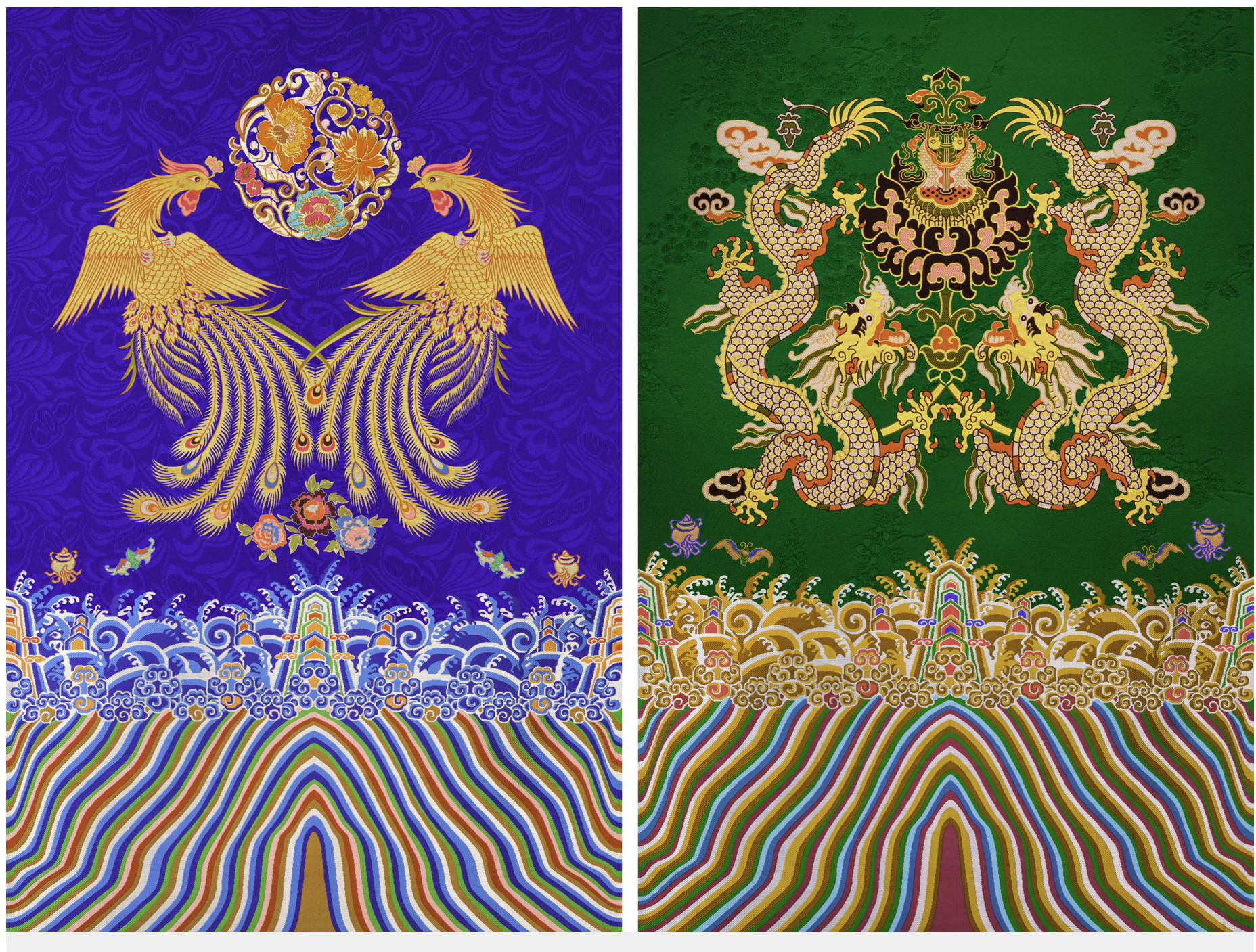


News BROWSE

Chun Hua Catherine Dong's 'The Misfits' Selected for Aberdeen Station



IMAGES COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Chun Hua Catherine Dong, 'The Misfits,' 2020, photomontage with augmented reality.

By Perrin Grauer
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The works will be displayed through Sept. 30 as part of the 2021 Capture Photography Festival.

Recent work by artist [Chun Hua Catherine Dong](#) (BFA 2011) will soon be displayed at Aberdeen Station as part of the 2021 Capture Photography Festival. Catherine's photomontage, *The Misfits*, was [selected as the winner](#) of a public art call.

"It is an honour to work with Catherine on the Capture installation at Aberdeen station," Shaun Dacey, director of Richmond Art Gallery, which partnered with Capture on the Aberdeen call, says in a statement. "The jury were excited about her proposal which speaks directly to Richmond's Chinese residents and extends a 2D installation into augmented reality. We can't wait to launch it in April 2021."

The Aberdeen Station display is co-presented by the Richmond Public Art Program and the Canada Line Public Art Program – InTransit BC.

According to Catherine, *The Misfits* explores issues of gender through the symbolic use of creatures that loom large in Chinese myth: the dragon and the phoenix. The two mythical beasts have long been emblematic of the male-female divide, Catherine writes in [a statement on the work](#). They're also commonly used to represent "auspiciousness and blissful relations" in a marriage.

But a look at early Chinese myth reveals a more complex history for the pair. The phoenix was formerly understood as a union between male and female, called "Feng Huang," writes Catherine. It only became a symbol for the purely female later on, once Chinese emperors took the dragon as an imperial symbol (and as an ancestor, Catherine notes).

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CHUN HUA CATHERINE DONG

"From a powerful independent creature to a subordinate to the emperor, from plural to singular, from fluid to static, the phoenix's gender transformation demonstrates how gender is socially produced and shaped by political power and culture, and how it is manipulated, imposed, and naturalized through histories," Catherine writes.

"In this work, the phoenix and the dragon are depicted not as opposites but as mirrors of each other. Adding my own twist to a traditional medium by placing these symbols within the rainbow sea and mountain patterns, I intend to re-interpret the Chinese mythical creatures from a feminist and queer perspective, offering a contemporary reading on Chinese tradition."

As part of her reading on that tradition, Catherine set her phoenix on a blue background, to return masculinity to the phoenix. Plum blossoms, meanwhile, are an offering of femininity to the dragon, according to [Capture's text on the work](#). By referencing traditional Chinese textiles in her exploration of these shifting symbolic values, Catherine aims to further emphasize the ancient roots of the social construct of gender.

Each image also has an Augmented Reality (AR) component, accessible via a free mobile app. Once activated, the works become animated, and "begin to dance with an ethereal score of Chinese music," Capture writes.

The Misfits will be on view at Aberdeen Station from April 2 to Sept. 30, 2021. You can see more of Catherine's work on her website: chunhuacatherinedong.com