

≡pa●Opa≡

Rae-Yen Song

14 July 2023 - 1 October 2023

Major exhibition exploring family, identity and the crafting of our realities opens at Aspex Portsmouth this summer



wood papa, Rae-Yen Song. 2023.

This summer, Aspex Portsmouth will launch a major new exhibition by Glasgow-based artist, Rae-Yen Song.

≡pa●Opa≡ is Rae-Yen Song's first solo presentation of work in the south of England and features an installation bringing together existing and new artworks. Through drawing, sculpture, costume, moving image and family collaboration, the exhibition focuses on the artist's father, shining a light on

a life that resisted colonial realities and found an alternative way of being through paths of Eastern spiritualism, science fiction, video gaming, and 1970s psychedelia. **≡pa●Opa≡** reimagines the artist's father as a new character: a voyager from Song's multiverse; a shape-shifting figure – part avatar, part deity – inspired by Taoist notions of continuous change.

The exhibition features a new moving image work created in collaboration with Song's father, and using volumetric video filmed at the University of Portsmouth's Centre for Creative and Immersive Extended Realities (CCIXR). Experimented further through gaming technologies, it depicts the artist's father practising his Tai Chi routine, wearing a costume and mask made by Song. These garments are multi-functional, serving as both robes and armour. They simultaneously imply performance and anonymity, exposure and refuge – and are exhibited here as sanctified relics. The moving image is presented as a view through a portal – a transportative opening, which we can see but through which we cannot pass.

Visitors to the exhibition will also have the opportunity to explore a new series of drawings, influenced by ancient Buddhist manuscripts, Yokai Manga, and illustrations from Dante's Divine Comedy. The drawings reference 五行 (*wǔxíng*) – the five phases in Taoist philosophy, with its five elements of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. They are presented as five separate images – but could coalesce at any time to form a flowing circular whole, reminding us of the fundamental interconnectedness and fluidity of all things.

“Aspex Portsmouth is thrilled to be commissioning Rae-Yen Song in the artist's very first major, solo show in the South of England. This is an ambitious installation marking a pivotal moment for the artist's career as well as Aspex's artistic programme. We would like to thank the support provided by the CCIXR faculty at the University of Portsmouth for enabling Song to develop a new body of work using their facilities and the Henry Moore Foundation for seeing the need for endorsing artist development.”
says Ricardo Reverón Blanco, Curator and Programme Manager at Aspex Portsmouth.

≡pa●Opa≡ is on display at Aspex Portsmouth from Friday 14 July until Sunday 1 October 2023. The exhibition is free to visit.

An exhibition preview event will take place at Aspex Portsmouth on Friday 14 July 2023, 6:00pm – 8:00pm. Tickets are free and all are welcome. Artists are invited to come along to the preview event from 5:30pm, for an extra half hour of networking with peers. Tickets are free and can be booked [here](#)

Ends

For further information please contact Kirstie Banks, Communications Manager at kirstie@aspex.org.uk

Notes

Aspex Portsmouth www.aspex.org.uk

Aspex brings new art and ideas to the heart of Portsmouth. Our mission is to cultivate art, creativity and a collaborative community. We believe art makes our lives better, brings joy, broadens minds, facilitates learning and creates meaningful connections in our communities.

We create opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience contemporary visual art – from looking and discussing, to making and curating. We achieve this by delivering an exciting and varied programme of exhibitions, off-site projects and participation events.

Rae-Yen Song <https://rae-yen-song.com/>

Rae-Yen Song (b. 1993, Scotland, based in Glasgow) works expansively across mediums, including drawing, sculpture, installation, costume, video, sound, performance, and family collaboration. Song's work explores self-mythologising as a survival tactic: using fantasy and fabulation to establish a richly visual world-building practice informed by autobiography, ancestral journeys, Taoist philosophy, family ritual, multi-species interdependency, and science fiction. For Song, world-building becomes a tool for imaginative self-definition, with familial logics becoming the foundations of an alternative reality untethered from linear conceptions of space and time. It allows Song to resist colonial tropes and conventions, crafting multidimensional personal records and offerings for the future. These narratives yield a mix of humour, empathy and absurdity, whilst speaking broadly and politically about foreignness, identity, survival and what it means to belong — or not.

Recent exhibitions and projects include: *Body Poetics*, GIANT, Bournemouth (2023); *Let the Song Hold Us*, FACT Liverpool (2022); *Meet me at the threshold*, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh (2022); *Aggregate 2022*, Freelands Foundation, London (2022); *WORMB*, Quench Gallery, Margate (2022); >■●> at Dundee Contemporary Arts (2021); *wūūwūwūū*, a LUX Scotland moving image commission for BBC Scotland (2021); *Fabric of Society*, Glasgow International (2021); **may-may songuu**, esea contemporary, Manchester (2020); *songdynasty.life*, a nascent online archive with videos previously commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival and Hunterian Art Gallery (2020 – ongoing).

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