

A new part in Lap-See Lam's growing suite:

Begin Again, Begin Again

Lap See Lam with Kholod Hawash

10 May–17 August 2025

The exhibition "Begin Again, Begin Again" consists of a film installation by Lap-See Lam, with embroidered costumes by Kholod Hawash. The installation has emerged from the multimedia work "The Altersea Opera", which was shown at the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2024. The film and the costumes have been purchased for the Moderna Museet Collection.

In her work, Lap-See Lam (born 1990 in Stockholm) explores Cantonese cultural heritage and her own family history. In immersive installations and films, she combines traditional Cantonese storytelling with today's advanced film, 3D and animation technology.

In the dim light of the exhibition room, the audience is met by her evocative half-hour film "Floating Sea Palace", which is projected onto a thin screen, surrounded by a structure of bamboo pipes.

Textile artworks by Kholod Hawash (born 1977 in Basra, living in Finland) hang from the bamboo pipes. The embroidered quilted costumes are also worn by the characters in the film.

Growing Suite and the Dragon Ship

The film installation is the latest work in Lap-See Lam's growing suite about shifts in meaning that occur when people, lineages, symbols and objects are moved from one place to another, from one context to another.

The story, like several of her works, takes place in and around a Chinese dragon ship, where past and future merge, legends and actual events are intertwined, dreams and reality become one.

The three-story ship, which exists in reality, was built as a large floating restaurant in the early 1990s. It later became a rather busy entertainment palace, served as a ghost ship at the Gröna Lund amusement park and was then anchored in a port in Stockholm's northern archipelago.

Lo Ting and the tormented Fish People

The main character in "Floating Sea Palace" is Lo Ting. A mythical figure from Cantonese folklore who is half human, half fish, and is said to be the ancestor of the people of Hong Kong. In Lap-See Lam's work he appears in two versions and in two times – the past and the future.

The fateful narrator's voice belongs to the character Singing Chef. He describes how the Fish People, to which Lo Ting belongs, are caught in nets and tormented by humans. They are exploited as labour on the seabed in search of pearl oysters or are forced to risk their lives for their delicious meat.

In the story, Lo Ting boards a dragon ship, but it becomes a dangerous journey. The ship steers across the turbulent waters of the North Sea, is struck by lightning and sinks to the bottom of

the sea. In the accident, Lo Ting is torn in two, man and fish are separated from each other. Incomplete and with a constant longing for his origins, he tries to find his place in a new world and a new time, with a new beginning.

Kholod Hawash's visual stories in quilting

Kholod Hawash works in the textile craft technique "jodaleia", which is the Arabic term for quilting or wadding, and "tatreez", embroidery. Iraqi quilts are traditionally created from recycled textiles that are sewn together by hand, and are used to cover and protect the furniture and walls of the home.

Kholod Hawash's visual world is a colourful meeting between the present, the future and the ancient myths of Mesopotamia, as well as animals and nature from the landscape around Basra. The motifs also express a strong feminist conviction and every person's longing for freedom and the right to decide for themselves over their lives. Stitch by stitch, her detailed visual stories grow, in both winding sequences and in tableaux.

The exhibition includes a selection of the artworks that Kholod Hawash created for "The Altersea Opera" in Venice 2024, including "Pastoral Meadow", "Magical Seaweed" and "Light of Pearl". Moderna Museet has purchased five costumes for the collection.

Cuartor: Asrin Haidari.

The exhibition is shown in Moderna Museet's new, smaller exhibition space, which covers 144 square metres.

Facts

"The Altersea Opera" (2024), Nordic Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia

"The Altersea Opera" was presented as part of the Nordic Pavilion at the 60th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia (20 April to 24 November, 2024). It was conceived and conceptualised by Lap-See Lam, and realised in collaboration with composer Tze Yeung Ho and textile artist Kholod Hawash.

"Floating Sea Palace", Lap See Lam (2024)

The film is a three-channel video work and consists of a combination of sequences from the environment on board the ship and in the Nordic Pavilion in Venice, as well as 3D scans with shadow animations.

Cast

Past Lo Ting: Bruno Hibombo

Future Lo Ting: Ivan Cheng

Singing Chef: Ping-Kwan Lam

Dragon: Sofia Jernberg

Creative team

Director of photography: Lisabi Fridell FSF

Technical director and animation: Martin Christensen

Original music and sound design: Marlena Salonen, Linus Hillborg

Sound mix: Linus Hillborg

Please, visit the press section at the Moderna Museets website for the complete credit list.

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