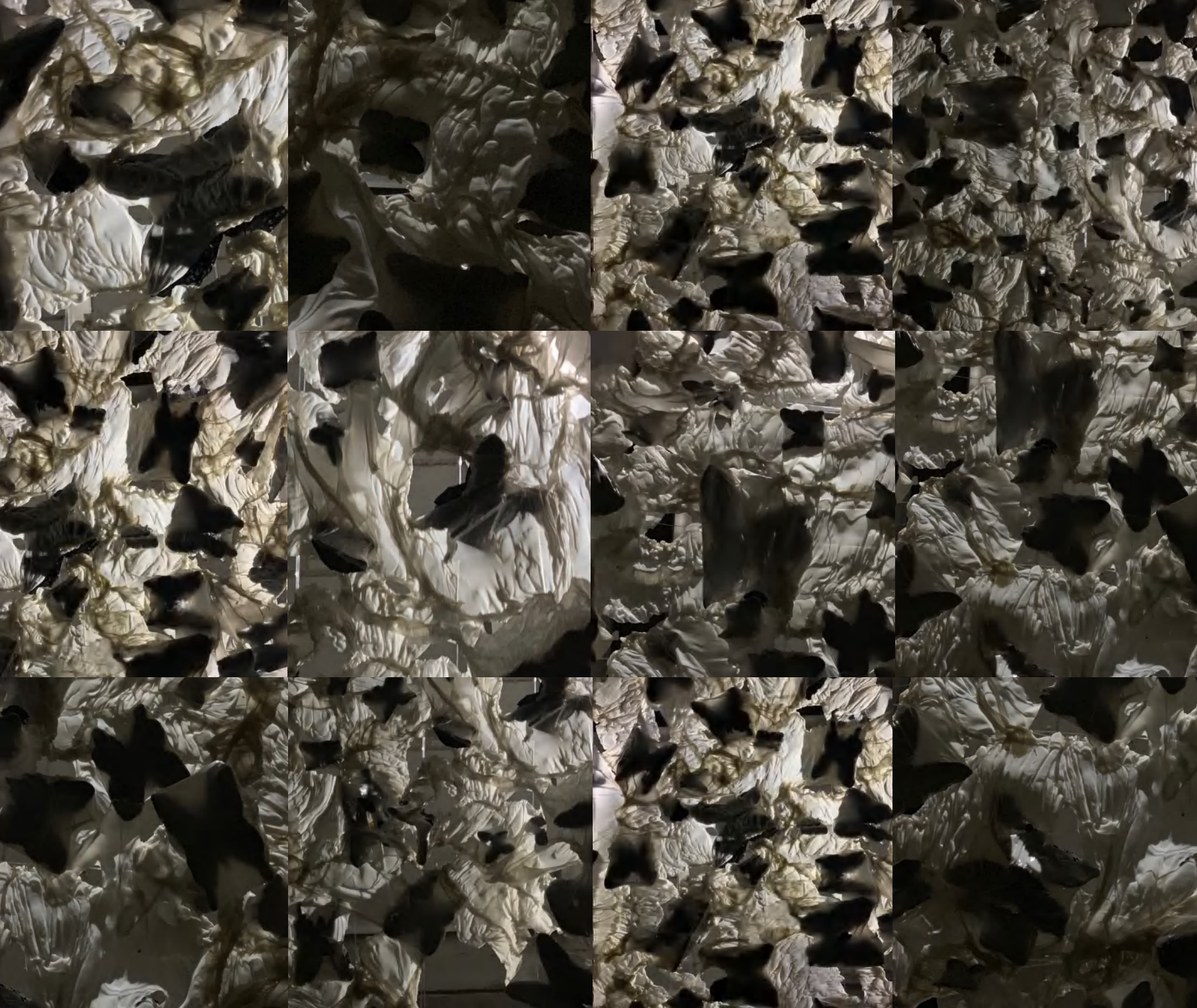
Death or Resurrection

In Greece, the butterfly is honored as a symbol of soul and incarnated mind. The emerging of a butterfly from the chrysalis represents the departure of the soul from the body. In Christianity, especially the vanitas paintings, caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly respectively stand for life, death, and resurrection. Japanese culture treats the butterfly as an embodiment of soul and a symbol of traditional "Female Virtues". A couple of butterflies serves as an indication of romance and conjugal happiness in the folklore popular in China. The concept of Samsara in Buddhism comes from the process in which a larva metamorphoses into a chrysalis and then into a butterfly, and butterflies are a symbol of this cycle.

It is assumed that coming out of the cocoon and becoming a butterfly suffers from extreme pains, making it praiseworthy. Actually, such a kind of viewpoint is not true as the growth of a butterfly is accompanied with pain from beginning to end. Each transformation in the growth of a butterfly is a rebirth of the predecessor. The trials and disasters in life are similar to the struggling process full of pain and torture in which an eggs turns into a caterpillar and then breaking the cocoon into a butterfly enjoying freedom in nature, then ridding itself from the dangers of natural enemies, and making the destiny changed, basking in freedom, sweeping away the sorrow and agony encountered in the first half of life.

The butterfly is endowed with a unique cultural connotation that spreads the awe of nature, appreciation of life, desire for love and wishes for a new life, which indicates the persistent seeking of pure and flawless beauty from time immemorial.





Breaking Away
2019
porcelain, plastic, resin, paper, metal
250cm x 100cm x 80cm

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