

Press Release

Laetitia Yhap: *An Ending to a Beginning*

6 April - 27 May 2024



Laetitia Yhap, *Dark Shed with M*, 1985-1986, Oil on board, 121.7 x 151 x 6.5 cm

This spring, DLWP will present a solo exhibition by the Hastings-based artist, Laetitia Yhap, bringing together a selection of works that traverses twenty years of making.

Yhap (b. 1941, UK) is best known for intricate paintings of fishermen on The Stade Beach, Hastings, UK, created on unusually shaped panels individually hand-made by the artist for each work. Yhap moved to Hastings from London in 1967, and in 1974 began her cycle of work depicting raw glimpses into the lives of the fishing community, documenting daily scenes as they unfolded on the beach.

Enraptured by the ritual of their activities, Yhap began to draw the fishermen from life before returning to her studio to make the paintings. She would continue making works of this community for twenty-five years, bringing forth their resilience and spirit in the face of such dangerous labour conditions. Yhap's oeuvre serves as a unique picture of an industry that today looks completely different, as rapid industrialisation and ecological shifts render the lives of those working at sea increasingly precarious.

Born in London during the Blitz to an Austrian mother and Chinese father, Yhap has often grappled with a sense of displacement and not belonging and ultimately

found solace in art making and the fishing community of Hastings. *An Ending to a Beginning* celebrates Yhap as a unique voice within British art history and highlights key moments in her career. It features her earliest and final paintings of the activity at The Stade Beach from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s, together with several private loans of rarely seen paintings, and a selection of drawings made directly on the beach and in the studio. The exhibition will be accompanied by texts written by the artist to mark this significant presentation, and a new film by Mark French, which includes conversations with the artist and the fishing community in Hastings that draw attention to pressing environmental concerns within our local and wider landscapes.

As indicated by the exhibition's title, Yhap's work highlights the inevitable, but also cyclical nature of time's movement. As the artist says of her experience: 'I feel as if I've been a witness...I think I go back to being a free person, the self-determination, the way of life that to me is threatened, as an artist, and as a fisherman might feel. Things run their course I suppose; whether you like it or not.'

Notes to Editors

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Biography

Laetitia Yhap graduated from Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts in 1962. Following her graduation, and, through the support of the Leverhulme Research Scholarship, she travelled to Italy for a year to research Renaissance art and architecture. In 1965, she gained her postgraduate degree from the Slade School of Fine Art. Yhap lives and works in Hastings, UK.

Yhap has exhibited extensively in institutions including Serpentine Gallery, London (1979); Hayward Gallery, London (1982); Tate (The Hard-Won Image, 1984), London; The Barbican Art Gallery, London (1987); Whitechapel Gallery, London; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (1974, 1982, 1985 and 1987) as part of the John Moores Painting Prize, where Yhap was one of the awardees in 1974.

Her solo exhibitions include *Laetitia Yhap: Fishing Paintings*, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Hastings (1984); *Laetitia Yhap: The Business of the Beach*, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (toured Berwick Museum and Art Gallery, Camden Art Centre and others in 1988-89); *My Vital Life*, Laetitia Yhap at 80, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Hastings (2020), and *Laetitia Yhap: Longings and Belonging*, Yanlan Arts and Culture Foundation, Beijing (2022).

Selected public collections which hold Yhap's work include Tate, Arts Council of Great Britain, British Council, Contemporary Art Society, Government Art Collection, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Hove Museum and Art Gallery, Walker Art

Gallery, and others. Her work is also held in numerous private collections in UK, Switzerland, USA and China.