

## Lenora Lee Dance and FACT/SF @ CounterPULSE

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This weekend, audiences will get to see what CounterPULSE's two Artists in Residence have created after 100 hours each of conceptualizing, workshopping, and refining world premiere pieces. Lenora Lee Dance and FACT/SF present works that collectively explore the formative experiences that shape artists' identity and that become deeply rooted in the body over time.

Lee's piece, "Reflections," is what she describes as a response to what she witnessed as a Chinese American growing up in San Francisco. The work started out as an examination of her paternal grandfather's struggles with xenophobia after immigrating to San Francisco and being subjected to the detainment and interrogation that were customary at Angel Island Immigration Station in the early to mid-twentieth century. However, it gradually evolved into a textured multimedia piece that "looks at the experiences of Asian American men, from the first through the third generations, and also the artist's experience in the context of the transitions and challenges associated with acclimating to a culture that is so different," she explains.

Lee also worked with a number of community organizations, such as the Chinese Historical Society of America Museum and the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, to launch her piece. In addition, Lee collaborated with a video artist, composer, writer, and media designer, as well as Kei Lun Martial Arts & Enshin Karate, South San Francisco Dojo to incorporate Chinese lion dance and martial arts into the work.

"The process began with having artists talk about their experiences...getting glimpses into their different stories," says Lee, who describes the piece as a collage rather than a straight narrative. "At the same time, there's a sense of a journey, a process, a passage."

Part of the piece explores the history of gang violence in Chinatown in the 1970s and 1980s, but Lee was also sensitive to telling the story in a way that is empowering rather than shaming. "The artists were asked to write about a time they had endured great injustice, but also a time when they had felt great beauty...so there is a juxtaposition of relating the experiences of beauty and shame in the Asian American man."

For Lee, it was important to incorporate traditional Chinese lion dance and martial arts in ways that defied mainstream representation. "People are used to seeing martial arts as aggressive or campy, but if you're from the culture, that can be upsetting," she explains. "Each movement is so specific, and there is a confluence of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects, so I wanted to show the beauty and deeper parts of the culture and lineage."

Lee will also be presenting the work in New York and Los Angeles, and hopes to create a short dance film that will enable the project to live on even when it isn't being performed.