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Yuan Fang's Visceral Paintings at Skarstedt Confront the Body's Fragility and Its Strength

In her new solo show in Chelsea, the Chinese artist unveils emotionally charged abstractions born from her intimate reckoning with illness, resilience and renewal.



Fierce, untamed painterly gestures surge and reverse, folding into the swirling entanglements of artist Yuan Fang's abstraction. They expand toward the infinite, then coagulate into energetic nuclei that implode into mass before breaking apart again in multiplying flame-like or tidal movements that echo the expansive and

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disaggregative forces binding all matter in a perpetual cycle of generation, transformation, decay and rebirth.

In just a few years, Fang has become one of the most sought-after names in emerging abstraction, first capturing collectors' attention in her native China and soon after across the globe. Her warm whirlwind of hand-touched gestures feels both psychologically and physically participatory, evoking, beyond figuration, movements and bodily expressions that release an overwhelming vital energy. That energy resonated deeply with audiences who, after the long period of restriction during the pandemic, yearned for renewed physical connection and sensation. Interest in her work surged during that time and has endured since. While her auction record remains \$88,900, achieved by *Expanse (mask)* at Phillips New York in March 2023, her results have stayed consistent—particularly in Hong Kong—showing how her compelling approach to abstraction continues to engage collectors beyond passing trends. Last year, the artist joined Skarstedt, further cementing her career with strong international representation.

The new body of paintings Fang is currently presenting at Skarstedt Chelsea marks a shift. They carry a different intensity born from the visceral, hard-won awareness of the limits in that perpetual conflict between body and spirit, the transience of flesh and the infinite potential of the mind. That awareness emerges most starkly when confronted with the body's vulnerability—something Fang faced this year after learning she had cancer. The result is a series of emotionally and psychologically charged works that stage a strenuous struggle for resistance and resilience in the face of the entropy that rules over our bodies and our individual fate.

Fang's approach to the canvas is deeply intuitive, she explains when we meet in her studio. The vibrant, freshly finished works—spread in a circle around the room—were still pulsing with energy before leaving for the gallery. For Fang, painting is not about premeditation but about transferring and channeling forces through a constant exchange as she navigates the push and pull of the surface. "I think my process is very intuitive because I don't really use sketches," she tells Observer. "For me, painting is almost like an accident; you discover what it should be as you work on it. The process is about finding the piece along the way. I like to leave space for the unknown to take over."

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Every one of Fang's paintings begins differently. She usually starts with a basic flow or a structure she wants to achieve, then moves into the line work. "From there, I add more layers, and it becomes this ongoing process of adding and erasing," she explains. "There's a lot of building up and cutting back in each painting."

Although the expansive movements of paint seem capable of evolving endlessly beyond any structure, they are anchored by a graphic foundation that guides and orients their flow rather than corrects or contains it. In this process, almost like automatic writing, there's an attempt to capture invisible forces and the violence of the sensations they spark. Fang is open about the fact that these paintings are far more visceral than her earlier work, born of a direct confrontation with the body's limits and representation and a fierce fight for its survival.