
Mutations in Yellow: Turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, and chili powder on rice paper

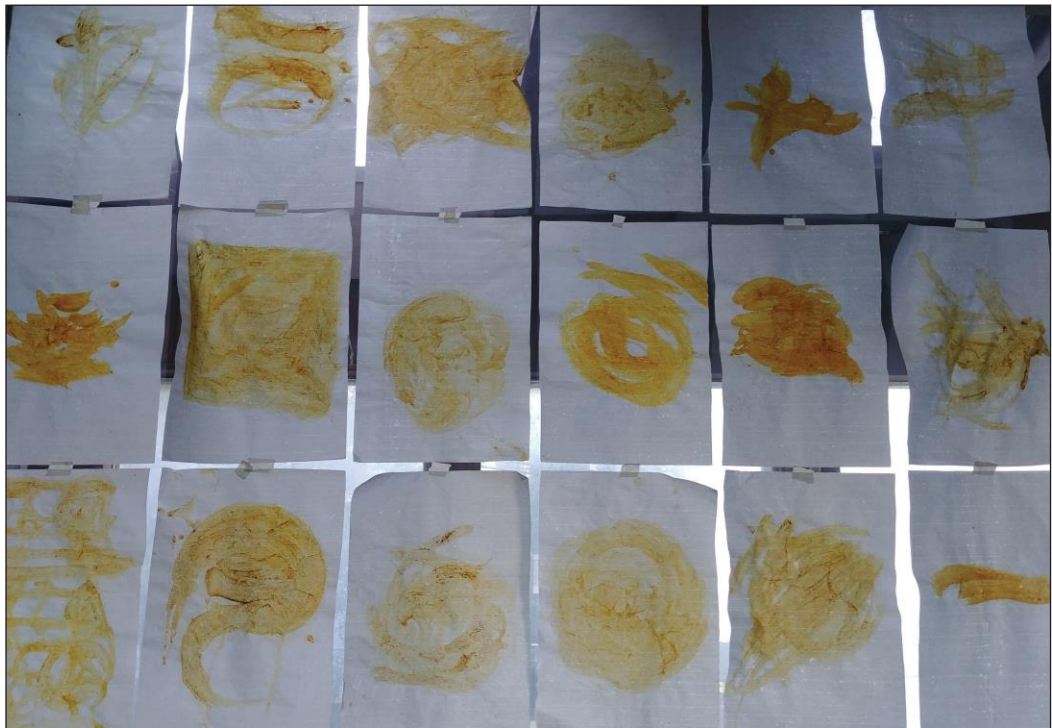
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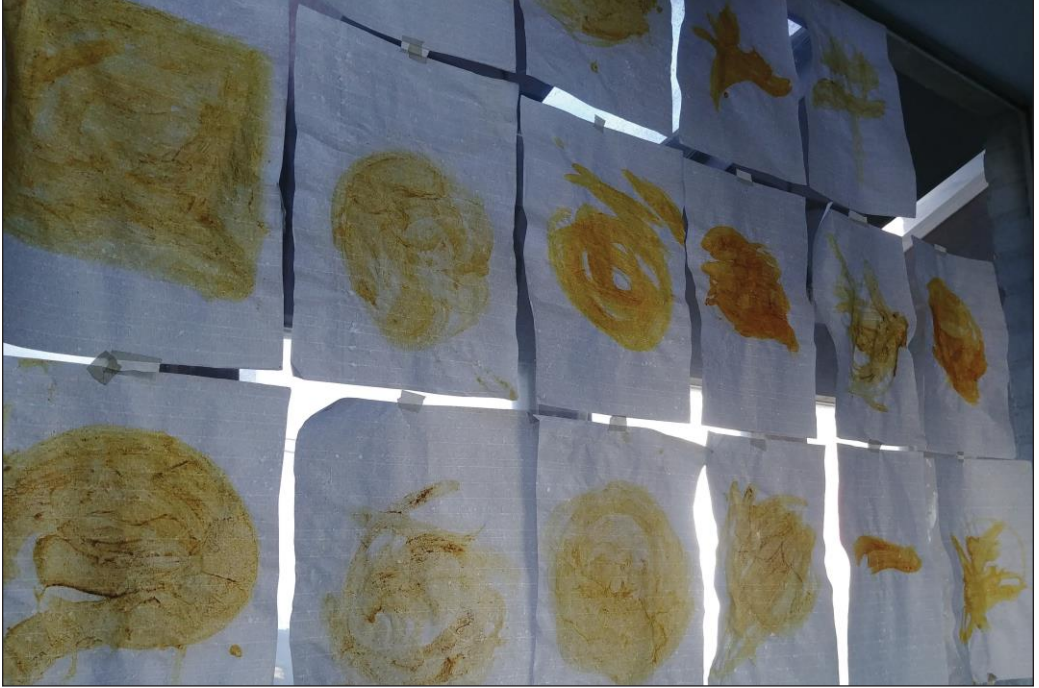
Abstract

Mutations in yellow, a serial arrangement of yellow pigments on rice paper are reflections on botany, viruses and empire. The studies investigate the materiality of yellow, using turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, chili powder to make imprecise diagrams; reminiscent of, but neither calligraphy nor painting; gestures that trouble and muddy the taxonomies of yellowness and the historical entanglements between 18th century colonial studies of plant disease, imperial routes and racial capitalism. The invention of “yellow” as a racial description associated with “dirty, lurid, treacherous, suspect, diseased, weak, lazy, melancholy, unproductive” appeared in natural science publications, frequently representing maladies and infectious afflictions to biological and human (European Man) health and reproduction. The images evade scientific conventions of pictorial accuracy that typify botanical illustrations and instead present the colour yellow as medium in non-linear, non-teleological “mutations”—present and willfully unproductive, like withdrawal from the descriptive apparatus mapping “yellow” to infection, foreignness and invasion.

Keywords

virus, yellowness, mutations





Author Biography

michelle liu (they/she) is an artist and a non-architect with a BFA in Visual Arts and a MA in Theory and Criticism. They are a settler living in Tkaronto on territories subject to the Dish with One Spoon Covenant, from Hong Kong and the nowhere of diaspora belonging. Their minor practice involving sometimes writing, sometimes sound, sometimes video, and sometimes interventions, searches for moments, encounters and shifts that resemble art and explores the themes of opacity, softness, texture, messiness, and critical resistance at the edges of nothingness and empire. Her engagement with architecture is oblique and is concerned with de-professionalization and practices in architecture that trouble relations, structures, and economies of domination. They are interested in experimenting with and mobilizing art and architecture as revolutionary service for the people, as well as punctuations in the rhythms of everyday life. They are inspired by abolitionist imaginaries, fugitive infrastructures, oceanic poetics, slow militancies, and riotous possibilities towards collective liberation.