

«HARBOR»
JEE CHAN

WORK IN PROGRESS

OCTOBER 21 + 22
UFERSTUDIO 1



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The performance opens in a slow and subdued atmosphere. Chan moves slowly with a round double-sided mirror that has a diameter about the size of their torso, along with the sound of a muffled voice speaking in a soft volume. Through the mirror, I see the architecture of the theatre, other audience members, and Chan. «Mirror raises the question of looking by opening ways and possibilities of looking. For example, to look at, in, through, past...», says Chan during the artist talk. As they leave the mirror on the floor and kneel by a projector, the sound shifts to a clear voice speaking in Chinese, introducing the focal point of Chan's looking.

It is the voice of Chan's grandmother that we hear. We see the English translation of her speaking on the projection, as Chan changes the slides.

Horror	Japanese soldiers	took the girls	My mom was heartless
		Chinese don't care about girls	she left me
	took a boat from Guangzhou to Hong Kong to Singapore		
			very poor

These are the voices recorded between 2016 and 2017 while Chan practiced calligraphy with their grandmother, who they were very close with. The voices speak about Chan's grandmother's childhood of experiencing WWII, being sold by her mother to *yí po* (her grandmother's sister), and fleeing her hometown to run away from the invasion of the Japanese.

Emotions, such as sorrow, pain, and anger are embodied knowledge that can be passed on through bodies from one generation to the next. Emotions can be transmitted in a similar way to a small cup of black ink that Chan empties into a bigger pool of clear water on stage. The black ink spreads and becomes a part of the water, though diluted in its intensity of colour. This can perhaps relate to what Chan points to as the «diasporic knowledge we hold in our bodies». Grieving over the loss of a loved one can include the process of looking at these marks of memories that became a part of one's body. And when this process is shared, in this case in the form of a performance, it can be absorbed in each viewer's body in individual ways.

In the program note, Chan writes that their grandmother's passing in 2018 guided them to shift their choreographic position «from one of dancing to being danced». I witness Chan's «being danced» in the movement solo that is «not set or structured at all», but rather has been evoked in them during the period of transcribing and translating their grandmother's stories. To the layers of sounds, consisting of people's voices and white noise (which I am later told by Hilà Lahav, the sound designer, that these were the noise in between the video recordings of Chan's grandmother), Chan moves in contrasting fluctuations between delicately controlled motions slowly rippling through their body and energetic torrents gushing out.

Watching this solo, I remember Chan's grandmother saying, «Your generation has an easy life.» But perhaps the lives of our previous generations continue to flow in our bodies to be contemplated and reconciled.

«Looking into the muffled voices»

INKY LEE

«How does one process grief?» I ask myself after watching *harbor*, a work in progress by Jee Chan. As everyone's memory is «singular and adjusted», as Chan says in the artist talk after the performance, each person's process of grief can also take a unique form. Grief, as other emotions, is not a clearly shaped singularity, but rather is a sophisticated mixture of ambiguities that can move one's body in multiple directions in unexpected moments. Witnessing *harbor* to me feels as though I am invited into Chan's process of grief of losing their grandmother in 2018, refined by time and the courage of facing and expressing the coiled memories around it.