



Zihan Zhao

Made of 3D-printed PETG, a contemporary material that replaces natural fibers, the work recalls the columnar textile objects that stand among the earliest traces of human civilization. Formed through continuous twisting and the layering of fibers, these artifacts evolved into both functional tools and carriers of meaning.

MORE INFO:

Khipu — which means “knot” in Quechua — is a codified form of communication that anthropologists have yet to fully decipher. Nonetheless, it stands as evidence of an early form of expressive consciousness. The physical structure of the khipu, composed of bundles of intentionally twisted and knotted fibers, reveals how the manipulation of material evolved into a primordial language. With *Khipu / Rope-Making*, Zihan Zhao explores this material language through a contemporary sculptural lens. The work reinterprets the expressive potential of flexible materials, pushing beyond the boundaries of traditional textile art. Drawing on her experience with polymer-based substances, Zihan Zhao brings these materials to a state of softness that allows them to be woven. Through intuitive bodily movement and a subconscious sensitivity to the material, the designer twists and shapes the matter within a limited timeframe—just before it solidifies—thus capturing both process and form as the sculptural imprint of a fleeting expression.



Exhibition:

Dark Times Bright Signs

“Times have been dark” more than once in history, and “the world has been falling apart” for centuries, countless times, generation after generation. Today, though, dystopia feels particularly realistic—certified, experienced electronically in real-time, and reinforced by scientific theories now accessible to all. Apocalyptic thinking not only surrounds us—it has become mainstream. Driven by this condition of hyperawareness, swept by waves of eco-anxiety, saturated by conflict and forced to face a rapidly-evolving reality—a new generation is developing new languages, perhaps forms of reworking, toward new balances, of hope. At the same time, though, the apocalyptic scenarios around us—or rather, upon us—cannot help but permeate our gaze, consciously or otherwise, shaping the creative language of today and the way we parse the world.



BIO DESIGNER:

Zhao Zihan graduated from the Accademia delle Belle Arti di Brera di Milano, in Italy. In 2012, he founded the 'Spazio Z Art Studio' in Milan. Zhao Zihan was invited several times to take part to the Fuorisalone exhibition at Milan Design Week with his works. In 2021, he created the brand UNICOGGETTO, that includes works ranging from furniture design to product design to art installations. His works are influenced by traditional Chinese painting art and Italian art design, and are committed to establishing an artistic context under new technological conditions.