

## like a luminous animal

Written by Pei-Hsuan Wang

It feels like I'm flailing through my 30s. For the past three years I have been a hot, tired mess agonizing over lost loves, broken connections, unfulfilled career goals, and the fact that I've failed every marker of success set to be achieved by women my age. All the while the world outside burns, fueled by life-and-death matters – racial inequalities, climate change, covid pandemic... – that seem to have rendered my existential worries maudlin and trivial. Habitual content consumption feeds a persona with impotent rage, however safe inside the bubble of a global elite habitus. I find myself prolonging a privileged process of self-care while exerting influence no larger than the confining aura of my cynical inaction and perpetual bashing of the consensus.

It was amidst this personal crisis that 'like a luminous animal' took shape. In a way I sought and found comfort and alliance in the work by makers I adore. In Anna Maria I discover a role model that has demonstrated with her life and art that a prolific pathway for women artists to excel is possible; in Eiko's work I see my own questions and wonderings of the self materialized; Hao's *Brace* so viscerally subverts a violent tool and symbol of the establishment into forms filled with life and magic; Philipp's paintings caress and console my innermost pain and desire, two often overlapping sets of feelings; Josh articulates my own frustration as a privileged individual in a divisive world saturated with grievances; Elina defines a version of womanhood rising above heartbreaks and common narratives; Breda's steadfast belief in deep emotions as human's life-force even in the harshest of times offers me hope in love and joy.

Perhaps this project questions the singularity of our experiences as a way to unsettle the notion of the self. It is perhaps also self-serving as a tentative call for inner peace and motivation by ways of borrowing other creative individuals' powers to disrupt the cycle between optimism and discontent within my system. It is my hope that our collective loves and struggles bring about nuanced points of departure, and that open revelations of passion and fragility reveal not weakness but empathy and empowerment.