

CAN x TWO TEMPLE PLACE

Within the dazzling interiors of Two Temple Place, works by four contemporary Chinese artists not only surprise and engage; they ask new questions about the building, and the people who commissioned, crafted and built this extraordinary architectural fantasia in central London.

The artists were selected by Chinese Arts Now, an organisation that focuses on presenting works with a contemporary British Chinese element, which made the prospect of a collaboration with a heritage venue such as Two Temple Place an intriguing one. The Chinese community has been growing in the UK since the 1800s so by now are a true part of the country's fabric, yet it is rare to see anyone of Chinese heritage represented in our prestigious historic houses. Being invited in by Two Temple Place, not simply as ornaments but to create new work, grapple with the legacy of Astor, to have a voice and occupy the space, was an irresistible opportunity. Chinese Arts Now instantly knew it had artists of calibre up to the challenge.

This exhibition features works from fine artist and singer-songwriter Chloe Wing, augmented reality and architectural artist Donald Shek, former lawyer and performance artist Jack Tan, and composer and creator of a new Instagram opera, Jasmin Kent-Rodgman. All of them have used Two Temple Place as inspiration or challenge, exploring the aesthetic and historic resonances of William Waldorf Astor's building to explore their practice.

Originally conceived as a live exhibition for Two Temple Place - William Waldorf Astor's sublime neo-Gothic gem - CAN x TWO TEMPLE PLACE has evolved into an exciting new arts encounter, experienced in an original digital space.

In creating an abstract digital setting, Two Temple Place history and architecture has been put on display in this new contemporary world, to be discovered alongside contemporary artworks.

Exhibition artists: Chloe Wing 周永森, Donald Shek 石英杰, Jasmin Kent Rodgman 陈茉莉, Jack Tan 陳捷棋

Curators: Rebecca Hone, Jodie 恩慧 Gilliam

Designer: Christine 挺欢 Urquhart

Director & Composer: An-Ting Chang 張安婷

Creative Tech Partner: Ian Gallagher

Photographer: Johan Persson; Original building images: Julian Nieman

Erhu musician (Film): Wang Xiao 王潇

Writer & Performer (Film): Daniel York Loh 罗宁勇

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Donald Shek

Donald Shek studied architecture at Liverpool University and now works with a variety of media – screenprinting, drawing, etching and augmented reality – incorporating architectural elements into his work.

In 2019, Donald completed a residency at the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art in Manchester, and in 2020 he was commissioned by CAN to produce *Augmented Chinatown 2.0*, an app available on GooglePlay and AppStore that combines augmented reality with music and drama to explore London Chinatown's layered history.

Shek's images are often produced using 3D programs before being converted into a 2D image for printing. This relationship of media comments on our mechanised society in which reality is sometimes blurred with the digital world which takes on a new significance in this digital space. His work is influenced in both form and theme by early 60s avant-garde theorists such as the Situationists and Superstudio.

For this new work produced for CAN x Two Temple Place, Shek has reflected upon the history, architecture, decoration and mythological imagery of the house, as well as exploring Astor's interest in literature and fiction.

Life of the Body 2021

4 colour silkscreen print on paper

Lover of Life 2021

4 colour silkscreen print on paper

Shek's two new screen prints reflect in their sun and moon the Sunrise and Sunset stained-glass windows at Two Temple Place, which take their inspiration from idealised springtime Swiss and autumnal Italian landscapes.

In these prints and their titles, Shek reflects on the mythical Norse female and male – Lif (Life of the Body) and Lifthrasir (Lover of Life) – who survive the apocalyptic events of Ragnarok hidden away in woodland, and emerge to repopulate the world in an allegory of renewal and rebirth.

In both images Shek depicts the sacred tree of life, while the arrangement of the branches represents the phoenix enveloped by the dragon, and comments on the circularity of life, with new spring growth representing youth. The rugged

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mountainscapes are in fact digital drawings of Thiessen polygons, while the branches of the trees are generated using a simple L-system. In some areas you can make out modern typography and images that suggest street signs, reflecting Shek's previous work and style.

Heaven's Scrolls 2021

Screen-printed cotton calico and light control film

"I am not who you think I am; I am not who I think I am; I am who I think you think I am."

Charles Cooley

For Shek, the scrolls of heaven raise fundamental questions of identity and perception. Shek became interested in the Astor of Two Temple Place and his quest to find acceptance both in America and Britain – a sense of 'otherness' that struck a chord with Shek's own experiences as a British Chinese man.

Here, Astor and Two Temple Place provide another layer of inspiration. Suspended within the staircase at Two Temple Place, which features ornate carved literary figures and mythological references, *Heaven's Scrolls* is made up of over 50 metres of fabric, screen printed with English words and traditional Chinese words characters. Each scroll has a category: Myth and Philosophy; History; Identity. References include Egyptian mythology, Bible quotations, North American legislation targeting Chinese immigrants, a Dutch progressive rock band and expressions taken from friends and family. The scrolls also include derogatory and racist terms. Some of these phrases are historic, but many Shek has experienced himself.

These words and phrases are screen printed onto material, originally to be hung in the main staircase of Two Temple Place. While two of the scrolls are cotton, the third is a reflective material, used so that when installed, the audience would look back at themselves reflected between the words.

Shek explores in this work how stories from the past can generate a sense of individual belonging, can help define – but can also distort our understanding of our identity.

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left to right

***The Chink and the Child* 2019**

Etching on paper

***The Paw* 2019**

Etching on paper

***Gracie's Goodnight* 2019**

Etching on paper

***The Father of Yoto* 2019**

Etching on paper

These four small etchings (all under A5 in scale) are based on the stories from *Limehouse Nights* by the English writer, Thomas Burke. These 1916 stories tell of poverty-stricken Limehouse, London's first Chinatown. The opening story, *The Chink and the Child*, was about the innocent interracial love of a Chinese man for a white girl. *The Father of Yoto* shows the first appearance of three scrolls, a recurring motif in Shek's work which can be seen in augmented reality form in the app *Augmented Chinatown 2.0* and the imposing *Heaven's Scrolls* of CAN x TWO TEMPLE PLACE.

Despite the book being fictional, its presentation of Limehouse, Chinatown and the Chinese diaspora captured the public imagination. The book was banned in circulating libraries and bookshops for its (at the time) scandalous portrayal of the hybrid East End of London. Burke had considered his contribution magical rather than pejorative, building through the White gaze an idea of an exotic, clandestine community of Chinese people which became an inspiration to film-makers like Charlie Chaplin. Stories like these have fetishised Chinese people into stereotypes that still persist today.

***China Town with a bit of Soy Sauce - Part 2* 2016**

Graphite on paper

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Chloe Wing

Chloe Wing is a singer-songwriter and papercut artist. Her work deals with themes such as self-consciousness, anxiety, alienation, the psyche and mental health. She is interested in the construction and pressures of society and convention on age, gender, identity, ethnicity and appearance – classifications that can be limiting and divisive. Wing's work explores the impact these conventional identifications can have on emotion and mental health.

The artworks displayed in CAN x TWO TEMPLE PLACE explore these themes, and culminate in Wing's new work, *Paper Gown*, which depicts a beautiful and delicate white wedding dress, that on closer inspection is detailed with hidden and layered symbolism and imagery which has historically been used to establish high status, wealth and power. On visiting Two Temple Place, Wing was struck by the very masculine space and wanted to highlight the female characters in the interiors as an effective juxtaposition, which became key to the development of *Paper Gown*.

Hand cutting is central to Wing's practice. The process is slow, methodical and sometimes meditative, which creates an intimacy between maker and object. But it also invites the possibility of human error, and Wing celebrates the imperfections as showcasing the humanity behind an object.

Paper Gown 2020-21

Handcut cotton facing

Visiting Two Temple Place in 2020, Chloe Wing was inspired by the density of decoration, history and symbolism within the 1895 building. 90% of the details in the gown are taken directly from the space, from small wood and stone carvings to larger more obvious features such as curtained windows in the Great Hall, and a Tudor rose front doorknob. You may also notice a few additional details from other buildings aiming to present similar high status or grandeur of design as Two Temple Place: a floral design from a V&A cabinet, the Fleur-de-Lis emblem and ceiling tile at Blenheim Palace, Tate Britain's floor tiles and banister 'fan' and an extract of the gate pattern at Buckingham Palace.

Paper Gown is inspired by bridal wear. It is intentionally airy, fragile and light on the surface, in contrast to the dark wood and strong structure of Two Temple Place. The windows cut into the front of the gown are voyeuristic and objectifying but hidden in the layers of hand cut panels are darker imagery and messages.

The gown responds to and plays with social gender roles specifically focussing on the

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restrictions placed upon women, but Wing also includes the creativity, joy and imagination of Two Temple Place as inspiration.

Paper Rings 2020

Handcut paper

The exterior ring of 'Paper Rings' was made in 2019 as an artwork 'Engagement Ring'. The piece has been developed here, adding the interior gold ring as well as the light and rotating elements. Paper Rings depicts the horses in Piccadilly's famous Helios fountain and makes the viewer work to distinguish a gold crown from fences and gates.

This revolving diorama symbolises the pressures of status that can be attached to objects such as the engagement ring, as a result of historic traditions, and references expectations around traditionally gendered milestones in life – like engagement or weddings.

Paper Stage 2020-21

Hand cut coloured paper on wood mount

Paper Stage is a diorama depicting contrasting masculine and feminine figures. While the female figure is rounder and softer, the male figure is made through cutting harsh straight lines. Hidden words and gender stereotypical motifs depict a world of conformity and rules.

Paper Frames - 2015

Hand cut paper

This 'frame' is one of a series of four which can be displayed together or separately. It depicts a draped curtain and winding staircase which Wing feels are reflective of those at Two Temple Place. A hidden shirt collar represents rigidity and uniformity.

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Jack Tan

Before becoming an artist, Jack Tan trained as a lawyer and worked in civil litigation as well as in NGOs undertaking human rights cases, policy and anti-racist campaigning work. This experience influences his work as an artist, exploring the connection between the social, the legal and art. Tan creates performances, sculptures, videos and projects that highlight the rules – customs, rituals, habits and theories – that guide human behaviour.

Hearings 2016

Printed textiles and audio recording

From January to February 2016, Jack Tan completed an artist residency in Singapore with Community Justice Centre, undertaken at the State and Family Courts.

Hearings is the multimedia installation that was produced during that residency, comprising eight graphic scores and audio recordings, originally commissioned by the Singapore Art Museum for the Singapore Biennale 2016.

As a court artist, Tan listened to the sounds of the courts- the ambient sounds and tonal inflections of speakers as well as the content of their speech and documented what he heard in abstract coloured drawings. These drawings were then used as graphic scores that were interpreted and performed by the alumni choir of Anglo-Chinese Junior College. This institution was founded in Singapore a few years before Two Temple Place by a British-American missionary.

Exhibited within CAN x TWO TEMPLE PLACE, *Hearings* reflects the building's close proximity to Temple – the legal centre of London – as well as William Waldorf Astor's own early profession as a lawyer.

The scores

A court of emotion

3 minutes 40 seconds

Throughout a court complex people are confronted with the emotions that litigation induces: worries about an impending hearing, elation at a successful outcome or disappointment at losing. Judges and lawyers acknowledge these emotions. They may empathise or even commiserate, and yet they have to maintain impartiality. The words in this score are verbatim declarations I heard around the State Courts of Singapore that addressed litigants' emotional states.

The Choir sings their interpretation of this score in three sections. The declaratory

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sentence at the top was made by a judge trying to bring the litigant-in-person back on track during a hearing. The bubbles contain a question I overheard in a corridor between a legal adviser and a client. Finally, during a pro bono legal advice session, a lawyer attempts to pierce through the clients wall of confused emotion with encouraging statements.

Mitigation and sentencing

3 minutes 59 seconds

Listening to the sentencing in a series of traffic cases, I noted some of the text of the pronouncements and the declaratory tone in which they were delivered. In addition, through drawing I tried to capture the serious atmosphere of the process. The finality of the sentencing is represented as a dark circular block and yet within that sombreness there are streaks of colour that allude to the empathy that is required when considering mitigating circumstances.

The Choir begins singing this score from the middle of the circle working their way out to the edge and to the text, before coming back into the middle again.

Waiting for hearing to begin

2 minutes 34 seconds

Like the soundscape of a concert hall before the orchestra begins to play, there is a sense of anticipation or 'tuning up' before a hearing begins. This score documents the sounds heard in a courtroom prior to the entry of the judge and then continues for a short while into the formal hearing. General chatter, footsteps, doors creaking, pens dropping, bangs and other background noises are scored as music.

The Choir sings this score line by line from left to right. The "Oei! Oei! Oei!" in the middle of the score, shouted by the court police, ushers the judge into the courtroom. Thereafter the previous soundscape of meandering chatter in court (green line) becomes more structured (blue line). After the hearing commences, various noises continue and a new whirring sound can be heard from outside.

A man who is his own lawyer

1 minute 4 seconds

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I attended a series of hearings where a lawyer was representing himself in a case. This particular score is derived from one cross-examination that he conducted where he had to pin a hostile witness down methodically and logically, and yet battle his own emotions and clear irritation at what the witness was saying. Both these sides of him had to converge in a single clear argument (as represented by the blue diamond) if he was to present himself well to the judge. This was a difficult task but one which he discharged competently because he won his points.

The Choir divided in two for this performance: one half taking a circular melody while the other half made a series of 6 specific noises. With gathering intensity, both sides of the choir meet in the middle.

My learned friend

1 minute 40 seconds

I listened to two senior lawyers exchange arguments towards the end of a hearing. They were typically polite and measured, often using the phrase “My learned friend”. The coloured strokes in this score capture the protocol and politeness of turn-taking in court advocacy. However the increasing intensity of colour as the strokes reach the top denotes the increasing earnestness and sharpness of the exchanges between the advocates as they sense the end of the hearing near.

The Choir divided in two to sing the score in two halves. One half uses a rising refrain, while the other sings sang a falling one.

Forms and processes

1 minute 51 seconds

This graphic score is inspired by the idea that the courts are comprised of procedures and forms that initiate proceedings and move them along. I encountered many public information flowcharts at court and used their visual language to describe some questions asked about a litigant-in-person’s extenuating circumstances while they are in the court system.

The Choir’s interpretation of this score captures the feel of how a person may initially respond to the many forms and processes that are encountered in court, which may appear daunting at first in spite of their aim to be helpful.

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Interpreting states of mind

2 minutes 37 seconds

This score describes the work that interpreters have to do to translate not just language, but the overload of information that litigants sometimes provide as a result of heightened states of mind or emotion during court hearings. The orange represents an interpreter ascertaining relevant information from a litigant (coloured dots and stars), and then conversing with the judge in blue.

The Choir assigned a duet to each coloured line: a pair of female voices to the orange line, and a pair of male voices to the blue. Other singers contribute and interrupt with noises and phrases.

Appeal and advocacy

3 minutes 32 seconds

On a visit to the Court of Appeal I listened to a conversation between Appellant and Respondent lawyers and the three judges. Argument, questions, debate happened freely between the lawyers and judges in the effort to determine truth within the complexities of real world business relationships and the legal principles at stake. I was struck by the dynamic of persuasion and deliberation unfolding before me in court.

The Choir divided into three, each group singing a particular motif, but all three groups singing simultaneously. Two soloists, representing the lawyers, interrupt and attempt to influence the Choir.

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Jasmin Kent Rodgman

Jasmin Kent Rodgman is a London-born British-Malaysian producer, composer and artist, who brings together the contemporary classical, electronics and sound art worlds to create powerful soundscapes and musical identities.

nineteen ways of looking

In 2020, Jasmin Kent Rodgman was commissioned by Chinese Arts Now and the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art as part of their continued commitment to supporting artists during the pandemic. *nineteen ways of looking* is a powerful performance of opera, dance, music, spoken word and image – moving and still – developed with Chinese writer Chen Si'an, and choreographer Si Rawlinson, featuring countertenor Keith Pun and contralto Hildur Berglind Arndal.

nineteen ways of looking is an anti-racist work, responding to the portrayal of and prejudice displayed towards people of East and Southeast Asian heritage in the West during the COVID-19 pandemic. This important multidisciplinary work explores nineteen different perspectives that relate to isolation, the media and mental health.

Shot entirely on camera phones, each Instagram 'square' contains a miniature chapter of the opera that unfolded post by post between 17-27 November 2020.

Within the concept of the original exhibition, objects featured in the opera were to be displayed in the shelves of Two Temple Place's library, demonstrating the reality and relevance of the themes contained within *nineteen ways of looking*. An interpretation of this is shown in the digital space, with objects removed from the displays in the archive photographs of Two Temple Place and replaced by Rodgman's vision. Photographs of the venue are faded with the striking Instagram visuals taking over, asserting their voice.

Within CAN x TWO TEMPLE PLACE, just a small selection of the works produced for the opera are shown. To experience Jasmin Kent Rodgman's work fully and in its entirety, you can visit: <https://www.instagram.com/nineteenwaysoflooking/>

CREDITS

Composer: Jasmin Kent Rodgman; Librettist: Si'an Chen (translated by Alice Xin Liu); Director: Jasmin Kent Rodgman; Dramaturg: Jude Christian; Executive Producer: Jasmin Kent Rodgman; Producer: Treacle Holasz; Assistant Producer: Maria Guy; DOP, Photographer & Editor: Ning Zhou; Choreography and Movement: Si Rawlinson; Filmed by Si Rawlinson; Additional Editing (Isolation, We Can Be Quiet) by Si Rawlinson; Countertenor: Keith Pun; Recorded by Keith Pun; Filmed by Keith Pun and Sawako Kayaki; Contralto: Hildur Berglind Arndal; Recorded by Daniel Bøgh Nielsen; Filmed by Hildur Berglind Arndal; We Can Be Quiet: written and performed by Si Rawlinson; Featuring improvisation by David Austin

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Grey; Narration: Clare Taylor, Jasmin Kent Rodgman; Designer: Anushka Tay; Food Stylist: Premila van Ommen; Musicians: Jasmin Kent Rodgman, Reylon Yount and Beibei Wang; Models: Mia Foo, Angela Hui, Oliver Loi-Koe, Clare Taylor, Dan Tsu, Reylon Yount

Thank you also to everyone who contributed to the project's research and development over summer 2020. This project would not be where it is today without your invaluable insight and input.

Amoy Place, Nankin Street, Pekin Street, Canton Street, Ming Street

Film with audio

Cyber Wailing Wall: Part II & I

Film with audio

Migration

Film with audio

It turns out that many complex emotions can be conveyed across a computer screen. My colleagues, their faces huddled in small video chat windows, expressing their condolences.

But I could see far more...

"Fortunately, we can work from home now. How else could I face her?"

"Why did she come back to London? What's the point?"

"It's bad here. Are China's prevention and control really as good as they say it is?"

"A person really can lose her parents overnight. It's terrible."

Maybe I'm overthinking it. Maybe it's just happening inside my head. Maybe I shouldn't over-interpret their expressions...

The only lifesaver I still have is to believe that this is only temporary. What divides us brings us together.

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I really wish someone could tell me that I'm not deluded by this expectation.

原来隔着电脑屏幕也能传达那么多复杂的情绪。同事们的脸挤在一个个视频小窗口里，向我表达哀思，但我能看到的却远远更多。

“幸好现在可以在家办公，不然该怎么面对她呢。”

“她为什么还要回伦敦呢？还有什么意义？”

“这也太惨了吧，中国的防治真像他们自己说的那么好吗？”

“一个人真的能一夜之间就没有爸妈了啊，可怕。”

也许是我想太多了。也许这些声音始终只发生在我自己脑子里。也许我不该过度解读他们的表情。

我还能把握住的救命稻草，只有相信这些都只是暂时的。那些分裂了我们的，终将再次将我们缝合。好希望有人能告诉我，这期待不是妄想。

We Can Be Quiet
Film and audio

Mother
Film and audio

Nineteen
Photographs and audio

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