

# NEAR DWELLERS

THE TREE MUSEUM & STREET ROAD    AUGUST 2023 – SEPTEMBER 2024

## SARAH LE QUANG SANG

### NEAR DWELLERS AND THE SHARING OF BREATH

AUGUST 4 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

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#### NEAR DWELLERS AS LEGAL BEINGS

FAWN DAPHNE PLESSNER

AND SUSANNA KAMON

OCTOBER 13 – DECEMBER 30, 2023

#### NEAR DWELLERS AS CREATIVE COLLABORATORS

RUTH K. BURKE AND JULIE ANDREYEV

FEBRUARY 2 – APRIL 13, 2024

#### NEAR DWELLERS AS URBANITES

JESSE GARBE AND DOUGLAS LAFORTUNE

MAY 3 – JULY 14, 2024

#### NEAR DWELLERS FINALE & SYMPOSIUM

BY YOU, OUR COMMUNITY,

WITH YOUR NEAR DWELLERS

AUGUST 9 – SEPTEMBER 28, 2024



**SARAH LE QUANG SANG**

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Near Dwellers is an exploration of animal-human relationships in five parts, with a focus on interspecies interdependencies in the spaces and places we share.

Through the lens of artists and scholars who work intimately with animals and/or with their representation, Near Dwellers opens up new and multi-faceted ways of troubling the purported human-animal divide.





*Rural Diversity Revolution*, from the series *Áo dài*, 2022, photograph by SLQS, digital print.



*Disobey*, from the series *Find.ers.Keep.ers.*, 2022, photograph by SLQS, digital print.

Sarah Le Quang Sang (SLQS) is a Franco-Vietnamese artist living in East London in the United Kingdom. Her practice explores the politics of space by troubling who and how people (of colour) are represented within it. Her artistic intention is to make and hold space as a woman, a person of mixed heritage, a foreigner, a mother, an artist and an equestrian, and as an expression of her commitment to the politics of decolonization, contesting imperialist spatial ordering, and sexist and racist social and cultural attitudes. Her practice is multi-disciplinary, spanning performance, live art, photography, video and screen printing. She also works as a curator and cultural producer.

For *Street Road*, SLQS's film, *Walking Together*, 2023, opens our year-long inquiry on relationships between human (animals) and (other) animals.

Her film provocatively and poetically situates us in the midst of a walk with rider and horse (SLQS and Spirit of Saigon) as they move through the interstitially urban lands of Walthamstow Marshes, in London.

However, this walk is not a performance of equestrian





*Walking Together*, SLQS, 2023, HD film, 6 minutes 49 seconds, made in collaboration with video and sound artist Bilal Singh and equine partner Spirit of Saigon.

mastery over one of the most iconic animals in human culture. Instead, SLQS draws us into a meditation on the very essence of our connection to other beings.

The simple, but often missed, act of breathing together is presented as a kind of prayer, not only to the Marshes as host and provider, but also to the very possibility of her and Spirit of Saigon's ability to traverse the Earth – breathing together, listening together, moving together in unison.

Inspired by the walking meditations of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist Thích Nhất Hạnh, SLQS immerses us in this

intimate communion through her utterance of a mantra:

*Breathing in: We are walking together this Earth;*

*Breathing out: This Earth that holds us;*

*In: Walking together;*

*Out: The Earth that holds us...*

SLQS poignantly reminds us of our place on Earth with its teeming multitude of life forms, and the plain reality of our shared journey: that we share the air as it invisibly loops in and out of all bodies, repeating with every heart-beat.

But the film also raises questions that go unanswered: We are directed to watch horse and rider from an aerial



*Áo dài* (detail left)  
handsewn and screenprinted by  
the artist with UK rights of way,  
including bridleways, 2023.





perspective and made to inhabit that imperial gaze as they traverse the section of land that we come to see as a map: a patchwork of fields, cut through with train tracks, power lines, well-trodden pathways hemmed in by industrial buildings, roadways and urban settlements.

The Marshes are scarred with the markers of human management and control, of human-animal hierarchies and the surveilled body, and like a specter, the unspoken politics of England's horse culture – its wealth and privilege – lurks as we listen and watch.

SLQS's film draws us into a contemplation on how a relationship with an animal can, at one and the same time, help us appreciate our shared existence with other beings, while also immersed in the social and political burdens of our time.

On display alongside SLQS's film is her *Áo dài* – a traditional Vietnamese garment, hand made with fabric that has been screen printed with images of maps of public rights of ways (bridleways).

In her film, SLQS wears the *Áo dài* instead of the more familiar English riding

costume. Here we see how the artist directly confronts the racial politics of the equestrian world by pointing up the legacy of English cultural practices and its visual codes. The customary image of rider encased in tightfitting jodhpurs, knee height boots, shadbellies and vests, and leather and whips, are here replaced with a flowing tunic, its fabric responsive to the movement of wind, woman and horse as they traverse the land.

To witness a woman rider in an *Áo dài*, within an English landscape, a number of issues begin to surface: that is, not only does her intervention make visible assumed norms of how and who can move through such spaces, but we are also made aware of the presumed normativity of English equestrianism and its image that is ubiquitous within North America too, and in turn, the tacit valorization of British colonial culture that subtly persists beyond the shores of the United Kingdom.

However, SLQS's rejection of English custom also evokes a deeper troubling: we are prompted to reflect on the legacy of British and Anglo-American imperial legal orders and statecraft that had, for a



*Vietnamese Mask*, from the series *Áo dài*, 2022, photograph by Annette Lister. Digital print, 30 x 25 cm framed.



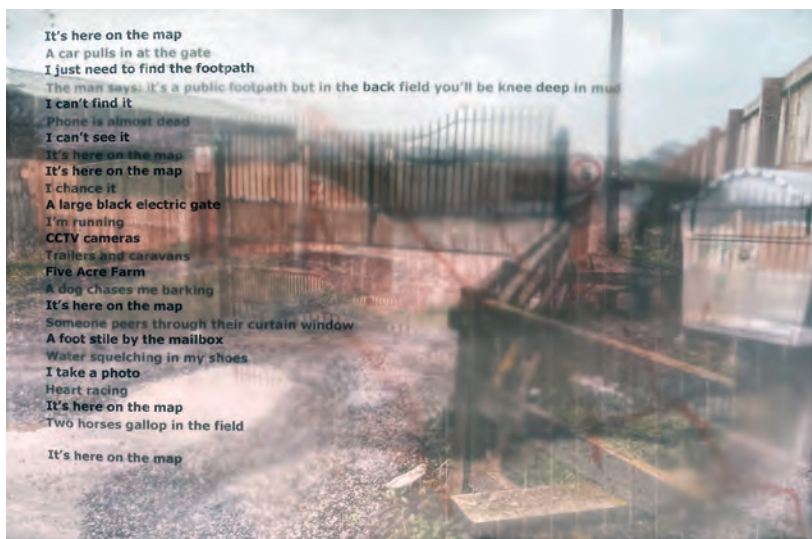
*Blue*, from the series *Áo dài*, 2022, photograph by SLQS. Digital print, 30 x 25 cm framed.



*Tarth*, from the series *Áo dài*, 2022, photograph by Annette Lister. Digital print, 30 x 25 cm framed.



*Running with Blue*, from the series *Áo dài*, 2022, photograph by Annette Lister. Digital print, 30 x 25 cm framed.



*It's here on the map*, part of the series *Find.ers.Keep.ers*, 2021. Layered transparent prints, framed with double glass. See more about this project at SLQS' blog, <https://slqsstudio.com/blog/finderskeepers/hereonthemap>

considerable period of time, conflated the status of animals with Black people and people of colour within Common Law.

Their legal designation as "property", and its violent consequences for human life are well understood, even though the traces of these injustices are not yet remediated within our contemporary moment. But what about the animal? How does the scripting of animals as objects of ownership and without political recognition – a form of "bare life" – continue to undergird and sustain normative percep-

tions of the presumed hierarchical ordering of man and "beast"? SLQS puts into motion a nuanced critique of the privileging of the white man over not only the human "other," and woman "other," but also the animal "other."

Additionally on view are a selection of photographs that document SLQS's intervention in Machynlleth, Wales, where she walked along bridleways wearing the *Áo dàì*, accompanied by a pony called Blue. The bridleways are historically instituted public rights of way, established in 1949 under the National Parks and Access to



**Terre**

Unique screenprint, printed on 250 gsm Fabriano paper, 53 x 71 cm, 2023, available as a limited edition of 8



**Land**

Unique screenprint, printed on 250 gsm Fabriano paper, 53 x 71 cm, 2023, available as a limited edition of 8



**Trái đất**

Unique screenprint, printed on 250 gsm Fabriano paper, 53 x 71 cm, 2023, available as a limited edition of 8

the Countryside Act. They are intended to permit anyone access to the pleasures of walking or riding through the countryside.

However, some of SLQS's other experiences of traversing such paths in the UK tell a different story. Her artwork titled *It's Here on the Map* (from a series called *Find.ers.Keep.ers*) evidences one of a number of encounters with farmers and landowners, some of which were hostile. Landowners have, over recent decades, lobbied to close off public access to lands. However, *It's Here on the Map* gently directs our attention to the obstacles that riders face, with poorly marked rights of way and subtle warnings from farmers not to continue a journey. SLQS draws us, yet again, into a reflection on how the equestrian world, and human-animal relations generally, sit within a web of racialized politics and presence within a terrain.

Alongside the photographs and the *Áo dài* is a selection of screenprints. Here SLQS folds together the visual forms of England's countryside, its soft rolling hills and green patinas and grey skies, with the imprint of horsehair that reads as patches of grass land blowing in the wind. The

bucolic setting is punctuated with a red circle, inked and printed with a *Bánh Tráng* (a rice paper used for spring rolls in Vietnamese cuisine). Sections of text, of her mother's handwriting in Vietnamese sit in the foreground of the landscape. The prints elegantly combine the representation of an idealised and abstracted English landscape with Vietnamese cultural referents.

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*Sarah Le Quang Sang graduated with distinction from the MA Performance Making programme at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has presented work at MOMA Machynlleth, Totally Thames, Spitalfields Music, Rich Mix, Procreate Project, the Live Art Development Agency, the Royal College of Art, the Brunel Museum, the Migration Museum, the Attenborough Art Centre, the Science Gallery and the University of Lincoln. She is currently a member of the New Artist Collective and Creative Think Tank at UK New Artists.*

*For more information:  
@SLQSstudio, SLQSstudio.com*

**Near Dwellers**  
**Public Lecture Series**  
(online, via Zoom)

Street Road and the Tree Museum cordially invite you to join us for discussions of human-animal relations between the artists exhibiting and guest scholars.

Five public talks will take place from Autumn 2023 through September 2024. Dates and times will be announced on Street Road's Near Dwellers' webpage and via mailing list throughout the duration of the Near Dwellers exhibition program.

**Our first public talk will be with Sarah Le Quang Sang and scholar Florence Fitzgerald-Allsopp on Saturday, September 9th, 1pm to 2:30 pm Eastern Standard Time.**

For connection details, and further information about the full year's programming, artists, and speakers, please visit our website, and sign up for our mailing list:

[www.streetroad.org/near-dwellers](http://www.streetroad.org/near-dwellers)



**TREE MUSEUM**

The Near Dwellers exhibition program is a collaboration between Street Road Artists Space, located in Cochranville, Pennsylvania, and the Tree Museum, located on Pender Island, British Columbia.

Exhibitions and performances for Near Dwellers are sited principally at Street Road Artists Space.

All public talks will take place on Zoom.

For more information about the Tree Museum see:  
[www.tree-museum.com](http://www.tree-museum.com)

**Visiting**

Street Road is open  
Fridays and Saturdays  
11am-3pm, and by appointment

Virtual visits can be arranged.

Street Road Artists Space  
725 Street Road  
Cochranville, PA 19330

**Contact**

[hello@streetroad.org](mailto:hello@streetroad.org)  
[www.streetroad.org](http://www.streetroad.org)



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