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The Art

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Lois Shih

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair
Professor Marco Alexander Barricelli
Professor Stephen W. Buescher
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2022

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The Thesis of Lois Shih is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

To mine: Ryan, Sara, Lester, 小的, and Ama.

To Anthony: your birth is my birth, your death is my death.

To my team: Grayson*, Jada^, Nati, Jordan, Henry, Noah Rose, and Iz'.

To my 老師: Ursula, Stephen, Eva, Marco, Richard, and Jennifer.

* *Long-term*

^ *Sprout*

' *Gennaro*

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Art

by

Lois Shih

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

It's funny because if you asked me three years ago if I would die for my art, I would've said "yes." I ABSOLUTELY would've died for my art, no questions asked. Because this was *it*, **this** was the *thing*. I signed up for the starving artist life, and was prepared to stake my life on the inevitable suffering of *said* life before the glory. In my mind, suffering was a prerequisite. I was *supposed* to suffer for the art, I was supposed to suffer in the training because art is important, because representation matters, because sharing is caring, because trauma can be beautiful, because because because because because...

Then, the pandemic happened.

And, we all suffered. Not just artists. Everyone in the world, together, suffered. And for the first time in my life, I wondered, “Is this worth it?” I wasn’t sure. Wow, talk about a mid-life crisis in my 20s. Woof.

So, I took a step back from my work. Don’t get me wrong - I was fully committed, but this time, at the end of the day, I would log off Zoom, and simultaneously and *intentionally*, I would clock out of the training.

Jokes on me, because in learning how to release the work (and I mean like, really releasing the work for real REAL), I saw, very clearly, how the training exists in my life. I can go on about how grad school taught me to breathe, to ha-hum-mah, to project, to listen, to sustain, to clown, but really – the biggest thing the training taught me is that art is there.

I don’t need to suffer nor die for my art, because it’s not going anywhere. It’s been here and it’ll still be here long when I’m gone, because the work is in drinking water, it’s in eating really good freakin’ food, it’s the smell of coffee in the morning before running to catch the shuttle, it’s peeing when you need to pee, it’s a nap on the couch in the grad offices, it’s teaching public speaking in a tent, it’s your class picture in the hallway; the work is in choosing not to do that self-tape and to go to bed, it’s dancing outside each other’s apartment windows because, well, Covid, it’s late night conversations with your roommate, it’s becoming a plant mom, it’s hugging your family after a year, it’s waiting, it’s persevering, it’s in grief, it’s in hope, it’s looking at the ocean and remembering that you... are so small.

And it’s in walking and walking and walking, straight-forward, towards your glory.