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ART & CULTURE

Artist to Watch: Rising Talent Yuan Fang Channels a Battle with Cancer into Triumphant Abstract Canvases

The artist's thought-provoking works are currently on view in a solo show at Skarstedt gallery in
New York

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Yuan Fang with her work *Forever Spinning Top* (2024).PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER SMITH/TATLER HONG KONG

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“My practice is always about how it feels to be a woman; that question is changing for me now,” says Yuan Fang. Born in the bustling city of Shenzhen, China, and now based in New York, the young artist creates large-scale paintings of tumultuous, swirling lines that grapple with the anxieties of the human condition. They took an even more reflective turn after she was diagnosed with breast cancer early this year.

As Fang processed the life-altering diagnosis and treatment, she began to see the cascading lines of her paintings in a new light. “I was learning to understand the feeling of alienation in my own body,” says Fang, whose work can be found in the collections of Lafayette Anticipations in Paris, New York’s FLAG Art Foundation, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. “I use shapes that duplicate themselves, which reminds me of how cancer grows and reflects what’s going on inside me.”



The artist's *River, Cutting in Half* (2024). PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SKARSTEDT, NEW YORK

Switching from acrylic to slower-drying oil paint, she began to blend colors and layer sinewy lines with more patience and deliberation. Inspired by Francis Bacon and traditional Chinese calligraphy painting, she now

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leaves more negative space to heighten the intense contrast between the background and the ribbonlike imagery in the foreground.



Pear Blossoms Pressing the Begonia—May- December Romance (2025).PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SKARSTEDT, NEW YORK

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Tatlin's Tower (2024).PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SKARSTEDT, NEW YORK

In addition to the monumental compositions she is known for, Fang has started working on a smaller scale, approaching these pieces like “a journal or a diary, digging into a more intimate environment,” she says. Together, these works comprise “Spaying,” Fang’s solo show at Skarstedt in Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood, which is on view through October 25. The exhibition title nods to the artist’s recovery from her hormone-related form of the disease. After finishing her treatments, she may still be at risk for related cancers and could potentially have her ovaries and uterus removed, she explains. “This made me think about what makes a woman. Are you a woman with just one breast or no breasts? Are you a woman without a uterus or ovaries?”

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Juice of the Rhizome Ignites the Endless Sea (2025). PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SKARSTEDT, NEW YORK

Hints of mammarys and tumors appear in the work, some taken from Fang's medical imaging. Although these elements are personal, using abstraction allows her to incorporate them without feeling vulnerable. "I try to take my diagnosis and treatment calmly," she says. "Painting is how I document this period of time."