



## **Ghost exhibit at Rome's MAXXI Museum.**

*Yuxin Li, a young Chinese artist, interviews Yuxin Li and tells us the story of a small urn and its contents, hidden inside the most important contemporary art museum in Italy.*

**Let's start by talking about you. Who is Yuxin Li?**

*An artist. I'm 23 years old, and I come from Wenzhou in Zhejiang, Cina. In 2009 I had to move to Italy for personal reasons.*

**How much did this trip cost you?**

*Seven thousand dollars and five years of work at a reduced salary.*

**What do you do?**

*I work in a textile factory that's under Chinese management.*

**How do you reconcile this job with your activity as an artist?**

*When you are deprived of freedom and you've had painful and humiliating experiences like I have, there is a lot of material to work with. I believe firmly in the equation art=life.*

**But how do you find the time to actually do art?**

*During the day my hands are busy at work on the sewing machine, but my mind is busy elsewhere: it imagines, it creates, it plans. When I can, I go to my cousin's workshop where I have some space where my ideas can take physical form and become tangible.*

**What are you working on now, artistically?**

*I'm working on two projects that will continue until 2014. They are both about the condition of semi-slavery that I deal with on a daily basis. Then there's "Ghost Body".*

**Let's talk a bit about this last one you mentioned. Let's start from the beginning.**

*Last spring I got pregnant and when my bosses realized it, they forced me to abort during the third month of pregnancy.*

**Who was the father?**

*I prefer not to answer that. I would only like to add that it was a very painful experience for me.*

**Who performed the abortion? Was it done in hospital?**

*No! It was a clandestine abortion. The doctor agreed to give me the tiny body that fit in the palm of my hand.*

**He was generous...**

*I'd say he was interested...he got paid for it. He gave me my child in a glass jar with formaldehyde to avoid decomposition.*

***What happened to the jar?***

*I emptied the contents into a small urn, which I hid in a safe place inside the Maxxi Museum in Rome.*

***Why didn't you bury the body or have it cremated?***

*Because otherwise it would have disappeared completely. That tiny body is sort of evidence for me, a tangible sign of a life that never came to be.*

***Please forgive my insistence, but why hide an urn in an art museum?***

*"Ghost Body" is a clandestine piece, just like my life has been clandestine in recent years. My work is clandestine. The forced abortion was too. "Ghost Body" is an invisible exhibit about us, the invisible people.*

***So we could say that "Ghost Body" is a metaphor for your existence?***

*Perhaps. Anyway I planned it as an action. If one day by chance someone discovers the little urn, only then will the work be complete.*

***So the urn needs to be "discovered": why?***

*Discovering the urn is a bit like discovering my story and my child's story. It's like shedding light on those who live in the shadows, on those whom, like us, are phantom bodies.*

***Is there also a symbolic aspect to your work?***

*Even if there were, I'm not interested in it. Ghost Body is a political piece! As long as there are restrictive immigration laws there will be lots of stories like mine. Paradoxically, these laws end up favoring the exploitation of the innocent, instead of contrasting it.*

***These laws exist all over the world!***

*In contemporary societies immigration is an inescapable reality. Peoples have always migrated, throughout history, bringing with them their ideas and thus riches! Laws that squelch freedom end up creating tragic living conditions like those I am subject to.*

***Is Yuxin Li your real name?***

*No, it's a pseudonym. I've been using it since 2009. As soon as I arrived in Italy the first things I did were: buy a mobile phone, and open a Facebook and an email account, all using the name Yuxin Li.*

***You use the internet a lot, how do you spend your free time?***

*I have very little free time. I read a lot in the evening, mostly art books and magazines in Italian, also to improve my language skills. I use Facebook very little even though I've been on it for four years... the rules for us are: no names and above all no images! But I'm also Google-dependent.*

***What are your plans for the future?***

*I want to stay in Italy. I now know the language pretty well, as opposed to English. Once I've paid off my debt, I'll try to find a way to make a living, also as an artist.*