

# Westfälischer Kunstverein

Rothenburg 30,  
48143 Münster  
westfaelischer-  
kunstverein.de

Opening times:  
Wed-Sun 11 am - 7 pm

Admission: 4 €,  
Concessions 2 €,  
Free admission  
For members

Mooni Perry

*Missings: From Baikal to Heaven Lake, from Manchuria to Kailong Temple*  
12 October 2024 bis 2 February 2025

Mooni Perry's words "creating by losing" have stayed with me since our first conversation. At the time, we were discussing the telling of stories, the handing down and appropriation of history or histories, as well as the insight that no narrative can ever be fully depicted.

A text, a philosophy, a myth, a practice or an idea is always subject to change in view of its time-specific contexts, resulting in a multitude of variations. Based on considerations of Daoist philosophy, Mooni Perry (born in 1990 in Seoul, KR) traces these shifts in her new exhibition at the Westfälischer Kunstverein. This is because it is a good way of understanding the extent to which every form of culture, communication or philosophy has always, *axiomatically*, emerged from the appropriation of another. Historically-established origin stories are of less interest to the artist than the realisation that the Daoist philosophy is closely interwoven with Buddhism and Confucianism and is subject to different interpretations depending on the given geographical and cultural region. While Daoism is increasingly being appropriated politically in some parts of East Asia today, it is subject to other interpretations elsewhere. For her exhibition, Mooni Perry had to ask herself the question repeatedly during her several-month journey in China, Taiwan and Germany: 'What story do I want to tell?'

In the film *Missing* (2024), which was made especially for the exhibition, Mooni Perry engages in a reflective relationship with ideas of belonging in order to become aware of a transformational moment that only arises from an external perspective. *Missing* contrasts a "longing for the West," which is partly accompanied by a distorted, idealised notion of liberal democracy and individual freedom, with a longing for the East. In response to questions of authenticity and originality, which, in the context of hegemonic historiography and the culture of memory, have become a weapon in the battle for interpretive sovereignty, the film reacts with a snapshot that precisely does not assume 'true' or 'false' narratives. Rather, the cinematic narrative is itself an acknowledgement that the world is also viewed differently by others and that an actual truth only manifests itself in the concurrence of multiple perspectives.

The title of the exhibition refers to a system of coordinates that the artist mentally superimposes on the map: the x-axis ranging from west to east - from Lake Baikal in present-day Russia, a region closely associated with shamanism, to Heavenly Lake in the Changbai Mountains on the

border between China and North Korea; the y-axis travelling from north to south – from Manchuria, a region that extends across the present-day borders of China, Russia and Mongolia, to the Kailong Temple in Tainan, Taiwan. The temporal qualifier ‘present-day’ is essential in this respect, as these historical and cultural landscapes have experienced a multitude of occupations and reinterpretations during previous centuries, which have also resulted in the irretrievable loss of East Asian cosmology and cultural techniques.

In her research, Mooni Perry is particularly interested in the question of what the idea of ‘East Asia’ means today, particularly in view of a history characterised by numerous ruptures, and to what extent cultural, historical and philosophical traditions connect China, Japan, North and South Korea, and Taiwan. There is an object in the foyer of the Kunstverein that is also mentioned in the film: the elaborately-decorated paper house on a wooden stool houses seven deities on three floors. The Kailong Temple, located in Tainan, is dedicated to them. On 7 July, according to the lunar calendar, a rite of passage, i.e. a kind of coming-of-age ceremony, is celebrated there: mothers accompany their (almost) sixteen-year-old adolescents to the temple to receive a blessing for their impending adulthood. The paper houses are then burnt, releasing the hope of being supported in the future, which settles in the soot on the walls of the temple.

The paper house is also accompanied by a speculative narrative thread: already visible from the outside through the glass façade, one can make out larger-than-life figures on the wall. They represent members of the Asian Feminist Studio for Art and Research, which Mooni Perry founded together with Hanwen Zhang in 2020. This platform developed into a multi-voiced network, connecting people worldwide through weekly online meetings, in which ideas are exchanged on the issues formulated there and also joint projects implemented, such as this exhibition at the Kunstverein. The make-up and clothing of the invented characters are based on the so-called ‘Ba-Zi’ of the members, which means the ‘four pillars of fate’ in East Asian astrology.

When Mooni Perry speaks of a “puzzle” when reflecting on concepts of identity, this seems to be formally translated in the film *Missing* by the division into five projection channels. The individual images, chapters or sequences sometimes appear to be cobbled together in a disparate fashion, and yet the narrative strategies and the juxtaposition of images in particular generate a world of their own, albeit a singular one: individual scenes are dissected, so to speak, when they are multiplied and shown from different perspectives. Connections between different biographies and geographies are forged when five people simultaneously look up at the sky in awe. Attention is drawn to a particular dialogue when only one or two projections coincide. An individual life is placed in a larger historico-political narrative when one of the protagonists is seen on a bed in a hotel room whilst writing, with footage of the Chinese border in Xiamen and the Taiwanese border in Kinmen placed next to her.

*Missing* thus accompanies the viewer into a multitude of interstitial spaces that firmly reject the opposing logical binaries of private/public, real/fictional, outside/inside, religious/atheistic and, in particular, profit/loss, instead allowing for unforeseeable correlations and contexts. This is also illustrated by the improvised mode of direction, which, although a script and certain roles were provided, ultimately gave the actors freedom to interpret and develop them individually.

What at first seems to be fragmented and far-flung coalesces in the final scene of the film once more. The search for orientation sketched out in *Missing*, be it with the help of an oracle, a fortune teller or prayers for love in a Chongqing temple, is temporarily resolved in the get-

together of AFSAR members in a Berlin apartment, who celebrate their reunion over a meal. “You’re going to find what you’ve lost,” was the message at the Guandu Temple. When asked whether a loss also holds the potential for a new beginning and unexpected connections, Mooni Perry seems to have come up with a possible answer here: “creating by losing.”

Theresa Roessler  
5 October 2024

*Missings: From Baikal to Heaven Lake, from Manchuria to Kailong Temple* is Mooni Perry’s first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, accompanied by her first monograph published by Common Imprint and mediabus.

The exhibition was initiated by the former director Kristina Scepanski (2013–2024) and realised by her successor Theresa Roessler (since September 2024) in conjunction with the team at the Kunstverein.

## Public Programme

Exhibition walkthrough with Jana Peplau / Theresa Roessler:

Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 6 pm

Wednesday, 20 November 2024, 6 pm

Wednesday, 18 December 2024, 6 pm

Wednesday, 22 January 2025, 6 pm

## Artist Talk:

Mooni Perry in dialogue with Asian Feminist Studio for Art and Research (AFSAR), followed by the Burning and Blessing of the Paper House

Saturday, 2 November 2024, 4 pm

## Presentation of Jahresgaben (editions) 2024

Saturday, 30 November 2024, 12 noon

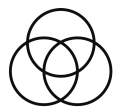
## Book Launch 'Missing'

Mooni Perry in conversation with Feng You (editor) and Sam Kim (graphic designer, publisher)

Saturday, 1 February 2025, 3 pm

followed by the Burning and Blessing of the Paper House

*The exhibition and catalogue were supported by the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Stiftung under its support prize "Catalogues for Young Artists"*



Alfried Krupp von Bohlen  
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Für die Menschen.  
Für Westfalen-Lippe.



Kulturamt