

ARTFORUM



Doris Guo, *Momentary Scare & Inconvenience*, 2019,
pine, hardware, chair, 22 x 25 x 11 in.

Doris Guo

BODEGA

167 Rivington Street Lower Level East
January 18–February 24

Doris Guo's exhibition is solemn, as if one has been summoned to a church or a graveyard for prayer. Here, a funereal series of Chinatown restaurant chairs are nestled within wooden, coffin-like receptacles. Though the chairs appear to be upright, the artist has amputated their back legs, giving us only a truncated front view. (They won't be seating anyone for a happy communion anytime soon.) These innocuous objects are

meant to, both literally and symbolically, contribute to the circulation and consumption of Asian food, yes, but also bodies, capital, and a certain kind of aesthetic. They are there to offer a seat at the table, so to speak, at every after-party and gallery dinner hosted in a local eatery—familiar rituals undergirding the lifestyle of the city's culture class.

Momentary Scare & Inconvenience (all works 2019), the most elegant of the four chair sculptures, recalls the feeling of being queued up at a crowded restaurant, anxious that an evening's plans might be derailed, while the vinyl-covered seat of *Cushion Sound* looks like something that would be found at a three-dollar dumpling spot, easily splashed and soiled, but never permanently stained.

Although there's been much discourse in New York about how art businesses are displacing Chinatown's populations, there is no polemic here. Rather, Guo's show feels like a meditation on the ways in which our contradictions, desires, and anxieties can be located in these bits of furniture that underpin vast social systems. *Bronze Guestbook II*, a sculpture cast from a found rock, is the only piece that has not been stripped of function and rendered ornamental. The work is mounted on a wall next to the gallery's reception desk, alluding to how the devout make pilgrimages to holy shrines, sometimes rubbing a special sculpture for good luck. It is meant to be worn down, broken in by communal gatherings and tenderness—in other words, it is an object of faith.

— *Hiji Nam*