

Yining Fei: Feral Sediment

Sep 19–Dec 28, 2026

SculptureCenter

44-19 Purves Street
Long Island City, NY 11101
+1 718 361 1750
sculpture-center.org

Ferality is often used as a political tool to designate subversive forms of life that seek survival within, while testing the limits of, a given order. Yining Fei's first solo exhibition in the US, *Feral Sediment*, centers on this condition of being neither wild nor tame through the case of *milu* (Père David's deer). After living in a state of semi-captivity for hundreds of years in the Qing Imperial Hunting Ground, milu suffered local extinction in the early twentieth century, surviving as a species only because a small number had been transported to European zoos (and later, to an English duke's estate). Their return to China, first as diplomatic gifts in the 1950s, made them the subject of an "innocent but laudable" repatriation story as described by the UK Far Eastern Department, and a tale of "heroic homecoming" as told by the Chinese state press.

Fei's fieldwork in 2025 followed the rewilding initiative of the returned milu. They are allowed to rest on nature reserve land, walk amid wind farm towers, or wander freely into farmland. After centuries of captivity, does a drive towards the unruly still exist at all? Or, might the unruly be understood as, according to scholar Jack Halberstam, an entropic force with no origin and no endpoint? Prompted by this uncertainty, the exhibition reimagines a deer's body, inventing an interiority shaped by the species' histories of domestication. Sculptures in the form of deer viscera are covered in a biomimetic glaze, inspired by the morphological similarities between the lining of the deer's organs and aerial views of the nature reserve's industrialized landscapes, where milu now roam.

Assembled into the shape of a deer stomach, ceramic fragments form the base structure of *in the cracks of everything* (2026) (#1), onto which centuries of human-deer interactions are grafted as bas reliefs. As a body's interface with the exterior world, the digestive system hosts nutrients, pollutants, or material traces of chance encounters, like rare earth oxides commonly found in wind turbines. Considering the stomach as a border space, Fei looks for the sense of ferality that might grow out of confinement. Found fabric and pendants occupy and prop open the stomach's ceramic folds, as if propelled by an invisible force within. Heightened by the action of expulsion, Fei's sculpture is suspended in a perpetual spasm, which, borrowing philosopher Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, is an archaic form of establishing the boundary of self.

Similar to the stomach, the mouth is also a threshold where ferality is negotiated. *GULP GULP: what can and cannot be taken in* (2026) (#2) is molded after a milu's palate. The structural form is taken from a Zoological Society of London's 20th century anatomical study. At its center, the palate holds extracts of smooth cordgrass, an invasive plant that has become the returned milu's primary food source in Jiangsu, and so determines the deer's survival. Glittering fabric extends the palate downward, as if the milu's swallowing of

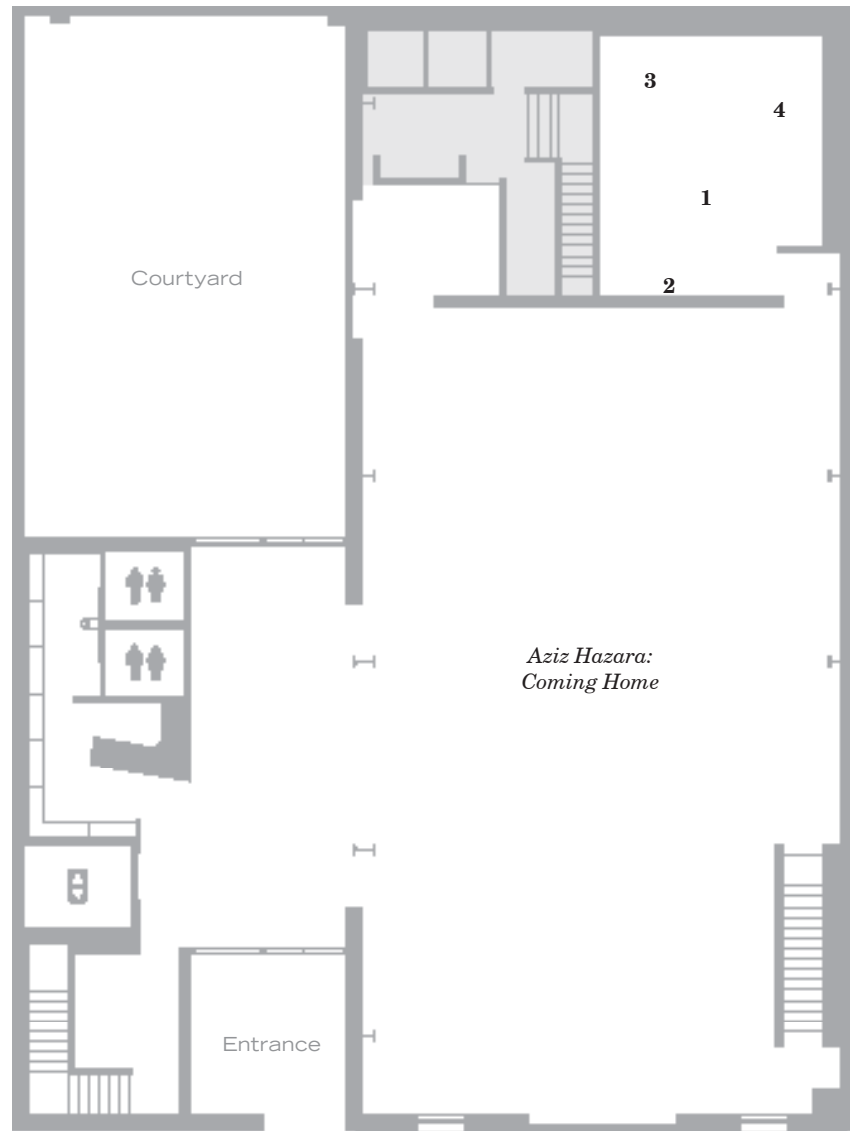
this invasive plant lends the mundane act of eating a ritual quality, breaking the canonized anatomical depictions of the mouth. What milu can take in is determined by the surrounding landscape, and in the act of consuming it, milu also secures its survival.

At the center of animal domestication is reproduction management, which makes the womb the most administered organ. *not until you come back (you won't understand)* (2026) (#3) is molded after an idealized female deer's reproductive organs, drawn from the same 20th century anatomical study. Insisting upon what scientific drawings cannot access, Fei adds anomalous accretions onto her reproduction of the Zoological Society's sterile and artificial form. Those areas are given over to her own imagining of the unruly: hand-sculpted objects, irregular in shape and color, and coarser in material than what's around them. Ferality, a behavioral trait that cannot be planned, takes on a different quality in the video component in this work. Placed at the base of the sculpture, the Super Eight film, taken on a shaky handheld camera, trembles through frames of a milu's skull and newborn fawns, placing death and birth side by side.

Seeing ferality not as part of a linear progression towards an end but as a recursive loop, *TURN TURN TURN: days blown by the wind* (2026) (#4) mounts reliefs on a rotating light mechanism molded in the shape of a deer heart. The sculpture turns ceaselessly like a horse-trotting lantern (*zou ma deng*), a light device as well as a metaphor describing the "cinema" of life that flashes before one's death. It is said that in the last moments before one dies, the pain or panic reaction initiates a dissociation effect that disrupts one's cognitive functions and engenders mirage-like images. On this heart sculpture, reliefs and glaze decorations compose a phantasmagoric terrain of wind turbine structures, road networks, agricultural land, and even constellations, across which partial silhouettes of deer trot and metamorphose—a composition that maintains equivocal proximity to the infrastructure of modernity and a state of lawlessness. Set to spin with no end, this work holds milu's transgressive behavior in a looping temporality.

As State Class-I Protected Wildlife in China, milu cannot be driven off of engineered landscapes or killed. The status places the rewilded animal in a troubling category: protected, but not fully contained. The state law mandates a margin of non-interference that protects each milu. Taking from Anna Tsing the idea of seeing ferality not as an essential quality of a being but an effect produced through infrastructure, this exhibition imagines what ferality might leave inside a milu's body and speculates on a future of feral relations that negotiate care and release, containment and transgression.

Works in the Exhibition



Ground Floor Plan

Gallery B

- 1 *in the cracks of everything*, 2026
Glazed stoneware, found fabric from Yancheng, dyed textile, steel wire, and UV printed conductive fabric
29 x 70 x 29 inches
- 2 *GULP GULP: what can and cannot be taken in*, 2026
Glazed stoneware (with Yancheng mud engobe), dyed textile, UV printed conductive fabric, smooth cordgrass extracts, polyester, and glass beads
20 x 17 x 10 inches
- 3 *not until you come back (you won't understand)*, 2026
Glazed stoneware (with Yancheng mud engobe), LCD screen, single-channel video (color, sound), fishing wire, radiation shielding fabric, and polyester
57 x 31 x 20 inches

Sound Designer & Composer: Vanessa Castro
- 4 *TURN TURN TURN: days blown by the wind*, 2026
Glazed stoneware, stainless steel structure, LED light bulbs, motor, conductive fabric, dyed textile, and polyester
50 x 18 x 17 inches

All works courtesy the artist

On View Concurrently

Aziz Hazara: Coming Home
Sep 19–Dec 28, 2026

Cevdet Ereğ: Americas
Sep 19–Dec 28, 2026

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