



Hagay Dreaming

A Techno-Fantasia Guided Theatre of Revival

This is an artistic collaboration by Taiwanese-American artist Shu Lea Cheang and Truku artist and practising shaman Dondon Hounwn.

Hagay Dreaming is based on a story belonging to the Truku Indigenous culture of Taiwan. In her dreams, a hunter meets a group of spiritual non-binary beings called Hagay and they pass on ancestral knowledge of living, weaving and hunting.

Hagay Dreaming connects Cheang's new media practice with Hounwn's inheritance of tribal ballads, movement and rituals. It presents an artistic vision for a future reality based on Gaya, the Truku people's principle of living. Gaya perceives all living beings as connected, merging body and soul to achieve snhiyi, a state and power of total trust.

Hagay Dreaming is an Elug Art Corner production directed by Shu Lea Cheang with artistic direction by Dondon Hounwn.

Presented by Tate and Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels

13, 14, 15 March 2025 at Tate Modern

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Synopses

Prelude: Welcoming the Spiritual Being

With a reverent heart, we call upon the primordial spirits.
Turning smoke into a path, descending upon this land.
Let this place be filled with the light of Your origin.

Act 1: Red Thread

In this moment, I meet my past self.
I reach out to touch, to console.
In the river of time, I offer blessings with sacred chants,
waiting for their breaking free from their own cocoon.

Act 2: Butterfly

Butterfly, symbol of life and death interlaced.
Fluttering, it seems almost weightless.
But the ancestors have always said to face it -
to break through the crumbling land ahead,
only by crossing over can we be reborn...

Act 3: Stone Awakening

With stone as the covenant and the body as the guide, I
comprehend the profound essence of Gaya.
I have made peace with the world...
returning to the world of the primordial myth.

Act 4: Hunter's Dream

Entering the spiritual realm in the rain,
chance encountering the Hagay beings in the forest.
Mastering skills like an imprint.
Generations interwoven into myth.

Act 5: Exchange

I am either male or female - I am myself.
I emerge from mythology and exist in the present.

Act 6: The Path In Light

We see the light, we hear the music and song.
Following the path, we return to the land of ultimate
beauty.

Translations

From Mandarin and Taiwanese Indigenous languages of Atayal, Truku, Seediq and Pinuyumayan. Where Atayal, Truku, Seediq and Pinuyumayan are used, transcriptions are included.

Act 1: Red Thread

A chant in Atayal:

*wagi ye~
ku blaq qu riyax sasiyoni
ye~ro
ku sansaramat lelubuw su qu laqi su*

The Sounds of Papakwaqa Mountain.
On this beautiful day, I sing a melody of longing for my child.

Act 2: Butterfly

A song titled 蠓生如蝶 / *Fluttering Butterfly*.

Refrain in Truku:

maaw ka sapah mu
(The mountains, they are my home.)
yayung nii ka knudus mu
(The streams, they sustain my life.)
dxgal nii ka dara mu
(The earth, it is my blood.)
kika ngalan phngak mu
(This is the life I depend upon.)

I walk along a path buried in mud, rock and water,
Hearing the panicked cries of the people.
I see butterflies dancing in radiant light,
bringing messages of life and death intertwined.

Mountain shakes, earth quakes, storms rages,
orchids drift in the flowing streams.
On fractured, crumbling mountain trails,
rocks glimmer with golden light.

In the darkness, the ancestral spirits shine,
Telling me not to fear,
Not to turn away from ordeals.
Oh, my beloved child.

The giant trees from the ancestral land
symbolise the origins of myth.
Who willfully place you in the bidding wars,
forgetting we are but a small fraction of you?

We fire our guns to defend the forests,
Gather around the flames to listen to the stories.
As though we have returned to the ancient tribes, yet
we open our eyes, the elders are gone.

Within the woven patterns of every life,
Our ancestors never closed their eyes,

always watching over their descendants in this world.

A chant in Truku:

*mqaras nawi misu mnan
paah kana o
rudan su
kana mnswayi su wa
o ~*

Hymn of Welcoming the Spirits

Act 3: Stone Awakening

(Voiceover)

Father scolding: *Dondon, what are you doing? You're making up? Are you a girl?*

Dondon's narration: *In junior high school, the boy proudly wore earrings. It was his grandfather who pierced his ears when he was little. His father told him off and took out his mother's lipstick to roughly draw on his face. 'If you want to be a girl, you go wear women's clothes and put on pretty makeup.'*

This child is Hagay. When I was little, I was with my grandma as she told the village women washing clothes by the river, 'This child is Hagay'.

Tribal elder's narration: *At the beginning of the universe, three deities emerged from the spiritual realm's stone. One deity looked at this world and found it very boring, so he returned to the spiritual realm. The remaining two deities found the world pleasing and decided to stay. They brought plants and animals with them. Later, they tried various ways to reproduce. When they were at a loss, a fly appeared, landing on their genitals, thus showing to the deities how to proliferate their descendants.*

Time and the world keep changing...

Act 4: Hunter's Dream

(Voiceover)

Hunter's narration:

My name is Heydi Mijung. I grew up in the mountains. Since I was a child, I watched my father making hunting traps which fascinated me. I secretly followed my father to the mountain where he placed the traps. After my marriage, I told my husband that I longed for the mountain, I wanted to go to the forest.

He asked, 'Can you?' I replied, 'I can'.

I went into the mountain to place the trap and brought back a large animal caught in the trap.

An elder in the tribe, seeing me carrying the big game down the mountain, said to me, 'You woman, you can'.

Dondon's narration:

A hunter, hiding from the rain, sought shelter in a cave and fell asleep. She dreamt of a group of beautiful people. The hunter asked them, 'Manu ka Numa? Who are you?' They said, 'we are Hagay'.

The tribal people say that 'Hagay' is the first Truku who bravely proclaimed that he was an effeminate man. Hagay transmits the knowledge of weaving, hunting and the Gaya living principle to the hunter who further disseminates this among the tribal people.

Pilaw's narration:

My name is Pilaw. I like to weave. Through the interwoven threads on the loom, I sense my tribal people. My body is repeating the tasks my people have been working on. As the threads entangle, I am sorting out my own gender identity. Gently, I hold on to myself. Watching the knitted patterns, I attempt to prove that I exist. I am creating my imprints in the world I live in.

A song entitled *I am a real woman* in Seediq:

*wa u wa ku Tawsay wa
(I am a woman from Tawsay)
enkey saw ku wasil pada wa
(I am as strong as the rope that catches the muntjac)
em wa u wa ku wa na limuy wa
(I am a beautiful woman)
uka ku wa makeylan wa
(I just can't stop myself from dancing)
wa u wa ku wa Nabuun wa
(I come from an ancient tribe)
em balay ku saw ma ima wa
(Who else has such capacity as me)*

Act 5: Exchange

A chant in Pinuyumayan:

*a i ya i i ye e u la
sa li si dra ne ya la
a i i ye ee u la
dra dru ba dru wa ne ya la*

A song for children to dance to

Act 6: The Path In Light

A song titled *Dancing Mountain Spirits* in Truku:

*kana ta lisaw
(All the boys)
Kana ta Uwa
(All the girls)
supu ta mqras
(Happy together)
supu ta mgril
(Dancing together)
Kana ta payi
(All the female Elders)
Kana ta baki*

*(All the male Elders)
Imleng qaqaq su o
(Move your feet)
laqi brah u o
(With the children)
O nay o nay o nay o nay*

Shu Lea Cheang

Shu Lea Cheang (b.1954) is an artist and filmmaker who engages in genre-bending, gender-hacking art practices. Celebrated as a net art pioneer with *Brandon* (1998-1999), the first web art commissioned and collected by the Guggenheim Museum, New York, Cheang represented Taiwan with the mixed media installation, *3x3x6*, at the Venice Biennale in 2019. In 2024, she received the LG Guggenheim Art and Technology Award. She currently has a survey exhibition at Haus der Kunst, Munich.

Dondon Hounwn

Truku artist Dondon Hounwn (b. 1985) was born in the Dowmung tribe in Xiulin Township, Hualien County, Taiwan. Hounwn's work blends ancestral knowledge with forward-thinking and cross-gender aesthetics in his interdisciplinary art practices. An inheritor of tribal ballads, instruments and rituals, he works in performance, installation, video and living theatre. In 2015, Dondon Hounwn founded Elug Art Corner where Indigenous youths research Truku cultural heritage. Since 2023, Elug Art Corner holds the annual GAYA Cosmos gathering with artists and researchers exploring Gaya living principles.

Production Credits

Director | Shu Lea Cheang
Artistic Director | Dondon Hounwn
Producer | Ping Yi Chen
Production Administration | Cheng Hsuan Weng
Original Script | Dondon Hounwn
Script Adaptation | Shu Lea Cheang
Script Consultation | Wei Lun Lu
Performers | Dondon Hounwn, Temu Masin, Sinkuy Katadrepán, Pilaw Uraw, Dremedreman-Ljaculjingiljing, Kiyu Pahauran
Messenger | Shan Shan Chen
Choreographer | Dahu (Wei Yao Chiu)
Music Producer and Composition | Sayun Chang
Costume Design | Shao Yen Chen
Laser Artist | aka_chang
Stage Design | Hsien Yu Cheng
Stage Manager | Chien Huan Hsu
Technical Coordinator | Kieran Brockbanks
Sound Engineer | Alfredo Radetich
Lighting Engineer | Ed Saunders
AV Technicians | Michael Fisher, Paul Kelly
Senior Art Handling Technician | Yaakov Gueta
Audio Describer | Alice Gilmour
Tie Up Artist | Eloi Guix
Music Audio Engineers | Shih Wei Liu (Good Sound), Jemi Chang (KDS), recorded with Yu Hao Chang (Violin & Viola), Jiro Yeh (Cello & Double Bass)
Fluttering Butterfly: Lyrics | Dondon Hounwn, Composition & Vocal | Shan Shan Chen, Music Arrangement | Jiro Yeh, video | Tumun Buru, Rngrang Hungul, Thalaelethe Titibu
Dowmung Save the Tree documentary (Rngrang Hungul, 2014)
Photos by Kim Jakobsen To featuring Hui-Shan Yang, Yueh-Lin Hsia, Chun-Fang Hu, Chun Fan, Ciru Aking, Dondon Hounwn, Tumun Buru, Kaji Cihung, Pitay Pawan, Temu Masin, Temu Basaw and knife-maker - Kawas Taing.
Laser Provider | Shenzhen LAYU Laser Technology Co., LTD, LaserCube.
Laser Technician | Abby Shum

Video documentation | Nick MacDonald
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Curated by Rosalie Doubal, Senior Curator, International Art (Performance and Participation) and Dina Akhmadeeva, Assistant Curator, International Art and produced by Demelza Watts, Production Manager (Performance and Participation).

Special thanks to the Dowmung tribe people.



