

*Planet*  
CHINA

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# International Women's Day 2022: "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow"

Every year on March 8, International Women's Day is celebrated across the globe to remember the achievements of women, raise awareness against gender bias, and take action for equality. Today belongs to all women groups everywhere. As the world reckons with the fallout of COVID-19, growing inequality, and accelerating climate disasters, the need for a shared plan to recover and transform economies and societies have never been clearer. When a crisis occurs, people's lives change in an instant. Crises impact women, girls, boys, and men of all ages differently. Women are often the first responders to a crisis, and they play a central role in the survival and resilience of families and communities, but they still face stereotypes and discrimination. Today many women woke up facing more uncertainties than yesterday. The contemporary situation in Ukraine has shaken the balance of many families: many women are running away with children, other women have decided to stay and help, and even to fight. But women's lives shouldn't be a battlefield. The previous sentences that describe the situation of the last few weeks in Ukraine are also sentences of the common lexicon to describe the daily life of women, who do not live in a state where there is a war but are terms of comparison to describe the vicissitudes facing women. Women still have to fight for their rights. Women still try to conquer their own space and that the right time is dedicated to them. How long will this still be necessary? To be able to create a world that can solve today's problems it's necessary to have an equitable, and inclusive society. It is important to promote resilience and leverage women's leadership. Recognizing the contribution of women and girls around the world who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response is the main step to building a more sustainable future for all. We want to thank all women that took part in this new special issue. We want to thank these women that shared their stories.







*This free ebook  
includes interviews  
with artists,  
writers, entrepre-  
neurs & thinkers*



# Celebrating Women Who Push Boundaries

China-underground.com and CinaOggi.it are two web magazines curated by Matteo Damiani and Dominique Musorrafiti dedicated to Chinese culture. Since 2002, China-underground has organized cultural events, festivals, and created documentaries, photo reports, and magazines.

## Interviews

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This issue is a collection of selected interviews with inspiring women that worked hard to reach their path and dreams. All these women are connected with China from all over the world. They moved around the world to reach their goals. International Women's Day is a day for commemorates the movement for women's rights. A day for remembering the past days in which women were not allowed to be themselves, to think, to talk, to study, to vote, etc. In some countries of the world, these problems still exist, for this reason, it is important to have examples, a source of inspiration to help other women to follow their desires, never stop fighting for what they believe. Engage to achieve goals in any field. Women can be everything they want to be.





YUN WANG



TOBY CRISPY



DAISY TAM



FENGRU LIN



WU JUDY  
CHIN TAI



VIOLET LI





SAMANTHA SIN



CARMEN HO



IVY MA



ALANA TSUI



NANCY LIANG



XIAONING  
LYU





Senior Research Scientist at the California  
Institute of Technology, and a Professor of Physics and  
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*Photo courtesy of Yun Wang*

# Yun Wang



**Y**un Wang originally from Gaoping, a small town near Zunyi, in Guizhou Province, China, is a poet and cosmologist. She received a bachelor's degree in physics from Tsinghua University in Beijing, after which she moved to the United States and obtained her master's and a doctorate in physics, from Carnegie Mellon University. A Senior Research Scientist at California Institute of Technology since 2015, and a Professor in the University of Oklahoma's Department of Physics and Astronomy until 2017, she has published over 100 refereed papers, most recently specializing in probing the dark energy in the Universe, with particular attention to the use of supernovae and galaxy redshift surveys as cosmological probes, studies of the cosmic microwave background anisotropy, and the measurement of cosmological parameters. Yun Wang has developed strategies for optimizing future surveys to probe dark energy, created a mission concept for the NASA-DOE Joint Dark Energy Mission (JDEM), the Joint Efficient Dark-energy Investigation (JEDI), and served as the Principal Investigator of JEDI. She is the author of the cosmology graduate textbook *Dark Energy* (Wiley/VCH, 2010). In 2012 she was elected a fellow of the American Physical Society. She is the author of two poetry books: *The Book of Totality* (Salmon Poetry Press, 2015) and *The Book of Jade* (Story Line Press, 2002), winner of the 15th Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize. Her two poetry chapbooks are *Horse by the Mountain Stream* (Word Palace Press, 2016) and *The Carp* (Bull Thistle Press, 1994), and she is the translator of *Dreaming of Fallen Blossoms: Tune Poems of Su Dong-Po* (White Pine Press, 2019). Wang's poems have been published in numerous literary journals, including *The Kenyon Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Salamander Magazine*, *Green Mountains Review*, and *International Quarterly*. Her translations of classical Chinese poetry have been published in *Poetry Canada Review*, *Willow Springs*, *Connotation Press*, and elsewhere.



**What prompted you to study physics? Have you always had a clear intention to follow a career in science?**

As a child, I loved math and was fascinated by how things worked in nature. Even though I also loved poetry, my father advised me to pursue a career in science, so that I can be relatively immune from political persecutions. I chose the Modern Physics major at Tsinghua University, since that sounded most exciting to me. I went to Tsinghua when I was 16, and spent five amazing years there. During that time, I decided that the goal of my life is to pursue Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. This led me to a career in physics and astronomy, in particular, cosmology, since nothing is closer to Truth than the science of how the Universe works.

**What were the biggest challenges you encountered during your research? What were the discoveries that motivated and stimulated you to deepen your studies?**

The biggest challenge was the ubiquitous sexism in the field, often implicit and subtle, and sometimes blatant and outrageous. I once tried to join a scientific discussion that two male colleagues were having, since I had worked on that same topic. They actually just

looked at each other and smirked, and ignored me. I am happy to say that I am now much more successful than either of them in the field. A public lecture on cosmology at Tsinghua by Prof. Fang Li-Zhi around 1982 left a big impression on me. I was astounded to discover that the whole Universe can be studied, and there is a research area called cosmology, to study the origin and evolution of the Universe. I was selected for graduate study in the U.S. by Prof. T.D. Lee's CUSPEA (China-U.S. Physics Examination and Admission) program in 1984, and went to Carnegie Mellon University in 1985 to study cosmology, and got my Ph.D. in Physics in 1991. In 1992, the anisotropies in the cosmic microwave background (CMB) radiation were discovered by the NASA space mission, Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE). The CMB is the afterglow left behind by the Big Bang, the extremely hot and explosive beginning of our Universe. These tiny inhomogeneities in the temperature of the CMB are the imprints of the primordial seeds for cosmic large-scale structure, predicted by the theory of the very early Universe. I was stunned by this confirmation of a seemingly speculative theory, and became interested in focusing my research on the interpretation of observational data, and the exploration of possible future data that can significantly advance our





understanding of the Universe.

**Can you introduce and tell us more about your work and your research that focuses on exploring the nature of dark energy, the mysterious cause for the accelerated expansion of our universe?**

In 1998, astronomers discovered that the expansion of the Universe is accelerating today, contrary to expectations---cosmic expansion should be decelerating today if there is only matter in the Universe. Matter gravitates and slows cosmic expansion. The observational discovery of cosmic acceleration means that there is more to the Universe than previously thought. There could be a new energy component in the Universe, causing the cosmic expansion to speed

up, since unlike matter, energy does not gravitate. Or perhaps our theory of gravity, Einstein's General Relativity, is incomplete and needs to be modified. Even now, we are still in the dark on the nature of the observed cosmic acceleration, which we dub "dark energy". Much of my research in the past two decades have focused on dark energy. I accepted one of the invitations I received to write a graduate textbook on dark energy (it was published by Wiley VCH in 2010), and I was elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society in 2012 for my leadership in dark energy research. My work on dark energy has been wide-ranging, as well as in depth. I established the framework for analyzing observational data without making theoretical assumptions about dark





energy, and identified the observational data sets required to illuminate the nature of dark energy. I then created concepts for space missions that can deliver such data sets. It has been a long and exhilarating journey.

**You are a cosmologist, but also a poet. Can you tell us more about these parallel careers? What role do poetry and science play in your life? Where did your passion for writing come from? How do you keep the balance between both? So are they complementary, one the extension of the other?**

I was born into poetry. My father recited ancient Chinese poems to calm me when I cried as a baby. It worked every time. When I was older, he taught me more classical Chinese poetry and poetics. I started writing poetry when I was

twelve years old, triggered by the spectacular beauty of nature in my hometown of Gaoping in Zunyi, China. Back then, Gaoping was unspoiled in its idyllic rural landscape, sparkling with crystal river and streams bordered by abundant wild flowers, and surrounded by wave-shaped green mountains. Thus it's natural that I am both a cosmologist and a poet---both are integral in my pursuit of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. I have never felt the need to balance poetry and science in my life, since they are both organic and essential in my life. I write poetry when I must, when I am electrified by inspiration or compelled by strong emotions. Science is a more constant part of my consciousness, since I have a major role to play in my field, and I love my research. Not surprisingly, I have received much more recognition in science than



in poetry, since I am an “outsider” poet, not plugged into the academic network of poetry. Many people look up my poetry because they know me as a scientist, and are happily surprised that I am a well-published poet, with three full-length poetry books including two award-winning ones.

**Do you have a poem that you are most attached to? Can you share with us the story that inspired you to write it and why it became special for you?**

Here is a recent poem titled “Immortality” (from “The Book of Mirrors”, published by White Pine Press in 2021), which I wrote in memory of my parents, trying to make sense of the brevity of human life in an infinite Universe:

*My father washed his only shirt at night  
dried it by the fire in a haunted house  
by a white river in the mountains  
He pours osmanthus black tea  
into blue porcelain cups in my dreams  
five years after his death.*

*My mother gazed at Venus at dawn  
as she cleaned chamber pots  
for wealthy classmates  
She bought me a diamond ring  
a few months before she died  
She had wanted one all her life*

*I watch peonies of white clouds  
bloom in the Maya blue sky  
contemplate the filaments of galaxies  
and the voids they frame  
The Universe expands  
My son promises to build me a spaceship*



You also translate classical Chinese poetry. What would you like people to understand from poetry? From your point of view, what makes poetry, even if from the ancient past, current and present? How can reading poems enrich our daily life? Can poems be therapeutic?

Indeed. I think classical Chinese poetry is one of the greatest treasures of human civilization. I am fortunate to have been born into it, and well educated on it. As someone who has published poetry in both Chinese and English, I feel that I can make a valuable contribution by translating my favorite classical Chinese poets. My book of translation, “Dreaming of Fallen Blossoms: Tune Poems of Su Dong-Po” was published by White Pine Press in 2019. I am now working on a book of translation of Li Bai’s poems. Li Bai and Su Dong-Po are my favorite classical Chinese poets. Poetry adds a dimension to life that can enrich and enlighten human existence. The best poems are timeless. They are therapeutic in expanding our consciousness, enlivening our imagination, and connecting us to the great river of human existence in its most powerful form---poetry.

Poetry and science in the age of social media. Which are the main benefits and which are the disadvantages? What is your opinion about the way the internet and social media are shaping the world and these fields?

The obvious benefit of social media is that it facilitates fast and broad communication, across all kinds of boundaries. It has facilitated the effective dissemination of scientific knowledge and discoveries. It has enabled people to easily find the poetry that they like, regardless of their taste. I think the main disadvantage is that the vast ocean of information out there contains both good and bad, truth and lies. One must be critical in evaluating claims, and be guided by evidence and sound judgment. Overall, I think the benefits outweigh the negative effects.

**The theme for International Women’s Day, 8 March 2022 is, “Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow”. Are women in the field of STEM still facing more challenges and discrimination compared to males? What has been achieved and what significant challenges are still to be met?**

I like that theme; there is no sustainable future without true gender quality. Women in STEM fields



do still face tremendous challenges as well as subtle (or not so subtle) discrimination compared to males. It is very difficult for a woman to push to the top of the field while also having a full life, since women carry most of the domestic responsibilities. What has been achieved at present is that open sexism is no longer acceptable (or even legal). The significant challenge is that society at large is still rather sexist. Both men and women are still often biased against women who aspire to great accomplishments in any field. Ambitious men are praised; ambitious women are often demonized. We have a long way to go in fighting for true gender equality.

**The pandemic has put a strain on the whole planet earth. Women have been most disadvantaged by this situation. Many are taking their lives back from all angles. What advice would you give to them?**

Reach out to each other; connect with friends, so that you are not alone in your struggle. Friends can lift each other up, and help each other.





# Daisy Tam

Associate Professor, Department of Humanities &  
Creative Writing Hong Kong Baptist University  
(HKBU) & Fulbright Research Scholar at MIT

*Photos courtesy of Daisy Tam*





**D**r. Daisy Tam is an Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing at the Hong Kong Baptist University where she teaches and researches urban food systems and practices with a particular focus on food security. Dr. Daisy received her Ph.D. in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths, University of London, and holds an MA in Comparative Literature from University College London. She grew up in Hong Kong and graduated with a BA in Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong. Her awareness of the food waste issue dates back to 2004, when she was in London. She spearheads research in this area in Hong Kong and works in an interdisciplinary and innovative manner by bringing together the arts and sciences. In 2018, she won the Fulbright-RGC Senior Scholar Award to conduct research at MIT's Urban Risk Lab. Her project, "Crowdsourcing Food Rescue – a new approach to Food Security and Urban Resilience" is a technological and theoretical undertaking that investigates the capacity of networked approaches to collecting surplus food in the city. The project advances research in the area of food security and waste reduction, increases resilience for the socially vulnerable, and contributes to sustainable urban development in the face of climate change. In one of her talk, she gave some scary statistics on Hong Kong's broken food system: the city throws away 3,600 tonnes of food every day. To educate her students and the rest of the world through lectures and workshops on being less wasteful, she suggests a shift in the attitude toward food consumption. Apart from food-related research, she is also involved in improving the lives of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. She is the Board Director of Enrich – an organization that empowers women through financial literacy training.



**You are an Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing at the Hong Kong Baptist University. When did you first realize you wanted to focus on urban food systems and food security? What initially drew you to become engaged in these themes?**

(Almost) From Day 1! My Ph.D. was on ethical food practices and I knew from that point on that food would be the focus of my work - it's such a grounded topic - it touches everyone and offers many dimensions to explore. When I was studying in London I had a part-time job selling apples for a local farmer in Borough Market. It was one of the best times in my life - i learnt everything about food from the farmers, the butchers, the fishmongers and the bakers, etc, and I have so much respect for the work that they do. When I returned to Hong Kong, I expanded my research to the level of the city - and started working on urban food system and food security.

**How did Hong Kong FoodWorks come to life? Can you tell us more about it and what this means for social and environmental impact in the city? What were some of the biggest challenges at the beginning of HK FoodWorks?**

10 years ago when I started to talk about food security in Hong Kong, many people thought it was unnecessary - after all HK is Asia's gourmet city! We have one of the highest restaurants to population ratios in the world, and thinking about securing our food system seems redundant. Living in a prosperous city has its advantages, but it can also make us blind. Around the same time, a few social issues emerged: food waste was very much on the agenda, as our landfills were reaching saturation. The city also drew up its first poverty line, revealing the harsh realities of the vulnerable population. Further afield, severe climate events were raising alarm bells about the effects of climate change - and food production was a large culprit. I see all of these as part of the same problem, so I put together HK FoodWorks - as a way to raise awareness and share my research with a wider public.









**What about Breadline? Can you tell us more about it?**

Breadline is HK's first public web application for food rescue. I worked very closely with food rescue organisations over the years and I understand the challenges that they face. Collecting surplus food is a logistical nightmare and I thought it was an interesting problem to tackle. I finally had the opportunity to develop the platform with my long-term project partner when I won the Fulbright Senior Scholar Award in 2018 - I spent 6 months at MIT and had the time and the environment to bring it to fruition.

**How have HKFoodWorks and Breadline grown since they started? What are the milestones you have achieved so far?**

Breadline grew from a research idea into an actual application where over 1000 people make use of it to collect nearly 100K loaves of bread. The platform has been running for almost 2 years now - serving the most vulnerable population throughout the pandemic. The design of the platform empowers our volunteers to act independently, operating on real-time information, so we are 4 times more volunteer efficient and effective. Our hit rate is at 98% - if a shop reports having leftovers, our volunteers will be there!





Are people's food habits, in Hong Kong, over the last years changed? Do you think they bear more conscious about food waste? What role do you think social media plays in this cause today?

Absolutely! I think it's so much more acceptable nowadays to pack away leftover food, we have changed the cultural values/ meanings/ behaviour - leaving a table full of excess no longer signifies good hospitality!

In the last few years of Covid19, there has been a need to talk about the importance to act for climate change, shaping future healthier food, and creating sustainable cities. Do you think there still are misconceptions about these priorities?

If it were up to me, I would redesign the city and the way we live with food at the centre of the question. Too often we treat problems separately when they are inter-related. What would the future of a city look like, if we integrate growing spaces in every district?



You are also involved with the migrant domestic worker community in Hong Kong. How and when did you start to work on this project? Can you tell us more?

Women empowerment has always been important to me. I began volunteering at a local charity called Enrich, then became their advisor, then board, and eventually chair of the organisation. I very much appreciated their attitude towards migrant domestic workers - the way they seek to empower women through education and financial literacy training - and values these workers as a contributing force to Hong Kong. I met so many women who had such inspiring stories - the way they fought for a better life for themselves and their families, their strength, and resilience are so motivating.

What advice would you give to women? What advice do you think was important to you, and could make a difference for others too?

Never settle without a fight. Ask yourself if your efforts, skillset, and all that you are bringing to the table are genuinely recognised, not just in words but in action.

**The opportunities that we have today have been made possible by those who fought before us, so we have to keep up the good fight and forge a better path for those who will come after. The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2022 (IWD 2022) is, "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". What are your hopes for women, what are your wishes?**

My hope is that the fight for equality is everyone's fight - together we can accomplish so much more if we are all given the opportunity to learn, grow, and participate fully in society. We have what it takes to create a more diverse and inclusive society - and putting a cap on this potential because of unfounded biases is the squandering of our most precious resource.





Dr. Daisy Tam is the founder of **Breadline** and **Hong Kong Foodworks**. Hong Kong FoodWorks is dedicated to the discussion of the Hong Kong Food System. Food system is the way that food is produced, distributed, consumed and the waste disposed of in Hong Kong. Hong Kong FoodWorks provides open-source resources for researchers and practitioners in food of all levels. Hong Kong FoodWorks aim to make accessible to all who are interested in and wish to learn more about issues concerning food in Hong Kong. Against a background of growing global population, rapid urbanization, and reduced productivity due to climate events, re-thinking the way people feed themselves is not only a question of sustainability but of security. The world food system produces both hunger and excess, a logic so contradictory. Everyone has the Right to be Free from Hunger. Food was first mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Overpopulation and natural resources can no longer sustain this current way of life. Today consumerist lifestyles are extremely energy-intensive – from the way people eat to the way people dress to the way people travel. Diversifying and finding alternative models that support smaller, more local supply chains can help tackle these systemic issues. Dr. Daisy Tam decided to tackle Hong Kong's alarming food waste by designing her crowd-sourcing app Breadline, which allows bakeries to connect with volunteers wanting to pick up leftover loaves and deliver them to charities. Supported by the Fulbright Scholarship, the project started in 2018, and has already connected 80 volunteers with 300 bakeries in its Beta Version only, facilitating the donation of 1000 loaves of bread each week.



# Wu Judy Chin-tai

Award-winning record producer focused on sounds of  
nature, instrumental, and ethnic music



*Photos courtesy of Wu Judy Chin-tai & Wind Music  
A Special Thanks to Peiti Huang*



**W**u Judy Chin-Tai is a Taiwanese record producer whose work primarily focuses on natural sounds, instrumental music, and ethnic music. She is currently the Director of Music Production at Wind Music Co. She majored in tourism in Taiwan before studying recording technology at Brigham Young University in Utah. Judy returned to Taiwan after finishing her studies in the United States and began working as a recording engineer at Wind Music. Ken Yang, the founder of Wind Music, encouraged her to observe and discover sounds in the Taiwanese wilderness, which she did, and she began to preserve the sounds of nature by making audio recordings. Her works about Taiwan's natural habitats, such as The Forest Show, "My Ocean," and "The Nearest Heaven," to name a few, have drawn significant attention to the sounds of nature and raised awareness of the Taiwanese wilderness. Judy won her first Traditional Golden Melody Award for Best Producer in 2001 for her work on "My Ocean." In 2002, Judy collaborated with ocarina artist You Xue-Zhi. Her subsequent works, including "Colors of Childhood Taiwanese Children Song," "Formosa Aboriginal Song & Dance Troupe" / "Holding Ina's Hand," and "The Mongolian Folk Long-Song," all won Golden Melody Awards. Her 2009 production percussion ensemble Ten Drum Art Percussion Group received a Grammy nomination for Best Tradition World Music Album. In her collection of wildlife sounds, she has personal approaches, since she understands the importance of listening and humans' relationships with nature as part of nature. Judy helped distribute international bestselling albums such as Bleeding Wolves into Taiwan.





**Can you tell us a bit about yourselves and where did your passion for sounds comes from? Is it something that you developed naturally, or was it something you suddenly decided to embark on? How did you get involved in recording nature's sounds?**

I took piano lessons and self-taught guitar when I was a kid. Then I received classical music training in college, with an emphasis in sound recording technology, in the US. I was like most normal people (with proper eyesight), dominantly perceiving things with my eyes. My ears were sensitive to music only. Until I was assigned to collect sounds in nature did I know how my hearing was long neglected, in terms of perceiving the world with my five senses.

**What about your first projects on sounds of nature, instrumental, and ethnic music? Can you share with us your beginning? What were the main challenges? How long did it take you to develop an understanding of what it was the style of sound you wanted to hear, make and share?**

I finished my college education in 1994 in America. Then I came

back to Taiwan and got a job at Wind Music. Back in the '90s, our record company featured traditional Chinese music, Buddhist music, New Age/healing music, and traditional Taiwanese indigenous music. My music background mainly focused on western classical music. When I knew Wind music had collections of Chinese traditional and Taiwanese indigenous music, I was very interested. My first job assignment was to assist an ethnomusicologist, Pro. Wu, Rung-shun, to collect and to record the traditional folk songs of the Tsou tribe in the Ali Mountains. There are 16 indigenous tribes in Taiwan. The Tsou is one of them. A lot of the indigenous tribal villages are scattered in the mountain areas. So my boss said: Since you'll be going to the mountains, why don't you try to record some nature sounds on your way?" "On the way" is a very typical mindset of a Taiwanese boss—give you an assignment and want you to do another 100 side jobs "on the way." So I did, both. That's how I started, and am keeping doing now. Anyway, I went with Pro. Wu to record the Tsou tribe at the Ali mountain. Back in the 90s most of the young indigenous students would receive their mid-school or higher education in the cities. And most of them









would be in the cities to find jobs in order to support their families back in the tribal villages. So in their home villages, you'd see mostly older people, grandpas and grandmas, and their grandchildren. You wouldn't see many young men and women. The absence of the young and mid-aged generation created a huge gap that made it difficult for their culture, their tradition, even their language to pass down from the older generation. So when I was there to record traditional songs for the Tsou tribe, only the older generation could sing, like people over 60s, 70s, even 90s. I remember recording a hundred-year-old man singing an old tune... He knew that we came a long way to record him singing. He was so excited that he kept singing and singing and wouldn't stop. His 70+-year-old son was a bit worried that his old father couldn't breathe and kept sending me signals, asking me to stop recording. So I politely told the old grandpa it was enough and asked him to stop. But the old man wouldn't stop singing. Because for many decades he hadn't sung this old song. Because no one was ever interested in hearing these songs. People who would sing with him or appreciate these traditional songs all passed away. That was why he wouldn't stop singing. This event gave me a strong impact. I was still pretty young when I started my first field recording in 1994. I hadn't seen much of the world, even the land I grew up on. I had this stereotypical type that singers would all look



young, stylish, and good-looking ---the stereotype brain-washed life. These songs are important by the mass media back then. So cultural heritage and they are dying. That was why Pro. Wu felt this urgent need to record these traditional indigenous songs. At that moment, I totally realized why my boss was so enthusiastic about releasing these traditional songs. To be very honest, these CDs didn't have much commercial value. But he knew that we were racing against time. If we hadn't had collected those songs, they might have disappeared within one generation. As for the nature sound recording, the first recording clip I did was on that same trip to the Ali mountain. After I finished recording the Tsou elders, I was guided by





a local friend, Dr. Pu of the Tsou tribe. He was the co-producer of the Tsou CD. One night, he took me to the mountain valley near his home and recorded my first tree frogs in total darkness. The enclosure mountain valleys gave the frogs sound a natural reverberation and made it sound beautiful. I was excited to record this beautiful sound and I thought it was quite easy to record sounds in nature. After that trip, I tried to do wildlife recording by myself. Then I realize it was far more difficult than I thought. Firstly, Taiwan has a population density of 650 people per sq. kilometer. It is very challenging to avoid man-made noises when recording outside. Secondly, I only had a music background. I didn't have any biological or zoological background; didn't know animal habitats and behavior, didn't know their whereabouts, let alone recording them. Fortunately, I got to know some wildlife experts, and they taught me some very basic knowledge about the wildlife I was looking for to record. So later on I invited them to join with our wildlife recording job. And they helped a lot. A few years later, we were able to collect some sounds, different kinds of birds, frogs, insects, and mammals. But I still didn't have a clue as to what to do with these sounds.

One evening I decided to go to a nearby hot spring site after my heavy loading work to release my stress. The open hot spring was right by a creek. I was sitting on a rock by the creek, soaking my feet in the hot spring. Then my hearing opened up. I heard tree frogs and insects singing, accompanied by a gurgling creek. Then I heard a music interval of minor 3rd hidden in the sound of the tree frogs. And on top of it, another major 3rd interval was created by the cricket sound. I assembled and arranged these intervals and created a melody right there. This melody, Forest Rhapsody, was inspired by frogs and insects. So when I arranged this music piece, I invited more frogs and insects to be my percussionists. After I finished the music master CD, I thought I also needed to properly introduce my wildlife musicians. So I produced another CD, with audio clips, pictures and basic information about these wildlife musicians. This additional CD functioning as a wildlife sound library that goes together with the music CD as a finished pack. Through this combination, music becomes a great platform to circulate basic wildlife knowledge. This 2-CD album "Forest Show" became very popular and successful in Taiwan and China, especially among elemen-





tary school teachers; possibly because it combines both entertaining and educational functions. So I invited more wildlife experts to help collect sounds in nature so that our music can carry more wildlife information to the general public. And this has also helped to raise public awareness of environmental conservation for the last 20+ years.

**What are some of the significant changes you've found in your personal approach to listening, over the years of your career so far? How these changes had influenced and affect your recording process?**

With my music background, my ears were trained to analyze textures in music. I can hear chords, intertwined melodies, and counter lines in music pieces. So It was not too hard for me to hear layers of different sounds in nature when I do field recording. (But to identify species is another challenge.) However, removing unwanted sound layers was the hard part, especially man-made noises. Even with wildlife experts, it's still challenging. Animals are



uncontrollable. We can't send them text messages and make appointments for recording like we usually do with human musicians. Once, I was recording with a bird expert, Mr. Sun Ching-sun. A serpent eagle was flying and singing very close to us, just right on top of the trees we were staying under, so we immediately hit the record button. Ten seconds later, we heard another larger bird flying over its top. It was an airplane. And we couldn't ask the plane to go away. So the serpent eagle sound was dirtied by the plane engine sound. In the 90s, I'd have to either discard this clip of recording or spend lots of budgets to remove the engine sound of the airplane in a digital mastering studio. Thanks to modern technology, by 2000 we were able to filter out the noise with music soft wares ourselves. Nowadays a lot more tools are available in the market so we can repair sounds recorded in the early days.

**You connect audiences with nature through creativity. What do you love most about your job, what are the greatest rewards? What message do you hope to communicate with your projects?**

10+ years ago, I was talking with a 5-year-old girl, a friend's daughter. She told me how she encountered a white-breasted water hen and a Malayan night-heron on a college campus with her mom. I was totally shocked. How could this little 5-year-old girl know and tell these wildlife names like introducing her next-door neighbors to me, while these names were still strange to most adults? Then she told me: "My kindergarten teacher plays your wildlife CD every afternoon before our siesta hour." That brought me greater joy than big CD sales. Up till now, the new generation does have more concerns about our environment.





**Nature always places humans in front of the unexpected. Were there any unexpected moments or events that created unexpected opportunities from a creative point of view?**

My early stage of field recording was interfered with by various human noises, so I was a bit too obsessed with pursuing pure and clean natural sound, without human disturbance. There was this one occasion when I was recording the ocean sound at the Kenting beach, a super popular site in southern Taiwan. It was at noon-time on an over-heated summer day, with only 2-3 tourists on the

beach. As I was recording and enjoying the soothing sound of the ocean waves in my earphones, a few seconds later, I heard a group of young people coming out of nowhere, yelling and laughing. I was pretty frustrated and upset—my nature recording is ruined again and just about to hit stop. Weird thing is, as I was listening to the mix of their laughter with the gentle ocean sound, something clicked in my mind—Aren't we human beings part of nature? The sun rises on the evil and the good, the rains fall on the just and the unjust. The sun, the rain, and nature treat us all equally. Why should I divide humans against



nature? All of the sudden, I realized, black and white, poor and rich, this kind of extreme division only exists in the human mindset.

So that event totally changed my perspectives of field recording. It shouldn't be an extreme division between humans and nature, nor should it be just total human domination only, but to learn to respect all livings, to find our role and position in nature, to pursue a better harmony, or balance between nature and humankind. We are still far from that balance. But I'm happy to see that balance has become a clearer goal, even a global goal, for us global citizens.

**Can you share with us a meaningful story from backstage of one of your projects?**

In the second question, I mentioned this 100-year-old grandpa who wouldn't stop singing. He was singing "Somolo solo." This is a long passed, super old tune where they would improvise text to sing to the melody as a way of daily conversation among tribal people. (Unfortunately, it was only familiar to the older generation due to the language lost among the younger generation.) In 1994, after we finished producing the CD of the Tsou traditional songs, I thought most of the songs collected in this CD, especially Somolo solo, were doomed to disappear within 20 years. Surprisingly, in 2014, I received an invitation from an elementary





school Principal, Ms. Fang. (Later on, I found Ms. Fang was Dr. Pu, the Tsou co-producer's wife...) She said their school kids had been learning and practicing the Tsou traditional songs from the Tsou CD we recorded/produced 20 years ago. They were ready to give a concert and invited me to watch it. She said it would be a great encouragement for the kids if I could show up since I was the main recordist of that CD. So I went. It was such a touching moment watching the kids embracing their own heritage. I was teary throughout the whole event and decided to tell this unexpected story through my music. So when I was producing my album "Nature's Whispering" in 2021, I was hoping to combine the historical recording sung by the elders (who all passed away) in 1994 with voices of young kids in the tribe. Sayungu Tiakiana, one of the production assistants from the local Tsou village in 1994, is now the principal of Charshan Primary School. She taught her students "Somolo solo" by playing the album born out of our field research too. Then I went up to the mountain to record them and orchestrated this "somolo solo" into a newer version, using more contemporary music language to reframe the traditional tune. It becomes the first track on my newly released CD. In 1994, I was in the Ali mountain recording elders singing this fading tune. 27 years later, I was there again recording children singing the same old tune and rejuvenating their own heritage. So "Somolo solo" is a story about a collaboration that transcended time and space. It is also a starting point of my creative career in chasing music and sounds.

**Do you have a wish list of places where would you like to go to record the sounds of nature and create new projects?**

This is a time of rapid change. So frankly, I don't do plans, goals, or wishing lists. I only have certain directions in mind and in life. So that I can grab all opportunities handy and be more sensitive to all inspiring sparkles around me.

**Do you think that listening to the sounds of nature can provide a more comfortable healthy environment? From your perspective, can people feel happier and more productive? What is your perspective considering this uncertain and stressful period for humans?**

Yes, I do believe nature sounds give us a certain level of tran-





quility. That was one of the reasons I put out 2 other digital releases of nature sound recordings, to help ease down the anxiety we as humans might face in this period of time.

**How do you think the relationship between nature and human beings has changed in the era of social media? Are humans, due to the current world situation, slowly moving away from noise pollution? Or is there still much to do to reconnect with the natural environments?**

Just from my personal point of view, social media can effectively connect people together in the

virtual world. But on the other hand, it seems to create more distance among people in reality. The pandemic turned down the hustling of humans a little bit. I think after the pandemic the bustling and hustling will resume (too bad). Photos posted on IG and FB, especially with nature backdrop, encourage people either to go near nature or to attract more likes. It is good in a way. But I personally feel that finding inner peace in nature, learning to dialogue with nature, or finding the balance between humankind and nature is the key to reconnecting us with the natural environment.



**Wind Music**, founded by Ken Yang, has published numerous collections of documentary recordings in order to preserve and protect cultural heritages facing extinction. Ken as a music-lover realize that he could make the world a much better place by sharing music with people. The belief in the power of music drove him to share music as a core value. Wind Music shows the uniqueness of the East. The philosophy from the East is distinguished for its harmonious wisdom. Thus, Wind Music strives to capture the insights and values of this timeless philosophical wisdom and cultural heritage in order to embody them in music. Wind Music has successfully built a creative and active role in the music industry. Adopting modern and innovative approaches play a part in preserving the history of Chinese music. Wind Music has a strong connection with nature and spirituality, for this reason, it provides special musical elements to nourish the modern human body, mind, and spirit.





# Toby Crispy

Fashion designer, founder, and  
creative director of FashionClinic by T



*Photos courtesy of Toby Crispy and Fashion Clinic by T*



Toby Crispy is a Hong Kong sustainable fashion advocate. Founder of Fashion Clinic by T, Toby Crispy has worked in different sectors in the fashion field. She worked ranging from magazine editor to designer for international brands after graduating from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She worked as a design manager at French label Agnes b. , before launching her upcycling label, LastbutnotLeast. Since 2013, Toby has been focusing on educational services to redesign fashion pieces. Toby demonstrated the various possibilities of upcycling fashion through re-design service and collaboration with NGOs, art groups, brands & corporate for exhibitions, workshops, events with various fashion brands, corporate groups, shopping malls, and green groups, in order to reconnect wearers with their clothes and mend those relationships. Believing that the fashion industry is sick and needs prescriptions for change. She truly believes that upcycling is the best way to make the best use of resources. The process of transforming unwanted products into something valuable again is challenging but also rewarding to creators.





**Have you always had clear your career as a designer? How and when did you get into fashion design?**

Not really, everything seems to evolve naturally. I have been fond of art and drawing since I was a child. When it came to choosing a major subject for the university, design was an inevitable choice for me, and I thought that I like observing human figures, that's why I started my journey of fashion design.

**Who influenced you as a person and as a creative?**

My family, my father, mother, and my grandmother have high standards and personal ideas about clothing and lifestyle. Of course, throughout the creative journey, I have been influenced by different masters at different stages, it's a bit hard to list them out at a time. At this stage, I would say: Yohji Yamamoto, who is very dedicated to the relationship between fabrics, tailoring, and fashion. Carolyn Denham, who tenderly illustrates the respect and meaning for every person and object within the clothes-making process through her Merchant and Mills. Thich Nhat Hnah and Jane Goodall, who teach me love all lives in nature with a dedicated and pure heart.

**How does Fashion Clinic come to life? What is the philosophy behind it?**

In 2016, Fashion Clinic was brought to life in my first solo refashion exhibition with the support of my first retail customer, Sam Fung of XiaoShiGuang and Francesca at FL Place, at Central. At that time, up-cycling fashion was very new, this name just popped up in my head in a second, which sounds so simple and straightforward to be understood. We all know that the fashion industry is sick, we need prescriptions for change urgently. I hope to provide services to heal the industry, the closets and the hearts correspondingly through my redesign, workshops and curation.

**What were the biggest challenges you encountered at the beginning?**

As I said that it was very new at the beginning, people always mixed it up with 'recycling' and compared my bespoke service charge with the pricing of the mass-produced fast fashion. All the respect to creativity, quality and craftsmanship have been washed out by the marketing strategy for overconsumption. It takes me a long time to turn the mindset around through talks, interviews, collaborations and even making video documentary.





## Fashion Clinic by T

/ SINCE 2016

Trans-fashion  
Tales of Time in Textile.

**Fashion Clinic by T** is playing an important role in the fashion industry attempting to make it more sustainable and providing an alternative to people who are not familiar with the concept of upcycling. Fashion Clinic by T's mission is to fight fashion waste using a human and personal approach to resonate with audiences. Fashion Clinic by T aims to repair and restore unwanted clothes by redesigning, reshaping to be re-experienced by consumers. Founder Toby Crispy is a local pioneer in fashion upcycling. Instead of throwing out, “fashion surgeons” can redesign everything from garments to handbags to lengthen their lifespan. Change of mindset can help start circularity and sustainability. A change of mindset can bring new creations from already existing fashion sources.



**What are the goals you have achieved so far?**

Since 2013, I have been focusing on my refashion services & illustrating various possibilities to advocate upcycling design concept, such as creating upcycled textile art, curating exhibitions, SLOW STiTCH NOMAD, workshops and events with various key players in the industry, like JOYCE Boutique, Lane Crawford, New Balance, Patagonia, K11 Art Mall, M+ Museum, The Mills, Oi! ArtSpace...., writing SLOW STiTCH column for a bilingual magazine OBSCURA to connect with the slow stitch designers/artists around the world, in order to extend the life span of usable materials and reconnect the relationship between the clothing and the wearers, simultaneously stitch up a sustainable future. Since 2020, I changed the brand name to FashionClinic by T to keep on to (T)rans-fashion (T)ales of (T)ime in (T)extile by (T)obyCrispy & (T)eams.

**Can you tell us more about how the recycling, up-cycling, and re-using process works? Where do you get the discarded clothes and/or other materials and how do you give them a new life and design?**

All the materials are from my customers or project partners, as I aim to let the participants go through the process of upcycling. Before getting started, I'm used to listening to their wearable stories, then asking them what they like / dislike about their preloved clothes and their wishes for the change. There are many variations of techniques I use to redesign, such as visible mending, hand embroidery, reconstruction and fabric manipulation etc.

**In a world of constant change and uncertainties, due to climate change and pollution, new sustainability is a priority, especially in the fashion industry. What kind of role does a fashion designer play?**

Due to the problem of overproduction, everywhere is filled with excessive clothing and consumers' respect for quality and craftsmanship has been washed out by fast fashion culture. I think that designers should make use of our creativity to save the 'usable waste' and breathe them new life to close the







loop of the fashion cycle. More important is to urgently preserve and pass on the craftsmanship that has been accumulated over centuries. What we need now is more of the redesign with consciousness and reflective experience instead of the blindly produced new products. Last but not least, proposing a better lifestyle with our profession is the mission of a designer.

**Do you think people are conscious that tonnes of clothes are discarded and landfilled each day? From your perspective, do people are getting worried about the environmental or ethical effects of fashion?**

Consumers are getting more conscious about the problems but they are still the minority, and some may think that they are passive and can't make any difference with their little effort. I think that the biggest responsibility is for education from school, government policy and the fashion industry to solve the problems it created.

**Do you think there are some people interested in sustainable fashion but they don't know how to reduce fashion waste? How can these people be helped to become more fashion-conscious? How to raise awareness?**

Actually, there're more and more

social media sharing creative ideas of sustainable lifestyle. I would suggest them to follow these platforms and give them true support. And the tips from me are:

CHOOSE WELL, BUY LESS & UPCYCLE UNTIL THE END OF ITS LIFE. Think over night before you buy anything to get rid of your impulse of buying things you don't really need. Organise your closet every season to review what do and don't suit you and understand your personal style. Find your favourite refashion designers / tailors to give a fresh look to your preloved clothing and give your support for the refashion career development. Buy what you need not what you want. And purchase for quality over quantity with the cost-per-wear theory. Hold more swapping parties with friends with similar tastes. Make sure your clothes go to the right people who really need them when you give them away. Be conscious to understand more about the production process and be mindful to reconnect yourself with your clothing and the people & objects that brought them to life. Learn a few basic skills to repair/refresh your own clothing.





**What are the main barriers for the one-of-a-kind by professional designers and tailors, the cost is definitely higher than the mass-produced garments. Ethical VS affordable. Is this one of the main challenges? Or, do you believe VS affordable are never opposites. Being ethical can sometimes even be free if you keep wearing your clothes already in your wardrobe, or cost only a few hundred HK dollars for making a simple repair or reshape. Based on the theory of cost-per-wear, the better quality in good condition, refashion is the (in terms of style and craftsmanship) you buy, the less cost you spoke service custom-made only spend. I believe that what we need**

Honestly, I do think that the most sustainable fashion is already in our wardrobe. As long as they are new luxury, cause it's like a bespoke service custom-made only





is warmly handmade beautiful and long-lasting clothes that carry wearable stories to be passed on from generation to generation.

**How has the sustainable fashion industry has changed during the years and with the pandemic? What has been achieved and what significant challenges are still to be done?**

Frankly speaking, although it's encouraging to see more brands in different levels are showing

their concern for sustainability, I think the change of the fashion industry is way too less than what is required to resolve the crisis. Their most obvious change in the pandemic is their sales tactics to e-commerce and the greenwashing marketing strategy instead of the improvement of the problems. The biggest challenge is still the selfishness and greed of the producers, we need to urge for the change with a bigger voice from the customer power!





**What are your boldest predictions in sustainable fashion? What advice would you give to individuals to help and take actions to make fashion more circular?**

1. Refashion as after-sales service must be added into the fashion cycle, cause I truly believe that upcycling is the best way to make the best use of resources and to close the loop of the consumption cycle. In this way, it cuts down over-consumption and waste of resources at its root.

2. Recycling technology will act as an important role in the circular economy.

3. Fast fashion must decline as the public's awareness of cherishing increases.

4. More and more creativity for sustainable fashion will be evoked.

My tips would be what I mentioned for the above question.



# Fengru Lin

Co-Founder And CEO Of TurtleTree  
with the mission to change the face of  
sustainable nutrition

*Photo courtesy of Fengru Lin and Turtle Tree  
Special Thanks to Rita Huang*







**A**fter a double degree in information systems management and marketing, Fengru Lin worked as an account manager at Collis Asia (now UL LLC), where she handled sales and business development for about three years. After leaving Collis Asia, she worked for the American software company, Salesforce, and subsequently had a one-year stint at Google before establishing TurtleTree. She frequently visited dairy farms around Asia to source quality cow milk to make her own cheese. What started as a passion for making cheese and due to the inability to find good milk in Asia, Fengru Lin boldly co-founded with Max Rye a biotech company, to create real milk through cell-based methods. TurtleTree aims to make high-quality milk in the lab using stem cell technology, so it can create milk from cows, humans (breast milk), and other animals, without the need for cows, humans, and other animals. As demand for dairy products increases with the rising global population, novel strategies for milk production are more important than ever. The goal was to transform one of the world's staple foods using a production process that bucks traditional methods and promises to overcome dairy farming with sustainability methods. This will shape the future of not just how people get dairy milk but how humans will feed their infants. Technology can solve some of the world's largest problems. Curiosity and a certain fearlessness have helped Fengru solidify the vision behind her company. She is a pioneer of change, she is crafting the future.



**Can you please tell me more about you and your background?**

I founded TurtleTree in 2019 with a bold vision: to create a brand-new generation of sustainable nutrition that's better for the planet, animals, and people alike. Before founding TurtleTree with my co-founder Max, I had 8 years of corporate sales experience working with global conglomerates like Salesforce and Google.

**How the idea to have cow's milk without the cow and human milk without humans came to your mind? What motivated you to follow this idea?**

It all started quite simply with my cheesemaking hobby. After learning to make cheese in Vermont, I wanted to replicate the cheesemaking process in Asia, which led me to traveling to many dairy farms in the region (e.g. Indonesia, Thailand, etc) to source high-quality milk for creating high-quality cheese. What I found however were cows being pumped with hormones, unsanitary living conditions for the livestock, and even the feeding of contaminated water to animals. That's when I started thinking about a way to produce quality milk that was healthy and nutritious, all without causing harm to animals or the environment.

**How did TurtleTree come to life? What were the biggest challenges of the beginning? What are your milestones and goals so far?**

It was serendipitous that I met my co-founder, Max Rye, just as I had this idea in my head. Max was speaking about cell-based meat at an event at Google where I was an account manager then. I floated the thought of using cell-based methods to create milk to Max, who was very enthusiastic about the idea. We connected with some scientists (who verified that it was actually very possible to create cell-based milk), and after experiencing some research breakthroughs, I eventually left my full-time job to pursue this bold new idea with Max and founded TurtleTree. With both of us being businesspeople and not scientists (Max was previously the CEO of a Silicon Valley tech company), we initially faced quite a bit of skepticism from early investors. "You guys are business people. What business do you have running a biotech company?", and "I'll only invest if you have a Nobel Laureate on the team" were some of the sentiments we faced early on. Yet, Max and I firmly believe that it is our non-scientific perspective that lends TurtleTree such a unique edge—despite being such a young company, we've accelerated rapidly because we're always been focused on driving the com-



**TurtleTree** is a biotech company committed to revolutionizing the way the world eats. Utilizing its proprietary cell-based technology, they are looking to create a new generation of sustainable food—one that's better for the planet, animals, and people everywhere. Backed by leading investors and a team of world-class talent, they will soon be launching sustainably produced dairy bioactive, starting with lactoferrin. TurtleTree can have a 98% reduction in carbon footprint and, as a result, will help to save the world by replacing dairy cows in the future. TurtleTree is the first biotech company in the world to create milk from all mammals. To maximize impact, the team will work with industry leaders to adopt sustainable and safe methods to create milk. TurtleTree has offices in both Singapore and San Francisco in the US.







pany from a business perspective. Max and I also have very different backgrounds, which again lends a diversity of thought and value to what we're bringing to the table. Thinking out of the box and even adopting unconventional solutions has certainly played a role in TurtleTree winning global competitions like The Liveability Challenge and The Entrepreneurship World Cup for our innovative disruption of the dairy industry. Other milestones we celebrated in 2021 include establishing our R&D center in Sacramento, California, and closing Tranche One of our Series A funding with US \$30 million. We're also very proud that we hired Aletta Schnitzler, who is basically a superstar in the industry, as our CSO! For 2022, we're targeting to bring lactoferrin, a high-value dairy bioactive, to the market

as our first commercial product sometime this year.

**As a non-scientist, how did you inspire so many scientists to work for you, in such an international team at TurtleTree? What strengths were created in carrying out the projects?**

Empowerment is one of TurtleTree's core values. Our goal as a company has always been to put talents in the driver's seat. That includes empowering scientists to carry out their own research and development, and to run projects as if it were their own business. And as a company, we support them with the resources they need to innovate and grow as a people leader. We believe that this approach has been key to us attracting some of the best and brightest





minds in the industry.

**How do you think Covid-19 and Climate change are impacting the food industry and specifically dairy consumption? Do you think people are aware that current systems of producing and distributing food are very fragile? What solution for a sustainable future?**

During the height of COVID-19, one of the most striking images in the news was when farmers were dumping gallons of milk and smashing eggs all while food shortages were happening in supermarkets. The pandemic has honestly spotlighted the inefficiencies and inadequacies of our current food distribution and production systems, which have already been compromised because of the effects of climate change. Govern-

ments are certainly realizing this, and are investing in solutions to future-proof their food sources. The Singapore government, for example, has launched their “30 by 30” goal (for the country to produce 30 percent of its nutritional needs locally by 2030). The Singapore Institute of Food and Biotechnology Innovation (SIFBI) research institute was also established in 2020 to facilitate research and development in alternative proteins. \$144 million was also committed to investing in alternative proteins. But while VCs, scientists, and governments may be excited about such innovations, a truly sustainable food future can only begin when the everyday person embraces it as a part of their daily life. To that end, educating the average person or independent F&B owner to learn more about the



likes of cell-based food, and showcasing relatable ways for them to incorporate it into their everyday diet is key to increasing uptake of this brand new way of eating and thinking about food. Food tech will only reach its goals if everyone plays a part. So, if you're a fan of this industry, do educate as many people as you can!

**By producing animal “clean milk”, your company can better plug into the manufacturing of products such as cheese, cream, butter, and yogurt that need to be recreated with fresh raw milk. What are the priorities on your agenda in this area?**

TurtleTree's current focus is creating the highly functional ingredients found in human and bovine milk such as lactoferrin. High-value dairy bioactives like lactoferrin are key to meeting the current market demand for functional nutrition, and the possibilities of incorporating bioactives into everyday food products are truly quite endless. We are continuing the development of both human and bovine milk proteins through precision fermentation, and are working very closely with US and Singapore agencies towards regulatory approval.

**When do you think the prices can reach a point that people can see your first products of “green milk” on the shelves?**

TurtleTree will target high-value functional milk ingredients first so that everyone can enjoy the nutritional benefits of milk in the near future.

**Some of the proteins in human milk have been proven to help with immunity, gut health, and brain development. Could clean “humans breast milk” be a better and faster way to save and help babies from denutrition in poor nations?**

We believe in creating accessible products that are beneficial for everyone. With our highly functional ingredients that can be added into everyday food and beverage products, we hope to be a sustainable solution to the food security issues that are happening on a global scale.



**The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2022 (IWD 2022) is, "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow", what about women in a leadership position? In your experience, what do you think makes a great leader?**

We would like to encourage and continue this trend of women leading innovation and technology development, as it opens up opportunities for those with the right skills and goals to thrive in the industry. We believe in inclusively hiring the best talents from all areas of expertise. Backed by our supportive team, the women of TurtleTree are breaking new ground in our journey towards a better generation of food. We're extremely grateful to have female leadership that represents us with distinction and, in doing so, pave the way for more women to join the industry. With women's leadership in the cellular agriculture industry, there will hopefully be more cell-based products and innovations that serve the needs of women, and more inclusively, the human population, animals, and planet Earth in general. For example, one of TurtleTree's early initiatives is to produce cell-based milk ingredients and milk to meet infant and adult nutrition needs sustainably, filling the current gap in the nutrition product market.

As founders of the company, what Max and myself focus on everyday is to develop a team who we trust will make the best decision for the business in their respective roles. At TurtleTree, I have the courage to be vulnerable as a leader at times knowing I will be embraced by a team who care for me as a person, and who will guide me generously in their area of expertise.

**What are your hopes and wishes for women? Is there a piece of advice you would give to the next generation of women leaders?**

Women are still underrepresented in STEM, so having women leaders spearhead food tech businesses will certainly help shape an open, diverse food tech business culture that will in turn also encourage more women to join the industry. At the same time, when more talents are encouraged to enter the field with their own unique expertise, be it in science, business, or creative work, it will definitely help develop the industry. I would also add that it's important that we educate the next generation to think about talent inclusively. Informing them about the choices they actually have will allow them to make the best decision for themselves to pursue what they are truly passionate about.



# Violet Li

Master Teachings of Tai Chi, meditation, and  
author of hundreds of articles about Tai Chi

*Photos courtesy of Violet Li*





**V**iolet Li, a 12th Generation Chen Tai Chi Inheritor, certified Tai Chi instructor, an award-winning journalist, writer on Tai Chi, Qigong, Mind-body exercise, Martial Arts, and fitness. She was born in Shanghai, China grew up in Taipei, Taiwan lived in St. Louis, Missouri, USA for a long time, and then moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. Her educational background includes an Executive MBA from Vanderbilt University, an MA in Economics from Washington University, and a BA in Journalism from Chengchi University. Violet always enjoyed workouts. She studied yoga, practiced aerobic dance, and taught kickboxing. But it wasn't until 2000 that she found her true passion in Tai Chi. Since then, she has spent more than 10,000 hours learning the art both in theory and techniques from many masters and grandmasters. She interviewed research scientists, doctors, and practitioners to understand the benefits of doing Tai Chi. Violet Li has appeared on many podcasts, TV, and website interviews. She has taught the healing art of Tai Chi and Qigong to more than 10,000 people worldwide. Her youngest students were 6 and the oldest was 106. She promotes health, happiness, and harmony through Tai Chi and Qigong. Violet Li shows that Tai Chi is more than what it appears to be: It exposes people to different thoughts, different ideas, or different ways of doing things. Tai Chi can change people's mindsets, creating the opportunity for them to expand and grow.





**When did you begin your martial art training and what attracted and motivated you to the discipline? How long have you been practicing?**

I started my Tai Chi training in my late 40's. It was all by accident and random. During that time, my kids were going to a Chinese language school on Sundays in St. Louis, Missouri. I had nothing to do while they were in classes. Out of boredom, I took a Tai Chi class for parents. The rest was history. The more I study the art, the more I am intrigued by it, which is so profound from several aspects, not just the theory, techniques, and usages behind the art but also the health benefits, culture, and philosophy. I have been studying the art for 20 years, became an indoor disciple of Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei, taught over ten thousand students in more than 30 countries, trained many instructors, and authored over 700 articles, still, I feel like a beginner.

**Can you please tell us a little about Tai Chi?**

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese martial art as well as a healing art. It is considered the ultimate martial. Its cultural root dates back more than 5,000 years ago. It seeks the harmony between nature and humans while the entire universe continues to evolve from day to night,

from winter to summer, from sunshine to storm, from drought to flood, from volcano eruption to sea-level rise, from one dynasty to another..... Tai Chi is an internal martial art that mixes softness with hard punches and maintains stillness during movements. It is an art as well as a method of meditation. The creator of Tai Chi, General Chen Wangting selected the best martial art fighting techniques infused them with the Chinese meridian system therefore scientists to discover that Tai Chi practice provides holistic health benefits including but not limited to improving cardio-vascular functions, physical balance, chronic pain management, diabetes, stress/anxiety reduction, brain health, and so forth.

**When did the time come that you realized that you would make a profession?**

I started teaching Tai Chi in 2006 and writing in 2009 while managing multi-million-dollar IT projects for a large telecommunication company. I enjoyed my day job; nevertheless, something at my heart was missing. In 2015, I decided to quit my regular job so I can devote myself more to the art. I am not sure about the term "a profession" since there is a little financial reward in it and I don't have any measurable targets to grow "my









*Outside Tai Chi, Violet Li was a Senior Program Manager in the IT industry until she quit the job in May 2015 to devote herself to the great cause of Tai Chi/Qigong*

business”. Maria from my Executive MBA class asked me what my marketing plan is when I left my old job. I told her that I had none. I am following the principle of Dao or Wu-wei. Wu-wei literally translates into do-nothing; however, it means that we follow our passion and let nature takes its own course.

**Can you share your teaching philosophy?**

Everyone is an individual with different physical capabilities and constraints, varied goals, diverse lifestyles, and needs, I respect each person and try to accommodate him/her in my teaching. Tai Chi is not just about the movements. My teaching focus is always on the

fundamentals and principles; once students comprehend them, it is easy to expand their knowledge base and skills.

**What does your training routine consist of? What would you say is the biggest positive influence Tai Chi has had upon you? What benefits for life do you think that Tai Chi can provide?**

My training routine, not just for my students but for myself as well, consists of how to relax the mind and body, how to breathe properly, the proper body alignments throughout the movements, what is the real purpose of each move, and how to accomplish that end, and being patient and kind to ourselves. Tai Chi Chuan is a healing



art with a multitude of health benefits; I have been helped hence.

The biggest impact on me actually is how I see the world and my value system. Tai Chi Chuan is not a religion. People with all faith backgrounds practice it. It is spiritual and it brings tranquility to life and lets us understand the rule of nature and respect everything in it.

**Are there any cultural differences and approaches with respect to when you started to study martial art? Do martial art students get into the discipline due to the “health” or “personal growth” side nowadays?**

Tai Chi is deeply rooted in Chinese culture. People with all cultural heritages or even ideological beliefs have learned the art and appreciate it without a barrier. Some of my best students who are none-Chinese-speaking have a better understanding of the art than my average Chinese students. After all, true art speaks to the heart and strikes a common cord with souls. Most martial art students get into the discipline due to its health benefits especially when their body has been beaten up badly by their hard style martial art practice; I also had a student who was an MMA fighter who wanted to learn better fighting techniques and loved it. The majority of people learning it are for health purposes and some for

self-defense.

**Have you come across some inaccuracies or misunderstandings of the information that has been reported concerning the arts? What are some common, incorrect assumptions?**

I am pleased to see that more and more Hollywood movies and TVs and media include Tai Chi in them. However, they got it almost all wrong and Tai Chi is always portrayed for seniors and some of the Tai Chi posts or movements they exhibit are poorly done or unsafe. People told me that they understand that Tai Chi is good for them but they want to pursue other exercises while their body still can handle those and they will come back to Tai Chi later. Tai Chi is a mind-body-breathing exercise and looks soothing and easy. People only find out how difficult to learn an authentic form once they study it. Due to its complexity, Tai Chi is not a mindless set of movements but a brain exercise as well and it is fun to practice.

**Do you find that Tai Chi is more suited to a certain type of person or do you think it has something for everyone?**

There are over one hundred Tai Chi forms with the same underlining principles and they are good



for people of all ages and physical conditions. My youngest students were 6 and the oldest was 106 and I have taught all age groups in between.

**Since childhood, you have lived in different parts of the world. You were born in Shanghai, grew up in Taipei, and lived in the States. How much does martial art has influenced your way to see life and appreciating living and moving in different countries?**

I was born in China, grew up in Taiwan, and spent most of my adult life in the U.S. I have traveled for work and pleasure to 20 some countries and enjoyed the diversity of culture and history around the world. Learning a martial art never crossed my mind until I accidentally stumbled upon it. Tai Chi Chuan is not just a martial art. It heavily embodies the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang. Growing up, we were told to have razor-focus goals and work diligently toward the goal regardless. Now it is no longer the goal that I am chasing but the process and keeping everything in perspective and balanced during my life journey. Tai Chi is truly a way of living.

**What was the best teaching you received from your Master? If you could give one piece of advice to somebody that is beginning their martial arts journey now, what would it be?**

I am fortunate to be taught personally by Grandmaster Chen Zhen-gei, who is ranked the 9th Duan by the Chinese Wushu (Martial Arts) Association. The 9th Duan is the highest honor a martial artist can earn. He has bestowed the title due to his enormous knowledge of the art and superb skills. What amazes me most is not just his art and his devotion to promoting it, but his humility to embrace all different Tai Chi styles and never criticize other martial artists' skills. My advice for anyone who would like to start the journey of learning Tai Chi is relaxing, being humble, and savoring the process of learning.







# Samantha Sin

Founder of One Yoga Studio  
and Samantha Yoga



*Photo courtesy of Samantha Sin*



**S**amantha Sin started her yoga journey in her early teens. Upon graduation from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and equipped with a Bachelor of Nursing, she attained the highest qualification in yoga as ERYT500 and founded her first yoga studio. She finished a lot of other certifications eg, Aerial Yoga, Yoga Wheel, Yoga Therapy, Advanced Yoga Teacher Training, etc. She believes that yoga should be the union of mind, body, and soul. Samantha's teaching style is dynamic and fun. She encourages students to push their own limits and progress in a non-competitive way. Thanks to her Bachelor's studies and knowledge of the human body, she is able to break down

each pose straight to the yoga basics, since she believes that mindfulness connects a lot of things together. Samantha offers a progressive approach to Hatha and Vinyasa Flow Yoga, and her inspirational classes are a dynamic combination of breath-inspired movement and creative, yet balanced and intelligent sequencing. Samantha's career in yoga resulted from the harmony between what she loves to do and what she needs to do: to spread the benefits of yoga. Samantha has a genuine love for yoga and she is dedicated to helping people improve their lives through the correct practice of yoga. Samantha has been teaching for around ten years.





*Samantha believes yoga is for everyone. A lot more than just simple stretching exercises, but something that can help bring mind, body and soul in peace*





**How did yoga come into your life? How long have you been practicing yoga? How has your life changed since you started? What is the most significant change you have observed in practicing yoga?**

I guess I have always had a special relationship with yoga since I was a kid. My parents met each other in a yoga class back in the 70s. Yoga was not nearly as popular back then as it is right now. I always find it fascinating how both of them developed an interest in yoga and fell in love with it. Because of my parents, I was exposed to yoga ever since I was a kid. They practiced yoga at home from time to time. I still remember how my sister and I mess with our parents when they were doing asana practice. As we grew older, they started teaching us bits and pieces. It was fun. It was however not until years later that I was really hooked. My undergraduate degree was in nursing. Naturally, I started my first job as a nurse after graduation. Working as a registered nurse in the operation room was extremely stressful and I felt that my life was turned upside down. My mind and body were not in the right balance. I had lots of negative thoughts constantly and I realized that was not the life that I want. Completely by chance, a friend of mine asked me one day if I wanted to join her for a yoga session. And it was how I

get reconnected to yoga. It may sound cliché but yoga changed my life so much. Not only because it is a large part of my life now, but also because it transformed me spiritually. I become more grounded and be able to live the moment after I start practicing yoga regularly. It becomes easier for me to let go of negative thoughts in life. There is a reason why yoga has become so much more popular in recent years. I truly believe that yoga is what most of us need to help restore our mental and emotional balance. It is a high-paced society we are living in, and the world is becoming more and more uncertain. It is very easy to feel insecure and develop anxiety in a place like Hong Kong. The benefits of yoga are very evident.

**How did you decide to become a yoga teacher? What do you love most about your job?**

After I started practicing yoga regularly again, I found myself much happier than before. It didn't change how stressful my job as a nurse was, but I became a lot more resilient. I started falling in love with yoga and did my teacher training. At the time, I wasn't really thinking about a career change. I did it simply because I wanted to. After obtaining the qualification, however, the possibility of becoming a full-time yoga teacher



became a lot more real. Even then though I wasn't sure if I should make a career change and become a yoga teacher. I was afraid of the uncertainties. However, something completely changed my mind. I was reading the book the Alchemist and I always remember the courage I found from the line – “when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.”. That was the moment that I decided to start my own yoga studio. When I started my yoga studio, yoga was reasonably popular but not nearly as popular as it is today. There weren't many options for people who wanted to practice yoga outside of the major chains. I wanted to promote yoga and make it affordable for everyone. People could come to try it out and decide how regularly they want to practice it without having to pre-commit to a 2-year contract. In a way, we are offering flexibility to our customers.

**Can you tell us more about your studio? Which aspects of yoga are you most excited about teaching? What type of yoga do you teach?**

We currently have two studio brands – One Yoga and Samantha Yoga with 4 studios in Central, Wan Chai, Sheung Wan, and North Point. We offer all kinds of yoga from ground to aerial classes. What sets us apart is our focus on teacher training in particular. We are currently the only studio in





Hong Kong that is offering a full on-line RYT200 Yoga Teacher Training. Our RYT200 teacher training program is one of the most popular in Hong Kong and has many amazing graduates who are now professional yoga teachers. Some went on to start their own studio too! I used to teach a lot of Vinyasa classes and Inversion techniques at the studio. In recent years, I focus most of my energy on training new yoga teachers. I really enjoy teaching our teacher training programme. It is very different from teaching a regular yoga class. You spend a lot of time with your students and you develop a deep connection with them through the programme. It is a very rewarding thing to see how they grow their skills and confidence as a teacher. It feels amazing passing on yoga knowledge to the new teachers who you know will influence more yogis in the future.

**What are the biggest challenges and what are the rewarding thing in your career?**

For everyone living in Hong Kong, it has been a tough couple of years since 2019. This was particularly the case for us as a business. Whilst teaching yoga is a very rewarding thing, running a yoga studio is very different. As a business, we have to face the business realities, survival, and competition. COVID-19 has

definitely been one of the toughest challenges we have faced as a business. At the time of writing all studios in HK had to halt their operation due to social distancing measures. In 2022 alone we will be close for at least 108 days, if not more. The most rewarding thing for me personally is seeing the happy faces of my students; knowing that they have learned something in class that would be useful for their yoga journey. Even though we have conducted quite a lot of RYT200 teacher trainings already. Every graduation ceremony is still a bitter-sweet moment. Our students have all been very sweet. A lot of them write long thank you cards with touching words. It is really really rewarding knowing that they truly enjoy the journey with us.”

**Is yoga more a spiritual or physical experience? What are your feelings about it?**

Yoga is not whole if we only focus on the physical asana or the spiritual practice. For most people, yoga is probably more a physical experience; A lot of people do yoga as a physical exercise to relieve stress/stretch themselves. In a 60mins regular yoga class, it is usually difficult to cover the spiritual side of yoga. Therefore most people have the impression that yoga is mostly about asana. In fact, yoga has a



The studios **One Yoga**, and **Samantha Yoga**, across four different locations (Central, Wan Chai, Tim Sha Tsui, and Sheung Wan) in Hong Kong, are the brainchild of Samantha Sin, which is a yoga teacher and an entrepreneur. The two studios, with more than 2,000 students visiting a month, share the same vision and mission: to promote yoga and provide quality yoga experiences for everyone. They try to arrange their class time and length to make the experience easy for people, who aim to live a healthier and happier life through the practice of yoga. As a registered yoga school with the US Yoga Alliance, Samantha and her team have also trained many yoga teachers through their yoga Teacher Training Programme which was started in 2018. The studio is an internationally recognized yoga training school, that provides diversified yoga training and builds a yoga community for yogis. The team consists of young and passionate yoga teachers and management that take care of the operation of the studios as well as the online program, that trying to give their students more individual attention, helping them to find something that suits them in terms of ambiance and style. In addition to the online courses and studio sessions, the team also holds regular training classes for all levels and abilities, from beginners to advanced level yogi, and on various specialty yoga such as Aerial Yoga, Wheel Yoga, and Yoga Therapy, and many more!

One Yoga, “ONE” means yoga is for everyone.

long history dating back to the BC itate more without stiffness in era. In its long history of develop- the body. I do meditate regular- ment, different schools of thought ly and I introduce a short medita- and philosophy have developed tion exercise in my regular classes for yoga. It is important for a yogi to understand the history and philosophy of yoga in order to gain the full benefit of it. This is also what we cover a lot in our teacher training programme.

**How important is meditation to stay calm and relaxed in such uncertain times?**

Yoga and meditation are strongly related to one another, in fact The benefit of yoga is very evident in ancient times, monks practice achieving a positive mental state. The benefit of yoga is very evident yoga in order to be able to med-

**Do you think yoga can help to stay focused and positive during this period of global stress? How long would you think is needed, in order to start feeling the benefits? What are your suggestions to stay calm and relaxed in such uncertain times?**

Definitely! There are plenty of scientific studies that show the benefit of yoga for stress relief and achieving a positive mental state. The benefit of yoga is very evident



Samantha Sin  
believes that good  
yoga can bring  
peace to people:  
both mental and  
physical. Yoga  
helps people  
connect to their  
inner self and find  
inner balance





from my own experience. It does not take long for one to see the effect. A lot of people think that you need to practice yoga for a very long time in order to see the benefits. This is not true. My recommendation is to focus on developing a habit initially. It is not realistic to expect a sustained benefit with just one session of yoga. Most people feel positive and rejuvenated after a yoga session but everyone hasn't the time to go to a yoga class for 60mins. What I always recommend people do is to start with time you can commit and commit to doing it for say 7-14 days. It can be as short as a 15mins session a day at home. You can also include meditation in your practice. We have quite a few videos for beginners on our website for free.

**Due to the pandemic and restrictions, some people have left their exercise or gym routine. Can yoga, especially now, be a practical home substitute for other forms of workouts? Can yoga be a more accessible form to stay and be healthy?**

This is actually what we firmly believe and what we are promoting







as a studio. Whilst yoga, like the gym, is becoming more difficult to access in a studio due to COVID restrictions, there are plenty of resources online that are free which people could make use of to practice at home. Unlike the gym, yoga does not require a lot of space and equipment. A simple yoga mat is enough to get you started. We as a studio have been actively promoting online learning/remote learning to help people continue their yoga routine during this difficult time.

**Do you feel anyone can enjoy and gain from yoga? What steps can be done to include yoga in the daily routine? What is your best advice?**

The motto of One Yoga is Yoga is for everyone. The most common misconception is you need to be flexible in order to do yoga. Quite the contrary, it is because you are not flexible, that is why you need yoga. Like I mentioned, take baby steps. Start small, make sure there is continuity. Commit to a 7/14-day routine. Once you see the benefit and develop the habit, it becomes more difficult to stop than to continue.



# Ivy Ma

Visual artist specializing  
in mixed media

*Photo courtesy of Ivy Ma*





Ivy Ma was born in Hong Kong. Her academic training was originally in information science. She received a BA in Information Systems from the City University of Hong Kong in 1996. After working as a programmer and software engineer for some years, she began to study painting in 1999 at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) / The Art School, Hong Kong Arts Centre in Hong Kong and earned a BFA (Painting) in 2001. She was awarded a scholarship by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council to study for one year at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom, where she obtained a MA in Feminist Theory and Practice in Visual Art in 2002. She has held several solo exhibitions in Hong Kong and participated in group exhibitions in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Pakistan, and Australia. Her works were featured in the Hong Kong Art Biennial in 2005, she was an Asian Cultural Council grantee in 2007, and won the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Awards in 2012. Her works are in the collection of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum and are part of the Hong Kong Legislative Council Complex Art Acquisition Project commissioned by the Hong Kong Legislative Council Commission. She taught at the HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity in Hong Kong from 2006 to 2007. She was a part-time lecturer at the Hong Kong Art School from 2004 to 2016 and has assumed the position of full-time Lecturer since September 2016. She is a course instructor of Associate Degree of Arts in Visual Arts at the Academy of Visual Arts (AVA), Hong Kong Baptist University since 2015.



**Could you tell us a bit about yourself? When did you realize you wanted to be an artist? What motivated you to get into art?**

I was born in 1973 and grew up in Hong Kong. My parents are immigrants from Mainland China while they were in their 20s. Cantonese is my spoken language, Chinese is my written language. We all learn English in school from early education. I am a mother of an 8-year old girl. I studied Fine Art (major in painting) on a part-time basis with a full-time job. It was a few years after I have graduated from a major in Information System Degree course and worked in an Internet company. I realized the office job in a commercial company was quite meaningless for me. And so, I started to think about what do I want to do. It was 1999 I started to attend an Art School and immediately got quite indulged in learning more and making more in Art. Indeed, I did not really think about being an artist or not at that time. What's the motivation behind it? I guess I am always a person quite a space out, but I know I care a lot about life (not good or bad, but what's value). I question myself about what life can be. I am curious about what relationship we have with others and the world. And, just from the experience of looking at art (no matter if it is a painting or a novel or a film), I

purely think I might be able to find something, and I can experience and share something new.

**Who influenced you as a person and as an artist? What does art mean to you?**

I cannot really think of a particular person who influenced me. But I think, I did learn a lot from several failed relationships in my life. During childhood, I grew up in a single-parent family. My feeling was very detached from the surroundings. These personal life experiences did influence me a lot. Then, later on, when I learn more and engage in art-making, there was a lot of hidden magic from all these past experiences, to bring in, and blend in the artworks. Or we could say, there is a secret linkage that bridges subtly of one-self inner psychic to the outer material world, this means to me a lot.

**What were the biggest challenges you encounter in the realization of your artworks?**

I could mainly say it was something quite practical – the limitation of time and space. I have never had a stable studio to work in. So, it is always a challenge to get things done, but I guess it is, on the other hand, good training for myself.







**You are a visual artist specializing in mixed media works, and you explore various perspectives. Which of your technique reflect you most as an artist?**

I think I enjoy most when different media come together along the way - making a digital image through my own camera. I love to find photographic images, making a printout through photocopying. Or printing on different textures of papers. I like making a collage through cut and paste, then mixing with painting pigments on canvas, wood, or linen. I enjoy working with mistakes and the unexpected and solving problems through experiments. After all, there are always surprises, from time to time. Something that is being settled through repetition, might be a so-called technique. It doesn't matter about technique. But for me, it is more like habit or style, you just know what you can do and what you don't; what you are good at and what you aren't.

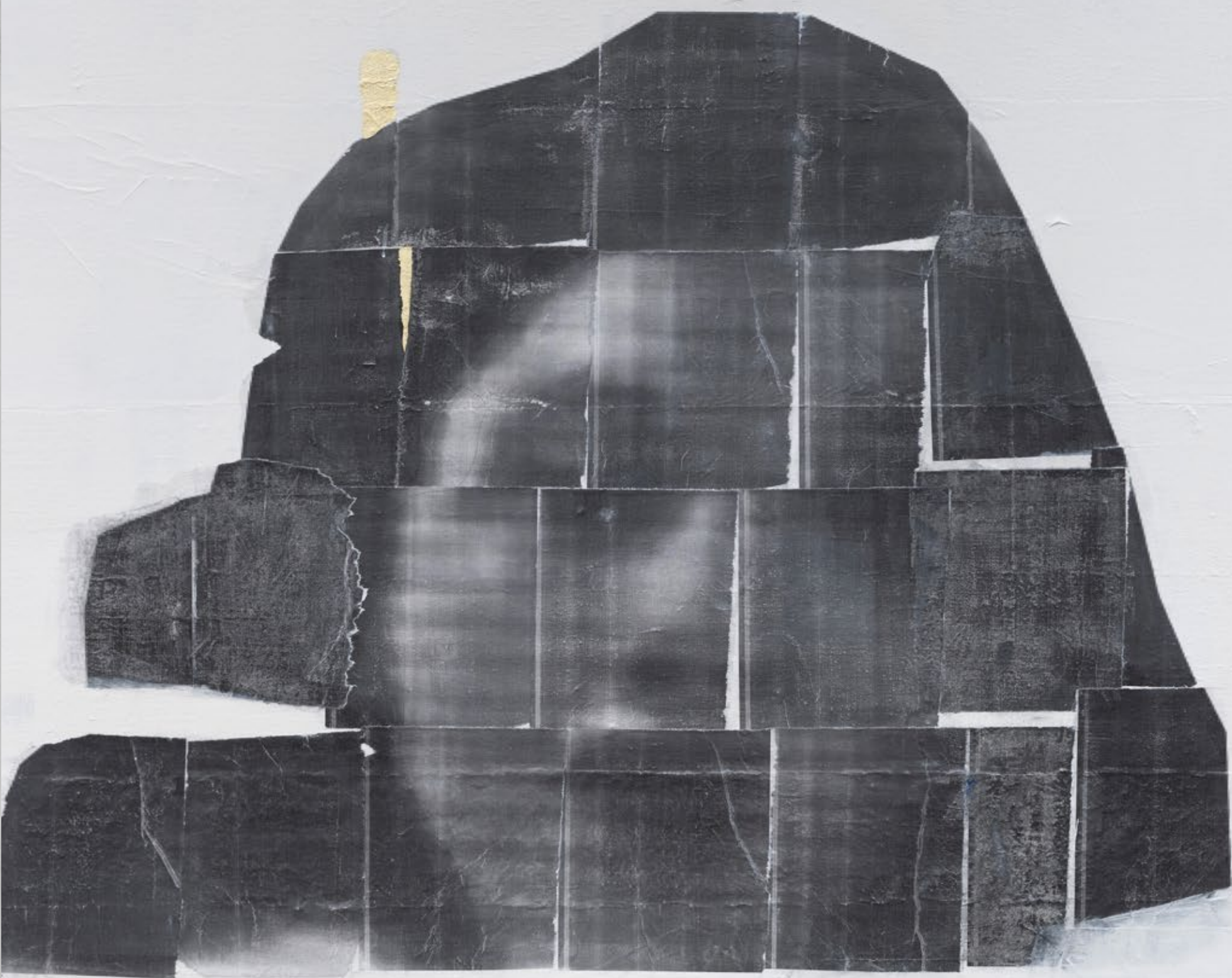
**Does your art have a philosophy message or reflect your personal philosophy of life? What do you want to communicate with your artwork?**

I don't know much about philosophy and I don't believe there are messages in art. Maybe, "message" is solely not a proper word.

*In her artworks she likes to add something and take away something, she actively erases and draws into, disassembling and rearranging*

As I think I see myself like a "sample" in the world, who is like everyone, from the day we were born, we were given certain "factors", such as where, when, what, and how we were brought up. Then along with years of growing up, things happened to us, good and bad. Something like rules, like moral standards, always have been pinned in the society, while something could still be able to change, to motivate, at least to review. Making art is a free area that gives us time and space, chances to "shake" things up, to dismantle, to unpack the "factors", and to assemblage them again. After all, I love to see myself as a "sample" in the world, what kind of person I could become and what do the artworks out from my brain and hands would look like. I am just very curious. And, I am very eager to show my experiences and the excitement of making, and the outcomes, to the audience









**You navigated topics related to History and human beings' behavior. You had said that you are fascinated by “the distance between the present and the past, as well as how history is archived and presented to us in the now”. Can you tell us more about this aspect and what is your perspective of the current world situation? How can art, contribute to awareness?**

Artists are not the ones who invent things, I guess. So, to-look-back is important. And, the most interesting is always knowing that the present will soon be the past. The future is the unknown. Artists then can link up the three

*Ivy Ma showed her interest in exploring the marginality of different media and materials. In her early works, she used everyday materials like hairpins, thread, wood, cotton, dolls, fresh meat, and candies. In the last years, her source materials range from historical images, people in the artist's family photographs, to strangers in found photographs*



(perhaps as a circle), put them in motion. Sometimes, it is a matter of choice, where and how do we want to locate ourselves and to feel the movement. The world is full of sadness. Yes, happiness does exist but no longer the aim we pursue, as it is more complicated than that. For human beings, what makes us different from animals, is we have science and art. The former gives us facts and logic, the latter gives us opinions and sensations.

**Is there any of your artwork that you are particularly connected to or that marked a significant moment or change in your life or way to create art? Can you share with us the story behind it?**

I would say, the works that I have done in 2012 “Walking Towards”, 2015 “Last Year”, and 2019 “I Did Not Attend My Father’s Funeral”, were significant in my art-making path. I would add that they did not change my life though. “Walking Towards” is from a project where I re-photographed a wall-size photo displayed inside Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. It shows a tiny silhouette of a human figure walking on the bridge after a few hours of the bomb. I printed the photo, erased some ink, and then applied some white drawing pigments on the light areas. It was the time I brought tragic moments in world history into my work. “Last Year” is a project started in 2014, when I was taking photos of the portraits of young protestors of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. This project, as the previous one, is also printed on papers, but this time, I erased the ink and drew patterns on them more deliberately.







They turned out a series of 40 blurry portraits with abstract and expressive drawing traces on them, shown in a solo exhibition called, Last Year in 2015. It was on this occasion and time that I realized the “distance of history” is so close from present to past, and to me. “I Did Not Attend My Father’s Funeral”, I made this installation work the year after my biological father, who I hadn’t seen since I was 3, was passed away. Since I found myself having no “linkage” with him, I decided not to go to the funeral, yet I do have an impulse to deal with a photographic portrait that has been in my family album

*Ivy works her way  
through history to find  
what we might call “the  
human thread” running  
through everything*



for many years. So, I used a photo with him wearing a suit probably in his 20's, that I indeed think he is very handsome. Then I make the same image of him into thousands, printed them and cut them out one by one, then installed them on a wall, each one attached to a nail. It was the time I feel like I was swinging back to my personal history and memories, that past is not past, it is always a room to review and so to make it what I love to call "new memories"

**The pandemic had a huge impact on arts and cultural heritage fields. At the same time, the lockdown has pushed people to make abundant use of art from home thanks to the web. Do you think social media and new technologies are helping art and artists to get closer to the audience or there are new kinds of layers and filters? What is your perspective of art, and what do you see after Covid-19?**

I am a kind of old-fashioned person, can't really catch up with new technologies. Also, I am a bit skeptical while something that is fashionable and popular. Yet, I do have and use a Facebook account and I like to constantly post photos and write a little something. I find it is a good way to keep connections with former students and friends. It helps a lot for an introverted and

shy person. After Covid, I found that as artists we are very lucky since we are mostly quite independent to think and to make things in a comparatively (mentally) isolated situation.

**The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2022 (IWD 2022) is, "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow. What does it mean to be a woman artist working in Asia today? Does gender still matter? Are women slowly changing the art scene, or is there still much to do to accelerate the process?"**

For International Women's Day, I would like to say, I wish all the women who are still suffering from Gender inequality can be able to gain justice. I think this is teamwork, not just for women, but for all other genders. And it starts from an individual's effort. It starts with the education of the next generation. It starts from how much we are willing to rethink the system, the structure, the way of living that the society wants us to be, and willing to ask questions and change things that we find are wrong, to begin with.



# Nancy Liang

Illustrator and animator creates unique  
and dreamlike art and looping Gifs

*Photo courtesy of Nancy Liang,*

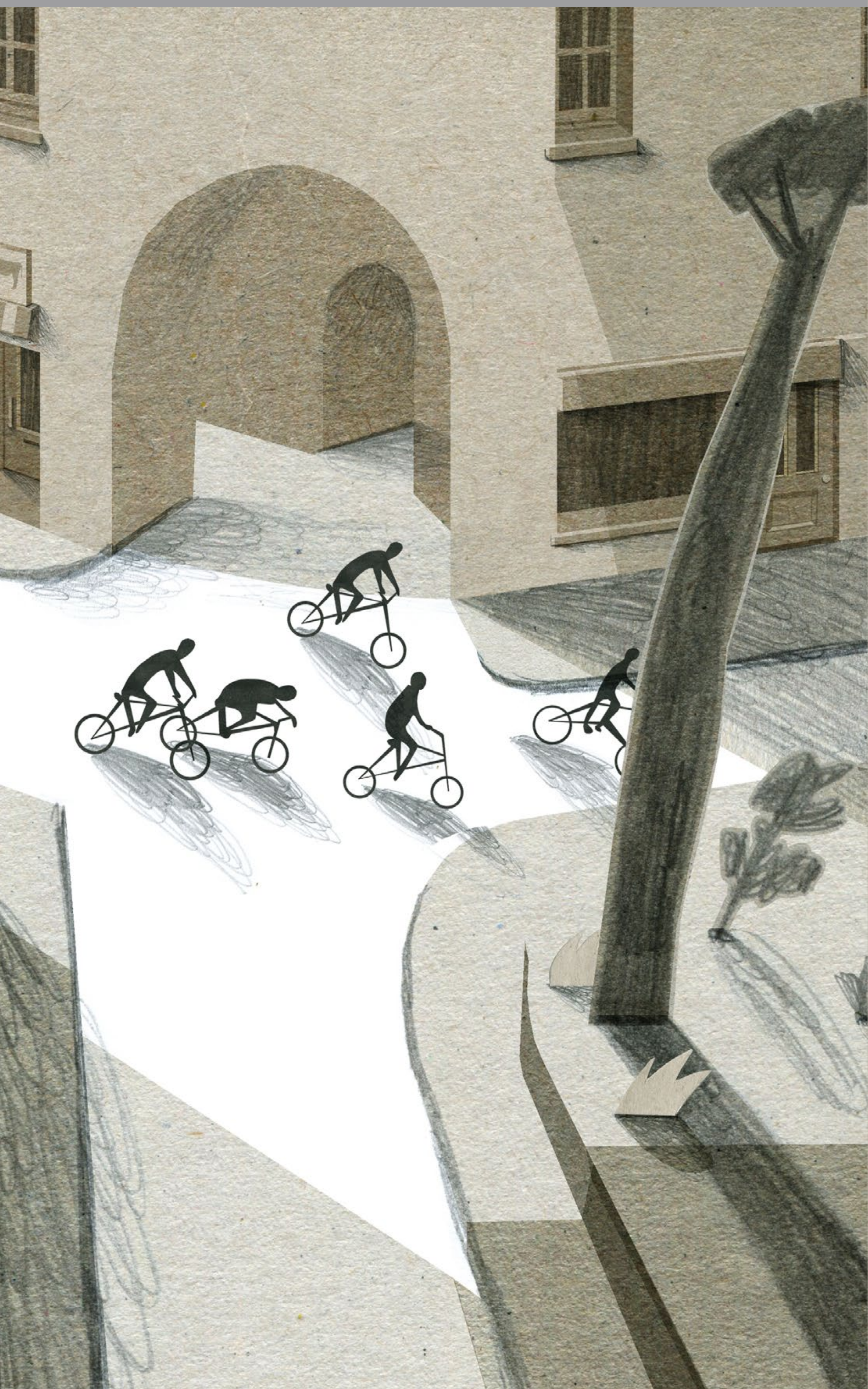




**N**ancy Liang is an artist, illustrator, and animator who mixes paper with new technology. Nancy Liang based in Sydney, Australia, studied Design at UNSW Art and Design with Honours. She tried so many things, to satisfy her artistic vein: textiles, jewelry, objects, and even undertook research in sustainability. She took a course in Illustration and this helped pave her decision to venture into the field. During her studies, she was already teaching. Outside of illustration, she worked at the International Art center of Sydney. Inside monochrome Nancy Liang's forgotten tales visions of fictional cityscapes and suburban life, every little detail is executed beautifully. The very personal style of Nancy Liang shines with a special intensity. Most of her animated Gifs are night scenes, and in her personal page 'Over the Moon' she expresses her fascinations with the night and all the dreamy elements that can have a different shape and a different story under the moonlight. Nancy curated every small detail to the background and periphery, foregrounding the image in quiet, bringing with her drawing the spirit and the breath of the night. The im-

ages evoke the circumscribability of twilight, midnight, and predawn delirium. She enjoys working with traditional techniques, such as drawing and painting. Art looping Gif, where a little animation is added to the new illustration generation brings the level of narrative to another level. The artist makes her artwork unique with her fantastic details created with paper textures that give the final work a romantic and nostalgic effect. Incredibly and surprisingly the paper without the help of technology would never arise the same effect on paper. All her elements that move are completely hand-drawn or hand-made frame by frame. Working in layers allows Nancy to animate individual subject matters, drawing, cutting, pasting, and shifting things around in a reiterative process. With the combination of traditional style and modern technology, she has balanced a good harmony that enhances visual communication a great deal. She also collaborates with musicians and makes music videos. Her professional work can be glimpsed in a variety of locations, such as The Lifted Brow, The Illustrated Mixtape, Airbnb, Realestate.com.au, and many more.







**Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? How did your adventure in the illustration world begin? What motivated you to become an illustrator? What illustration impressed you the most? What are your best childhood memories related to drawing? Do you remember your earliest sketch? What was about?**

My name is Nancy Liang, and I am an artist who is currently based in Sydney, Australia. I predominately work with paper and collage, and my artwork is often presented as a cross between hand-craft and digital techniques. My practice spans illustration, animation, and installation. However, I'm always constantly curious and eager to explore new fields to add to my creative practice. Currently, I dabble in Korean ceramics and have a keen interest in Chinese painting. During my time off, I enjoy reading, in particular on Chinese and Korean history, language, and historical arts and crafts with a focus on Buncheong. I'm am passionate about the environment (stemmed from my studies in Sustainability in Design), and for the past 4 years, I've been doing my best to reflect on my impacts and incorporate mindful practices into my daily life and creative practice. I've always wanted to be an artist, or at least pursue creativity in my life. I have been drawing as soon as I could hold a pencil, with vague memories of doodling on loose sheets of paper in the hallway light as a child. This passion eventually carried on into my studies, but I was always determined to keep my creative practice open due to my interest in many fields. However, it was also important to be practical and establish a path to work from first. Based on my experience at the time, illustration seemed to be the most feasible route as I neared the end of my university studies. While I took a semester module in Illustration during my studies, my illustrative practice is primarily self-taught. Of course, I applied the skills and advice given to me by my mentors and tutors, but in the end, it was up to me to forge my own path. My Tumblr 'Over The Moon', (<https://nankliang.tumblr.com>) really helped my work gain attention. This was during a time where other forms of socials such as Instagram were not as prominent, and all major creative platforms had also regularly used a Tumblr. In time, I was invited to interviews and features from places such as Colossal, Brown Paper Bag, and Hi-Fructose. This then gave me leverage to be scouted by agencies and clients.



**Who influenced you as a person and as an illustrator and creative?**

My influences are comprised of people that had continually offered their support and given mentorship throughout my creative journey. They include my agencies, art directors, clients, creative colleagues, collaborators, family, and mentors. A very large part of me is made up of pieces of them. I am very thankful for their contributions and guidance.

**What do you love most about your job? What better focus your personality, in your creations?**

There are so many things, however, I'll tap into one for now! I love the geographical flexibility of my job. Most of the time, I am able to work anywhere. However, to be considerate and practical during these strange times, I have been residing and creating in my studio and attending meetings via video calls. Previously I have been lucky to enough to work on a short animation stint in Japan, and tomorrow I'll be heading interstate for an exhibition opening! The only downfall is perhaps staying up during the odd hours. Sometimes a client will be in the US, and for them to organise a meeting in the morning would mean I'll wait until midnight on my end. However, I am quite used to this and enjoy the solitude of the night!







**Do your illustrations express your mood and the way you see the world?**

Absolutely! I am not particularly nimble with my use of words, and (without a lot of preparation) I struggle to string sentences in most social situations. Despite my tendency to enjoy solitude and shy away from the world, I choose to open myself to others using illustrations spurred by my thoughts and feelings. Recently I've also been enjoying reading (and attempting to write) poetry. This non-verbal form of communication may seem rather obscure, however, it is one of my most natural ways of expression and a genuine way for people to engage with me.

**What are your sources of inspiration? What is the biggest challenge when you have to start a new project? How long does it take from the beginning to the end? What is the creative process behind your artwork?**

My main sources of inspiration often stem from the world around me. I enjoy observing my surroundings, reflecting on its movement, and trying to understand the patterns or mechanics of what I'm fixated on. There aren't a lot of big challenges for me when starting a new work as I have certain habits and rituals I follow with my creative process (for both personal and commercial work). I often start with a brief to map the





project, create sketches, reviews, and finally start the artwork which involves both hand and digital collage using found and hand-made textures. With timing, it really depends on the artwork. When working with clients I adhere to a much stricter action plan due to deadlines. Times can range up to a week or even a year.

**Do you also use traditional tools to create your illustrations? Do you have a sketchbook? What is the main difference between work using digital and traditional tools?**

I enjoy tactility in my process, and this stems from the foundation I received in drawing and painting as a child to young adult. While I am now able to explore art freely and peruse the possibilities digital technology and tools can provide for the artist, I also keep my traditions close to my heart. All my textures are found, drawn, painted, or handmade but I also find joy in augmenting and applying them within a digital landscape to aid in the creation of an artwork. Despite the perception that traditional and digital tools are on the opposite ends of the scale, they are surprisingly compatible if you can find a way to process them together. The hand-made is closer to the heart, however, the digital provides opportunities like ani-

mation and sound. Digital tools can efficiently complete tasks too mundane and time-consuming if done by hand, and this allows me to focus on more unique processes that only the hand (or human) can muster ie, unique frame-by-frame animations. In addition, to allow me to process my thoughts I always have a sketchbook (or loose pieces of paper) handy. I have two Tumblr blogs that allow me to post-digital experimentations and thoughts. The 'Ask' feature is fantastic, as it helps me engage with the creative community. I have a section called 'Q&A', where I answer questions and create Gifs or tutorials to my response.

**Your intricate Gifs and dreaming illustrations have poetic narratives. You use a limited color palette. What do you want to communicate with this color choice?**

Thank you for this lovely question! In the beginning, my choice to use a limited color palette was due to the fact I struggle with using colours. While it is still not my strong point, after years of working in the creative industry I have gained a little skill to wield the spectrum with a tad bit of confidence. However, I definitely do not want to get any hopes up as I still have trouble with colour coordination. This phenomenon also overlaps with my daily life as I have a hard time









apprehending excess, whether it be colour or sound. So my home is simply lined with greyscale and natural colours, materials, and textures.

**Are there any of your illustrations related to a moment that marked a significant point in your life? Could you share with us the story behind it?**

There are a number of choice pieces I'll love to elaborate on! However to keep it succinct I'll tap into two pieces for now :)

### **Midnight Games 2014**

Midnight Games was the first illustrated series that launched my

illustrative journey. The piece is collaged using Kraft-paper and hand-painted textures using hand and digital (in Photoshop). It was then later overlapped with pencil scribbles and shading. The process involves a lot of scanning and printing, and the artwork had probably been flushed back and forth as physical and digital manifestations numerous times. This series is rather melancholy. There is some pride and some jealousy as I look back at the young artist at the time fumbling her way into a creative industry. She had no idea when once commercially approached it can be a surprisingly competitive and cut-throat place. However, it was her naivety that allowed her to be able to be scout-





*Nancy is prolific and most productive during the nighttime, she can keep working on projects until the crack of dawn. The night is one of the sources of inspiration of Nancy. In her illustrations and animations, we can see whimsical looping Gifs of star-filled nights, mysterious urban stories in a quiet and often focused on the natural elements of cityscapes and life in Australia.*

ed and further allowed her to continue to create work that is poetic and whimsical. Sometimes I yearn to be that past version of myself...

### **The Rabbit Lantern 2020**

The Rabbit Lantern is a large-scale illuminated artwork made for The Sydney Lunar Festival 2020 with the City of Sydney. It is one of 12 animals of the Lunar Zodiac represented as a sculptural installation in a free outdoor display that celebrates a centuries-old tradition of Chinese Lanterns with a contemporary twist. It is inspired by playful childhood memories of the popular 'White Rabbit' candy. The concept is a nod to my humble childhood, where we did not





have the luxury of owning toys but cherished the folded paper forms my parents would fashion out of our favourite wrappers from candies during the Lunar New Year. This was my first project that was predominately conceptually driven. It involved more than just an illustrative component to realise it. I worked closely with The City of Sydney and through Gorilla Constructions manufactured the installation. The artwork on the lantern is hand and digitally collaged with handmade textures. It was then blown up and printed on fabric to adorn the Rabbit like a jumpsuit. Through this project, I was given the opportunity to explore my place and my identity. It was something I was starting to question after working for around 5 years in the commercial industry. As a practicing Australian-born Chinese (ABC) artist, I have slowly become interested in exploring how art can contribute to a dialogue that helps shape an understanding of Chinese culture and inspire a continuity of tradition that is increasingly being disconnected from the lives of the Australian-Chinese diaspora.

**Can you tell us more about your artistic collaboration “Family Murmurings”?**

Family Murmurings is a collaboration inspired by the stories written by Kenneth Chan of growing up as an Australian Chinese in the





1950s and 1960s. It focuses on the ups and downs of one community, concentrating on one extended family. It presents as an exhibition with the artworks drawn together into a virtual reality reel, allowing viewers to explore memory, community, and belonging. The project is an acknowledgment that the Australian Chinese community is diverse, with people whose families have been in Australia for generations and people who have just immigrated. It looks at the cultural relationship with the broader Australian community, through the prism of individual relationships. It is both a historical reference and a personal statement about our past. The project is a first of its kind for me. To begin, understand-

ing how it worked in VR within a 3-dimensional space a bit of a challenge as I'm used to engaging with my audience on a 2D scale. However, I was very lucky to receive an Oculus Headset to trial, and this allowed me to interact within a digital world. Furthermore, it had inspired for me to further explore my own identity as a younger generation of Australian Chinese - something that I struggled with when growing up in Australia. As an artist, it offered an accepting space for me to contribute to the ongoing dialogue the Chinese had played to help shape our community



*Photos courtesy of Carmen Ho*

# Carmen Ho

Talented young composer of orchestral  
and instrumental music







**C**armen Ho is a composer of orchestral, instrumental, and choral music based in the UK. She has received numerous awards including the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize in 2018 and most recently 4th prize in the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award 2020. Carmen has worked with musicians such as BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Bristol Ensemble, Bristol University Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble 360, Ensemble Variances, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Kokoro, Musikfabrik, Riot Ensemble, The Bach Choir, and Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. She has participated in the Summer School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (2016), Kyiv Contemporary Music Days (2016), Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra Composers' Day (2017) & (2019), Bristol New Music (2018), and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra Composers Scheme (2019/20). Carmen has completed her Ph.D. in composition at the University of Bristol, under the supervision of Professor John Pickard.



**What's the story behind your motivation to study music? What are your best childhood memories related to music? As you grew older, what were your influences?**

I was exposed to music at an early age. My parents are not professional musicians but they love music and much of my early childhood was involved music at home. I think one of the best childhood memories related to music was my first Classical concert experience. I was around 6 years old at the time and my dad brought me to see a symphonic concert at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre concert hall. I was fascinated by different orchestral instruments on stage and I managed to sit through the entire concert. And I would say this has an important aspect of my early development as a musician.

**When and how did you realize you wanted to be a composer?**

I started composing when I was in my 6th form years as part of the course and I must confess that I didn't enjoy it at the time. I didn't have a great interest in composing music until I was in my second undergraduate year when my earliest influences were Penderecki and Pärt, the most memorable pieces I looked at during that time being Polymorphia and Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten. They

*Her new work, Unforged, has been commissioned for Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's autumn season. The piece was performed on Wednesday 24 November (Lighthouse, Poole) under the baton of the BSO's Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits. The performance was also live-streamed to a global audience and available to view for 30 days, presented by broadcaster Martin Handley.*

were the key to changing my perspectives on classical music and they led me to explore sound and space as well as experiment with extended techniques.

**Can you walk us through an average workday and tell us about your creative process? How do you compose, and how do ideas come to your mind? What would you consider the most challenging aspect of composing music?**

It's hard to explain the writing process as it's different every time I start a new piece. And I found that maintaining a healthy head-space is very important to me throughout the creative process. My writing process usually begins with an endless process of listening and studying scores before I start sketching ideas. I rarely write the









whole piece with a big brush, I often add, rework, omit and discard ideas until I know I am ready to start writing the piece.

**Besides passion, study, determination, and will, what are some sacrifices you've faced pursuing your passion for music? What have been the greatest challenges of your career so far?**

I must admit that I'm finding it difficult to find time to rest when working on a new piece and having a day job at the same time but, to me, when you love and enjoy what you do, it doesn't feel like a sacrifice. One of the greatest challenges of my career so far is to

*Carmen's new work is part of a triptych of new pieces written by women being celebrated by the BSO: the Orchestra performs material by Elizabeth Ogonek and Franghiz Ali-Zadeh in season 2021/22*



find a way to pace myself and it's something I'm still learning and constantly reminding myself of.

**Do you have a piece of music you are most proud of? Can you tell us the story behind it?**

I would say I'm most proud of my orchestral piece 'Saṃsāra'. It was written as part of my Ph.D. portfolio and it was my first attempt at writing for orchestra. This work has marked a new stage in my development in terms of the use of subtle harmonic progressions, textual transformations, and meticulous orchestration. I'm very fortunate that this piece has won 4th prize in the prestigious Toru Takemitsu Composition Award 2020 and was performed by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra.

**Do you think the Internet has impacted the music business? What is the role of social media for a composer of orchestral, instrumental, and choral music?**

Digital media certainly has had a huge impact on the music industry in the past 2 years. Musicians and composers were seeking new ways and adopting new formats to collaborate and create music and thanks to technology enabling us to keep music alive and giving an opportunity for the industry to continue reaching new audiences.

**The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2022 is, "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow" Does gender still matter? What do you think is the role of gender in your field? Do women have the same opportunity as males?**

I've always thought of myself as a composer and don't define myself as a 'female composer' but I'm aware that female composers' work is still underrepresented in the contemporary music world. In the near future, I hope to see that everyone has the same opportunities and composers from all backgrounds can realize their full potential.

**Can you share with us, a piece of advice that you would give to someone who wants to get in the fields of music and be a composer of orchestral?**

My piece of advice would be to be prepared for sleepless nights, lots of disappointments and most importantly, just believe in yourself and keep writing.



# Alana Tsui

Freelance artist specialized  
in bespoke mural

*Photo courtesy of Alana Tsui*







**A**lana Tsui is a New Zealand mural artist based in New York. She was born and raised in New Zealand with parents from Hong Kong and Shanghai. She has worked on a multitude of projects besides being a freelancer mural artist, she is a model and an influencer. Alana has a Bachelor of Arts specializing in fashion design. When she moved to New York City, after graduating, Alana flourish as a mural artist due to her talent. Social media were a great jumping board and platform that helped her dive into a mural career. She worked closely with different fashion brands in styling and content creation. Alana has styled for several brands; M.A.C., YSL, TUMI, Lululemon, Lane Crawford, Calvin Klein amongst others. When Alana moved to Hong Kong and painted at WeWork in Causeway Bay, the Cross Cafe in Sai Ying Pun, and many bars and showrooms: she left her print in the city. Alana is passionate about her work and makes customized art mural designs based on clients' requests s bringing something fresh and always adding her personal style of work. Her murals painting are soothing and at the same time full of meticulous details, bold patterns. Her works can also be recognized by monochromatic themes meaningful and symbolic hidden details. She draws inspiration from everything, especially her travels. Because she was born and raised in New Zealand, she is influenced also by Maori tradition. In her incredible artwork, they can be found also Feng Shui elements and Chinese Calligraphy. She customized and embodies the finest global urban-chic trends also to create around the world hot spots, that will bring people to the places, buildings, or urban areas. Her murals can be also a sort of interactive art that people can use to create a personal portrait as their memory or to share on social media photos.





**Can you tell us a little about you? I read that you graduated with a Fashion Design degree, and you were a full-time fashion stylist for HYPEBEAST when you first moved to Hong Kong. What motivated you to start making art murals? What inspired you to hit the streets?**

I was born and raised in New Zealand, after I graduated with a Bachelor of Fashion Design Degree, I moved to New York for a year and a half where I first started painting murals. I was living in a loft apartment in Chinatown at the time with very dull grey walls, so I repainted the room white, but when I got to the fourth wall, I ran out of paint so I just started doodling and a whole mural came out. I loved the freedom of being able to express myself through painting on large scale, it's a very liberating

feeling that I never experienced growing up living at my parents' house. I started painting all the other walls in my room and posted this on social media. From that, people started asking me to paint for their apartments, offices, etc and the biggest mural I designed and executed was for The Thompson Hotel in Tribeca that year. When my visa ran out, I moved to Hong Kong and stepped away from painting for a while, working full-time for HYPEBEAST as a fashion stylist. Through the street culture community, I was in, I was approached to paint for a couple of companies like Vans, Ecko, WeWork and a street art campaign called "Love is Wild: Walls of Change", alongside some renowned artists such as Shepard Fairey and HO-PARE, who inspired me to pursue mural painting full time.



**Where do you find inspiration when starting a new project? What do you want to communicate with your artwork?**

My inspiration is always evolving. Influenced by my surroundings and different stages of life, I do find that I am naturally more drawn to patterns and monochromatic tones which is prevalent in my style of artwork. I strive to create pieces that exhibit a complex balance of clean, fluid, and intricate line work that is at once organic yet captivating, with hidden elements integrated within, to bring in new dimensions to each artwork.

**How long do you generally spend on a mural work, considering also the planning aspect?**

It varies from mural to mural depending on the size and the intricacy of the design. I generally spend





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a few days to a week on the initial design to show the client, if it gets approved right away then I would move on painting but if they want changes then we would go back and forth, which can go on for a few weeks until we get the design locked down. As for the actual execution of painting the mural, it also varies from a short few days to a week but I usually paint pretty fast.

**Do you have any preferred surface? What media do you currently most enjoy working with?**

A smooth surface always helps so the paint can glide on evenly without me having to go over the lines numerous times, but I have become comfortable working on all sorts of surfaces over the years from concrete walls, wood, bricks to metal grates. For precision in my linework, I prefer to paint with paintbrushes and house paint for more control.

**How would you describe your ideal working environment? How do you see and feel the project blend into its surrounding space? Do you have a wish list of places where would you like to go to create new murals artworks?**

I always like to go for a site visit and meet the client before starting the design process so I can re-

ally get a feel for the space in person, to ensure the style of artwork fits. My ideal working environment would simply be a well-prepared wall that is clean, with the base prepped and any cracks and holes to be repaired before I begin my work. I also like to paint for hours on end when I get in the zone, so it's best when I have 24 hours of access to the space. I do not have a specific wish list of places I'd like to create murals for, I am open to everything and like to paint for a variety of clients, businesses, and projects to expand and push my own boundaries. However, I do wish to paint in every country I visit, to spread my art globally, and to be able to add more businesses and addresses of my murals to the treasure map for my REAL FACE NFT holders as a part of the utility of owning one of my NFTs, offering them special deals and exclusive access to each place. Please check out [www.realfacenft.io](http://www.realfacenft.io) for more info on my NFT series I have just launched with 7753 unique pieces - 1 in a million for the 7.753 billion people on the planet.



**What were the biggest challenges when making murals? What about the unexpected situations during work on a mural? Do you have a nightmare painting story?**

It's mostly the outdoor murals that may have more complications as the quality of the exterior wall could be in bad shape, or the painting timeline could be interfered with by the weather. The most challenging job I did was the two-story wings mural for The Mercury serviced apartments in Hong Kong. I flew over from New York to paint, but there was a typhoon during those few days I was in town. So we ended up having to drape a massive plastic tarp over me and the boom lift so I could paint without being rained on. It was like a boiler room under the cover and I was also not able to step back to look at it, so I free-hand-painted the whole symmetrical design, hoping for the best, that it would turn out even and in proportion. It wasn't until I fully finished and we took the cover off for the unveiling of the mural in front of photographers and journalists that I also got to see it in full scale for the first time myself. It was pretty nerve-wracking but luckily it turned out how I envisioned it in the end.







**From New Zealand to Hong Kong and New York. How's the street art scene? Which are the biggest advantages, which are the main differences you have found?**

My mural painting career started after I left New Zealand, so I have much more experience in the street art scene within New York and Hong Kong. Despite that, I have been fortunate enough to still have painted a few murals each time I have gone back to New Zealand to visit my family over the years. Both New York and Hong Kong are unique and inspiring in their own ways, obviously, the street art scene in New York is much more established with some of the most legendary street artists. The amount of ever-changing mu-

ral to see, especially in Brooklyn is astonishing, there's always something new to discover. Whereas Hong Kong's street art scene has grown dramatically over the last few years, showcasing some of the best local and international artists' work in a much more compact environment, and once you throw a couple of murals up on the walls, it's pretty easy to get noticed in the scene.

**How does living in international cities, with different cultures have influenced the development of your artistic career?**

It has definitely broadened my vision of being a full-time artist by being immersed in such creative and art-driven communities, in these large cities with endless opportu-



nities. I have also found the different cultures to have influenced the style of my artwork along the way, as I started with the Pacific Island style of patterns but when I moved to Hong Kong and got more in touch with my Asian roots, my style evolved to incorporate Chinese calligraphy-like strokes, and the designs became integrated with a lot of Asian influenced elements such as koi fish, lotus flowers and Phoenix birds.

### **What do you see as the role of street art in society?**

Streetart is much more acceptable these days as an art form on its own rather than seeing it as graffiti or vandalism. Hand-painted murals

are used for advertising, bringing a certain aesthetic into spaces to make them “Instagrammable” to help businesses get noticed. A lot of the time street art is used to convey a certain positive message, to bring awareness to current affairs in society, which has been very effective as it’s able to capture the audiences’ attention in a more fun and visual way.







**Racist episodes towards people of Asian origin have been in focus following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. You had worked on a mural focused on Stop Discrimination against Asian people. Can you tell us more about it?**

There was a heightened period of time when Asian people were being threatened for being out and about in New York City, I am sure in other areas/countries too but from what I experienced, New York Chinatown was highly affected, safety-wise and with many businesses closing down. MuralsforGood is a non-profit organization that works with local mural artists to beautify the city, using the power of public art to promote equality, inclusion, and belonging. They approached me to do a mural for a Macaron business that was reopening after a long period of being closed down during covid. I was honored to be a part of such a good cause, they also had a program working with the youth from Carnegie Hall to get them off the streets by having them onsite painting with the artists. It was a very meaningful piece to raise awareness against racism towards Asians, something I have gone through all my life, as it was something I experienced growing up in New Zealand too.



# Xiaoning Lyu

Founder of global art community VIVA LA VIDA

*Photos courtesy of Xiaoning Lyu*





**X**iaoning Lyu is the founder of Viva La Vida, a consultant for the United Nations Development Programme, German Chancellor Fellow, Sherpa of China at G20 Young Entrepreneur Alliance, Global Shaper of World Economic Forum, and Forbes 30 under 30. In January 2018, when Lyu Xiaoning crossed the threshold of La Casa Azul, Frida Kahlo's family home in Coyoacán, Mexico, she was touched by a particular painting named Viva la Vida. Her last work was completed in 1954 following complications from an amputated leg, just eight days before she died. Frida never allowed her physical disabilities to knock her down. She was inspired by Frida that converted all the pain and sorrow she experienced in life into the liveliness and boldness of her paintings. Kahlo's experience allowed Xiaoning to feel the power of painting. She invited passers-by to paint out their lives, encourages people to illustrate their answers to that question: "What does your life look like? She went on to introduce her experiment to many streets and countries. She hopes this could be a starting point where people get inspired and begin to think about what their lives really mean to them. Viva la Vida has now a global community of people from different countries who have vast curiosity and compassion towards fellow human beings and continuously collect their stories.





**Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your background?**

I'm Xiaoning, nowadays based in Berlin and Beijing. I'm the founder of Viva la Vida, also a consultant of United Nations Development Programme, German Chancellor Fellowship, Sherpa of China at G20 Young Entrepreneur Alliance, Global Shaper of World Economic Forum, and Forbes 30 under 30. I am passionate about the field of creativity and cross-cultural communication. I founded Viva la Vida in 2018. It is a global community in 50+ countries where people connect and share their life stories through art. Later I initiated a charity fund focusing on using art and creativity to improve the mental health condition of young people. A hundred Olympic Champions have become our ambassadors since then.

**What do you love more about art? What is your artistic philosophy? What had art done for your personal life?**

It is human nature to make sense of events happening in our lives. I do believe the process of making art can be a very powerful tool for us to look inward, to understand, and then to express with creativity. And this whole process of making sense and getting clarity out of the chaos and confusion heals us. The special part about art, com-

pared to other mediums we use to make sense such as philosophy, is that art embraces emotion and spontaneity. It is not a rigid and logical process like philosophy. But it is the fluid nature of art-making, that makes it closer to our heart and soul than any other medium. Besides, the aesthetic value of art can simply give joy to us. And the artwork we create acts like a messenger that carries our understanding of self and contemplation of life at this specific moment, then transcends time and physical space, to help connect with similar minds and souls for us. That's how art makes our transient existence in time eternal. How beautiful that is.

**You are the founder of “Viva la Vida”, how did this global art experiment project come to life?**

My grandpa passed away in the autumn of 2017. I started to question the meaning of life: If no matter how fabulous your life was, and one can leave nothing after his death, then what is the meaning of living? By accident, I watched the movie Coco and got to know the Day of the Dead in Mexican culture. I was very much inspired and decided to fly to Mexico City to explore more. There I “met” Frida Kahlo, and her famous watermelon painting named “Viva la Vida”. Her life story and attitude inspired



*“Viva La Vida” is a Spanish phrase meaning “Live the life”. It is also the name of a painting created by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. This painting was her last artwork.*





me and made me wonder again - what is the meaning of life, for me, and for many others? The next day I went back to Frida Kahlo’s museum and started to sit on the street, and asked passers-by to make a drawing to answer the question - what is the meaning of your life. In three hours there were 70 people who drew their lives for me. The works were fabulous. That year I traveled to ten countries. Wherever I went, I would carry this little street experiment with me, sitting on the street and inviting strangers to draw. Later some people who drew their lives for me thought this concept pretty cool and started to go back to their own neighborhood and ask more people to draw. Within a year it went from a simple and spontaneous street experiment to a global art movement in more than 60 countries. We had 20K people draw their lives for us and we put the drawings on our website as an online gallery <https://www.vivalavida.today/>. This is a perfect example of how art can transcend borders, religions, and languages, and create.

**What is the “Viva la Vida” mission? What goals and milestones had it achieved so far?**

As I mentioned previously on the power of art and creativity in mak-







ing sense and healing, I believe the mission of Viva la Vida is to invite more people onto this journey, to understand better who we are through creativity. We don't need a therapist to sit in front of us and make sense of our lives for us. What we need is a fluid creative experience with a proper guiding framework, so we can from time to time remind ourselves to come back to the purpose of this activity (i.e. understanding of the self), and not easily get lost in the waves of emotions and emergence of ideas. I believe technology has a central role in this process. Through technology, the art-making experience can be much easier and more convenient - after all, not everyone is a professionally trained artist but every one of us has the human instinct to create. Technology can also enhance connectivity - through sharing our artwork and viewing others', we see more possibilities thus are able to make a conscious choice of what we want for life. That's what we believe - art-making with the help of technology, for not just professional artists but for everyone, can become a very powerful tool to enhance our mental well-being. Right now with VIVA's charity fund, we've developed workshops and sessions for young people to tackle daily life challenges through art-making and better understand the self. The next steps would be developing a tech product to achieve the mission stated above.



**What about people's reactions? From your perspective, what are the main difference in the response from country to country? Do social media had leveled cultural differences nowadays?**

People have asked me this question a lot - what is the pattern that you've found after inviting so many people to draw their meaning of life. Of course, I can give you some answers - some people draw what is important for them in life (e.g. important people, dreams, what they believe, etc.), some people draw important life events or moments, some people make drawings out of abstract concepts (e.g. love, truth, beauty, etc.); people from tropical countries tend to draw more colorfully, while drawings from cities that are financial centers (such as Hong Kong and Singapore) tend to be a bit more tedious and lack of creativity. But no, I don't and do not want to see things in this way. Art-making is a very personal experience that carries a lot of deep and intimate meaning for the person who creates it. It is dangerous to deal with art in a statistical way - especially if we are to look at the artwork that concerns profound issues such as the meaning of life. Thus instead of generalizing and categorizing the artwork we collect, I would encourage everyone to look at each piece of drawing as if you are meet-

ing this lively human being who created it, to try to understand what matters to this person and why he/she draws in that way, and to accept and embrace the way he/she is without judgment but with your heart. Because for me, the very endeavor to understand is to love. And to love strangers who have absolutely no connections with your life is to love your own life in the most abundant sense.

**The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2022 is "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". What are your best wishes and pieces of advice?**

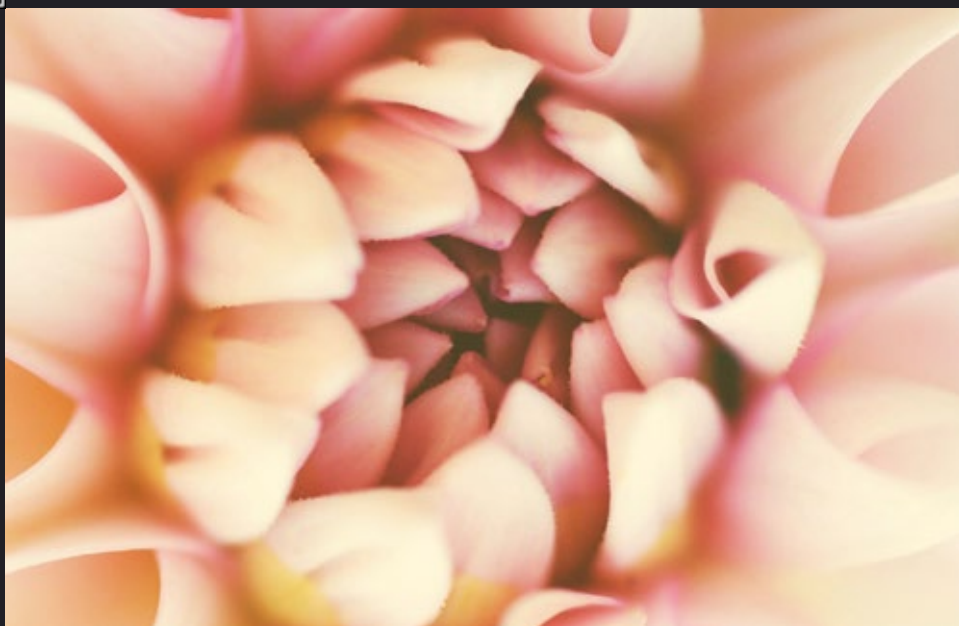
I would encourage every woman to look at herself and gender differences through a more positive lens - being a woman means having this amazing femininity by birth, and femininity means beauty, elegance, sexiness, sensuality and sensibility, fluidity, strength, etc. We have so much by birth, and all of them are powerful. If we want to be perceived and treated with more equality and respect, we have to first perceive and treat ourselves in a loving manner. So, be the love and home for yourself, be strong, be passionate and determined, be beautiful and sexy and dare to fly.



**Viva La Vida** is a global art experiment that explores the meaning of life. In this project, people are invited to answer a simple question “What is your life” by drawing a picture on the spot or on-line. Viva La Vida encourages people to use the artistic medium to deeply think about and explore the purpose of life. The first offline event was held in Mexico City where the founder Xiaoning Lyu collected ~70 artwork in four hours. So far, Viva La Vida has gradually become a global open-source art movement that anyone can host a Viva La Vida offline art experiment to collect people’s drawings. VIVA joined hands with Beijing Star Power Charity Foundation, a non-profit organization formed by more than 120 Olympic and world champions, and founded a charity program supporting the mental health of youth. The program aims to establish consultancy services across middle schools and offer mental health courses, developed by professional experts. VIVA aspires to help people better understand themselves and thus learn how to better communicate with people from different backgrounds. Viva la Vida aims at building the largest humanity database and has partnered with organizations including UN, Facebook, China Unicom, Vanke, G20 YEA, etc. It combines the power of technology and humanity, using the algorithm of image recognition and machine learning to analyze the cultural implication behind the drawings.







PLANET CHINA 13 – Nancy Kwan, Maki Hsieh, Afruz Amighi, Jas Charanjiva, Richard Pena, Hao Wu, Pixy Liao, Alpine Decline, Ed Shew



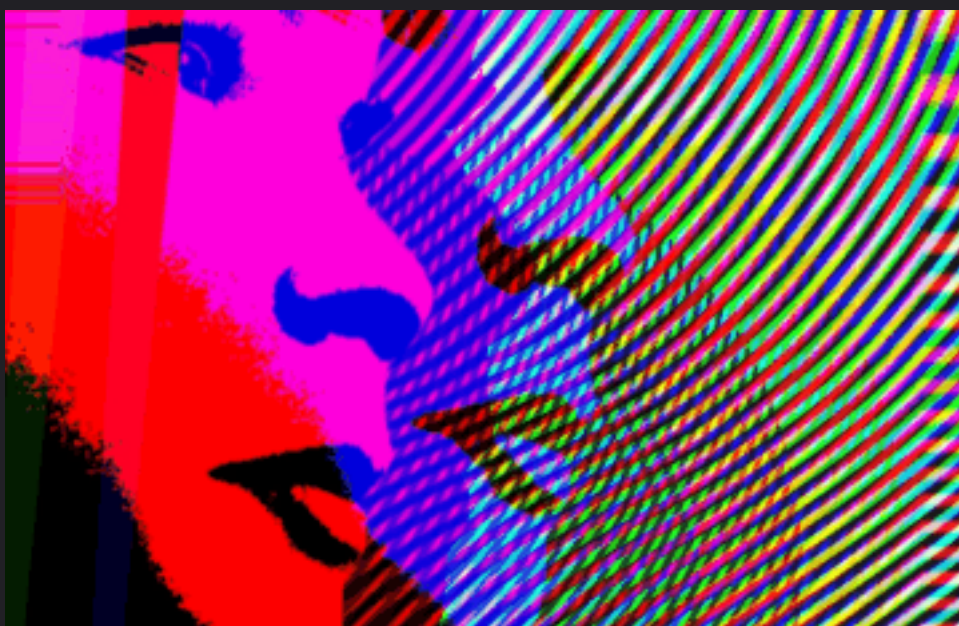
PLANET CHINA 12 – STOP HATE, Stand against racism and violence. Exclusive interviews with Julia Chang Wang, Michelle Yang, Popo Fan, Melodie Zhao, Jessica Chou, Mimi Choi, Jingyi Wang, Tina Fung, Si Jie Loo



PLANET CHINA 11 - Celebrating women who push boundaries. Muna Tseng, Shu Lea Cheang, Nona Mock Wyman, Elaine Yan Ling Ng, JuJu Chan Szeto, Shirley Dong, Siu Tin Chi, Tella Chen, Michelle Hong, Denise Huang, Chen Li, Denise Tam, Shuling Guo, Zoie Lam, Chia-Chi Yu, Zihan Yang



PLANET CHINA 10 - Liu Bolin, Zhang Chong, Janice Wong, Alice Poon, Huichi Chiu, Jiannan Wu, Yulong Lli, Heng Yue, Jumping Goat, Katherine Lee



PLANET CHINA 9 - Celebrating women who push boundaries. Li Jingmei, Sissi Chao, Jill Tang, Xing Danwen, Shirley Ying Han, Echo He, Xia Jia, Xue Mo, Meng Du, PeiJu Chien-Pott, Jiayu Liu, Qu Lan, Tiffany Chan, Xiong Jingnan, Gia Wang, Chen Jie



PLANET CHINA 8 - Guobing Yang, RongRong & Inri, Hilda Shen, Zhang Bo, Zhang Chong, Wang Wen, Chen Donfan, Gan Jianyu, Webson Ji, Frode Z. Olsen, Yale Yuan Shifu



PLANET CHINA 7 - Matt Chen, Ken Chan, May Chow, Li Dong, Yu Bo, Jeremy Pang, Taozi, Michelle Lau, Cherry Li, Lee Xin Li, Piero Kuang Sung Ling



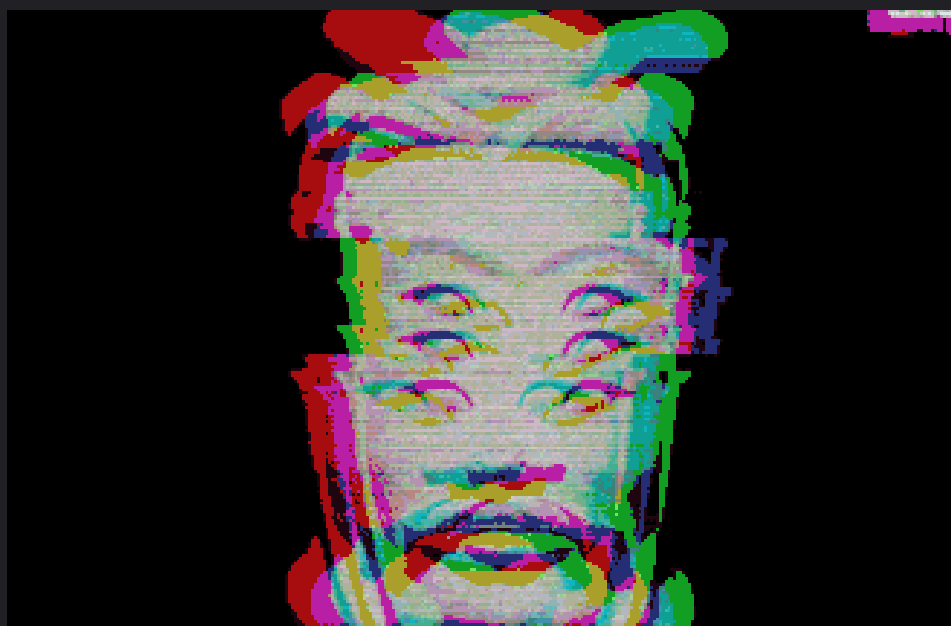
PLANET CHINA 6 - Interviews with Hao Wu, Badiucuo, Margaret Sun, Elsbeth Von Paridon, Yafei Qi, Eric Fish, Zhang Yang, Hannah Li, Song Wen, Michael Pettis



PLANET CHINA 5 – Interviews with The Chinese LGBTQ community in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and abroad. Interviews with Helen Zia, Joanne Leung, Shanghai Pride, Beijing LGBT Center, PFLAG China, Lin Zhi-peng (No. 223), Simon Chung, Lucie Liu, Chen Chen, Lin Junliang.



PLANET CHINA 4 – Interviews with Zhang Huan, Manya Koetse, Jeremy Tiang, Michael Standaert, Rebecca F. Kuang, Lisk Feng, Herman Lee, GuiGui SuiSui, Lance Crayon







PLANET CHINA 3 – Interviews with Wang Xiaoshuai, Stefano Boeri, Li Wei, Hui He, Yan Hua Wang, Boris Wilensky, Hua Dong [Re-Tros], He Sen, Ming Youxu, Josh Summers



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# SOUTH OF CLOUDS

A DOCUMENTARY BY  
DOMINIQUE MUSORRAFITI  
MATTEO DAMIANI

SOUTH OF CLOUDS, documentary on Chinese Ethnic Minorities in Yunnan Province. The documentary shows, without commenting, a China linked to ancient traditions, which nowadays struggle to compete with the rhythm of modern life: villages, customs, music and lifestyles of the minorities Bai, Lisu,

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