

NEW BRITAIN MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

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NBMAA Presents *NEW/NOW Jennifer Wen Ma: An Inward Sea*

New Britain Museum of American Art
May 6 - October 24, 2021

NEW BRITAIN, CONN., March 1, 2021, The New Britain Museum of American Art will present the solo exhibition, *Jennifer Wen Ma: An Inward Sea*, from May 6 through October 24, 2021, as part of the Museum's *NEW/NOW* series featuring contemporary artists. Ma has explored themes of utopia, dystopia, and the human condition in recent immersive and participatory exhibitions, and in an installation opera that traveled worldwide. *An Inward Sea* continues this exploration while reflecting deeply on the events of the last year—including the COVID-19 pandemic, extensive lockdowns, and subsequent racial justice uprising in the U.S.—and how they have impacted the lives of residents of New Britain and beyond. *An Inward Sea: Oral History* is a collaboration between Jennifer Wen Ma and oral historian and interdisciplinary artist Nyssa Chow.

An Inward Sea is also one of eight groundbreaking exhibitions selected for the 2020/20+ WOMEN @ NBMAA initiative celebrating the impact of female-identifying artists throughout American history. Extended into 2021 due to COVID closures, the year-long series presents work by Kara Walker, Anni Albers, Shantell Martin, Yoko Ono, Nancy Spero, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Carrie Mae Weems, the Guerrilla Girls, Jennifer Wen Ma, and many more.

Presented in the New Britain Museum of American Art's William L. and Bette Batchelor Gallery, *Jennifer Wen Ma: An Inward Sea* transforms the entire gallery into a reflective yet charged dreamlike space, with a luminous moon projected above a vast glistening sea. Made of black cut-paper waves tipped in gold, the sea evokes traditional Chinese landscape painting. Audiences are invited to walk through the undulating wave formation, which serves as a metaphor for the difficult terrain we are navigating. Two glass pendulums swing freely over the sea, in and out of rhythm; their kinetic motions create a release and tension, psychologically activating the space with a sense of potential collision and danger.

The moon, like a theatrical spotlight, sets a poetic stage upon which portraits of New Britain residents are projected. The black-and-white profiles resemble 19th century silhouette portraits, capturing the speakers' likeness while preserving their privacy and identity, and allowing them to speak freely about their stories of isolation and otherness, community and togetherness, and personal experiences of the pandemic and beyond that reveal the human condition. The recordings will live on through an archived database, creating an individual and collective history for the city of New Britain and the New Britain Museum of American Art, and a portrait of an American city during this challenging and unprecedented time. If COVID safety protocols permit, there will be public programming of live events hosting residents telling their stories in person to an audience through the duration of the exhibit.

The exhibition is presented in the William L. and Bette Batchelor Gallery at New Britain Museum of American Art, and more information can be found here: <https://nbmaa.org/exhibitions/new-now-jennifer-wen-ma>

About the Artist

Jennifer Wen Ma (b.1973, Beijing, lives and works between New York and Beijing) is a visual artist whose interdisciplinary practice bridges varied media of installation, drawing, video, public art, design, performance, and theatre; often bringing together unlikely elements in a single piece, creating sensitive, poetic and poignant works.

Projects with international institutions include: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain; National Art Museum of China, Ullens Center For Contemporary Art, Beijing; Vancouver Art Gallery; Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, Charleston; Seattle Art Museum; The Phillips Collection, Washington DC; Qatar Museums, Doha; Cass Sculpture Foundation, UK; Sydney Opera House, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; among others.

She conceived, visually designed and directed installation opera *Paradise Interrupted*, performed around the world, including: MGM Cotai Theatre, 2019; National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, Taipei National Theatre and Concert Hall, 2018, Singapore International Festival of Arts and Lincoln Center Festival, 2016, Spoleto Festival USA, 2015. In 2008, Ma was on the core creative team for the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, and received an Emmy for its US broadcast. www.littlemeat.net

About the New Britain Museum of American Art:

The New Britain Museum of American Art is the first institution dedicated to solely to acquiring American art. Spanning four centuries of American history, the Museum's permanent collection is renowned for its strengths in colonial portraiture, the Hudson River School, American Impressionism, the Ash Can School, as well as the important mural series *The Arts of Life in America* by Thomas Hart Benton. The singular focus on American art and its panoramic view of American artistic achievement, realized through the Museum's extensive permanent collection, exhibitions, and educational programming, make the New Britain Museum of American Art a significant resource for a broad and diverse public.

Support:

NEW/NOW: Jennifer Wen Ma is part of 2020/20+ Women @ NBMAA presented by Stanley Black and Decker with additional support provided by Bank of America.

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