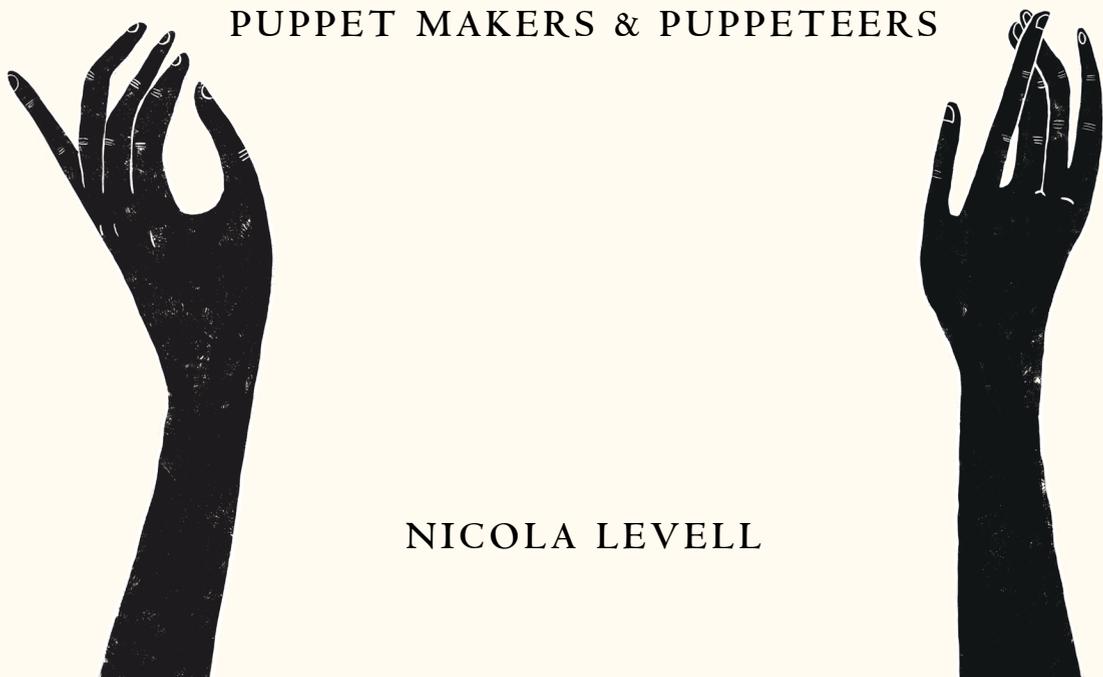


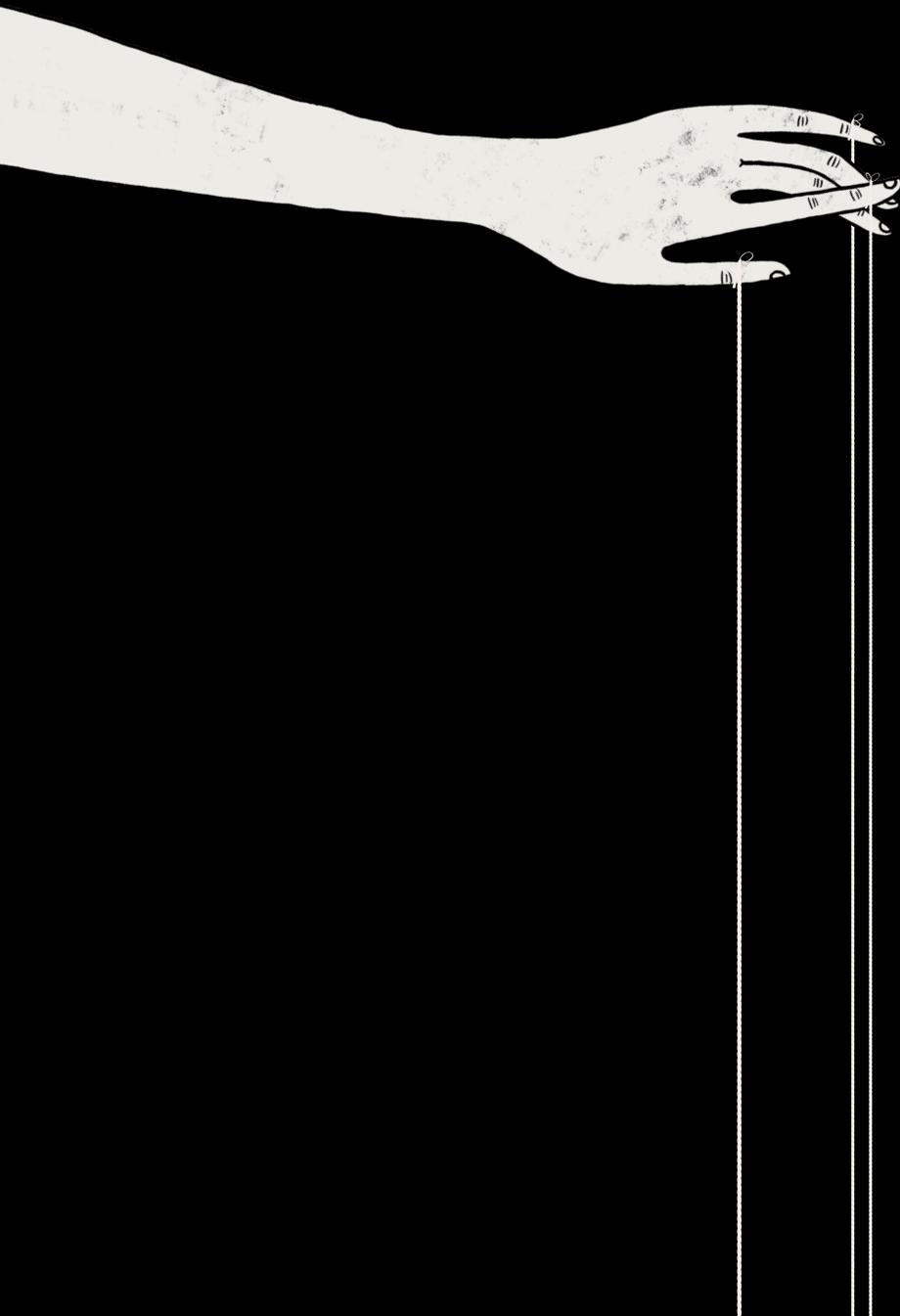


SHADOWS,
STRINGS
& OTHER
THINGS

PUPPET MAKERS & PUPPETEERS



NICOLA LEVELL



Hands—twitching strings, manipulating rods, moving parts—bring puppets to life. The creative intimacy between the puppeteer and their puppet can dissolve the separation between the two. As energy flows—through veins and wires, flesh and wood, muscles and silicone—the enchantment begins and stories unfold.





Installation view of the exhibition *Shadows, Strings & Other Things: The Enchanting Theatre of Puppets*, Audain Gallery, MCOA, Vancouver, 2019. Photo: Sarah Race.

THE ENCHANTING THEATRE OF PUPPETS



Puppets are fabulous storytellers and precious knowledge holders. They are important actors in the transmission of cultural values, histories, and skills, from generation to generation. Part of popular culture and ceremonial events, puppets enact epics, folktales, and comic episodes, with emotion and voice. They perform the roles of sacred characters and supernatural beings, heroes and rogues, demons and fools, to excite the imagination, educate, and amuse.

Puppetry is a dynamic, living art that dates back millennia. Although threatened and impacted by political currents, global media, and technologies, around the world, puppetry traditions have adapted through creativity. Puppets continue to diversify and multiply, as passionate artists, puppet makers, and puppeteers innovate and expand, drawing on novel storylines, materials, and techniques. Whether innovative or traditional, digital or analogue, miniature or gigantic in form, puppets dramatize the human condition and remain powerful mediums of activism and social commentary.

The exhibition *Shadows, Strings & Other Things: The Enchanting Theatre of Puppets* focuses on five main types of puppetry: shadow, string, hand, rod, and stop motion. There are over 230 puppets on display from 13 countries in Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Each one is handmade and has its own individual characteristics and personality. With the exception of the giant rod puppet Meh and the stop motion installation, all the puppets are from MOA's collection.

While the exhibition explores puppetry and storytelling, this accompanying booklet presents other storylines. It outlines the biographies and includes the reflections and words of contemporary puppet makers and puppeteers whose artistic works and practices were commissioned, borrowed, or acquired for the exhibition.



BACKSTORY

The theatricality of the exhibition—the dramatic stages, fantastic backdrops, animated lighting, playful graphics, theatre chairs, moving pictures, and sound—reflects the brilliance of the core design team and the organizing principles of wonder, enchantment, and play. The exhibition designer Skooker Broome transformed the gallery, formulating the stages and their extraordinary aesthetics of gold clamshell footlights, luxurious red velvet curtains, and a kaleidoscopic flooring of cherry wood, faux grass, black-and-white Harlequin-inspired tiles, and more besides. To complete the carnivalesque atmosphere, strings of incandescent lights were looped and suspended from the ceiling, casting magical golden reflections on the glass cases and the polished floors.

With a background in theatre production, Kate Melkert—who manages the fabrication of MOA's exhibitions—enriched the project with her knowledge of theatre-set construction and the technical terms of the stage. She led the move to hang the prosceniums creating depth, to hand-paint the wooden floors, and to animate the stages with sound effects. She awed individuals with her ability to construct on her own the prototypes of the stages and audio-visual booths as well as manage a team of creatives who fabricated and painted all manner of things to bring the enchanting theatre of puppets into being.

Cody Rocko, the graphic designer, excelled beyond the usual two-dimensional design remit and created an evocative style through colour, typefaces, shapes, materials, and images. To infuse the show with a sense of play and wonder, she drew on her background in fine art to illustrate the iconic woodcut-style image of the exhibition that pictures hands manipulating strings, seen on publicity material as well as in the gallery. The exhibition labels and graphic panels are also peppered with her hand-drawn squiggles and expressive icons and lettering.

KEY

Five theatrical stages each focus on a specific type of puppet: shadow, string, hand, rod, and stop motion. Stage sets, with their velvet curtains and hand-illustrated backdrops, depict popular scenes from puppet performances, plays, and skits. The backstages take you behind the scenes to storage spaces and workshop settings, where a panoply of puppet groups gathers, waiting to play. In glass cases, close to their related stages, there is a magical array of contemporary and historical puppets from different makers, places, and cultures.

Above: Installation views of the exhibition, *Shadows, Strings & Other Things: The Enchanting Theatre of Puppets*, MOA, Vancouver, 2019. Photos: Sarah Race.

Opposite: clockwise from top left: *Shadows* stage showing shadow puppets from Java, Indonesia, and Sichuan, China. *Strings* stage showing *Opera dei Pupi* from Sicily, Italy. *Rods* stage showing water puppets from Vietnam. Entrance to the *Stop Motion* stage showing *Four Faces of the Moon* (2016) animation and set by Amanda Strong/Spotted Fawn Productions. *Hands* stage showing puppet booth and *budatxci* hand puppets from Taiwan, and puppet booth and *Punch & Judy* hand puppets from Devon, UK.



The fabulous backdrops and the fascias of the hand-puppet booths were illustrated by the talented Erika Balcombe, a design educator and PhD candidate (UBC, Anthropology), who also acted as the curatorial research assistant. Using high-quality graphic markers, she created scaled illustrations of the different components, such as the *Opera dei Pupi* proscenium arch and the elaborate backdrop that depicts the interior of a palace. These were scanned, upscaled, printed onto canvas, and mounted on bespoke wooden structures. Gerry Lawson expertly edited and installed the audiovisual content, which adds another dimension of atmosphere and ambience to the exhibition, suffusing it with musical sounds from different cultural traditions, interwoven with the voices of puppeteers and narrators telling multiple stories to enhance the visitor experience. Stuart Ward of Hfour studio created sound and animated-light video-projections that dance across the stages, lending movement and life to the expressive puppets and their spectacular, storied settings.





SHADOWS



Shadow puppetry is an enchanting form of storytelling that existed in China and India over two-thousand years ago. It is now found in many parts of the world, entertaining crowds with popular tales of misadventure and religious epics with battles for kingdom and power. In shadow play, the puppeteers are concealed behind a stretched screen of white cloth and a bright light-source hangs overhead. As the puppeteer manipulates the figures, moving them across the screen, pulling them back and forth, the shadow characters come to life: walking, bending, distorting, growing and shrinking, and finally disappearing off-screen. The renowned shadow puppets of India, China, Indonesia, and Turkey are made of hide; many are intricately cut and dyed or painted with beautiful colours, minerals and pigments, which cast exquisite shadows.

Wayang kulit shadow puppet representing Prince Rama, in the process of being made, artist's studio, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, 1989. Photo: Dominique Major, MOA Archives.



皮影戏 | PÍYINGXÌ



Shadow puppetry in China is said to have originated in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), over 2000 years ago. According to legend, Emperor Wu was heartbroken and withdrawn when his favourite concubine died. His learned advisor—inspired by children playing shadow-hands in the sunny courtyard—created the first shadow puppet in the likeness of the deceased concubine to entertain the Emperor at night. Thus, he was pulled out of his depression and ruled for many years. This fabled episode speaks both to the power of shadow puppetry to enchant and to its connection with the spiritual realm.

Chinese shadow puppets have detachable heads. This is a unique feature related to ritualistic practice. When the puppets are not performing, their heads are removed from their bodies. It is thought that the puppet heads bring a life force to the figures. Traditional puppetry troupes can carry as many as 100-200 bodies and 500-1000 heads in their collection.

Guǎnméndàn (闾门旦) young woman, *píyǐngxì* (shadow puppet), late 19th/early 20th century, Chengdu City, Sichuan, China, maker: unrecorded, (Edz1340).
Photo: Rebecca Pasch.

With her elegant dress and hairstyle, this shadow puppet depicts a high-status young woman. Her flowing red gown is incised with a peony pattern, which symbolizes wealth and honour. On her feet are 'lotus shoes'—another symbol of social status, gender, and prosperity—denoting foot-binding, a practice that was discontinued in the late 19th/early 20th century. The long and vibrant tradition of shadow puppetry suffered during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976 CE) because it was seen to glorify the imperial past.



THE LU FAMILY

HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA

The contemporary *píyǐngxì* (shadow puppets) in the exhibition were made in 2018 by the Lu family—Fuzeng (father), Yishu (mother), and Tianxiang (son)—of Hebei province, China. Lu Fuzeng is a master puppet cutter from the Luanzhou region. He was introduced to puppet cutting while at elementary school. In rural areas, students were taught how to cut simple puppets out of paper and perform popular plays. He went on to apprentice with Master Wang, a master puppet cutter. Historically, master cutters would only pass their knowledge and skills down through the male line, from father to son. Master Lu searched for years to find a master without children who was willing to share his family's tradition with a non-relative who bears a different surname.

When Master Lu married in 1979, his wife Xu Yishu took over the painting of the puppets. Their son, Tianxiang, is now actively involved in the family's *píyǐngxì* practice. They make their own knives, their wax cutting boards, and their exquisitely fine puppets from scratch. The process of making the puppets involves: soaking, stretching, and scraping the cowhide until it is translucent and thin; carving out the shapes; cutting out the detailed patterns; and painting and lacquering. This is not their only occupation; the Lu family makes *píyǐngxì* to supplement their work as farmers. During the winter months, when other farmers in the region are processing cotton or spices, the Lu family is creating their fabulous puppets inside their modest home.

Chinese shadow puppetry was inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2011.

Píyǐngxì (shadow puppets), 2018, Tangshan, Hebei Province, China, makers: Lu family. L-R: Sunwukong (Monkey King, 3338/9); Ju Bajie (Pigsy, 3338/8); Tang Seng (Buddhist Monk, 3338/11); White Dragon Horse (3338/12); and Sha Wujing (Evil Sandman, 3338/10).

These exquisite *píyǐngxì* (shadow puppet) characters are from the classic Chinese narrative, *Journey to the West*, sometimes known as *Monkey King*, which is full of action, acrobatics, and martial arts. They are of classic north-eastern design (Luanzhou 滦州), from Luanzhouzhen in Hebei Province, one of the historically renowned regions of shadow puppetry in China. The leather is scraped extremely thin, which together with their jointed limbs, makes the puppets highly flexible when they perform high kicks, jumps, and flips. When performing, their distinctive designs and vibrant colours are visible on the glowing screen, enhancing the magical effects of the characters in motion.

Lu Tianxiang, shadow puppet maker:

At the time that I was about to graduate from high school, shadow puppets had become more popular. I realized this was a good opportunity to work, so I thought maybe I'd study with my dad. 2002, right after I graduated and during the summer break, I began to apprentice . . . I had a wood board and underneath were the two of my big textbooks, so thick! Then my dad let me start by cutting a sleeve. That was the first time I cut . . . I admired my father's cutting, the entire thing: the head, the body. I just helped him with the sleeve, the most simple part. I kept cutting and cutting that. When I had finished my first year of university, other students were going on break or looking for work, I would return home to cut shadow puppets. Because, to practice shadow puppet carving is a very repetitive process. You have to get it in your body. Once it's in your body, you cannot forget how. The next break we had, I would practice for two days and it came back. Every break we had, I practiced. So, by the time I was in my third year at the University, I could carve the entire body. But, the head was still difficult—the profile is the most tricky.



Top Right: Xu Yishu painting a shadow puppet.

Bottom Right: Master Lu scraping cow hide for shadow puppets.

Top Left: Master Lu Fuzeng, his wife, Yishu, and son, Tianxiang.

Bottom Left: Lu Tianxiang cutting a shadow puppet head.

Tangshan, China, 2016. Photos: Annie Katsura Rollins.

WAYANG KULIT

JAVA, INDONESIA

The *wayang kulit* shadow plays of Java are spectacular storytelling feats that can last from midnight until dawn. With gamelan orchestra music, voice, and song, the supple puppets and their shadows come to life. They perform episodes inspired by the Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as stories of the history and folklore of Java, with a local spin.

Wayang kulit shadow play is over 1000 years old. It is thought to be derived from the leather shadow puppetry traditions of southern India, like *tholu bommalata*, which came to Java with the spread of Hinduism in the first millennium. In Java—part of the largely Islamic Republic of Indonesia—this highly distinctive form of shadow puppetry is valued as a *pusaka*, a sacred treasure of the royal court of Yogyakarta. The plays are performed to mark special occasions such as birthdays, marriages, and religious events. They have also been adapted for television and for public education campaigns.

At the heart of all performances is the *dbalang*, the leading artist, puppeteer, and gamelan orchestra leader. With immense energy, drama, humour, and creativity, the *dbalang* is responsible for manipulating the puppets; for interpreting their personalities and gestures; for speaking in their particular voices and dialects; for narrating the story, and for conducting the gamelan orchestra—gongs, xylophones, drums, bowls, vocals, strings.

When the play is about to begin, the *dbalang* places one of his *kayon* or *gunungan*—a large leaf-shaped shadow puppet-form representing a tree of life or sacred mountain—in the centre of the screen to separate the opposing groups and to announce that the cosmic order is in balance. Partway through the play, chaos descends when the four clown characters—Semar and his sons, Gareng, Bagong, and Petruk—make an entry. They enliven and delight the audience with their crude and comic behaviour, jokes, and songs.

Wayang shadow puppetry was inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.



Top: L-R: Gareng, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), before 1993, (1568/3) and Semar, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), 1990, (1b441), Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, maker: Sagjo. Photos: Jessica Bushey

Centre: *Wayang kulit* shadow play, *dbalang* (puppeteer) manipulating two clowns, Gareng and Semar. Yogyakarta, Java, 1989. Photo: Dominique Major, MOA Archives.

Bottom: Gamelan orchestra musicians of the royal court, Sultan's Palace (Kraton), Yogyakarta, Java, 1989. Photo: Dominique Major, MOA Archives.



To maintain my energy during an all night performance as a dhalang, I need to prepare with physical, spiritual, and technical exercises so I can concentrate fully, speak fluently, and manipulate the puppets in the right way. Equally or more importantly, I need to cooperate with others who contribute to the production, such as musicians, crews, and sponsors. This collaborative multi-tasking in wayang puppetry is part of the spirit of gotong royong or a Javanese way of doing, giving, and sharing.

**Sutrisno Hartana, *dhalang*, master puppeteer
and gamelan orchestra conductor**

SUTRISNO HARTANA

The set of Javanese *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets) used to illustrate the Abduction of Sita scene from the Ramayana in the exhibition was previously owned and used by the celebrated *dhalang*, gamelan orchestra leader, and composer, Dr. Sutrisno Hartana.

Sutrisno Hartana also known as *dhalang Mas Lurah Lebda Swara*, became captivated by *wayang kulit* as a young boy growing up on Java. At eight years old, he would sneak out to watch the mesmerising shadow plays, full of energetic battles and comic skits, under the magic of the night sky. He recalls, “I was not the only one who stayed up too late watching the shadow puppets in my village and the surrounding areas ... many of my friends, relatives, and people from other villages also stayed very late, and even stayed all night long at *wayang* performances.”

Sutrisno Hartana performing with *wayang kulit* shadow puppet representing the toothy ogre Wil Kathaksini, who works for the 10-headed demon king, Rahwana. School Puppetry Festival, MOA, Vancouver, Canada, 2019. Photo: Sarah Race.



From 1982 to 1986, as a teenager, Sutrisno studied *karawitan* (gamelan music and the performing arts) at the Conservatory of Javanese Traditional Performing Arts in Yogyakarta, Java. The Indonesian government established this conservatory and a number of others in the early 1950s following Independence to safeguard and foster the development of the classical Javanese arts. Before this state-sponsored school system, the knowledge and skills of puppetry and gamelan were passed down by the *dbalang* to family members and in some cases students. In addition to his conservatory training, to deepen his skill and knowledge of *wayang* philosophy and traditional Javanese culture, Sutrisno studied with a number of experienced *dbalangs*. He recalls,

In my own experience, when I was studying wayang with a dbalang at his house, he did not ask me for money or anything else in exchange for his time and expertise. He generously introduced me to his family, his neighbours, and his other students. Sometimes he asked me to stay for dinner with his family. In return, before or after the practice, I helped him set up the puppets and instruments and also helped with the housework, such as cleaning dishes or sweeping the yard. This method of apprenticeship may be used as an example of the concept of 'gotong royong' commonly practiced in Java (similar to 'ngayah' in the Balinese tradition), which is based on an ethic of co-operation whereby individuals and cultural groups form communities in which they share not only their day-to-day physical realities, but also mental, spiritual, and emotional realities.

Sutrisno continued his studies in *wayang* puppetry and gamelan music and was awarded a BA (Indonesian Institute of Arts in Yogyakarta, Java), an MA (ethnomusicology, UBC), and a PhD (Arts History & Visual Studies, University of Victoria, Canada). In 2004, the ruler of the Princely State of Pakualaman, Central Java, granted him the title *Mas Lurah Lebda Swara*, making him a court musician of the royal palace. Currently living in Vancouver, he continues to perform, teach, and practice with students, relatives, and friends.



Clockwise: Prince Rama, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), 2008, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, maker: Sagio, (3340/1). Sita, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), 2008, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, maker: Sagio, (3340/2). Rahwana, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), 2007, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, maker: Kasut, (3340/4). *Kayon* or *gunungan* (tree of life or sacred mountain), *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), 2008, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, maker: Sugeng, (3340/5). Photos: Alina Ilyasova.

Wayang itself means shadow or a portrait of a person, or another acceptable definition would be a picture of a person's life. Therefore, all variety of characters like the good, the bad, the beautiful, and the ugly exist in wayang . . . When you look at the shadow, the wayang outlines, its appearance, if you want to 'see' the character of the wayang kulit, it can be seen from the colour. If a wayang is of good character, they will be black, golden, or white. Sometimes there are wayang with red faces. If the face is red it shows someone who becomes angered easily. Even if the puppet is a giant, if the face is golden, it means that the giant is good.

Sagio, master shadow puppet maker

SAGIO

YOGYAKARTA, JAVA, INDONESIA

Sagio is a master *wayang kulit* shadow puppet maker of the kraton, the Sultan's palace in Yogyakarta, Java, who has been teaching art at the Akademi Teknologi Kulit Yogyakarta (Academy of Leather Technology) since 1987. In MOA's collection there are 54 objects attributed to Sagio: 15 exquisite puppets of Yogyanese court style; an ornate Ramayana headdress; 31 leather-cutting tools, and a set of six items showing the different stages of making a *wayang kulit* shadow puppet. This includes the paper pattern and the cut-out buffalo hide in sequence, documenting the figure's elaboration through decorative incisions, paint, and gold-leaf application.



Sagio drawing a *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, 2013.
Photo: Davide Dominici, Mudfish Portraits.

The classical court style of *wayang kulit* are identifiable by their design: the stylized form and features of the characters, the intricacy of the incised patterns, and the rich yet restrained colour palette. In an engaging documentary short, *Sagio, Wayang Kulit Designer, Indonesia* (2013), directed by Davide Dominici, Sagio is profiled in his studio in Yogyakarta. He explains that he became captivated by shadow puppets as a young boy: “When I was little I used to craft *wayang* out of cassava leaves while looking after the grazing goats . . . and that inspired me.” With tangible delight, a sixty-two-year-old Sagio reveals that of the hundreds of classical *wayang kulit* characters he has learned to make, he has one particular favourite from his childhood:

The first thing I saw on stage was Hanoman. Hanoman stands on the right side of the stage, the good side. If the Hanoman puppet was made of the best quality, I'd watch until Hanoman goes out of the scene. But if the Hanoman wayang had been crafted poorly, I'd go home immediately. Why was I fond of Hanoman? . . . Hanoman is a white monkey, the general of the monkey army who helps Prince Rama defeat the demon king Rabwana. Hanoman never fails in his task, that's his spirit. He is humble. That's Hanoman . . . I'm able to craft any wayang kulit character but the one that is engraved in my heart is Hanoman.

Sagio's recollections speak to the power of puppets and puppetry to enchant the beholder and their ability to convey moral lessons in the stories they tell.



Hanoman, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet), before 1989, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, maker: Sagio, (1374/24). Photo: Jessica Bushey.

KARAGÖZ & HACİVAT

I try to create the characters for my plays together with children, because children, after all, should like them . . . The Karagöz Theatre depends on its audience. A master who can't delight one isn't a true master.

Ercan Aksakal, master shadow puppet maker and puppeteer



ERCAN AKSAKAL

BURSA, TURKEY

When *Shadows, Strings & Other Things* opened in May 2019, the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa, Turkey, with the assistance of Anil Bora Inan, the Consul General of the Republic of Turkey in Vancouver, gifted a set of ten contemporary shadow puppets to MOA. These were made by Ercan Aksakal, a master shadow puppet maker and puppeteer who works at the Bursa Karagöz Museum.

The puppets are from the Turkish shadow play known as Karagöz & Hacivat that dates back at least to the Ottoman Empire (c.1299–1923) and follows the escapades of the two main characters from whom it takes its name.

These friends are opposites in many ways: Karagöz (Black Eye) is illiterate and coarse, but well-intentioned and very funny; Hacivat is pretentious and conceited, well-spoken, and amusing. The plays are full of wit and satire and social and ethnic stereotypes, as well as supernatural characters such as jinns, magicians, witches, and dragons.

Ercan Aksakal recalls that he became fascinated with Karagöz and Hacivat as a boy. He grew up in a village on the Black Sea coast where there were no live performances. However, he became acquainted with Karagöz and Hacivat and their antics and adventures via the airwaves: “We had a transistor radio that my aunt sent us from Germany. My father always got angry when the batteries were dead after I’d secretly listened to the plays . . . Karagöz and Hacivat have been a part of my life ever since.”

Karagöz shadow puppetry was inscribed on UNESCO’s List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.

Karagöz & Hacivat shadow puppets, 2018, Bursa, Turkey, maker: Ercan Aksakal.

L-R: Yahudi (Jew, 3364/7), Laz (a man from the Black Sea region, 3364/6), Acem (a man from Persia/Iran, 3364/5), Çelebi (3364/8), Karagöz (3364/1), Hacivat (3364/2), Zenne (3364/3), and a house (3364/10-11). Photo: Alina Ilyasova.

THOLU BOMMALATA



ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

In India, shadow puppetry is an ancient art: it is over 2000 years old. With the proliferation of modern forms of entertainment, like Hindi films, this ancient form of storytelling has drastically declined and, in some regions, disappeared. Yet in some places it survives. One striking example—the largest of all—is *tholu bommalata*, which translates as ‘the dance of leather puppets,’ found in Andhra Pradesh. Made of translucent hide and coloured with dyes, these puppets cast dramatic shadows on a backlit screen. During night-long festivities, with other entertainment, music, and food, *tholu bommalata* bring to life episodes from Hindu epics (the Mahabharata, the Ramayana) and the Puranas, and convey local stories and news. The performance usually opens with an invocation to Ganesha, the Hindu god of beginnings and remover of obstacles, and to Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning, music, and art.



Top: *Tholu bommalata* performance, Hyderabad, India, 2013. Photo: R Ramana Reddy Battula.

Bottom: Sugriva, Monkey King, *tholu bommalata* (shadow puppet), late 19th/early 20th century, Andhra Pradesh, India, maker: unrecorded, (Ef227). Photo: Kyla Bailey.



STRINGS

String puppets or marionettes are in many ways the most complex of puppet forms. Strings, wires, or lines are attached to their articulated body parts: heads, arms and legs; sometimes joints—knees, elbows, feet, and hands—as well as eyelids, mouths, and chins. String puppets are manipulated from above: the strings are usually threaded, looped, and knotted through a handheld device. The more strings, the more nuanced and refined the puppets' movements are. Their faces can express different emotions, from happiness to surprise, from anger to sorrow. Likewise, their bodies can move, rotate, gesture, and dance in a sophisticated and dramatic manner. The realism of the string puppet enables viewers to suspend their disbelief and identify with these storytelling characters who inhabit parallel worlds.





Interior view, studio of puppet maker, Jorge Cerqueira, Sintra, Portugal, 2019. Photo: Jorge Cerqueira.

MARIONETAS



JORGE CERQUEIRA

SINTRA, PORTUGAL

Often what happens with puppets is when they are built for theatre, there are descriptive notes that characterize the figure, for example, by age: they can be young, they can be old; they can be fat, thin, bad, good, and they are designed just so. The puppets that I build have these characteristics too, but afterwards I try to give them an expressiveness, a spirit that goes a little beyond that . . . they embody a particular epoch, they embody a universe.

Jorge Cerqueira, master puppet maker

Jorge Cerqueira is an internationally renowned puppet maker who lives in Sintra near Lisbon, Portugal. He is also a school teacher who teaches visual art and technology in the same area. With a degree in fine arts, he began making puppets in the late 1980s as a means to engage his students, to show the ways in which different materials and techniques can be fashioned and articulated into marvellous human forms. From these organic beginnings, Jorge Cerqueira's reputation grew and he started to receive commissions from individuals, galleries, and museums. His exquisite puppets, which are generally at least one-metre tall, are instantly recognisable on account of their poetic, baroque aesthetic, their elegant and elongated limbs, and their meticulously detailed and bespoke features and costumes.

Left: Jorge Cerqueira with *marioneta* (string puppet) Jupiter, Sintra, Portugal. 2015. Photo: Eduardo Tomé.

Right: Venus, Roman goddess of love, beauty, fertility, and desire, *marioneta* (string puppet), 2015, Sintra, Portugal, maker: Jorge Cerqueira, (3105/2). Photo: Alina Ilyasova.



Clockwise: Jupiter, Roman god of sky and thunder, king of the gods, *marioneta* (string puppet), 2015, Sintra, Portugal, maker: Jorge Cerqueira, (3105/1). Photo: Alina Ilyasova.

Interior view, studio of puppet maker, Jorge Cerqueira, Sintra, Portugal, 2019. Photo: Jorge Cerqueira. *Marionetas* (String puppets) 2012, Sintra, Portugal, maker: Jorge Cerqueira.

L-R: Vasco da Gama (c.1460-1524), Portuguese explorer (2956/295); O Infante Don Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator, 1394-1460), King of Portugal (2956/296); Monsayeed (2956/299). Photo: Kyla Bailey.



Although Cerqueira's early puppets focused on the theme of witches, nowadays his characters are diverse, reflecting each commission. In conversation, pressed to describe their distinctive qualities, Cerqueira explains that the spirit and expressiveness of his characters emerge as the creative process unfolds: from sketching faces to sourcing and working with diverse materials—fabrics, leather, wire, wood, wood pulp, paper pulp, styrofoam, sponge, recycled materials—and twisting, modelling, stitching, inserting, gluing, and feeling, so the individual characters take form.

Commenting on the ten *marionetas* he made for MOA, Cerqueira reveals,

The ones that give me the most joy to make are those that go further away from reality, from our world, from our universe—those that are more mythological: Adamastor, Bacchus, Triton, and Neptune. Why? Because they are pieces that give a great freedom to those who draw them or to those who construct them. They are figures created by the human mind. They are concentrations of the imagination. Right from the start they are much more challenging, both in terms of design and construction. Because at the level of conception, the artist has to imagine these figures that never existed . . . Later on, during the construction process, these imaginary characters allow far more play than the human figures such as Vasco da Gama, the Sultan of Malindi, Monsayeed, Prince Henry the Navigator, who are historical figures that existed in reality.

OPERA DEI PUPPI

Opera dei Pupi is an internationally recognized form of marionette theatre from Sicily, Italy. Originating in the early 1800s, *Opera dei Pupi* is based on medieval romances and epic stories of King Carlo Magno (Charlemagne, 742-814 CE) and his Christian knights, who defended Europe against pagan and Islamic forces. The plays involve pomp and ceremony, unrequited love, violent battles, and the death of puppets, as glinting swords clash, shining armour rings, bodies split, and heads tumble.

Opera dei Pupi was inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.



Opera dei Pupi, paladins from the court of King Carlo Magno, c.2004. Photo: Fratelli Napoli.

THE NAPOLI FAMILY

CATANIA, SICILY, ITALY

Pupo (baby), fruit of the knowledge of the mind and of the hand, with great love I give life to you as a child. When you are on stage, you reciprocate by giving me emotions that go straight to the heart.

Davide Napoli, fourth-generation puppeteer of the Catania *Opera dei Pupi* tradition

The eight puppets dramatically poised on the *Opera dei Pupi* stage, many clad in shining armour, stand one metre tall from head to foot, with metal rod and wire mechanisms extending atop. They were made in the 1990s by the famous Napoli family, fourth-generation *pupari* (puppet makers) and puppeteers. Their workshop and small museum are housed in an ancient building, Casa Museo dei Fratelli Napoli, nestled in the historic centre of Catania, a city on the east coast of Sicily. Their company, La Marionettistica Fratelli Napoli, was established in 1921 by Gaetano Napoli and his sons Pippo, Rosario, and Natale. Their knowledge and skills have been passed down through the family line.

The making of each *pupi* (puppet) covers a range of creative skills including wood carving, painting, metalworking, and tailoring. The knowledge of metalworking—used to create the iron swords and the elaborate armour in brass, copper, and nickel silver (argentone) of the puppet-knights—is a closely guarded family secret. More recently, the metalworking techniques of the Fratelli Napoli have been further elaborated by Fiorenzo Napoli—the current artistic director, narrator, and master builder—who has passed on this knowledge to his son Davide, the eldest of the fourth-generation Napoli puppet makers and puppeteers.



The Napolis also have a long-standing tradition of designing and painting the dramatic canvas backdrops and curtains used on stage, as well as the *cartelli*, the painted signs and posters, with hand-lettering and dramatic scenes, put up to advertise their shows. Currently, Giuseppe Napoli specializes in this aspect of creative production, whereas Agnese Torrisi Napoli is largely responsible for making the *pupis'* costumes using velvet and fine fabrics. Agnese and Giuseppe, as well as Fiorenzo and Davide and other family members—including Dario, Marco, Alessandro, and Gaetano—are actively involved in the company's *Opera dei Pupi* performances, working as *parraturi* (puppet voice-overs), *manianti* (puppeteer-manipulators), stage managers, and stage assistants.

Top left: The Napoli family performing a scene from *Orlando Furioso*, L-R: Agnese Torrisi Napoli, Marco, Dario, Davide and Giuseppe Napoli, and Simone Vasta, Catania, Sicily, c.2010. Photo: Fratelli Napoli.

Right: Fiorenzo Napoli making *Opera dei Pupi* armour, Catania, Sicily, c.2010. Photo: Fratelli Napoli.

Bottom left: Behind the scenes: Davide Napoli arranging the *Opera dei Pupi* puppets for the next outdoor performance, Villa Comunale di Adrano, Catania, Sicily, 2004. Photo: Fratelli Napoli.

RUKADA



Rukada (string puppets), mid-20th century, Galle, Sri Lanka, makers: unrecorded.

L-R: Jester (Eh147); Jester (Eh 149); Tamil dancer (Eh164); Politician (Eh144); King (Eh142). Photo: Alina Ilyasova

GALLE, SRI LANKA

Lifelike in appearance, the striking *rukada* (string puppets) of Sri Lanka perform stories about ritual practices and everyday life. Ripe with fun and humour, the characters, in dress, gesture, and action, express social hierarchies and gender roles: the king and the prince; the politician and the village headman; the policeman and the servant boy; and a family of farmers (father, mother, daughter, and son). The rich array of character archetypes also includes the *sanni* (disease) demon dancer and an emaciated beggar with elephantiasis. While there is no scripted play—the puppeteers improvise in their storytelling—there are some instantly identifiable stock characters who perform certain roles. The two jesters, in colourful costumes, one with a feather duster in hand, comically announce the beginning and the end of the show. Whereas the Tamil dancer—with her graceful gestures and her exotic dress of silver jewels and shimmering veils—performs the opening act.

YOKE THÉ

YANGON, MYANMAR (BURMA)

There are 28 stock characters in *yoke thé*, the string puppet or marionette theatre of Myanmar (Burma). Often richly embellished, attired, and stringed, they consist of human characters, supernatural beings, familiar animals, and fantastic creatures.

This genre of puppetry originated in 1780, during the reign of King Singu Min, under the guidance of U Thaw, his minister for the performing arts. With royal patronage, this entertaining artform flourished during the 19th century. A repertoire of plays and the stock characters were established, along with musical scores for orchestra and voice.

Yoke thé plays begin with the creation of the world. Specific characters—the White Horse (*myin*), the two Ogres (*belus*), the mythological bird (Garuda), the monkey, the snake (Naga), and the magician Zawgyi—dance, sing, and battle in a most dramatic way. Their movement is enhanced by the clashing and beating of gongs, cymbals, and drums. Thus, the world is made. The second part of the play consists of episodes from the *Jataka Tales* (a Buddhist text) or from local folklore. It always begins inside the palace with four ministers (*wun*), who appear in order of seniority, swinging their arms in a pompous manner. They are followed by a page boy, who prepares the stage for the grand arrival of the King, the Prince, and the Princess, and then two clowns. After this regal interlude, the play begins.



Top: *Taw Belu* (Jungle Ogre), *yoke thé* (string puppet), late 20th century, Yangon, Myanmar (Burma), maker: unrecorded, (3307/2).

Bottom: *Myin* (White Horse), *yoke thé* (string puppet), late 20th century, Yangon, Myanmar (Burma), maker: unrecorded, (3307/1).

Photos: Alina Ilyasova.



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Hand puppets come in different shapes and guises, but they all rely on direct manipulation by the human hand—no strings, no wires, no rods, no sticks or handles predominate. Some hand puppets are elaborate, limbed and winged characters who perform in ceremonial and theatrical contexts. But the majority of hand puppets, found throughout the world, assume a simpler shape and form. These hand or glove puppets are relatively small, totally portable, worn on the hand and carried in a case. They may belong to itinerant puppeteers, who perform in public spaces: on streets, in fields, at festivals and fairs, for religious events and seasonal shows. A booth is erected to conceal the puppeteer who, using two hands, skillfully manipulates the lightweight puppets. On small stages, these recognizable characters, heroes and rogues, delight crowds with their energetic antics and subversive stories, laced with intrigue and satire, love and scandal, fighting and struggle, humour and fun.



PUNCH & JUDY

DEVON, UNITED KINGDOM

Punch & Judy is a well-known puppetry tradition in England, UK. The stripy booths for the puppet show, adorned with pennant flags and show-time clocks, are erected in the summertime on beaches, at county fairs, and at other festive gatherings. The performance is a series of skits full of humour, violent episodes, political satire, and puns, with audience participation readily encouraged. At the centre of all the action is Mr Punch, his long-suffering wife Judy, their baby, and a host of set characters: the Policeman, the Devil, the Ghost, the Doctor, the Crocodile, Joey the Clown, Toby the Dog, and more. In the exhibition, Punch—with his distinctive hooked nose and pointy chin, red cheeks, and manic grin—hits, with his notorious slapstick, the crocodile, who has stolen the sausages from the prize sausage-making machine.

The first recorded Punch & Judy show in England took place in London in 1662. But the tradition dates back to 16th-century Italian *commedia dell'arte* and the unruly character, Punchinello. One of the unique characteristics of Mr Punch is his high-pitched, squawking voice; he screeches his punchline, again and again—“that’s the way to do it!”—as he gleefully abuses his fellow puppets. His disturbing voice is achieved by the puppeteer or ‘professor’, as they are known in Punch & Judy culture, using a metal device, held in the mouth, called a swazzle or a swatchel.



Alison and Brian Davey and their puppets and Punch & Judy booth on the beach at Lyme Regis, Dorset, UK. c.2012. Photo: The Puppetree Company.

BRIAN AND ALISON DAVEY

AXMINSTER, DEVON, UNITED KINGDOM

When the puppet is completed, it's got to feel right on the hand, it's got to have good balance, it's got to 'work'; it's got to be able to pick things up, to do what you want it to do without thinking . . . it's got to do it naturally. I talk about the puppet taking over, if the puppet's been made properly . . . you can forget how to do this particular thing, that particular thing, 'cos the puppet does it for itself . . . You could have the most beautiful looking puppets in the world, but if they're made so it's difficult to operate them, then your show will show that, it will be slow and laboured, it won't have the life and vitality it should have.

Brian Davey, master puppet maker and puppeteer

The set of ten Punch & Judy puppets in the exhibition was commissioned by MOA and made by Brian and Alison Davey. Brian is a Punch & Judy puppeteer or ‘professor’, and Alison his wife acts as the ‘bottler’ during their Punch and Judy shows. The bottler is the traditional name for the person who stands in front of the stripy booth, encouraging audience participation and collecting money donations.

HAND PUPPETS | PUNCH & JUDY

The Daveys have been performing Punch & Judy shows and making puppets, including marionettes and rod puppets, for over forty years. They met as students at art college in London, and their artistic knowledge and skills are manifest in the marvellous puppet characters they create for their shows. They also design and make for other puppeteers, including other Punch & Judy professors, private collectors, and museums. Their Punch & Judy puppets can be found in, for example, the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Horniman Museum, both in London, UK.

In their large bright workshop in Devon, which also functions as a rehearsal space, the Daveys create their colourful Punch & Judy characters. Working from full-size drawings, Brian Davey, who spent his early career working as a graphic designer, first draws a layout grid and outlines the contours of the puppet's head on a block of pine or preferably lime wood. He then carves it out



using a combination of electric band and hand saws. For Mr Punch and the other puppets that have hooked noses and pointy chins, he carves these features separately from oak and then attaches them to the pine or lime-wood head with a mortise-and-tenon joint. After sanding the puppet's head by hand to a smooth and silky finish, Brian paints it with a primer and several coats of acrylic gesso before airbrushing on the pinkish flesh colour and adding red highlights to the nose, cheeks, and chin. For other features such as the brows, eyes, and mouth he uses a paintbrush and layers of acrylic paint. The painted features are brilliantly executed, with fastidious care taken to complete subtle details such as the interior of the crocodile's mouth. Take the roof of the mouth, for example: it is more than just a plain pink concave form; its pinkness is contoured, shaded, and highlighted to form grid-like ridges, perfectly echoing the hard palate's visual structure.

The costumes and textile accessories and props, like the string of sausages, are made by Alison. The quality of the materials, the double-linings, the attention to detail and finishing, including the perfect stitching, hemming, and trimmings clearly indicate the care and passion that she pours into their puppet creations, imbuing each one with a unique character and expression.



Top: Brian Davey painting the Devil (hand puppet) in his studio, Axminster, Devon, UK, 2019. Photo: The Puppetree Company.

Centre: The different stages of carving Mr Punch's head by master puppet maker Brian Davey, Axminster, Devon, UK, 2019. Photo: The Puppetree Company.

Right: Mr Punch (hand puppet), 2019, Axminster, Devon, England, UK, makers: Alison and Brian Davey, (3350/1). Photo: Alina Ilyasova.

布袋戲 | BUDAIXI



TAIWAN

The *budaixi* hand puppets of Taiwan are dressed in brightly coloured, richly embroidered robes, like those used in Cantonese opera. The term *budaixi* translates as ‘cloth-bag theatre’ in reference to the puppets’ square, sack-shaped costumes. Their heads and sometimes hands, legs, and feet are made of camphor wood. *Budaixi* puppets perform on an ornately gilded wooden stage. The well-known characters—officials, warriors, women, and Daoist figures with magical powers—enact scenes from historical narratives, which include dramatic displays of martial arts. With twirling sticks, high kicks, and bodily twists and turns, the puppets—both heroes and villains—fight to the bitter end.

A form of opera, *budaixi* performances are divided into two parts. In part one, the puppeteer displays the art of manipulation and expression that brings the inanimate body to life. In part two, the play is performed, along with storytelling, singing, and orchestral music of stringed instruments, cymbals, and gongs.

TÍTERES DE GUANTE

TEZIUTLAN, PUEBLA, MEXICO

With oversized hands, these *títeres de guante* (hand puppets) are from an isolated mountainous region in northern Puebla. They come in pairs: a man and a woman said to represent Joseph (José) and Mary (María). They perform during the dance of the *Tejoneros* or *buehues* that tells of the origins of maize. During the masked dance, the *carpintero* (woodpecker puppet)—controlled by pulleys and rope—taps its way down a wooden pole. The *títeres de guante* (hand puppets) appear on top of a stretched curtain or screen: CLAP, CLAP, clapping noisily. Their role is to contribute to the atmosphere and festivities. When not in use, the puppets are stored in the wooden carrying case painted with folk-art scenes of entertainment and everyday encounters.

Top: Puppeteer Lai Yongting performing with *budaixi* (hand puppets), Taipei, Taiwan, 2010. Photo: Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum.

Bottom: *Títeres de guante* (hand puppets), 20th century, Teziutlan, Puebla, Mexico, makers: unrecorded, L-R: Joseph (3341/9), Mary (3341/8), carrying case (3341/7); Mary (3341/5); Joseph (3341/6); carrying case (3341/4); Mary (3341/2), Joseph (3341/3), carrying case (3341/1)



DŁUGWE'

BEAU DICK

GWA'YI, KINGCOME INLET, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

In Kwak'wala, the Indigenous language of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations of British Columbia, the ingenious articulated characters—referred to as puppets—are *dlugwe'* treasures, as are the theatrical dances in which they appear. The Kwakwaka'wakw have a fascinating history of puppetry, related to their well-known practice of potlatching and hosting ceremonial feasts. Their winter potlatches are especially known for spectacular performances, suffused with cultural teachings and supernatural content such as the coming of Winalagalis, the warrior. Dances and songs associated with Winalagalis include the *tuxw'id*, which is performed by women who have the power and rights to make the *dlugwe'* treasures (puppets) come to life.



dlugwe' (treasure), (hand puppet), 1981, Gwa'yi, Kingcome Inlet, British Columbia, Canada, maker: Beau Dick (Dzawada'enuxw Kwakwaka'wakw), (Nb3.1404). Photo: Sarah Race.

RAVEN'S SON

BY LINNEA DICK

Full of lessons was he
 Who fell from the sky
 From the back of Raven's wing
 Bringing with him supernatural gifts
 That he hid in his bag full of tricks,
 Carrying light in his twinkling eyes,
 And cloaked in a clever disguise.
 He was not human,
 But a man of great stature,
 A clever magic maker,
 shape-shifter,
 storyteller,
 social justice warrior,
 Healing the world of its terrors—
 An artist making his own monsters
 To give back to his people.
 He lived in a sacred house
 Built of love
 and the word
 of the ancestors...
 And so the story goes on of this great man: a legend.
 And so it will be told, time and time again
 to us and our children's children
 As his spirit lives on with
 No foreseeable end

Raven's Son is an elegy, a heart-moving poem written by Linnea Dick following the death of her brilliant father, Beau Dick (1955-2017), Walas Gwa'yam, a Kwakwaka'wakw chief who left this world too soon. *Raven's Son* captures Beau Dick's artistic soul that is embodied in the *dlugwe'* treasures he created and performed, including this striking puppet made in 1981 and performed in a potlatch the following year.



Water puppets drying in the sun after a performance,
Saigon Water Puppet Theatre, Ho Chi Minh City, 2019.
Photo: Jason Schoonover and Susan Hattori.



The rod puppet is operated from below, rather than from above like its stringed counterpart. The rod puppet's head is generally attached to a central wooden or metal rod, which the puppeteer holds at the base or rests in a block. The central rod is often cleverly concealed by the puppet's clothing and torso. Smaller rods may be attached to the puppet's arms to allow a wider range of movement and gestures, from the sharp and jerky to the elegant and refined. Vietnamese water puppets, like those displayed on the stage in the exhibition, are a unique type of rod puppetry. Their central rods do not extend vertically, out of the puppet's body, to be held in the puppeteer's hand. Rather, the central rod is attached to a mechanism at the base of the puppet and the rod extends horizontally, underneath the water, to the puppeteer, who is hidden from sight behind the ornately decorated screen.

RODS

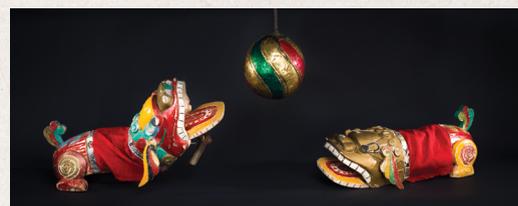
MÚA RỐI NƯỚC



VIETNAM

Water puppets (*múa rối nước*) are used in a unique form of rod puppetry found only in Vietnam, a country known for its lush green landscape fed by waterways and lakes. For this sparkling and boisterous spectacle, the extraordinary stage is an enclosed pool of water, smoke and firecrackers burst over its rippling surface, and a lively band of musicians play in time to the actions of the puppets. Layering the sound of drums, cymbals, wooden bells, gongs, and bamboo flutes are the voices and singing of the puppeteers, who are concealed behind the screen.

In Vietnamese water puppetry, there is no singular narrative, but rather a series of short sequences or skits. The skits, full of humour and satire, depict the folklore and culture, everyday lives, and comic misadventures of rural people, who work on the river and in the rice-paddy fields. There are also sequences that depict mythological characters, creatures, and tales, such as *The Dance of the Princesses and Fairies* and *The Fabulous Unicorns (Ky Lan) Playing with a Ball*.



Top clockwise: *The Dance of the Princesses and Fairies* *múa rối nước* (water puppet) performance, Hanoi, Vietnam, c. 2017. Photo: Kmiecinski.

Múa rối nước (water puppet) performance, Dao Thuc village, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2015. Photo: VSI.

Puppeteers hidden behind the screen, *múa rối nước* (water puppet) performance, Dao Thuc village, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2015. Photo: VSI.

Bottom: Water puppets, 1992, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, maker: unrecorded. L-R: Unicorn (3127/7); Ball (3127/9); Unicorn, (3127/10). Photo: Alina Ilyasova.

STOP MOTION



Stop motion animation is a time-intensive yet magical form of puppetry that dates back to the late 19th-century and the early days of film. It involves the creation of cut-out or three-dimensional puppets, whose bodies are manipulated by the hands of the puppeteer, in increments, and filmed. Nowadays, the faces and bodies of the three-dimensional puppets are frequently made of silicone with flexible joints. With a storyboard as reference, the puppeteer begins by positioning the puppets in a set and exposing them to one frame of film. The puppeteer then moves the puppets very slightly and exposes them to a second frame. This staged process continues, with tens of thousands of incremental movements, scenery moves, and filmed frames, until the story ends. Finally, when the frames are played in sequence, the illusion of movement is created and the puppets come to life.





The darkroom scene, *Four Faces of the Moon* (2016) stop motion animation, 2016.
Photo: Amanda Strong/Spotted Fawn Productions.



AMANDA STRONG/ SPOTTED FAWN PRODUCTIONS

VANCOUVER, CANADA

In the exhibition, there are two stop motion animations screening: *Four Faces of the Moon* (2016) and *Biidaaban* (2018), both by the award-winning Indigenous artist, writer, and film director, Amanda Strong.

Four Faces of the Moon is projected on 6.2-metre-wide wall of a dark yet dramatically illuminated and enclosed stage setting. This multimedia installation includes Skull Mountain, a set used in the animation, consisting of a haunting pile of handcrafted bison skulls on a sea of prairie grass. On the edge of this tragic scene stands a solitary figure, the puppet of a young Indigenous woman, a photographer, who stares in contemplation and sorrow. This figure represents Amanda Strong. The narrative is based on her personal story, told in four chapters, with the moon—an important seasonal guide and symbol of change in Cree and Anishnaabe culture—marking the passage from one chapter to the next.

The animation follows the journey of the photographer as she moves through time and space, encountering her family's history and connecting to her Métis, Nakota, Cree, and Anishnaabe culture and ancestors. We witness dark episodes of settler-colonial expansion, the incursion of the railroads, the slaughter of the bison, the impact of land policies, Indigenous dispossession, and Indian residential schools with their violent drive to break family ties and eradicate Indigenous language and culture. The film contains no spoken English: it relies on image, sound, Indigenous voices, and subtitles to tell this captivating and powerful story of Indigenous resistance and creativity, of the reclamation of language, and of the looping and interweaving of the past in the present.

Left: Director Amanda Strong photographing the Skull Mountain, *Four Faces of the Moon* (2016) stop motion animation, 2016. Photo: Spotted Fawn Productions.

Right: Detail, Skull Mountain with puppet representing Amanda Strong, Stop Motion stage, *Shadows, Strings & Other Things: The Enchanting Theatre of Puppets*, MOA, Vancouver, 2019. Photo: Sarah Race.

I feel, as Indigenous women, we can challenge the structures of process and storytelling to see the world in unique, cyclical perspectives.

Amanda Strong, stop motion film maker

The cyclical elements in *Four Faces of the Moon* offer multiple perspectives on the relations and memories that are carried and conveyed across generations through storytelling. We experience this intertwining of storylines in the encounters at different times and places between the photographer and her grandmother, Olivine Bousquet. We first glimpse the grandmother as a girl depicted in a photograph being developed in the darkroom. We also see her in puppet form as a Catholic school pupil in uniform declaring her name is not a sin, and as a young girl nestled with her father, Napoleon Bousquet, at the fireside, as he confronts the injustice of the colonial government's appropriation of land. We later observe Olivine Bousquet as an older woman holding hands with the photographer as they contemplate a herd of bison, alive and strong, moving out across the prairie. These moments are replete with emotion and metaphor. Perhaps it is no surprise to learn that Amanda Strong's entry into photography—and by extension the storied world of stop motion—directly connects back to her grandparents and is propelled forward by her desire to tell a larger, more complex story of the past, from an Indigenous perspective of knowing and feeling:

One day, my grandfather passed away and I found all of his old cameras and photos of my grandmother. I randomly switched paths for college and decided I was going to go into photography. I started with self-portraiture to express myself and find out who I was, but then I realized I didn't want to be a photographer and got my degree in illustration. It was through these programs that I started experimenting with film. I learned that making a film is about having a really big vision where you get to utilize all these different skill sets. There was still that idea of an image but now I could bring it into motion, adding sound to tell a bigger story. My work started out as very experimental and personal, but has been evolving ever since.

To end, it is appropriate to return to the very beginning of the stop motion animation, *Four Faces of the Moon*, and the powerful words of Amanda Strong that appear on the screen:

*I am Gidagakoons (Spotted Fawn).
This is for my grandmother Olivine Bousquet.
It is also for those ancestors who walked before me,
People who carried language and indigenous ceremony,
People who held the buffalo in a place of reverence and relied on them for sustenance
Before they were systematically destroyed and removed from the land.*

CITATIONS

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carpinteros (woodpecker puppets), 20th century, Teziutlan, Puebla, Mexico, makers: unrecorded (top to bottom: 3341/10; 3341/11; 3341/12). Photo: Alina Ilyasova.

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*Storytellers ought not be too tame.
They ought to be wild creatures. . .
They are best in disguise. If they lose
all their wildness, they cannot
give us the truest joys.*

Ben Okri