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Ysabelle Cheung on

Ellen Pau 鮑藹倫

at Edouard Malingue Gallery

Irene Chou, Ed van der Elsken,
Jaffa Lam, Shirley Tse,
Yim Sui Fong, John Currin
and more...

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Jaffa and a Piece of Good Water by Jaffa Lam. Courtesy the artist.

A socially engaged artist, **Jaffa Lam** (b.1973) has always valued the process of creation more than finished works. For more than a decade she has been collaborating with an association of former workers in the Hong Kong textile industry, creating collective sculptures and art installations that have mostly been exhibited in public spaces. She mainly works with recycled materials: wood and trees from building sites, fabric from old umbrellas and natural elements found at the sites where she works. She treasures any form of craftsmanship and always tries to connect with local know-how. Inspired by her early training as a classical Chinese painter, she retains the poetic spirit of this tradition while anchoring her work within today's social and political fabric. A free thinker, she maintains some distance from the art market, inviting the audience to resist a cold, efficient, money-driven system that tends to invade everybody's lives.

林嵐（生於1973年）是一位投入社會活動的藝術家。她對創造過程的重視遠勝於成品。十多年來，她一直與香港紡織業的前工人協會合作，創作集體雕塑和藝術裝置。這些作品大多在公共場所展出。她主要使用回收材料工作，如建築工地的木材和樹木、舊雨傘的布料和她工作地點的自然元素。她珍惜任何形式的手工藝，並經常嘗試與本地專有技術聯繫起來。受到她本人早年的中國古典畫家訓練的啟發，她保留了這一傳統的詩意，同時將自己的作品聯繫到現今社會和政治結構中。她是位自由思想家，與藝術品市場保持著一定距離，並邀請觀眾抵制一種冷淡、高效以及金錢至上的體系。這種體系往往會侵害每個人的生活。

你的藝術事業由雕塑開始，使用板條箱的木材和其他回收物料，並以投入社會活動與本地社區交流。現在看來你想將自己的事業擴展到表演藝術和劇院。你最初在舞台上的經歷是什麼？為什麼要開始在劇院工作？

每當我的藝術事業向前邁進時，我會跟隨筆刷而走，就如我早期作畫中國山水畫習慣的動作，那是我所有裝置作品的主要創作方向。中國山水的奇妙之處在於您可以創建行走路徑、以樹木作躲藏處或在亭子下乘涼並休息和欣賞風景。對我來說，在我的裝置中行走就如在這樣的風景中穿梭的一種體驗。我添加的元素反映了旅程的完整性和豐富性，並不一定能促進理解：相反，它們會擴大想像力，就像你正走進一個巨大和大風的柔軟袋子中一樣。

由於空間有限，我實際上並不一定十分喜歡劇院的舞台，但我也很好奇並欣賞劇院的局限性。不知何

故，它與在長方形宣紙上繪製的風景很相似。

至於我融入作品中的身體動作和聲音，它們也是在回應一個必要性。我對聲音有很多記憶，也許是因為聲音是我們與世界的第一次也是最後一次接觸的感覺。當我想像如何在風景畫中行走時，聲音自然發出，然後身體隨之自然運動。

你能告訴我你在《Wandering in the Dream》（2018年）的經歷嗎？這是一部多媒體作品，其中包括在花園裡播放的川劇的錄音。

靈感來自我參觀四川廣安段家大園子這個巨大的空曠文物館後的同理心。房主的女兒只能留在樓上狹窄的空間，窗戶很小。它使我想起了古典故事《牡丹亭》。其中一位年輕的女性角色幻想甜蜜的戀愛，後來因戀愛而死。我認為最初的故事並不那麼浪漫：這個女孩可能因為被困在那兒而感到納悶，以至於她開始產生幻覺。夢想與現實纏繞在一起，產生了一場悲劇。

你已經重寫了這個經典故事，聚焦在於這種局限感和精神疾病。對你來說，這個女人在我們當代社會中體現了什麼？

從廣義上講，這種隱喻性情況適用於所有少數群體或任何觀點不符合當前道德標準的人。重寫現有故事意味著首先要質疑。許多故事可以更新，合時宜地反映當今社會。甚至邪惡的觀念也隨著時間而改變。不變的是，仍然有一些人因為與眾不同而被邊緣化或判定為邪惡。這也是創造力的強大障礙：如果年輕人做的太創新和太新穎，他們就會害怕不被接受。

觀眾既可以坐在那裡聽錄音，也可以在花園裡自由漫步，好像參與裝置藝術一樣。這裡有許多裝有水並反射天空的船隻。這是否比喻生命為幻覺？

對，沒錯。當你走在一條來自古老河流的鵝卵石上時，你會接觸到比房屋本身更古老的歷史。水箱也連接到歷史較近代的一部份。我從

Caroline Ha Thuc: You began your art practice as a sculptor, working with wood from crates and other recycled materials, and engaging socially with local communities. Now it seems you want to expand your practice to performing arts and theatre. What was your first experience with the stage and why did you start working in theatre?

Jaffa Lam: Whenever I move on during my art practice, following my brush as if I were wandering in my early Chinese landscape paintings remains a key creative direction for all my installations. What is amazing with Chinese landscapes is that you can create paths to walk, trees to hide or kiosks as shelters to take a rest and enjoy the scene. For me, walking in my installation is an experience of travelling in such a landscape. The elements I add reflect the completeness and richness of the journey, and do not necessarily nurture understanding: instead, they enlarge imagination, just as if you were walking inside a huge, windy, soft bag.

I actually don't really enjoy the stage in the theatre, since it is a limited space, but I am also

curious about and appreciate its limitations. Somehow, it bears connections with a landscape drawn on rectangular rice paper.

As for the body movements and sounds that I integrate into my work, they also respond to a necessity. I have a lot of memories about sound, maybe because sound is our first and probably last contact with the world. Sound comes out naturally when I imagine how I walk in my landscape, and then the body moves naturally with it.

CHT: Could you tell us about your experience with *Wandering in the Dream* (2018), a multimedia work involving a recording of Sichuan Opera played in a garden?

JL: The inspiration came from a feeling of empathy after visiting this giant empty heritage house, Duanjia Dayuanzi in Guang'an, Sichuan; the daughter of the owner only could stay on a little upper floor with a very tiny window. It reminded me of the classical story *The Peony Pavilion*, in which a young lady dreams of a love affair and later dies because of it. I think the

original story is not that romantic: the girl was probably so sick of being trapped there that she began to develop illusions. Dreams and reality entwine tragically.

CHT: You have rewritten this classical story focusing on this feeling of confinement and mental illness. For you, what does this woman embody in our contemporary society?

JL: In a broad sense, this metaphorical situation applies to all minorities or to anyone whose views do not match the current standard of morality. Rewriting an existing story means above all questioning. Many tales could be updated to better reflect today's society. Even the idea of evil has changed over time. What has not changed is that there are still people who are marginalised or judged as evil just because they are different from others. This is a strong obstacle to creativity, too: many young people refrain for fear of being outcasts if they do something too creative and too original.

CHT: People could either sit and listen to the recording or wander freely in the garden as





Previous page and above: *Weaving Rock* by Jaffa Lam. Courtesy the artist.

if they were taking part in the installation. There are many vessels containing water and reflecting the sky: is this a reference to life as an illusion?

JL: Yes, that's right. When you walk on pebbles that come from the ancient river, you reach a part of history that is older than the house itself. The water tanks connect also to another, more recent part of history. I collected them from various families' trash stores, where people discarded them when a water pipe was installed in the village. The reflection of the sky in the water reminds us of the illusion of the distance of things, when you feel things are

closer just because you watch their mirror image. Yet they all embody channels to reach back in time, and the work invites people to enter this time tunnel through these different media.

CHT: For *Weaving Rock* (2019), you installed a loom and a rock into a temple in mainland China, alluding to the legend of the creation of Earth and the beginning of silk production in the country. The fabric you exhibited was the last piece woven before this type of craftsmanship was banned during the Cultural Revolution: why do you try to reconnect ancient tales with contemporary history?

JL: I believe that manual work allows people to be smarter. If you think back to the evolution of human beings, you can see how our ancestors progressively liberated their hands, not just surviving and making functional tools but also creating. During the Cultural Revolution, arts and crafts were forbidden precisely to prevent people from thinking. I am using this tale to connect back to ancient times and invite the villagers to create again. It worked as a kind of enlightenment: they suddenly felt that they possessed a treasure they need to protect.

各個家庭的垃圾箱收集村子安裝水管後人們丟棄的水箱。水中的天空反射使我們想起了事物距離的錯覺，尤其是從鏡中倒影看的事物，往往看來較現實感覺接近。然而，它們都體現了時光倒流的渠道，而這作品邀請觀眾通過這些不同的媒體進入時光隧道。

在《Weaving Rock》(2019年)中，你在中國的一座寺廟中安裝了一個織機和一塊岩石，寓言地球的創造和在中國開始生產絲綢的傳奇。你所展示的織物是文革期間禁止這種工藝之前編織的最後一塊織物。你為什麼嘗試將古代故事與當代歷史重新聯繫起來？

我相信手工藝可以使人變得更聰明。如果回首人類的進化，你會發現我們的祖先如何逐漸解放雙手，不僅生存和製造實用的工具，而且創作。在文化大革命期間，嚴格禁止手工藝品是為防止人思考。我用這個故事來回溯到遠古時代，並邀請村民們再次創作。它起到了一種啟發作用：他們突然覺得自己擁有需要保護的寶藏。

你是如何與本地居民互動的？為什麼與當地居民交流如此重要？

仍有許多形式的社會藝術可以探索。我也想知道為什麼我從事社交藝術這麼多年，因為我是一個相對害羞的人。也許我是故事的收藏者。

對我而言，藝術是探索世界的工具。最近，我更加專注於內在自我，而藝術創作並不是那麼重要。

這就是為什麼我可以將自己創作的作品留在創作現場的原因：就這件作品而言，我把石頭留在了廟宇中。重要的是與當地人的相遇，在特定地點創作的過程。

儘管你用紫外線將其變成現代化，但該編織岩似乎代表了傳統的支柱。它體現了傳統的持久性嗎？

正是。附近有一個非常著名的岩洞，有2000多年的歷史。我從山上選擇了一塊較小的岩石。它的大小與坐我在廟裡時的大小大致吻合。根據當地人的說法，每塊岩石都可能有一個古老的神。這也是為什麼我使用它並說服他們這是一塊編織石的原因，讓他們相信需要重拾編織藝術。我希望人相信自然的力量，而不是任何其他形式的權威。

編織的動作一直存在於你的作品中，從你在早期作品裡將回收物料縫合在一起開始。這個動作如何引起你的共鳴？

我學到的第一項工藝是刺繡，是我小時候住在中國時，我的鄰居教我的。我上學後才畫畫。也許這就是為什麼我繼續使用柔軟的材料的原因：我自然地回到線和針上。我猜想最後，細微的線的內在力量將克服並覆蓋巨石。這也可能是文明的隱喻。

你的作品使用基本元素，如水、石頭甚至讓聲音的傳播的空氣之類。這是與自然重新建立聯繫的一種方式嗎？

是的。水、石頭、空氣以及木材當

然是我喜歡的元素，也許是因為我在一個非常接近自然的鄉村小鎮長大。我以前在瓜田裡休息，爬上樹，與狗一起睡在乾草堆中，在河岸附近玩石頭。相比之下，我從沒對火感興趣。小時候，我住在母親當醫生的醫院附近。我記得當時有人在一家醫療工廠的爆炸中被燒傷。火是如此可怕。對我來說，這意味著破壞。

你為什麼覺得今天借鑒傳統，尤其是中國傳統文化，仍然有意義？

我不能忘記我曾居住過的地方和生活，尤其跟我後來和現在仍然擁有的城市生活相比。我一直記得舊時的感覺，即使我知道我來自福建的小鎮福鼎也不再一樣了。我仍然夢見它，但由於害怕破壞這個夢想，再也回不去了。

我們不應該忘記過去；今天我們所看到的仍然是傳統，只是有新包裝。我是一個重視傳統的人，我喜歡所有工藝品。如何將這些跨代的傳統轉化為當代，以及如何探索現在人對它們的依戀，是我的長期研究課題。這是一種冥想的形式，就像回到心靈的殿堂一樣。當然，因為我來自中國，所以我無法迴避中國傳統文化，那是我的安心之處。我不知道沒有藝術我該怎麼辦。我對中國傳統文化也有同樣的感覺。

你最近時常在文物古蹟中工作，例如三棟屋博物館。這是香港典型的客家圍牆房屋。你是否覺得歷史容易被遺忘？

CHT: How did you engage with the local population, and why is it so essential for you to immerse yourself in the local?

JL: There are so many forms of social art that can still be explored. I also wonder why I have been doing social art for so many years since I am a relatively shy person. Maybe I am a collector of stories.

For me, art is a tool to explore the world. Recently I've focused more on the inner self, and making art is not so important. This is why I can leave the works I create on the site of their creation: in the case of this piece, I left the rock in the temple. What matters is the encounter with the local people, the experience of making the work in specific sites.

CHT: This weaving rock seems to represent a pillar of tradition, even though you transformed it with UV light so that its form became contemporary. Does it embody the persistence of tradition?

JL: Yes, exactly. There is a very famous rock cave nearby, dating back more than 2,000 years. I chose a smaller piece from the mountain, whose size approximately coincides

with my size when I sit in the temple. According to the local people, every rock there could be an ancient god. This is also why I used it and convinced them it is a weaving rock, so that they would be convinced they need to go back to the art of weaving. I hope that people believe in the power of nature and not in any other form of authority.

CHT: The gesture of weaving has always been present in your work, starting from your early pieces where you stitched recycled material together. How does this gesture resonate for you?

JL: The first craft I learned was embroidery. My neighbours taught it to me when I was a kid living in China. I only drew later, when I was in school. Maybe this is why I keep working with soft material: I come back to thread and needles naturally. I guess that in the end the inner power of the tiny thread will overcome and cover the giant rock. This might also be a metaphor for civilisation.

CHT: You work with basic elements, such as water, stones and even air through the diffusion of sound: is this a way to reconnect with nature?

JL: Yes, water, stone, air and of course wood are elements I like, maybe because I grew up in a rural town, very close to nature. I used to rest in the melon field, climb up the trees, sleep with dogs in dry hay and play with rocks around the riverbank. In contrast, I have never been interested in fire. When I was a kid, I lived near the hospital where my mother worked as a doctor. I remember seeing people burnt all over from a medical factory explosion. Fire is so scary. For me, it means destruction.

CHT: Why do you feel it might still be relevant today to draw from tradition, and especially traditional Chinese culture?

JL: I cannot forget the place and life I lived, compared to the urban life I had later and still have. I always remember the old feeling, even if I know that Fuding, the little town I come from in Fujian province, is not the same any more. I still dream a lot about it but never go back, being afraid of destroying this dream.

We should not forget the past: what we see today are still traditions but covered with new packaging. I am a traditional person and I enjoy all the crafts.



Wondering Dream by Jaffa Lam. Courtesy the artist.

是的，人們不是忘記歷史，就是把它庸俗化。這所房子的對聯消失了。此外，燈籠絕不應該安裝在大廳中間，因為它覆蓋了非常重要並由皇帝頒發的列祖列宗神主牌。政府官員仍然無視這些文化習俗。我無法改變他們，但至少我可以參與講述歷史的項目。在這次展覽中，我放下了燈，在大廳安裝了LED對聯。

去年夏天，你在 Re-Rub 的《世界人權宣言》中組織了一場集體表

演，其中有婦女參加了通過揭露《世界人權宣言》的表演。這些女人是誰？

這不僅僅是婦女的活動，只是碰巧有更多的女人出現。這項公眾演出旨在釋放人們源於我們混亂的社會狀況的混亂、憤怒、失望、恐懼和遺憾。

你藝術創作的一個重要部分是與女性一起工作，尤其是前員工。這仍然是優先事項嗎？

是。我最近為 Manifesta 12 的

《Across the Border》項目製作了白色的「主婦」旗幟。該項目由西西里島巴勒莫市的 Filippo Minelli 發起。我之所以選擇白色，是因為它意味著投降，但也因為它雖然不可見，但在所有五顏六色的旗幟中都脫穎而出。我仍然非常踴躍參與香港婦女勞工協會的活動。

你認為香港近期事件對你的藝術創作會有多大影響？

現在很難說。幾年前，在7月1日遊行之後，我發表了《世界人權宣言》。在2014年台北現代

How to transform these cross-generational traditions into contemporary forms, and exploring people today's attachment to them, is my long-term topic of study. It is a form of meditation, like going back to the temple of the soul. Of course, since I come from China, I cannot avoid traditional Chinese culture, which is my cocoon. I don't know what I could do without art, and I have the same feeling with traditional Chinese culture.

CHT: You have been working a lot recently at heritage sites such as the Sam Tung Uk Museum, a typical Hakka walled house in Hong Kong. Do you feel history tends to be forgotten?

JL: Yes, people either forget or vulgarise history. In this house, the couplets [lines of poetry that are hung on the sides of the doors] have disappeared. Besides, the lantern should never have been installed in the middle of the hall because it covers the very important family horizontal board, which was an award from the emperor. Government officers still ignore these cultural customs. I cannot

change them but at least I can participate in projects that allow history to be told. For this exhibition, I took down the lamp and installed an LED couplet in the main hall.

CHT: Last summer, with *Re-Rub Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, you organised a collective performance involving women revealing by frottage the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Who were these women?

JL: This was not just a women's activity; it just happened that more women showed up. This public performance aimed at releasing people's anxiety, anger, disappointment, fear and regret that originate from our chaotic social situation.

CHT: Working with women has always been an important part of your practice, especially former workers. Is this still a priority?

JL: Yes. I recently made a white "housewives" flag for Manifesta 12's flag project *Across the Border*, initiated by Filippo Minelli in Palermo [Sicily]. I chose white because it means surrender, but also because although invisible, it stands out among all the colourful

flags. And I am still very much involved with the Hong Kong Women Workers' Association.

CHT: To which extent do you feel that your art practice is or will be impacted by recent events in Hong Kong?

JL: This is hard to say now. A few years back, I made the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* after the first of July march. *Singing under the Moon for Today and Tomorrow*, exhibited at Taipei MOCA 2015, was inspired by the 2014 Umbrella Movement. This time I cannot work too fast as the issue is more complicated. My art cannot respond quickly to events: it is more about deep reflection and observation. I am concerned with the emotional impact of events and I am focused on healing; I cannot change the world as much as an activist or a politician. I try to give people a space free from judgement, boundless and open.



Sam Tung Uk, Performance. Courtesy the artist.

藝術博覽會上展出的《Singing under the Moon for Today and Tomorrow》的靈感來自2014雨傘運動。這次我不能工作太快，因為問題更加複雜。我的藝術無法對事件做出快速反應，而是關於深刻的反思和觀察。我關注事件對情感的影響，我亦專注康復過程；我不及社會運動家或政治家那樣改變世界。我試圖給人一個不受審判、無邊無際和開放的空間。