

Tales of the Altersea (Prologue)

Lap-See Lam

Opening: September 15, 2023, 6–9pm

Artist talk: 6.30pm, Lap-See Lam in conversation with Carina Bukuts (curator Portikus Frankfurt/Main)

Tales of the Altersea (Prologue) marks Lap-See Lam's second solo exhibition at Galerie Nordenhake and her first in Berlin. The artist invites into a prologue of the narrative *Tales of the Altersea* previously presented at the Portikus, Frankfurt and the Swiss Institute, New York. Like a literary feature, this enables a new introduction to the works on show in Berlin, created in the past four years including the programmatic VR installation *Phantom Banquet*.

Lap-See Lam explores questions of interpretation, representation and identification in her practice working both with contemporary technology as well as traditional references and techniques. On one hand, the notion of glitches informs the artist's visual language, referencing a 'generation loss' both in a literal data transfer and an idiomatic inheritance of knowledge throughout family generations. On the other, symbolic features from traditional forms of storytelling such as shadow plays, to the décor of Western Chinese restaurants become an allegory for the experience of the Cantonese diaspora. The artist's biography weaves various features into her storytelling. In 2014 her parents had to sell the family restaurant founded by her grandmother after emigrating from Hong Kong to Sweden in the 1970s.

The tales of the *Altersea*, as told by the artist, centre around the *Sea Palace*, a dragon-shaped, three-story floating restaurant, now repurposed as a haunted house in the Gröna Lund amusement park. The ship had sailed from Shanghai to Europe in the early 1990s, when the business had to transform due to economic losses in various cities. Its journey and aesthetic, anchored in a historic reality, inform the artist's fictional narrative and materialise in the works on display in this exhibition. When entering the gallery, the visitor is met by *Dahlia* (2023), a ghostly green neon sculpture floating underneath the ceiling. Lam's underwater tales feature *Dahlia* and her sister *Julie* as the protagonists, who swim toward the wreck of the *Sea Palace* while encountering a complex entanglement of symbolic figures, monsters, and ghosts that separate them. When the sisters finally reunite, they resurrect a dragon spirit and escape from the decaying ship.

Continuing into the main gallery space, *Dahlia* introduces the *Portal* (2023), a sculpture and shadow play that depicts two dragons chasing a flaming pearl and recall the *Sea Palace's* ornaments. The entire gallery space is softly darkened with curtains, while further neon sculptures such as *Stern*, *Bow*, and *Starboard* (all 2023) glimmer on the walls enlivened by the dragon shadows, all tracing the dragon head and tail of the *Sea Palace*. *Julie* (2023), a kinetic sculpture, calls attention to herself with subtle swimming movements, now half dragon escaping to safety. In these works, Lam delves into almost magical imaginations of Chinoiserie, defined by imperialist trading, while reflecting on the reality of migration to both claim ownership of and complicate the idea of cultural heritage – a duality that characterises the artist's mythical installations.

The second room of the gallery, separated with a narrow curtain, allows entrance to her seminal VR-installation *Phantom Banquet* (2019-20). Viewers are invited to family-style sit at a round dinner banquet to be transported to another reality via VR-glasses. With a narrative about a girl with ghostly encounters, Lam guides through an architecture of a real-life Chinese restaurant represented only by its shell and marked by 3D-scan glitches to reveal hidden histories and possible futures.

Lap-See Lam was born in Stockholm in 1990, where she lives and works. The artist has been invited to create the idea and framework for a Gesamtkunstwerk at the Nordic Countries Pavilion for the 60th Venice Biennial, opening in 2024. Working alongside her are the artist Kholod Hawash from Finland and the composer Tze Yeung Ho from Norway. Her work is currently showing at the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo NY. Recent solo exhibitions include the Swiss Institute, New York City, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, and Lidköping Konsthall, Sweden (all 2023); Bonniers Konsthall (2022); Trondheim Kunstmuseum (2021); Moderna Museet Malmö (2018–2019); and Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2022, 2018). *Tales of the Altersea* is currently on view at Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki as part of the Ars Fennica 2023 exhibition. She has taken part in group exhibitions at venues including Ghost 2565, Bangkok (2022); KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2022); Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2021); PinchukArtCentre (2021); Uppsala Konstmuseum (2020); Performa 19 in New York (2019); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (2019); Luleå Biennial (2018); Kópavogur Art Museum, Kópavogur (2018); and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2017). Lam was the winner of Dagens Nyheter Culture Prize in 2021 and a recipient of the Maria Bonnier Dahlin Foundation Grant in 2017. In 2021 she was shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize. She is nominated for the Ars Fennica Award 2023.

Exhibition: September 15, 2023–October 28, 2023
Opening hours: Tue–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 12pm–6pm

Lap-See Lam presents her work *Dreamers' Quay (Singing Chef Suits): The Three Jugglers, The Teenager A'Yan, Afock*, 2022, at Studio Mondial as part of the Gallery Weekend Festival from September 16–17, 2023

Please contact the gallery for press images and further information.