

Beginner's Luck

May 8 — Jul 14, 2024 | TAO ART, Taipei City, Taiwan

In May 2024, TAO ART will present Oliver Beer's inaugural solo exhibition in Taiwan, titled *Beginner's Luck*. This exhibition will feature important series that the artist has been developing, including the *Resonance* Paintings, which visualize the otherwise invisible vibrations of sound. Additionally, the exhibition will showcase the *Recomposition* series, embodying the origin and materiality of sounds, along with the acoustic installation *Household Gods* and video works. Expanding on the intrinsic relationship between form, music and imagery, Oliver Beer's creative practice immerses the audience through intense sensory experiences and emotional resonance.

The artworks in this exhibition trace back to 2019 when Oliver crafted the acoustic installation *Household Gods (Mother)*. This installation incorporates objects that either belonged to or evoke aspects of his mother's life, spanning various historical and cultural epochs, from Predynastic Egypt to 20th Century Mexico. According to the artist, "in this installation, I have placed tiny microphones inside the empty spaces of the chosen objects to amplify their resonant frequencies. The sounds we hear are pure warm tones, resonating gently and freely from within the voids." The voices emanating from these hollow forms serves as the soundtrack to this exhibition. Together, these objects from different points in geography and history harmonize to produce a specific chord, akin to the open strings of a string section in an orchestra, a symbol of beginnings often depicted in cinema and popular culture. In Oliver's own words, "For the musicians of the orchestra it is a moment of self reflection, self correction, calibration and deep listening to each other. And yet it is also a sound that pulls music into a Western classical tradition; a tradition that historically doesn't acknowledge the myriad of possible tuning systems... So for me it is both a signifier of deep listening, but also a need to open our ears to system and traditions beyond our own." The artist's commitment to embracing new possibilities and beginnings is also emphasized through the exhibition title *Beginner's Luck* and the diversity of artistic experiments in Oliver's practice.

Accompanied by the gentle harmony played by the hollow objects in the installation *Household Gods (Mother)*, the audience directly encounters the intrinsic relationship between intangible sounds and material forms through the *Resonance* Paintings. In these works, the artist applies fine pigment onto the surface of a stretched canvas, while playing composed harmonies underneath the canvas through a speaker. The speaker moves the air into geometric forms, and in turn the air moves the pigment into those forms. In this way, we can visualize sound waves in the air much like we perceive waves on the surface of a lake after a coin is thrown in. The method itself is visually captivating and emotionally engaging as the paintings exhibited were created with the same pure vessel tones resonating within the objects of *Household Gods (Mother)*.

The *Recomposition* series serves as a counterpoint to the *Resonance* Paintings, embodying the origin and materiality of sound. Oliver creates these works by pouring a thin layer of precisely pigmented resin into a mould and placing fragments of real objects within the resin. Three of the *Recompositions* works exhibited evoke major works by Picasso, others integrate historical artifacts and personal belongings that transcend the boundaries of space and time. For instance, *Flying Apsaras* draws inspiration from the famous Buddhist Dunhuang murals, incorporating lotus flowers and prayer beads alongside fragments of violins and lute strings. Through the act of freezing objects in resin, the artist renders these acoustic objects and musical instruments completely static and silent, with their past vibrations impossible. Yet, this process also transforms objects into testaments of their existence. In the artist own words, "It both destroys these things, and eternalizes them."

Educated both in musical composition and cinema, Oliver Beer was often being discussed under the concept of synaesthesia as a visual artist. Yet, his multi-disciplinary practice expands beyond the interconnectedness of different senses. From the narration of a memory of his mother, to the interplay between ephemeral sounds and material forms, Oliver's works explore the unifying potential of music that resonates across history, generations and cultures.