

The Asian Art Museum Mobile Guide

Contemporary Art

An Acoustiguide Tour

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52. CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE CERAMICS

NARRATOR:

Welcome to our rotating collection of ceramic art from Japan. The Ceramics Masterpiece Moment showcases work from historic kilns and the modern movements of the 20th century, as well as a deep dive into contemporary ceramic practices. Karin Oen, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art.

KARIN OEN:

The evolution of ceramics is not any one trajectory, and that's the beauty of this type of installation. It allows the diversity within ceramic arts to shine through.

We have traditions that are very rooted in the particular kind of clay and glaze that is related to specific areas. We see ash-based glazes that have a sort of rustic look and are actually quite difficult to predict how they will fire. And then we have extremely precise colored glazes that are applied in a very technically difficult and interesting way.

NARRATOR:

Pieces also vary depending on the firing processes, whether in a wood-fired kiln or an electric kiln, which offers more precise temperature control.

Visitors will notice another difference in form. Shape is sometimes purely sculptural and sometimes dictated by function, as a cup meant for drinking must hold liquid.

KARIN OEN:

But it's never as simple as that; there's always an element of composition and application of decoration to the form that needs to be taken into consideration. These types of works will be displayed alongside works of art that are distinctly not vessels, that cannot hold water or tea in the way a traditional vessel would. It's interesting to see what remains, what's common between the forms that are completely sculptural and the forms that are functional the way traditional vessels are built.

55. COLLECTED LETTERS (F2016.2) (L)

NARRATOR:

Collected Letters is composed of about 1,600 individual, handcrafted porcelain pieces. They are upper- and lowercase Latin letters or what are known as “radicals” ... components of Chinese characters that form words when combined.

The artist, Liu Jianhua, was inspired by this building’s original use as San Francisco’s Public Library, which opened in 1917. The installation was designed specifically for this space in our Loggia. Karin Oen, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art.

KARIN OEN:

He particularly wanted his installation to be sited in a part of the building that looked old, that looked like it was from 1917. And he was interested in the challenge of creating a contemporary work that would seem at home in this Beaux-Arts travertine architecture.

NARRATOR:

The artist compared the effect of these delicate, dangling pieces to gradually falling snow. The storm’s vortex at the top dissipates as pieces fall closer to earth. This, in his view, is the “visual experience of language” ... moving through history from the past to present.

KARIN OEN:

It’s a bit of an analogy to the way you can try to make sense of the world. You can collect books like a library, or you can collect works of art like a museum. And you can try to set them up in orderly categories. But at the end of the day, there’s always a certain amount of chaos based on the world, and how these things will never come together perfectly and neatly. And yet it’s still a really beautiful and honorable enterprise to try to create these spaces for learning and for exploring the world around you.

NARRATOR:

Tap “More” to view an interview with artist Liu Jianhua.

56. MY HOUSE, MY TOMB, Afruz Amighi (Lent by the artist) (L)

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

My name is Afruz Amighi. The artwork you are seeing in front of you is entitled *My House, My Tomb*, and I made it in 2015.

NARRATOR:

This installation made from steel, fiberglass, and chain references the white marble Taj Mahal in Agra, India. The Mughal emperor Shah Jahan commissioned it in 1632 as a tomb for his wife Mumtaz Mahal.

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

The story behind the sculpture *My House, My Tomb* is based on one myth that grew up around the Taj Mahal. And one of the myths was that the emperor Shah Jahan wanted to create an identical version of the Taj Mahal across from the Taj Mahal for himself, where he would be buried, across from the tomb of his favorite wife. The only difference is that this second Taj Mahal would be built out of black marble, as opposed to white marble.

And so that concept of obsessional love and of rejoining that object of your devotion in the afterlife was so poetic and appealing to me that I thought, let me reenact or let me re-actualize this myth. Let me construct a sculpture that represents both the white marble Taj Mahal and the black marble Taj Mahal, and let me see how they interact with each other.

NARRATOR:

Amighi achieves this effect through skillful use of lighting. She was also struck by the imposing character of the Taj Mahal, beyond its *physical* structure.

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

The image has this incredible range, from being very poetic and beautiful, to this very kitsch backdrop for selfies. It's almost like a universal image. And so I thought to myself, what a challenge would it be to use something that is so iconic.

For me, the most important thing about people experiencing *My House, My Tomb* is that I hope that it's experienced viscerally, emotionally, in people's bodies, in people's heart. And that doesn't usually happen in a cerebral way or a logical way; it happens just sort of in an inexplicable, like, experiential way. And that's my hope for the piece.

(Tap "More" to hear information about the artist and see a video of the artist talking about the work.)

Artist Info: Afruz Amighi

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

When I was very young, in Tehran, my family came to the United States to visit. And during that time, there were rumblings of revolution in the country. And we ended up just staying here permanently.

When I was sixteen years old, I sort of told the world that I was an artist and that I was going to go to art school and that was going to be my destiny. And that was very quickly and abruptly shut down by my parents. And so that was kind of like a dream deferred. And I always made art, even while I was studying other things like political science.

NARRATOR:

Amighi drew during her early years, eventually integrating her drawing practice with sculpting.

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

What brought me to sculpture was that I really like materials in my hands. For me, drawing was ... has its own magic and it has its own immediacy that I really like; but is much more pristine for me than sculpture. I feel like sculpture was not only immersive for me making it but for the person experiencing it.

NARRATOR:

Her works reflect an integration of two- and three-dimensional approaches.

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

They don't have the volume that people associate with sort of more traditional sculpture. They are these planes that are constructed with steel but very much look like someone were to just draw in the air.

Light, and the manipulation of light, it's a material that I use in the work. Light is just as important in all of the sculpture works that I make. So light is urgent for me, but it's also a

very whimsical and playful part of the process of me making my work. And usually the last part of it.

NARRATOR:

While architectural references are apparent, Amighi's sculptures also reflect an early fascination with opulent decorative objects. But she reimagines them, uncovering a duality.

AFRUZ AMIGHI:

I've used that beauty to lure the audience as it lured me as a child, which is to sort of make these kind of shimmery sculptures that are reminiscent of jewelry and chandeliers, but ... If you look carefully at the forms, they look sometimes like rockets or missiles or some of the killing devices that are manufactured in the United States.

57. INTRODUCTION TO THE ART TERRACE

ABBY CHEN:

I am Abby Chen. I'm the head of the Contemporary Art Department at the Asian Art Museum.

This is the East West Bank Art Terrace, and it's reflecting the museum's 2020 transformation, and the artwork on view at the Art Terrace offers a new way of thinking—not just the presentation of the art itself, but the relationship between the museum and its surrounding environment, its connection to the community, to the local Bay Area, and the world at large. We have featured artwork of both local artists and international artists. But at the same time, the artwork off the terrace is connected to the entire façade of this new construction.

From the top of the building to the second floor, people can see art through the glass window, and also to the street level. For people driving down from Hyde Street or walking around the Civic Center area, they will be able to look at the art up close, and personally. And by the time they get to the terrace, they get to experience this large outdoor space in the company of the contemporary art.

NARRATOR:

The works on display are a combination of the museum's collection, loans, and specially commissioned works. The art is set against the techno-futuristic sheen of the new construction's metallic surface. The juxtaposition of the new look with the original building's classical architecture complements the way the diverse artworks reflect new and old, tradition and innovation. As a whole, this reflects the Museum's commitment to both local and global communities.

ABBY CHEN:

We're here in the heart of Civic Center, in the city of San Francisco, which is the center of innovation for the world. But at the same time, is really the destination for immigrants. And we want to emphasize that these artworks represent the people here and their interests, but at the same time, that we're also there, out there in Asia and out there with a lot of what's

happening in Asia as well. So being here and there and to communicate that experience with the audience is what we're trying to do with this transformation.

58. *FOUNTAIN OF LIGHT, Ai Weiwei (Collection Farschou)*

NARRATOR:

In 1920, Russian architect and artist Vladimir Tatlin completed his *Monument to the Third International*. It was intended as a model for a structure to house the Comintern—the international organization that aimed to bring about world communism. However, it was never built, remaining just a concept. Ai Weiwei, who is from the People’s Republic of China, pays somewhat ironic homage to both Tatlin and his artwork in *Fountain of Light*. Abby Chen is the Head of the Contemporary Art Department at the Asian Art Museum.

ABBY CHEN:

He was paying tribute to Tatlin but also blended his own perspective into this work, reflecting his own experience and vision coming out of the new communist country after the Soviet Union. So Ai Weiwei maintains the linear quality of the metal frame, but he translated the glass walls into chandeliers and crystal beads.

NARRATOR:

Ai Weiwei’s revisionist take on the tower as a sparkling chandelier can be understood as a reflection on the absurdity of Tatlin’s concept for the massive structure which was, in turn, a monument to the ambition of communism.

By using crystal beads mass-produced in China, Ai Weiwei also acknowledges the inverse of communism ... materialism.

ABBY CHEN:

I think Ai Weiwei’s rendition speaks to the lost utopian communist dream of Tatlin’s time. And he replace it with the contemporary aspiration of material wealth and conspicuous consumption.

And I think this particular sculpture is an embodiment of that.

59. ***DON'T MESS WITH ME*, Jas Charanjiva (Commissioned by the AAM, courtesy of the artist) (L)**

JAS CHARANJIVA:

Hi, I'm Jas Charanjiva. I'm a street artist from Mumbai. I'm the artist behind *Don't Mess With Me*, a piece I've created for the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.

NARRATOR:

Also known as the Pink Lady, the mural portrays a woman in traditional Indian attire. She wears a *dupatta*—the scarf over her head—and a *tikka*, the piece of jewelry hanging down from the top of her head that is often associated with brides and might be part of a dowry. At first glance, she might appear to be demurely adjusting her clothing, but upon closer inspection, it is clear that she is meant to be a symbol of defiance and strength.

JAS CHARANJIVA:

I used fuchsia for *Don't Mess With Me*. One, it's my favorite color. I associate it with rebellion and punk, since I was a teen. I also knew that it was going to be eventually on the street, so it was something I wanted to pop. I wanted it to have a bit of a cool factor, so others could resonate with it.

Her lips are also a little pursed, like she knows something but she's not really gonna say something; but her eyes say it all because she's quite wise.

You see a strong woman, because she's got a strong attitude, and she's changing things around by uncovering her face and having this stern look.

The modern piece that I created in that artwork was the brass knuckles that say "Boom." And that represented the new Indian attitude towards women and women's safety.

NARRATOR:

In 2012 in Delhi, a twenty-three year-old physiotherapy intern was brutally attacked and raped by a gang of men. Indian law prohibits publishing the victim's name, but she was widely known as *Nirbhaya*, meaning "fearless." That event, the victim's death, and the protests that followed, inspired Charanjiva to create this image.

JAS CHARANJIVA:

I may be really angry at first. And that's part of my process. But it's based on maybe some positivity, some change that can happen.

So she's got the boom with the fist, but she's also got a thumbs-up. And I wanted it to also be seen to some people when they're walking by as something like, "Hey, you know, you got this. Everything's gonna be okay." Yeah, I just wanted some positivity in there, too. And I wanted it to be a piece where different people could take away something different from it.

(Tap "More" to hear information about the artist and see a video of the artist talking about the work.)

Artist Info: Jas Charanjiva

NARRATOR:

Artist Jas Charanjiva was born in the UK. After moving to Toronto, she and her family settled in the Bay Area when she was about ten years old. Here, she immersed herself in music and local culture.

JAS CHARANJIVA:

My parents were kind of strict; they didn't give us much freedom as American kids had. I was very attracted to things that were kind of like rebellious and this subculture, that I actually wanted to be a part of and was attracted to.

I got into new wave, and then postpunk, got into the street art scene and the skate scene. That's when I really got, you know, everything just opened wide for me. And it's affected the way I look at art, the way I create art. I discovered *Thrasher* magazine and then that's how I got into like underground artists, started kind of copying their lines and just really getting to the way that they create art and the things they say, as well, because that's what really attracted me.

When I was older, I started really appreciating Mexican murals ... mostly because they're telling stories of struggle and history. I always like to have some history behind my work, some substance. And I so found those really, really fascinating.

NARRATOR:

Charanjiva currently lives in Mumbai, where she has cofounded a collective of Indian graphic artists called Kulture Shop and continues to create street art.

JAS CHARANJIVA:

With *Don't Mess With Me* coming to a museum like Asian Art Museum, I think that's something that really shows a lot of progress, like maybe pushing the boundaries. That is something that I always love to see, things pushing the boundaries, even as a child.

60. **LUMINOUS GROUND, Ala Ebtekar** (*Commissioned by the AAM, courtesy of the artist*) (L)

ALA EBTEKAR:

My name is Ala Ebtekar, and I'm an artist. A lotta my work takes interest in this idea of light and the work *Luminous Ground* is in many ways, birthed by light.

NARRATOR:

The installation is comprised of 1,800 tiles. Each tile, made from clay mined in California, is hand-shaped and fired. Each piece is treated with photographic chemicals and then exposed to sunlight, using negatives from NASA and ESA's Hubble telescope, creating a chemical reaction on the surface of the tile. Each tile is then washed in water.

ALA EBTEKAR:

In this process, the red iron changes into the blue by being exposed to the sun. So from the color of the earth to the color of the sky, these works are essentially birthed.

So in this whole project, the four elements come together from the earth, the clay, to the air, to the light, sun, firing it. And the water that actually fixes the process and makes it permanent.

I have this larger vision of this kind of thing coming together. But my day-to-day is comprised of working tile by tile. And throughout the day, these small pieces slowly start to build a larger image that is essentially the sky. And although you may experience this thing as this huge fifty-foot-long installation, it really becomes more like architecture.

NARRATOR:

Ala Ebtekar's work ponders many things; among them are the vastness of time and our place in the universe.

ALA EBTEKAR:

We oftentimes look up at the sky and time is flattened, a sense of we're looking at a still image or a still moment. But it's really much more than that. We're essentially looking into

billions of years. How do we fit in this larger timeline? How do we fit underneath the gaze of twelve billion years, kind of looking down at us?

It makes me think of a poem by Omar Khayyám, an 11th-century poet, astronomer, and mathematician; he writes:

“Drink wine and look at the moon and think of all the civilizations that the moon has seen passing by.”

Because I think this idea of imagining ourselves as the objects of the twelve-billion-year gaze, can open up a lot. That simple action might, in turn, help us navigate these contemporary uncertain times.

(Tap “More” to hear information about the artist.)

Artist Info: Ala Ebtekar

ALA EBTEKAR:

My background is in drawing and painting and installations, but, you know, it's really about creating an experience. And that experience oftentimes is a combination of different mediums. It's photography and ceramics or it's photography and canvas, painting. And so I think I'm interested in creating experience for the viewer, for the audience.

I was born and raised in the Bay Area but also spent a lotta time in Iran and actually studied there. I did a year of university training school there, but it's really outside of the academic institution that I found most of my inspiration, and studied Iranian coffeehouse painting for years.

I also worked in the tradition of book arts and illumination and I think something about that practice always stuck with me and carried through, whether I was working small-scale, on found book pages, or working on canvas or in ceramics, thinking about light and thinking about concepts of illumination. Or thinking about ways that texts could be illuminated, or images could be illuminated.

NARRATOR:

In making works that could embody light, Ebtekar draws from Iranian and other Middle Eastern traditions from architecture to ceramics.

ALA EBTEKAR:

A lot of the things that I've been also looking at and influenced in my practice is architecture, and specifically looking at Safavid-era architecture from Iran. Thinking about spaces like Ali Qapu, which literally translates to "the Sublime Portal" in Isfahan. These palaces were adorned with tiles that depicted the heavens and cosmos, and so the work is in line with that.

NARRATOR:

Ebtekar also consciously integrated *Illuminated Ground* with the Asian Art Museum.

ALA EBTEKAR:

Thinking about the history of the building, and also a museum that has housed so many ceramic objects from history. I think that was also another factor of wanting to work in a ceramic medium, but in a very contemporary way.

Really thinking about the collection and how this might even bridge certain works that are centuries apart. A lotta my work pulls from tradition in many ways. And I also see it as a continuation, as this kind of a living thing.

61. **BREAST STUPA TOPIARY, Pinaree Sanpitak (2019.7, .10, and .11) (L)**

PINAREE SANPITAK:

Hello my name is Pinaree Sanpitak. I'm a visual artist based in Bangkok, Thailand. This work is called *Breast Stupa Topiary*.

NARRATOR:

These are three from a series of eight Breast Stupa Topiary sculptures that explore the shape of the stupa—a hemispherical mound representing the burial mound of the Buddha, within which his relics, or the relics of great Buddhist teachers or monks, would have been deposited. The structures are also sites of meditation. These forms, executed in polished stainless steel, represent Sanpitak's exploration of another shape.

PINAREE SANPITAK:

About two months after I gave birth to my son, I started these works, which I call *Breast Works*. I was looking for a symbol to differentiate between male and female. And I really liked the breast form. I built this symbol that first it was portraying the self, my own experience. And then it grew, it evolved through the time. At one point the whole body appeared, and I thought maybe I'll move on to something else. But then it was still so intriguing for me, so I kept looking on it, in different mediums, in different experience.

I coin the term *breast stupa* from a piece in 2002, *Breast and Stupas*. So my intention was to combine the sacredness and the sensual together.

NARRATOR:

Sanpitak spent years creating different versions of her *Breast Stupas* from various materials, most of which were ephemeral. But she challenged herself to create something sturdy that could be placed outdoors.

PINAREE SANPITAK:

By the time I came to the stainless steel topiary my sculpture installations have already grown into these interactive sculpture installations. And the audience becomes part of the work. Just by walking through, just by looking, their experience becomes the work.

The topiary is not just only about trees, plants; but it's also about the air, about the people, about the environment.

Actually we designed it according to a leaf we call patinous leaf. And I work with an architectural firm here in Thailand to get the construction right. So people could go in and out, if they would like.

So hopefully, they can spend time, they can have a picnic underneath, you know. Enjoy.

(Tap "More" to hear information about the artist.)

Artist Info: Pinaree Sanpitak

NARRATOR:

Born in Thailand in 1961, Pinaree Sanpitak's artistic career has been impacted by many influences, both cultural and personal. It began with her education.

PINAREE SANPITAK:

I went to art school in Japan on the Japanese government scholarship and graduate in 1986. I wasn't sure what I was going to do. So I really owe it to my Japanese professor, he gave me the confidence. And I was fortunate enough to find my language by my third and fourth year, so actually I started from photography and then moved on to mixed-media, two-dimensional works, paintings. And, gradually involving a whole range of materials, starting from paper, which was my first love. Maybe that's the Japanese background.

NARRATOR:

Sanpitak added a variety of mediums to her practice, including some that were ephemeral, like wax, charcoal, and silk. She also experimented with others that were more sensory—for example, food, sound, and movement.

Now she makes her home in Bangkok and her surroundings provide fodder for her ongoing work.

PINAREE SANPITAK:

Being here in Thailand, the Buddhist institution is very rigid, very structural, but the forms that surrounds me, it's very universal. So I take those forms and mix them to my personal views.

It's probably like a storytelling from this one person. Though people know a lot about my Breast Works, but actually it's about the body. And it's about the experience of the human being through each body part. And how they would interpret those experience.

And then hopefully the audience can open their own perspective, too.

62. *I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE*, Chanel Miller (*Commissioned by the AAM, courtesy of the artist*) (L)

CHANEL MILLER:

My name is Chanel Miller.

NARRATOR:

The author and artist was largely known as “Emily Doe,” the survivor of a 2015 Stanford University sexual assault case—until she relinquished her anonymity and reclaimed her story, starting by publishing her memoir, *Know My Name*, in 2019.

CHANEL MILLER:

The title of the piece is *I was, I am, I will be*. They’re unfinished sentences. I encourage any viewer to fill in those phrases with their own experiences and to take the time to reflect on their own life trajectory.

The central character in the piece is androgynous. I want anyone viewing the piece to be able to project themselves into it.

The first phase is *I was*. And that character is reclined. I wanted that character to be dormant, because the past is fixed. You can’t change it and you can’t manipulate it in any way. Then we move to *I am*. That character is sitting cross-legged. In the present is the only time we can be fully grounded. And the present is always here, if we need to center ourselves.

And then *I will be*, the character’s gradually getting up. The character isn’t raising its arms in victory, just kind of exiting the panel with the gaze upward, indicating it’s forward-facing and looking forward to whatever may come into its life.

NARRATOR:

In processing her personal journey, Miller has contemplated healing as a cycle, one that is never truly over, but revisited and synthesized as a part of a whole.

CHANEL MILLER:

I hope this work serves as a protected space to reflect on your own journey. I think most of the time, we're hurrying along; that we think it's enough to just get by, get by, get by. So to create pause and to really, you know, sit with your own life will be very valuable to me.

NARRATOR:

Miller is also aware of the context in which her work is displayed.

CHANEL MILLER:

I'm honored that my mural will be visible alongside murals by two other women of color. I think it's really important to see the full spectrum of what activism is. It doesn't look like one thing. It's allowed to be bright and fun. I love that I get to coexist with them, that our pieces are so different, but that come from a similar place.

(Tap "More" to hear information about the artist.)

Artist Info: Chanel Miller

CHANEL MILLER:

I started making art as a kid, as most kids do. And I primarily would make cards for other people. And it may seem trivial, but to me, it became really clear what role art played and that it is my way of connecting to people. Growing up, my parents always allowed me to fill up the walls. It wasn't punished. And I loved that I had that kind of liberation, that they welcomed it, that that kind of expression was fully embraced.

NARRATOR:

In 2015, Chanel Miller was sexually assaulted on the Stanford University campus. That trauma, and the events that followed, threatened to overtake her life.

CHANEL MILLER:

I think I was first introduced to the world through the media as a victim. And that was an identity that I didn't want. And I thought if I don't begin to actively shape myself, then there's an identity waiting for me that will be all-consuming and threaten to define me for the rest of my life.

NARRATOR:

During the trial of her attacker, Miller felt constrained by the legal proceedings.

CHANEL MILLER:

In court, I remember there was a moment where there's a huge piece of white paper, and it was being used to create a timeline of the events of that night. And I was given a really thick marker to write in times. But I remember thinking, I wish the jury could yell out any objects or animals or foods, and I could draw them. I could finally show them that I'm more than this person confined to this really tight and dark narrative.

NARRATOR:

Expressing herself in that manner is integral to her art practice.

CHANEL MILLER:

Now, I make a lot of illustrated narratives. I like doing them about my day-to-day life. It's my way of capturing things that may be overlooked as mundane; but I really think there's so much value in the ordinary objects of our lives.

Art requires imagination, and imagination is the key ingredient to empathy. And if I could make you feel what I had felt, then you understand where I'm coming from and there's deeper empathy. And that helps me.

63. INTRODUCTION TO *MEMENTO*

ABBY CHEN:

I am Abby Chen. I'm the head of the Contemporary Art Department at the Asian Art Museum.

Memento, featuring Jayashree Chakravarty and Lam Tung Pang, serves as the inaugural rotation of Hambrecht Contemporary Gallery, the space that is recently dedicated to exhibiting contemporary art from the Asian Art Museum's collection. And this is part of the transformation project in 2020. The opening of this gallery demonstrates our commitment and a direction to present the artists of our time.

NARRATOR:

The title of this rotation, *Memento*, points to the way that these installations engage current issues, whether environmental concerns in Kolkata or social uncertainty in Hong Kong, through reminiscence and recollection.

Each of these artists draws from their classical training as painters to create genre-defying, boundary-pushing artworks that mirror the connection between both the tradition and contemporality this museum celebrates.

ABBY CHEN:

The goal is ideally that we do not have a gap between the traditional art and contemporary art. And I think that also helped me to select these two particular pieces as the debut of the Hambrecht Contemporary Art Gallery.

The ultimate goal is not just about the artworks themselves, but also about creating this experience to allow our audience to engage with the artwork in a way that everyone will have a new reflection with themselves. And to see our own inner world with a new light that is ignited by these contemporary artists and their creations.

64. A DAY OF TWO SUNS (2019), Lam Tung Pang (2019.69) (L)

LAM TUNG PANG:

Hi, this is Lam Tung Pang, the artist of *A day of two Suns*.

The video I took for *A day of two Suns* is not on purpose. It's just my daily practice on video shooting. I just carry a portable camera every day and then sometime I just standing there to do a shooting of particular images or particular subjects. So, what you saw in *A day of two Suns* is layers and layers of video which capture from different location and different period of time in Hong Kong.

NARRATOR:

This collection of moving images, layered upon the sculptures and found objects placed in front of the screen, creates a lushness and a depth.

LAM TUNG PANG:

For example, the video on the television, on your mobile phone, on computer, laptop, they all on the shiny screen. I think video should have its texture, and texture is the only reason why we have to look at the real objects.

So, in *A day of two Suns (2019)*, apart from projecting four videos on the very long paper, I also create objects and, in this setting viewers, I invite to walk around, or to look at all those little details, objects, scale model.

The artwork is about a tangible experience where you could walk around and also you're like, the viewers' shadows, and the objects arrange around the paper, will cast another layers of moving images on the top of the video I did.

NARRATOR:

A day of two Suns (2019) is Lam pushing the boundaries of traditional Chinese landscape painting, using his chosen mediums and materials to evoke the multidimensional way he perceives his surroundings.

LAM TUNG PANG:

Landscape has two meaning for me. One is a land for escape; escape from where you are, from the noise of society. And the second is about layering of time, of emotion, and of imagery from different times and different perspectives. Landscape is like a container that it contains different kind of things. It hold different kind of emotion. It holds layers of time. It grows, and it will never stop. Only our imagination will stop, but not the landscape.

(Tap “More” to hear information about the artist.)

Artist Info: Lam Tung Pang

LAM TUNG PANG:

This is Lam Tung Pang. My family name, Lam, means woodland. Tung means the east and Pang means the legendary bird. So, you understand my name as the legendary bird from the east of woodland. So, my name is like a imagery landscape. Landscape has been the subject of my work since I was a kid, I think. I used to do a lot of copying Japanese comics and playing Lego to build like different kind of scenery. I used to put a lot of figures around the landscape I draw, and the scenery I built with Lego to create stories. This is how I spend most of my time when I was a kid.

NARRATOR:

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Lam studied art there before going to London for his graduate degree.

LAM TUNG PANG:

The idea of the landscape was inspired by Chinese painting. I studied Chinese painting when I was in the University of Hong Kong. At the very beginning, I find it's so boring and I almost fail all the subjects. But then, when I back from London, after I finished my MA course, I found that the Chinese landscape, especially in those ink painting, shows the idea of escapism. So, I call it land escape instead of landscape.

For me, landscape is not that kind of idea of eternity. But because of layers of time and layers of memory, it's always very fragile.

I think there is a story behind the artwork, but my work, the purpose of my work is not to tell a story, but rather an experience.

65. PERSONAL SPACE (2010.326), Jayashree Chakravarty (2010.326) (L)

NARRATOR:

Jayashree Chakravarty's *Personal Space* is a monumental work that acts as a repository for the artist's memories and reflects her development as an artist. She layered paper, fabric, acrylic and oil paints along with tea and coffee stains to create this massive scroll, covering it with images, patterns, and textures. In her open-ended process, she is not always sure how the work will develop.

JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY:

For the paintings, it happens like this, that I put the glue and paper and my material and all; and then after, say, about twelve hours, I'm seeing the result. So this twelve hours, I'm just imagining. And to be very frank, this process is very good for me, because I like this imagination, which is helping me to decide for many other things.

NARRATOR:

Her training as a traditional painter is also evident.

JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY:

As a painter, I normally use very thick paint. And I wanted to have a kind of substitute of that in my paper work. I soaked the paper in water and could spread it on several areas, so that it became a kind of busy with textures. That's how I created a kind of extra-painted area with paper pieces.

NARRATOR:

After finishing her studies, Chakravarty settled in an area adjacent to Kolkata. At that time it was marshy and wild, with few houses. Within a relatively short time it was overtaken by rapid urbanization. The geographical motifs, maps, diagrams, landscapes, and urban structures present in her large works represent her memories of such places.

JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY:

The large-scale work, probably it comes from the kind of land that I have seen, the kind of openness I have seen, 'cause I wanted to have it in front of me, that it can stand in front of me, and a huge area that which can also cover the seen areas. Always I felt that scale of the work is not a problem for me. But what I'm putting on it, it should be very free-floating.

At this moment, whatever I am doing, that is totally an eyewitness, what's happening around me.

(Tap "More" to hear information about the artist.)

Artist Info: Jayashree Chakravarty

JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY:

I was born and brought up in the eastern part of India, called Tripura. And that place was a kind of hilly place. And there used to be jungle in different areas.

And I used to go with my father to the jungle often. And the most important thing that I remember, that how I used to see the nature is from atop of the hill and seeing it. So it's a kind of vast area of nature that I could see. So probably, this is the strongest influence or strongest memory that I could be with nature, connecting myself with the nature.

NARRATOR:

Chakravarty studied painting in Santiniketan and completed her postgraduate studies in fine art in Baroda. She adapted her training in traditional painting to make large-scale works that include dense collage.

JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY:

For even for the larger paper work, I followed a kind of very traditional technique that is for traditional tempera painting. We pasted several layers of paper, thin paper. And I followed the same thing, same process, and did large papers. I made out of the same process. That was several layers of paper on a fabric cloth. And so gradually, it became like a large format to work on. Whatever the length and the width I wanted to make, I could go on adding papers and cotton fabric.

NARRATOR:

The piece takes on an architectural feel—it curves and undulates in a way that allows Chakravarty the opportunity to immerse the viewer in this imagery.

JAYASHREE CHAKRAVARTY:

And that is always, the vastness of the nature that I wanted to bring in my work. I used to experience nature; I wanted to bring it in my work. So that space was very much important as I was trying to put together the scene areas into my work.

But it's always a learning process. Like, one painting I'm doing, and then I'm doing a paper work—it's all about painting. Because when the painting is standing in front of me as an architecture, that's another way of looking at it. So it is always there.