



Lap-See Lam
Tales of the Altersea
May 10 – August 27, 2023

Swiss Institute is pleased to present the first ever solo exhibition in the United States by Stockholm-based artist Lap-See Lam. Centered upon a room-spanning video and CGI installation of the same name, *Tales of the Altersea* marks a continuation of Lam's invocation of shuttered or sold Chinese restaurants in Europe, and, more broadly, her poetic interpretations of the lives of Hong Kong Chinese communities in diaspora.

In the 2010s, Lam used a 3-D scanner to document the interiors of several Chinese restaurants in Stockholm, including one run by her parents, that became insolvent. Marked by glitches, her architectural archives forge visual and historical links between these spaces, highlighting chinoiserie as a diasporic code of past and present. The interplay amongst cultural signifiers, mythologies and ancestral experience fuel Lam's storytelling, which unfolds at SI as a shadow play, a traditional form of Chinese folklore disseminated in Europe through imperialistic trade routes.

The scenography of this central 10-channel video draws from the décor and imagery of one such restaurant: the floating *Sea Palace*. In the early 1990s, this three-storey ship with seats for 230 dining guests was commissioned by Johan Wang, an entrepreneur in Sweden. It sailed from Shanghai to Europe, docking in various cities but failing economically after only one year. The restaurant ship lay moored in Gothenburg where it fell into decay until 2018, when it was brought to Stockholm where it is annually repurposed as a haunted funhouse in the city's Gröna Lund amusement park each Halloween. The luminous underwater world we encounter in *Tales of the Altersea* unfolds from this misfit vessel, where two protagonists, twin sisters, encounter a series of characters born out of Cantonese history and mythology. Accompanied by music and soundscape by composers Linus Hillborg and Marlena Salonen, and vocals by Bruno Hibombo, the story follows the girls across a journey of adventure and discovery. This panorama is bookended by neon and brass sculptures of verdant traces of a dragon head and tail at the bow and stern of the ship that glow in SI's lower level staircase and hallway.

In synthesizing antiquated and contemporary production techniques, along with styles of magical realism and oral history, Lam maps instances of generational and cultural loss next to identification and disidentification with cultural constructs. Through her forensics and her poetry, she indicates what might blossom in these vacancies.

A public program will unfold simultaneously in New York and Frankfurt, where an iteration of the exhibition is presented at Portikus, connecting the history and present of these cities as major trade centers.

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This exhibition is organized at Swiss Institute by Stefanie Hessler, Director, and Daniel Merritt, Curator and Head of Residencies. *Tales of the Altersea* was first presented at Portikus, Frankfurt-am-Main, where it was initiated and curated by Liberty Adrien and Carina Butkus.

About Lap-See Lam

Lap-See Lam (b. 1990 in Stockholm, Sweden) is an artist based in Stockholm, Sweden. Recent solo exhibitions include Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2022); Trondheim Kunstmuseum (2021); and Moderna Museet Malmö (2018-2019). Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at KINDL—Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2022); *GHOST 2565*, Bangkok (2022); PinchukArtCentre, Kyiv (2021); and *Performa 19*, New York (2019).

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, and accessible in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free-of-charge, Swiss Institute seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

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