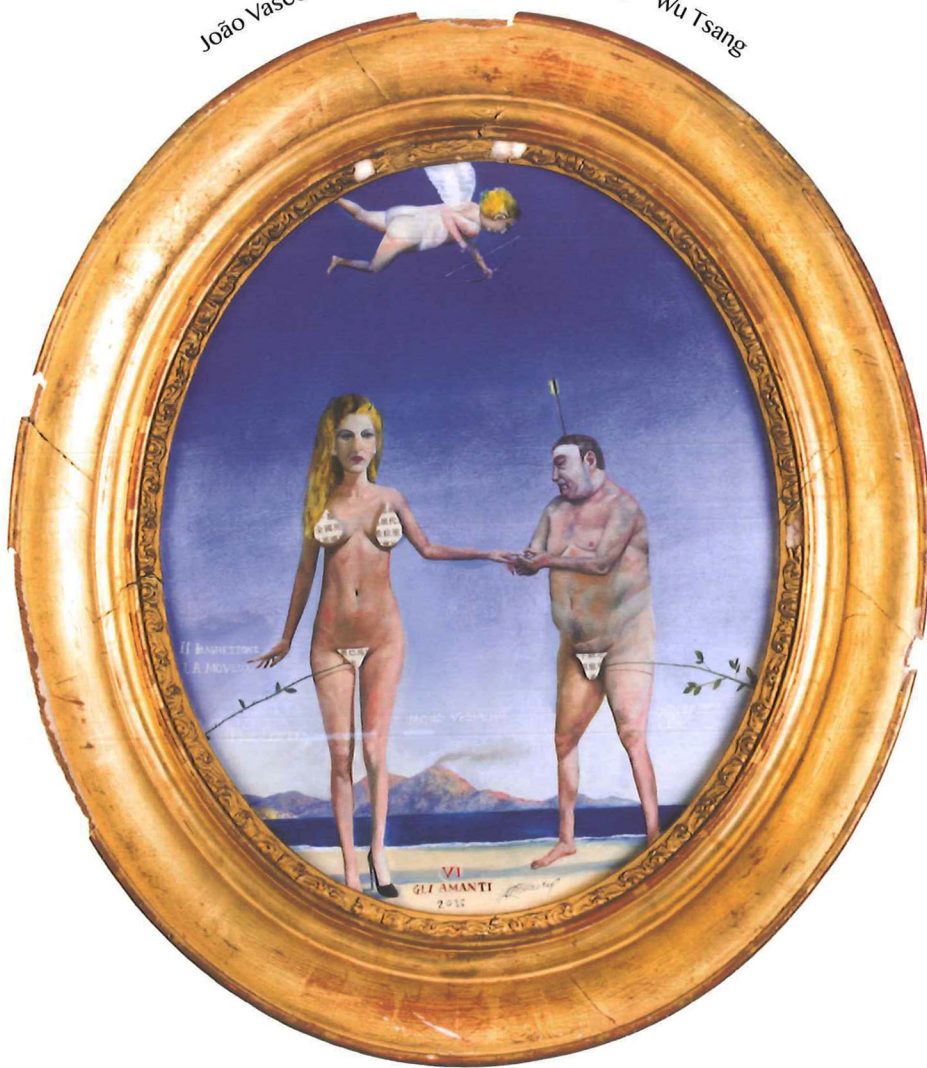


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Wu Tsang

Duilian

Diana d'Arenberg Parmanand

Wu Tsang

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Production still from *Duilian* (detail). Photo: Ringo Tang.

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Production still from *Duilian* (detail). Photos: Marion Tessier.

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Production still from *Duilian*. Photo: Ringo Tang.

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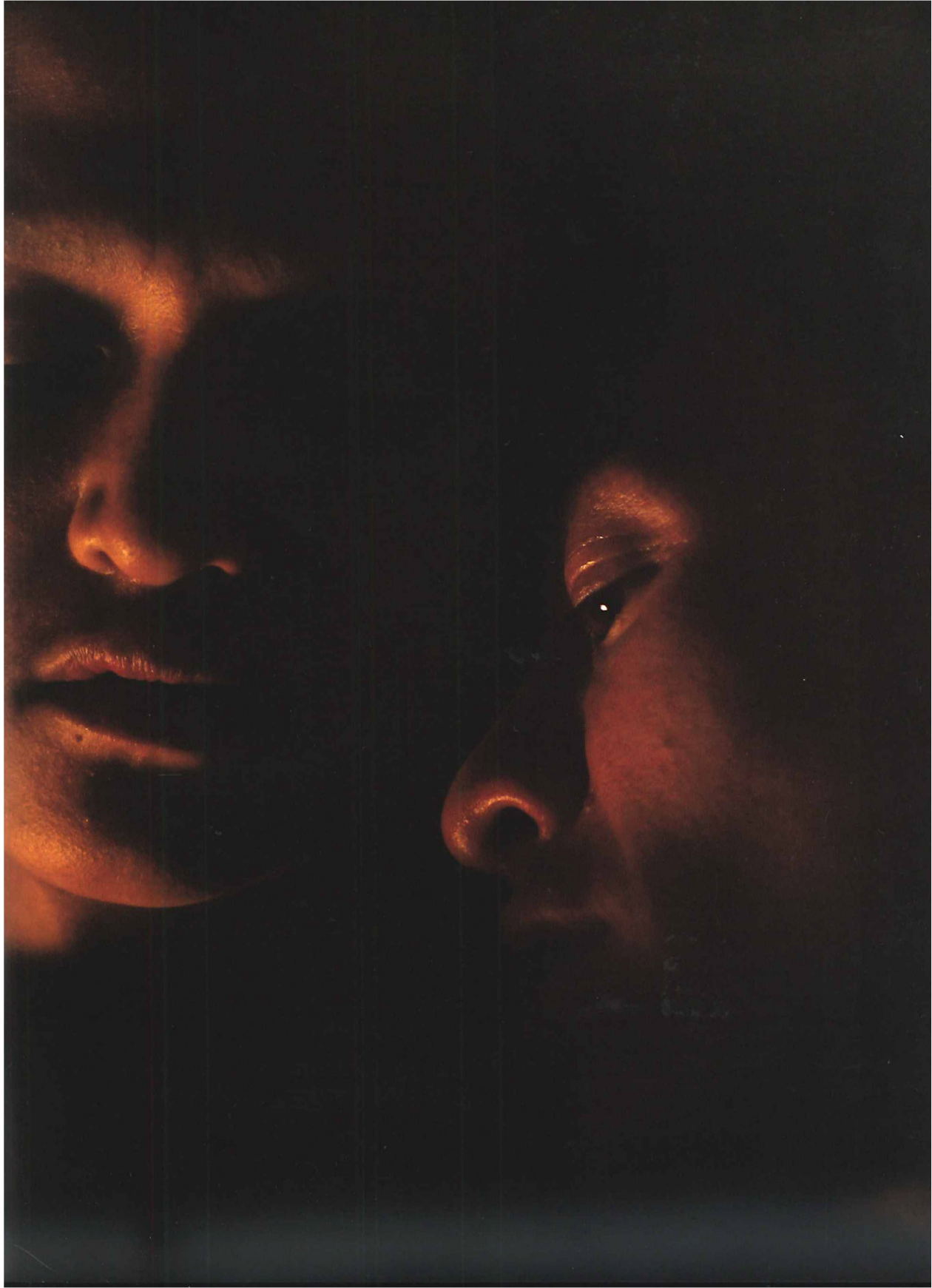
One Life, Not Preserved, 2016 and *Tears, Tears, Tears*, 2016.

Photo: MC.

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One Life, Not Preserved, 2016. Photo: MC.

Courtesy the artist, Spring Workshop, Hong Kong and
Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin.



Poet, feminist and queer revolutionary Qiu is regarded as a heroine in China, but in 1907 she was far from the revered figure she is today.

In 2005, Massachusetts-born, LA-based performance artist Wu Tsang set off for China to trace her ethnic roots. Her father, who was born in Chongqing, fled China as a child with his journalist parents in 1949, on the cusp of the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War. They travelled through Hong Kong, the first port of call for thousands fleeing persecution and fearing the onset of the Communist regime, and made their way to the US. Almost 70 years later, Tsang took the same journey back to China, and it was to prove serendipitous creatively.

"I grew up in a white American part of the States. We were the only Asians, so I had a mythical notion of my heritage," she says. Coming across the story of Qiu Jin led to a decade of research and artistic discovery. "I had an awakening," she says. "I researched everything I could about her."

Poet, feminist and queer revolutionary Qiu is regarded as a heroine in China, but in 1907 she was far from the revered figure she is today. "At the time Qiu Jin was persecuted and executed she was not known at all. She was basically a convicted felon and a nameless person."

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Qiu was executed for her involvement in an uprising against the Qing dynasty, which eventually led to the end of the imperial rule and the founding of the Republic of China. She is a symbol of women's independence in China. Her portrait hangs in the Communist Museum in Shanghai, a solitary heroine among the portraits of men. While today she is considered a martyr for modernity, it was her close female friend and rumoured lover, calligrapher Wu Zhiying, who first retrieved and buried Qiu's body after she was executed, and eventually wrote her story, ensuring that it survived for posterity.

"Wu played the role of not only burying her but also becoming her biographer and mourning



2005年，在曼徹斯特出生，以洛杉磯為創作基地的表演藝術家吳曾動身去中國，追尋她的種族根源。他的父親生於重慶，幼時於共產黨內戰勝利，1949年獲得政權之際隨從身為記者的父母逃離中國。他們途經香港，那裡是當時千萬逃難的受迫害者的避風港。之後因害怕共產黨政體的侵入而前往美國。七十年後，吳曾循著同樣的路徑返回中國，以富於創意性的方式證明巧合的存在。

「我在美國的白人聚居洲長大，我們是為數不多的亞洲人，所以對我來說我所傳承的東西十分神秘。」她如此說。在意外讀到秋瑾的故事後，她花了十年進行研究與藝術探索。「我忽然覺醒了一般」，她說，「我傾盡所能的了解她。」

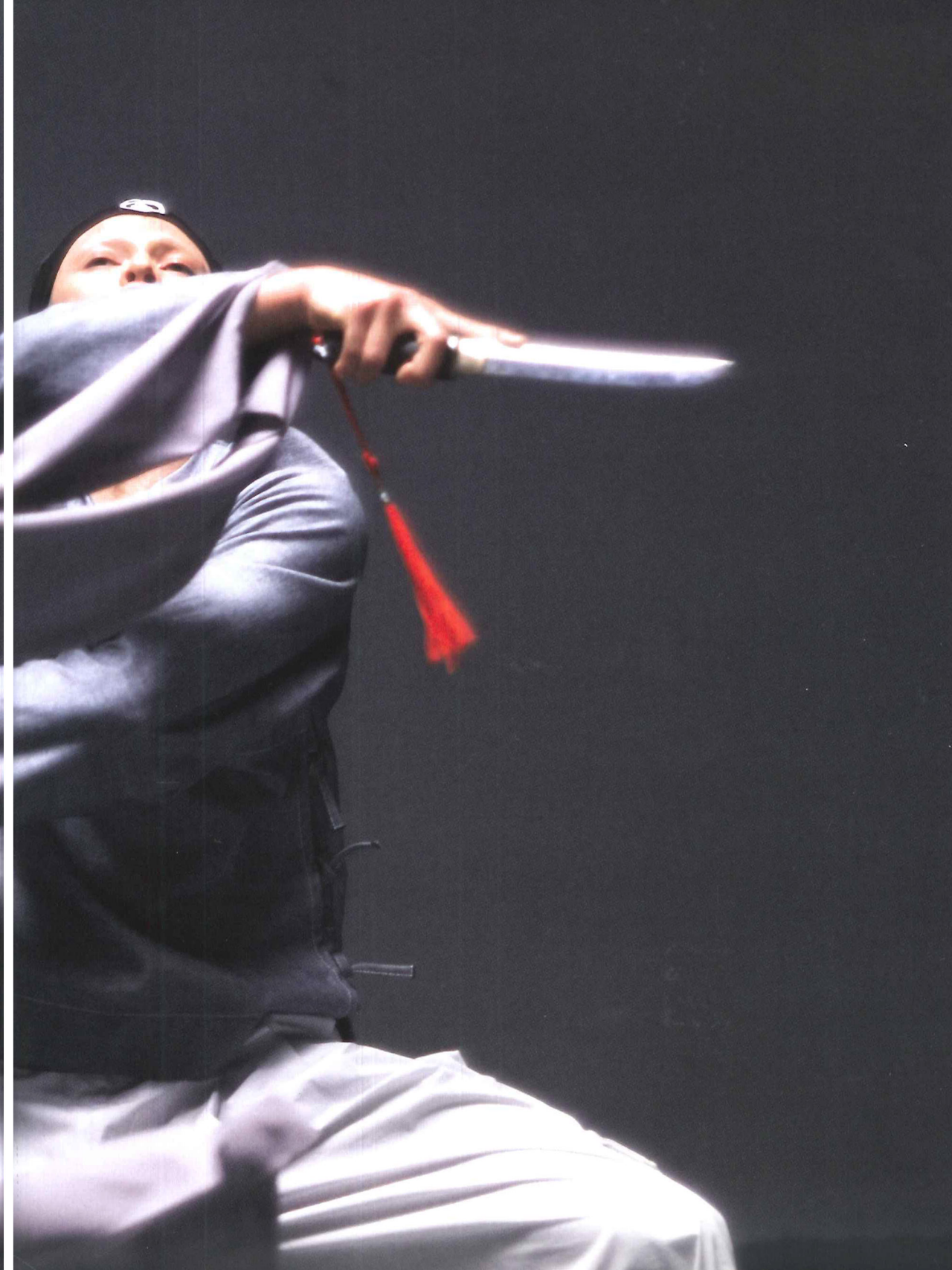
“詩人，女權主義者，革命鬥士秋瑾在中國被奉為女英雄，但是在1907年，她還沒得到如今的崇敬。

「那時候，她倍受迫害，被執行死刑，是個默默無聞的人。大約就是個有罪的重刑犯，沒什麼人知道她。」

由於她參與了一場反清鬥爭，她被判處死刑。在那場鬥爭最後促成了清朝統治的瓦解與中華民國的建立。她是中國女性獨立的代表。她的肖像懸掛在上海共產主義博物館，在眾多男性肖像中，她是個堅實的女英雄。如今她被認為是為現代化捐軀的烈士，而當初，是她親密的女性朋友，緋聞情人，書法家吳芝瑛在其被執行死刑後取回並埋葬了秋瑾的遺體，並書寫了她的故事傳諸後世。

「吳芝瑛不僅是她的埋葬者，又成為了為她作傳並緬懷她的人，為此不惜冒生命與聲望的風險，」吳曾說到。「我們關於秋瑾的所有認識都是通過吳芝瑛的轉述。創作關於秋瑾的故事與歷史的藝術作品要從吳芝瑛存留並分享秋瑾的故事出發。」

吳曾對於秋瑾的研究以「對聯／對練」作結。這個作品由裝置藝術及一段半小時的影片構成，在香港的春天工作室的兩處居所完成。每個物件都同其他物件以及影片有關：一把劍，一個滿是灰燼的金屬鼓，以及雕像燃燒的殘餘，一個不斷反射霓虹燈字的骨灰盒。這些器物將參觀者引上一段旅程，拼湊起秋瑾的故事，她作為中國革命先驅的一生以及她的死亡。這些物件展示在一處幽暗的房間，在春天工作坊中用紅簾隔開，中間用大電影屏幕分割，彷彿踏入另一個世界，一個能感受到秋瑾的靈魂的世界。







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her, at risk to her own life and reputation," says Tsang. "Everything we know about Qiu is mediated through Wu's telling of the story. The idea of creating an art work out of Qiu's narrative and history began with Wu's involvement in preserving and sharing her story."

Tsang's research into Qiu Jing's story culminated in *Duilian*, a project comprised of installations and a 30-minute film, all produced following two residencies at Hong Kong's Spring Workshop.

Each object relates to the others and to the film: a sword; a metal drum filled with ashes and the remains of a burnt effigy; a casket of neon letters reflecting infinitely on itself. Together they guide the viewer on a journey, piecing together Qiu's story, her life as a Chinese revolutionary and her death. They are presented in a dimly lit room closed off from the rest of Spring Workshop by dark red curtains, and divided in half by a large film screen. The effect is magical and sombre,

like stepping into another world, one where Qiu's ghost can be felt all around.

Tsang worked collaboratively with fellow performance artist Boychild, who portrays Qiu in the film, and the film is rooted in performance; this has long been the backbone of the duo's work. Boychild's performance career grew out of the San Francisco drag scene, while Tsang has been a seminal fixture in and driving force behind the Los Angeles LGBT scene. Tsang was one of the creators of LA's legendary Wildness parties, frequented by the city's LGBT community, which were the subject of her award-winning documentary *Wildness* (2012). Transformation, appropriation and the construction of alternative stories have always been part of queer nightlife and drag culture, and *Duilian* continues playing with these tropes.

Qiu's rumoured lesbian love affair, and the broader theme of queer history and its



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同表演藝術家小男孩（在電影中扮演秋瑾）一同工作，吳曾的電影是個植根於表演藝術的故事；這一直是二人組合作的主心骨。小男孩的表演生涯始於三藩市的易服場景，受洛杉磯同性戀，雙性戀及變性者鏡頭驅使。吳曾是洛杉磯傳奇性的野性聚會的創始人之一，也是她的獲獎紀錄片《野性》（2012）的主題。轉化，調適，構造不同的故事一直是奇妙夜生活與易服文化的一部分，而「對聯／對練」繼續捉摸這個比喻。

秋瑾傳聞的同性戀情，以及同性戀的歷史與其不可見性的廣闊主題是吳曾作品的出發點。吳曾常常將自己形容為同志運動活躍者，將自己的作品形容為對性別與性身分的探索與慶祝。「秋瑾對於我不是個人物，更是一種感覺。當然，表面的事物是無法免除的，她著男裝，佩劍，但是從更深的層面講，她創造了當時沒有的東西。」

電影自身是對女性固有觀念認為的愛情進行的虛構探索，這些事情正史並不會討論，通過兩人在一起的戲劇性鏡頭得以表現。但同時，這也關乎言語，以及在人與人關係塑造中言語的力量，言語是如何建立與重建真相，如何構成歷史。

「寫作對我很治癒，我能同詩歌工作，」吳曾說道。「寫作使我考慮到言語掙脫時間，社會束縛的力量。寫作是我們表達願景，傳達生活態度的途徑。我在這裡也試圖創造和他人交流的語言。」這部電影並沒有如實的反映秋瑾的生活，與之相反，電影個裂開來，以幽默與美感解構故事的講述方式。「我喜歡民間傳說，」吳曾說，「我並不在乎其真實性，歷史難免失真，由當權者改寫。」她說到。

一群來自香港同性戀，雙性戀及變性者團體的譯者參與進活動中，吳曾是在活動中認識的他們。秋瑾與吳芝瑛的詩信由他們用塔加拉族語，粵語，馬來語及英語改寫，其中刻意誤讀一些內容，創造出女人間的對話感。在這裏，誤譯吸引人們的注意，引發人們對於語言在故事，神話塑造及歷史傳承中的角色的思考。

「既然革命不能如願，那我們只好揮舞寶刀，伴著涕淚歌唱！」在一處誤譯中，吳曾如是寫道。原文十分隱晦，意義不明。稍加改動後，這句話由一個潛在裡充滿力量感，能夠激勵人的話變為荒唐可笑的內容。在原意與最終含義間出現了差異，解構了歷史事實及其權威性的概念，使事實與虛構兩個概念渾殺。吳曾希望參觀者透過字裡行間質疑權威，詢問故事的

invisibility, were the point of departure for Tsang, who describes herself as a transactivist and whose work has long explored and celebrated gender and sexual identity. "Qiu Jin for me in a sense is a trans figure. Of course there's the surface thing: she dressed in men's clothing and carried a sword, and had this persona of a male figure, like a knight. But in a deeper sense she really created a way of being that didn't exist at the time."

The film itself is a fictitious exploration of the women's supposed love affair, usually omitted from official histories, which is represented through dramatised scenes of the couple together. But it is also about language, the power it has in shaping our relationships with one another, how it can construct or reconstruct truths, and how it shapes history.

"The writing has been healing for me, working with the poetry," says Tsang. "It makes me think a lot about how language can escape from its time period and from the constraints of society. It can allow us to express desire or ways of being. I am trying to create a language here to communicate with others." Rather than providing a faithful account of Qiu's life, the film cracks open and deconstructs the apparatus of storytelling, and does so with humour and beauty. "I love the folklore," says Tsang. "I don't care how much is true. History is just a distortion anyway," framed by those in power, she adds.

With the participation of a group of translators from Hong Kong's LGBT community, who Tsang encountered while working on the project, poems and letters between Qiu and Wu were reappropriated and deliberately mistranslated – into Tagalog, Cantonese, Malay and English – creating an alternative narrative for

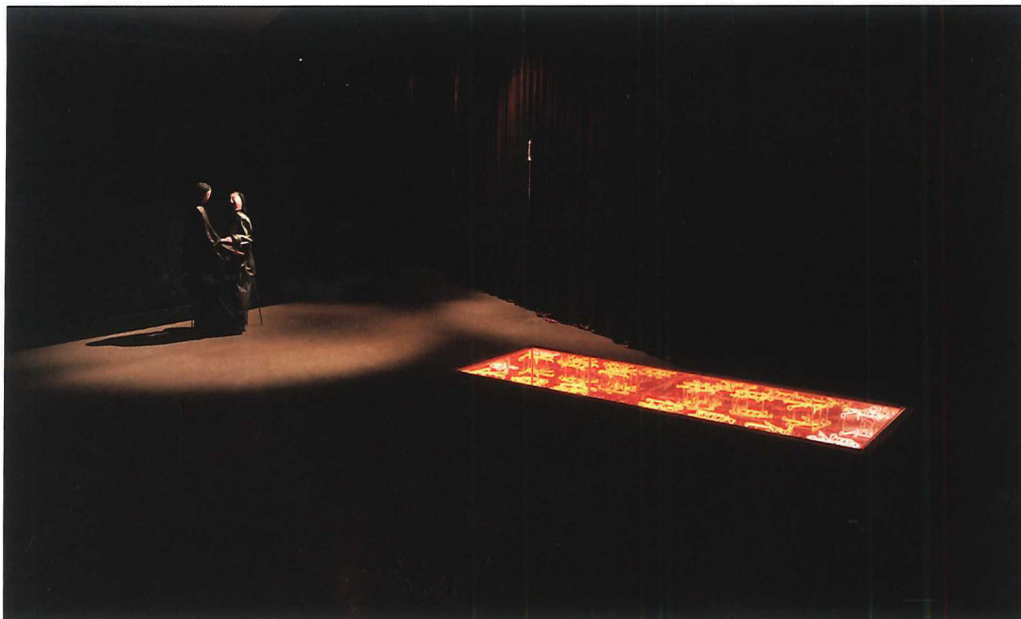
the women. Here mistranslation functions as a device that calls into question and draws attention to the role of language in the construction of stories and myths, and the telling of history.

"Since the revolution has failed us, all we can do is brandish our swords and sing karaoke with snot and tears!" declares Wu in one mistranslation. The original message is obscured, and the result nonsensical. With the mistranslation of a few words, the statement is transformed from one that might have been potentially inspiring and empowering to one that is absurd and comical. A gap is created between the original intent and the final meaning, deconstructing the idea of authenticity and historical truth, and blurring the lines between so-called fact and fiction. Tsang wants the viewer to read between the lines and to question authenticity, how stories are constructed, and how language is used to immortalise, mythologise or relegate to oblivion.

The exhibition's title refers both to wushu sword fighting and a form of poetry featuring couplets. Indeed, the film takes on a duel-like quality, as choreographed dance performances featuring Boychild and Tsang are woven into scenes of sword fighting performed by a troupe of female wushu practitioners. They represent the sword sisters, a radical group of women who initiated Qiu into a world of revolution after she left her husband and family.

The poetry voiceover rhythmically guides us from scenes of sword dancing to scenes of the two women together, presenting Qiu as a complex woman torn between two passions – for her country and her lover. "Why do the emotions of love and patriotism run so deep?" we hear in the





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voiceover. This tension and desire are central to the telling of Qiu's story. "I have this question of: what is love?" says Tsang. "We have love for people, but then there's also this love for a community, or a movement or cause."

The film has a narcotic quality, enveloping us, inviting us to slip into this world of sorrow, love and revolution as we are rocked gently by the undulating rhythms of waves, the sound of rain pattering down, and dolorously toned poetry. Water is omnipresent in the film: it is the backdrop against which the story and relationship unfold. Water becomes a metaphor for the fluidity of time and place, and of identity: Qiu the martyr, the lover, the poet, the transgressive queer revolutionary. Through water we are transported from one time and place to another, from the floating theatre of a colonial-style interior of a Hong Kong junk, suggestive of turn-of-the-20th-century China, to a modern-

day Hong Kong landscape crowded with drab high-rises – and from Qiu as a historical figure to one that has just as much relevance today.

Tsang combines performance with research and her own personal imagery to reflect on questions of authenticity and artifice. After all, she says, the reconstruction of history can be as important as the supposedly real thing. Driven by rich visuals and a doleful voiceover, *Duilian* speaks to and of many identities, for "there is no one authentic identity", says Tsang. It is an evocative tapestry of desires and hopes, a story of identity slippage and the power of words.



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創造方式，思考語言如何成為不朽，成為神話，又最終埋沒於歷史的風塵。

展出的主題雙關武術劍門與一種像詩歌的對句兩重內涵。當然，電影本身也是決鬥式的，在精心編排的舞蹈中，小男孩與吳曾交織在由一群女練武者的劍門場景中。這些練武者代表著寶劍姐妹，一群在秋瑾離開自己的丈夫與家庭後將秋瑾領上革命道路的激進女性。

背景音中富有韻律感的詩歌將我們從舞劍場景引領向兩位女性在一起的場景，將秋瑾塑造為在兩股熱情間備感矛盾的女性——是國家，還是愛人？在畫外音中，我們聽到「為何愛情與愛國都如此深沈？」吳曾說到，「我想問一問，愛情究竟是什麼呢？我們對人有愛情，對社會，活動或其他也有愛情。」

電影令人沈醉，將我們裹挾，引領我們墜入悲傷，愛與革命的世界。我們隨著波浪起伏而顫動，雨聲敲響，詩韻哀傷。在電影中水無處不在：在情節與關係展開的過程中，它一直作為背景音出現。水成為時間，地點與身分流動性的象徵。秋瑾，烈士，愛人，詩人，罪大滔天的革命者。經由水聲，我們在時間

地點間穿梭，從象徵著二十世紀中國的，外表港式，內裏殖民地式的流動劇院，到現代滿是高樓大廈的香港，從秋瑾，一個歷史人物，到一個同當今社會不無關聯的人。

吳曾將表演同研究結合起來，用她的私人相片反應對權威與欺騙的質疑。總而言之，她表示，歷史的重塑與被認定的事實一樣重要。在豐富的圖片與悲傷的畫外音作用下，「對聯／對練」講述並有關許多的身分，因為「並沒有真正的身分」，吳曾如是說。它是喚起人願景與希望的錦緞，一個有關身分變換與言語力量的故事。