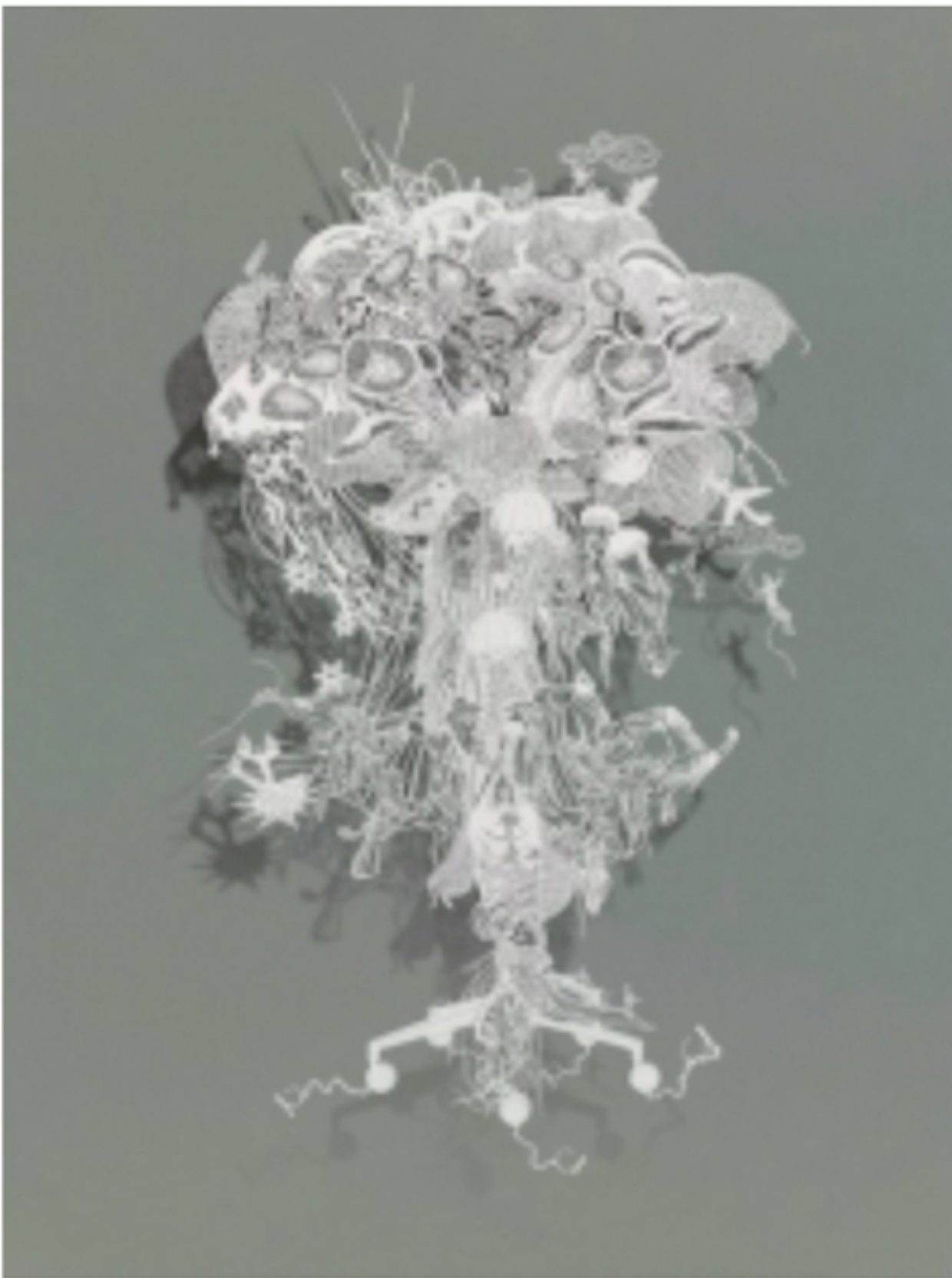


Liners' Paradox



At first glance, the predomination of vanilla-coloured art in Liners' Paradox appeared innocuous to me. But then I slowed down and looked again. Soon the pink highlights of Joey Leung's graceful works beckoned. And the faint red of Wai Pong-yu's Hong Kong flag in Bauhinia triggered ironic questions of nationalism, while channelling Jasper Johns' pop art flags. Next, I better observed what turned out to be anti-traditional folk art-inspired paper cut-outs by Bovey Lee and drawings by Angela Su. The latter initially reminded me of Leonardo de Vinci's medical sketches, but they later transformed into grotesque anatomical laments.

And that's the paradox. In the hands of these contemporary Hong Kong artists, a seemingly simple work gradually becomes the opposite. Line becomes a demanding accomplice agitating the viewer to look longer in order to locate the complex.

There's also the paradox of gender. Not only would one be hard-pressed to identify the male artist of the group based upon the art alone, but the work of the three women artists ultimately inverts staid notions of femininity. Lee's intricate cut-out, Atomic Jellyfish, eschews decorative lacy predecessors via a monstrous mushroom cloud that swirls with sea life, danger, and kitschy everyday objects.

Throughout the exhibition, the East-West paradox is likewise addressed. Thankfully, without cliché. Rather, it is subtle, as seen in Leung's painted scroll, The Fate of Captain Single Eye. Here she conflates motifs from both Western story-telling and traditional Asian art to illustrate an adventurous phallic tale. There's also her beautiful Messy Flower, where Leung adroitly combines classical Chinese painting and cheeky humour to convey Buddhist self-reflection. Like the rest of the works in this show, it's definitely worth a second look.