

Fingers Crossed - Things Hang on the Wall (Taming)

text by Elliot Jeffries (elliottjeffries.info)

Concrete fingers are crossed, a gesture of hope, wishing for luck. These fingers are so desperate, however, that they wind upwards around one another tightly, hopelessly. From the hand extends an arm. Gnarled and disfigured, it is less bodily and even less structural. Downward from this brutal mass shoot two rebars, sharpened at their tips and seductively, viciously even, polished. One points downwards, or hangs limp. The other bends upwards and to the side, as if it is trying to reach for something and failing. Bound by its own structure, its integrity defunct. The form becomes insect; antenna of a crushed cockroach, twisted and broken, clinging onto a final moment.

Around the deformed arm and above the trailing rebars, is a muzzle, hardened and glossed by indeterminate industrial process. Its hardness disrupts its materiality but reinstates the form as a device for restraint. Its roughness suggests use, yet its sculpted bagginess is embroiled with the fingers' hopelessness. Not so clear is what the fingers are crossed for; a lottery win? Sex? The sagging muzzle an attempt at fetishistic self restraint, a simulation of the dominant hand of another?

Two polished padlocks hang from the muzzle seemingly responsible for holding it loosely to the form. This doubling conjures a certain anxiety — the muzzle must be held on, and the thing must not slither away. Contradictorily, the muzzle does not do its implied job, restraining nothing at all, merely performing an illusion of domination or self-capitulation with the freedom to leave.

Via industrial crucifixion, Youn Yunlong Zhang points towards modern turbulence of masculinities. The slick materials of the city are ripped away exposing the sharpened rebar alluding to a certain structural violence, a sharpened spear-like vein that reinforces a manufactured facade. The muzzle becomes a symbol of disoriented authority, a flaccid attempt at taming violence or self capitulation; fetish becoming reference to identity struggles of queer masculinity. Finally the crossed fingers attend cynical surreality, sordid hope after deformation and decay, struggling between contrary desires for imposed structure and independence.