

ARTFORUM



PARIS

Antibodies

PALAIS DE TOKYO

13, Avenue du Président Wilson

October 23, 2020–January 3, 2021

Xinyi Cheng, *For a Light*, 2020, oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 39 3/8"

“Antibodies”—the products of the immune system without which we must be anti-bodies, physically restrained, abstaining from contact—is a large, rousing mixed show, consisting of works by twenty international artists. Caught in the briefest of moments between its opening and Paris’s second lockdown, the exhibition is bursting with art that commands you variously to stand well back, keeping your distance, or to come closer.

Achraf Touloub’s ink and acrylic line drawings are filled with meticulously repetitive patterns, overlaid with large swollen forms. At the top of the remarkably prophetic *National Materials*, 2019, is what looks like a coronavirus, spike proteins and all. Touloub’s lines construct habitats, not boundaries, and the highly wrought patterning of his work draws the viewer in.*

Tala Madani’s haunting animated video *The Womb*, 2019, documents the development of a fetus while episodes from human history play out in a film projected onto the inside of the uterus. From assembly lines to Abu Ghraib, from hieroglyphs to nuclear war, nothing depicted seems immune from invasive violence. Her oil paintings also have a cinematic character—bodies, safely isolated in dark, sealed-off spaces, are on the verge of dissolving into pure light.

There is a huge amount more. Forensic Architecture’s *Cloud Studies*, 2020, is an impressive investigation of the capacities of states and corporations to use gas to make unlivable atmospheres—the pandemic’s brutal course, we are reminded, is also shaped by power relations. Xinyi Cheng’s fluent paintings of sincere moments of sensuality, all the more moving for their introversion, are a joy. The exhibition’s enormous scope means that the theme of immunity is often inconsistently addressed—a small price for so much invigorating clamor.

— Tomas Weber