

9 March 2023

MAJOR SURVEY EXHIBITION

Renee So: Provenance

27 April – 9 July 2023

Renee So: Provenance is the first major survey exhibition of the London-based artist's work in Australia.

Curated by MUMA Director Charlotte Day, this survey exhibition brings together more than a decade of art-making alongside new work.

Renee So is renowned for her ceramic and textile works and the playful approach to form and history. These idiosyncratic ceramic and textile works are inspired by art history, museum collections and popular forms of gendered symbolism, while embracing traditional crafts, cross-cultural thinking, underlying sense of the comedic and a feminist worldview.

She is an observer of objects and the stories that accrue to them over time. While So's early work used motifs of bearded men, full bellies and boots to explore popular archetypes and representations of authority, she has increasingly looked to representations of feminine forms, drawing on artistic precedents from prehistoric to modern times.

The history, materiality and bearded faces of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German Bellarmine jugs that So encountered in London's Victoria & Albert Museum have been a dominant reference point for much of her knitted paintings and ceramic objects over the intervening years, exemplifying her approach to museum objects as sources of inspiration.

Other references have included classical sculpture, the Assyrian collections of the British Museum, objects looted by the French and British from the Qing Dynasty's Old Summer Palace in 1860 during the Opium Wars, the glazed brick bas-relief of the Babylonian Ishtar Gate, and Venus figurines, small statuettes dating from between about 40,000 BCE and 10,000 BCE.

Recent ceramic works also consider the legacy of the mid-nineteenth-century British and French 'Opium Wars' in China, during which countless objects were looted from Yuanmingyuan (the Qing Dynasty Old Summer Palace), influencing Western imaginings of Asia.

MUMA Director, Charlotte Day notes "So's works challenge both categorisation and contemporisation; they do not easily slot into narratives of 'the new' common to art production. This is, in addition to the histories she spotlights, a large part of her feminist politics. It has been a pleasure to delve into Renee So's melting pot of inspiration in the process of developing this survey, and we are grateful for her active and playful questioning of meanings and value hierarchies that are attributed to the cultural objects that she bookmarks in time and place".

It will be accompanied by a new publication designed by A Practice for Everyday Life and published by MUMA with Monash University Publishing. Featuring new writing by Chus Martínez, H el ene Maloigne, and Renee So in conversation with Charlotte Day.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Melbourne, Renee So studied painting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in the 1990s. Following a London Studio Residency with the Australia Council for the Arts, she relocated to London in 2005.

Renee So is available for interview. She will be in Australia from 11 April until 2 May 2023.

Renee So: Provenance will travel to UNSW Galleries, Sydney, in 2023. In 2024, So will have a solo exhibition at Compton Verney, Warwickshire.

Images: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2n6izw5jxyls64k/AADm_Ucuh_OYWH4xvkib_xKqa?dl=0

Renee So Biography

Her idiosyncratic practice in ceramics and textiles, and occasionally furniture and glass, is inspired by art history, collections in museums and gendered symbolism.

MediaRelease MediaRelease MediaRelease

MediaRelease



Her work is distinguished by its embrace of craft methods and cross-cultural thinking, an underlying sense of the comedic, and a persistent feminist worldview. While So's early work used motifs of bearded men, full bellies and boots to explore popular archetypes and representations of (mostly) masculine authority, she has increasingly turned to representations of women's bodies, drawing on artistic precedents from prehistoric to modern times. Recent ceramic works also consider the legacy of the mid-nineteenth-century British and French 'Opium Wars' in China, during which countless objects were looted from Yuanmingyuan (the Qing Dynasty Old Summer Palace), influencing Western imaginings of Asia.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Melbourne, So studied painting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in the 1990s. Following a London Studio Residency with the Australia Council for the Arts, she relocated to London in 2005.

So has recently been the subject of several solo exhibitions in the United Kingdom including *Renee So: Effigies and Elginisms*, Cample Line, Thornhill, Scotland, 2022; *Ancient and Modern*, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, Sussex, 2019; and *Bellarmines and Bootlegs*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2019. She has participated in significant group exhibitions including *Tales from Terracottapolis*, Tŷ Pawb, Wrexham, Wales, 2022; *Human Conditions of Clay*, John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, 2022, and Chapter Gallery, Cardiff, 2021; *Clay Dynasty: 50 Years of Australian Studio Ceramics*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 2021; *Connecting the World through Sculpture: The Sculptural Body*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2021; *London Making Now*, Museum of London, 2021; *Transparent Things*, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London, 2020; *The London Open*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2018; *In Search of Miss Ruthless*, Para Site, Hong Kong, 2017; *One Day, Something Happens: Paintings of People*, Leeds Art Gallery, 2016; *A Conspiracy of Detail*, Mackintosh Museum, Glasgow School of Art, 2013; and *Newspeak: British Art Now, Part 2*, Saatchi Gallery, London, 2010.

***Renee So: Provenance* opens 27 April – 9 July 2023 at Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Ground Floor, Building F, Monash University, Caulfield Campus, 900 Dandenong Road, Caulfield East. monash.edu/muma**

Media Contact: Magda Petkoff, Purple Media, 0409 436 473, magda@purplemedia.com.au