

DOLLHOUSE

Yutian Zhou



CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| <i>Into the Dollhouse</i> | 4 |
| Playing for Time | 5 |
| Failing Grade | 6 |
| Escape Hatch | 8 |
| Planning My Destiny | 10 |
| Breaking the Rules | 12 |
| Dressing for Success | 15 |
| Breaking My Heart | 16 |
| An Arrangement | 18 |
| Love Conquers All | 20 |
| 'Til Death Do Us Part | 22 |
| The Cake is a Lie | 24 |
| Let Me Out | 27 |
| Walking Away | 28 |

INTO THE DOLLHOUSE

Though most of the world believes that contemporary Chinese culture is modern and liberal in its societal values, in reality it is still very traditional. Chinese girls in particular are subject to pressures based on the expectation that they will observe and fulfill the obligations of many different traditions. As a woman who grew up in China, I have personally experienced this.

Dollhouse is a metaphorical exploration of these customs and cultural expectations. The project presents scenarios of important life experiences through the use of paper cutouts, small toys, and other props in a dollhouse-like set; I photograph the set in the studio, then add myself to the image in post-production, through digital compositing techniques. The scenes depict key events in a traditional Chinese life, from taking piano lessons as a child to getting married to having children of your own. However, in each scene, “live” human hands extend into the frame, arranging, adjusting, and manipulating its elements. I intend these hands as a metaphor for the way young people in China are guided through these customs, and how their lives are essentially manipulated by outside forces and people (family members, authority figures, and so forth) who have a stake in enforcing traditions.

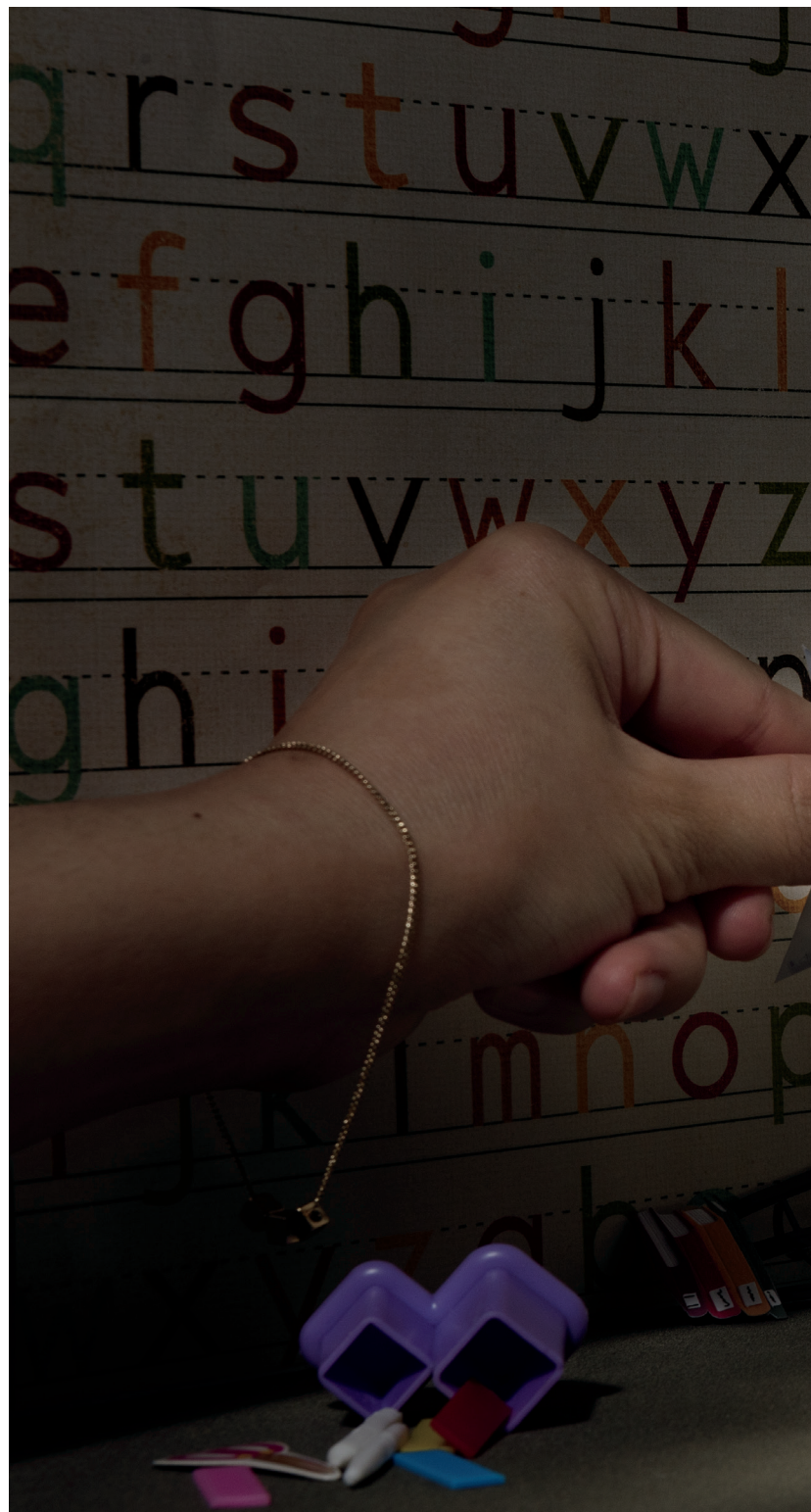
Although my Chinese peers and I have all felt the power of these forces, I hope to remind viewers of the degree to which all of our lives are controlled by cultural expectations—even in the West, though perhaps not to the degree that this is true in China. In so doing, I want to make the case that while it may be difficult to challenge these expectations, it is worth doing—and that it is possible to find a balance between personal hopes and ambitions and the expectations imposed by family and society.







Failing Grade







































THANK YOU

My dear lover / assistant Sailin Li.

SVA MPS Digital Photography faculty and staff, Elizabeth Avedon,
Fran Forman, Katrin Eismann, Tom P. Ashe, Marko Kovacevic,
Russell Hart, Debra Klomp Ching, Greg Gorman, Michael Foley.

All of my family, friends, loved ones, and fellow students.

