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SAN FRANCISCO'S FLOATING MYTHS BY ARTIST HOLLY WONG

Alex Mak | April 8, 2021

The "Artist You Should Know" series highlights Bay Area artists who are doing incredible work, it's our way of supporting the creative community and helping to keep San Francisco a strange and wonderful place.



Holly Wong's sculptures often float in the air, created out of light, ephemeral materials, but they are anything but fragile in theme. Her patterns seem to give off energy, they captivate your attention like a long, and deep rooted story. It's not often you can glance at objects and feel how much time and care was

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put into them. Holly's sculptures are named for myths, and when you gaze at them they hold your attention like an ancient piece of truth.

Meet Holly Wong, a San Francisco artist you should know.



ARTIST NAME: HOLLY WONG

[@HOLLYWONGART](#)

HOLLYWONGART.COM

Medium(s): Drawing-based installation art, mixed media and assemblage.

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I'm a sophisticated graduate with a BFA or FUCK art school!

I earned my BFA and MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute with a concentration in New Genres. This degree primarily focused on an approach to art making that was more interdisciplinary and conceptually orientated.

Several of your recent sculptures have mythological names like Phoenix and Arachne, do your sculptures tell a story?

All my work utilizes references to ancient myth to express contemporary conditions. I often summon the names of Goddesses because I am drawing from a wellspring of strength and confidence which I don't always feel in my ordinary life. Phoenix is about the emergence of life from the ashes and the power of renewal. Arachne is about the creative process and the power of having a personal craft; a kind of bewitching state where one spins a web that has no weaver.

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It takes an incredible amount of time to create an 11 ft sculpture with paper and thread, how many hours is that?

My 11 foot drawing installation “Phoenix” which is debuting at [SLATE Contemporary Gallery](#) was quite a time and labor-intensive project of love. I would say that the entire project took 250 hours or about 2 ½ months of my time. I get up very early each day before work to commit myself to realizing my ideas. It didn’t matter how tired I was. It was critical that I labored to give “Phoenix” flight.



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It can't be easy to find places to display such large, and delicate pieces of art, any recommendations to other '3 dimensional' artists looking to exhibit their work?

Locally, I think Root Division, Southern Exposure and the Richmond Art Center are good examples of risk-taking organizations that really support the vision of artists and have various open call processes. I am a member of [Artspace](#) which also is amazing; they do a great job of connecting artists to opportunities in the Bay Area and I highly recommend them. I have also applied to open calls for University galleries nationally. They are often open to ambitious work and can sometimes offer modest stipends depending on the place.



Any artists you think are particularly outstanding right now?

In terms of locally exhibited artists, I love the work of Rina Banerjee, Terri Friedman, Jutta Haeckel, David Hytone, Jen Pack, and Stephanie Syjuco. Nationally, I love the work of artists Natalie Ball, Esperanza Cortes, Nnenna Okore, Mia Pearlman, Lina Puerta, and Etty Yaniv. This is not an inclusive list and as you can tell, its pretty eclectic. There are so many amazing artists out there doing incredible work. Every time I open up Instagram, I am stunned by the vastness of talent out there.

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Favorite street art right now?

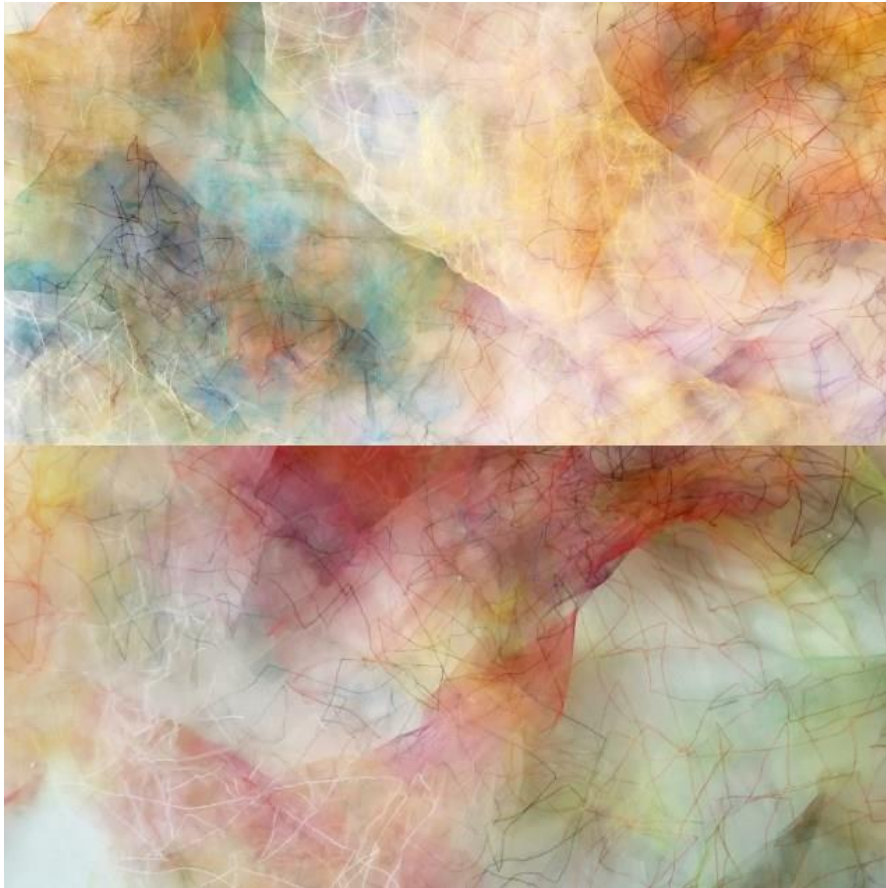
Lady Henze, Victor Reyes, and Zio Zieger.

Where's the most creative place in the Bay Area?

I would say the Mission District still has energy and spirit despite the gentrification. Also, Oakland has really developed community and there are so many good artists that have moved there.

When did you arrive in San Francisco, and what was your first job? What's your 9-5 job?

I arrived in San Francisco in 1989. My first job was working part-time as a janitor while I was a student at the San Francisco Art Institute. My current 9-5 job is as a division administrator for UCSF Alliance Health Project (AHP), which is a great organization to be a part of. AHP supports the mental health and wellness of the LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities in constructing healthy and meaningful lives. I handle AHP's finance and HR activities.



How do you think SF has changed over the years?

Yes it certainly has changed given the environment of business development in the past 10-15 years. As many have commented, artists have been forced out due to the high cost of living and scarcity of places to

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work. However, some artists have managed to stay and organizations like Arc Studios have helped to be part of the solution. With the changes brought on by the pandemic and the loss of sales tax revenue base, it will be a challenging time but potentially one of opportunity for artists.



What does Slate mean to art in the Bay Area?

SLATE Contemporary Gallery & Art Consulting shows a wide variety of artists in diverse mediums. One of the many things that is refreshing and wonderful about SLATE is their openness to strong work, whether or not it fits into a more traditional gallery model. Because of their track record of placing ambitious projects in corporate and institutional settings, SLATE has an adventurous eye. I think that mental flexibility and that willingness to visually explore for their collectors and clients is part of the Bay Area's tradition at its best.

What's coming up for you?

I am having a solo show at SLATE Contemporary which will be up from April 1, 2021-May 29, 2021. All of the works featured in the exhibition were created during the shelter-in-place order over the past year and, so, reflect my spiritual and visual responses to the pandemic, social injustice, and my desire for personal and social transformation. The display presents a wide variety of expressive modes, including the large-scale drawing-based installation titled Phoenix, to which this show is dedicated, as well as a series of more intimate works on paper, larger scale paintings on paper, and assemblages.

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You can view the works on exhibition here: <https://slateart.net/exhibition/phoenix/>

At the time of this writing, SLATE Contemporary is open by appointment and Saturdays from 12pm-5pm.

Full article: <https://brokeassstuart.com/2021/04/08/san-franciscos-floating-myths-by-artist-holly-wong/>