



QUEENS MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Queens Museum Presents Patty Chang: The Wandering Lake 2009-2017

The US premiere of the performance and video artist's large-scale mixed media installation culled from Chang's ambitious 8-year project *The Wandering Lake* (2009-2017)

Queens Museum
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368

T 718 592 9700 **F** 718 592 5778
E info@queensmuseum.org
queensmuseum.org

September 17, 2017 – February 18, 2018

Press preview: September 13, 2017

Public opening: September 17, 2017

[Public event] Walkthrough with the artist and book launch: October 8, 2017



Video still from *Invocation for a Wandering Lake, Part I (Whale)*, 2015

Queens, NY – The Queens Museum presents the most extensive work to date by performance and video artist Patty Chang in *Patty Chang: The Wandering Lake 2009-2017*. Extending across over 4,000 sq. ft. of gallery space, this exhibition marks the US premiere of a large-scale mixed media installation with video projections, photographic installation, glass sculptures, drawings, an artist's book and ephemera culled from Chang's

ambitious 8-year project *The Wandering Lake* (2009-2017). The exhibition is curated by Hitomi Iwasaki, Director of Exhibitions and Curator at the Queens Museum.

The Wandering Lake project was partly inspired by turn-of-the-century colonial explorer Sven Hedin's book *The Wandering Lake* (1938), which tells the story of a migrating body of water in the Chinese desert. The multicomponent project is a meditation on mourning, caregiving, geopolitics and landscape. "I started the process of making this project with fragments of ideas, actions, images and references that gradually became intimately intertwined. *The Wandering Lake* reminds us that landscape and bodies are alike in that they are both temporary, lyrical, and impacted," said Chang.

The project began in 2009 with her first visit to Xinjiang province of Western China, the alleged location of the land-bound body of water that constantly shifted its location as described in Hedin's book. The project continued on Fogo Island off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada, the longtime home to a major fishing fleet where there is now a moratorium on cod fishing. Chang filmed herself performing a ritual washing, of a beached whale corpse, in *Invocation for a Wandering Lake, Part I (Whale)* (2015) in a symbolic reparative cleansing of harmful human interventions in nature, and as a reference to Herman Melville's great allegory for capitalism, *Moby-Dick* (1851).

In the early stages of her pregnancy, Chang visited the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan, which at the time was rapidly shrinking despite once being the fourth largest inland sea (before the Soviets attempted to convert the area into cotton fields). She photographed the "ship cemetery" near the port city of Muynak and filmed herself washing a deserted ship, which is documented in *Invocation for a Wandering Lake, Part II (Boat)* (2016).

After the birth of her son in 2012, she returned to the Aral Sea. As she was unable to film the outdoor infrastructure under the restriction of the local government, Chang documented the weaning of her son by photographing pumped breast milk which she had deposited into random receptacles after meals, in *Letdown (Milk)* (2017), a photographic installation that contemplates internal and external "flow." Charted through the cycle of life in her immediate family, moments of loss, waste, excess, and dislocation are projected onto unfamiliar landscapes and observed in her own body.

In the final phase, Chang followed the South-to-North Water Diversion Project, the longest aqueduct in the world, which brings water from Southern China to Northern China, including the capital Beijing. Along the way, she collected her urine in plastic bottles to draw parallels between controlled and uncontrollable "flow" as commentary on the scale of infrastructures in relation to the human body.

Invocation for a Wandering Lake Part I and *Part II* is projected onto large cardboard bifolding panels, and the selected photographs taken during her second trip to Uzbekistan, *Letdown (Milk)* (2017), is mounted on custom-built architectural structures, encouraging visitors to meander through the structure. Also featured is *Configurations* (2017), a three-channel video installation that reenacts her lecture performance about her trip along the South-to-North Water Division Project, as well as hand-blown glass sculptures modeled after the plastic bottles that Chang fashioned into a urinary device during her journey. The exhibition weaves together the strands of narrative, visual feedback and analogies between corporal and environmental symbolism, and becomes a complex cinematic work in itself.

The eponymous artist's book (\$24.95, published by Dancing Foxes Press/Queens Museum, distributed by DAP) conceptually mirrors the installation in the galleries. It is a first-person photo-travelogue by Chang which includes over 80 images, both the artist's and found, during her travels and research. The monologue deepens and extends with excerpts from wide-ranging authors including Jill Casid, VALIE EXPORT, Herman

Melville and Alice Walker, which explore subjects such as the forced sterilization of women in Uzbekistan, Japanese *ama* deep sea divers, the concept of abjection, and water-management in China. Chang constantly refers to water—its flow, presence, and absence—as an all-encompassing metaphor for life. The book’s afterword is written by Hitomi Iwasaki. Click [here](#) for more information.

Chang is best known for her early videos and photographs that represent performances in which she incorporates objects, constructs situations, and engages with incidental or intended participants. As the performances are often without spoken words, allowing greater space for multiple narratives. While Chang’s work has always conflated fiction and reality, the works in her subsequent phase since 2005 blend elements of documentarian attitudes, performative actions, and esoteric associations, as informed by her research and travel to locations of mythological, cultural, and personal significance.

Patty Chang: The Wandering Lake, 2009-2017 sets up parallels between corporal and environmental symbolism in the space between fiction and nonfiction, realism and abstraction, using her work to examine the complex way narratives develop through geography, history, cultural mythology, fiction and personal experience.

About Patty Chang:

Patty Chang (b. 1972, San Leandro, CA) is a performance and video artist known for probing taboos, stereotypes, and cultural myths. In her earlier works, Chang’s humorous and sometimes unsettling work mocked exoticized and diminutive depictions of Asian women in Western popular culture. Chang frequently appears in her own work, investigating complex aspects of Asian identity by impersonating contortionists, sex workers, and legendary street fighter Bruce Lee, while other earlier notorious endurance performances tested the boundaries of social acceptability. She marked a shift in her practice with *Shangri-La* (2005) by moving behind the camera to direct a video work which she later exhibited in a sculptural installation. A chronicle of a real journey to an imaginary place, *Shangri-la* examines the mythic utopia in the collective imagination in her pilgrimage to the rural Chinese village of Zhongdian, one of several places that claimed to be the “real” magical city from James Hilton’s 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*, and the subsequent film by Frank Capra.

Chang received a BA from the University of California, San Diego in 1994. Her work has been exhibited nationwide and internationally at such institutions as The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; New Museum, New York; BAK- basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht, the Netherlands; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Fri-Art Centre d’Art Contemporain Kunsthalle, Fribourg, Switzerland; Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, England; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; and the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden. Chang has received grants from Creative Capital, the New York Foundation for the Arts, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Tides Foundation, and Guggenheim Foundation. Most recently, Chang participated in the 2016 Shanghai Biennale. She lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

Funding and Support

The presentation of the exhibition and publication *Patty Chang: The Wandering Lake 2009–2017* is made possible by The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, and Artensee (Shanghai) Cultural Development Co., Ltd. Special thanks to our collaborators at

BANK/MABSOCIETY. The Wandering Lake project was realized with grants to the artist from Creative Capital, Guggenheim Foundation, Headlands Center for the Arts, Massachusetts Cultural Council, and New York Foundation for the Arts.

Exhibitions at the Queens Museum receive significant support from Ford Foundation and the Charina Endowment Fund. Major funding for the Queens Museum is generously provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, Lambent Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc., and the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund.

Media Contact

Vyoma Venkataraman, Media Relations Associate, Queens Museum
1.718.592.9700 x227
vyoma@queensmuseum.org

About the Queens Museum

The Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Corona Park features contemporary art, events of hyperlocal and international impact, and educational programs reflecting the diversity of Queens and New York City. Changing exhibitions present the work of emerging and established artists, both local and global, that often explore contemporary social issues, as well as the rich history of its site. In November 2013, the Museum reopened with an expanded footprint of 105,000 square feet, a soaring skylit atrium, a suite of daylight galleries, nine artist studios, and flexible event space. The Museum works outside its walls through engagement initiatives ranging from multilingual outreach and educational opportunities for adult immigrants, to a plethora of community led art and activism projects. The Museum's educational programming connects with schoolchildren, teens, families, seniors as well as those individuals with physical and mental disabilities. The Queens Museum is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Visit queensmuseum.org. Follow us at @QueensMuseum