

# **HOMAGE TO QUAN ÂM**

**MARIA THUY HIEN THAN**

Part of arebyte 2023/26 programme [The Body, The Mind, The Soul](#)

Opening Event: Thu 28 March 2024, 6.30-9pm

Press Preview: Thu 28 March 2024, 4-6pm

Exhibition runs until 19 May 2024

arebyte Gallery London



arebyte's new exhibition, [Homage To Quan Âm](#) by Maria Than, delves deep into the intricate layers of personal identity, cultural assimilation, and the evolution of self-discovery. Quan Âm, the Viet name of Bodhisattva (Buddhist deity) of Compassion, Mercy and Medicine, has been the favourite goddess of many, including Maria. Drawing inspiration from Maria's own experiences growing up in a Vietnamese-British-French Buddhist family, the exhibition serves as a visual and emotional exploration of the complex journey away from refusal, and towards acceptance and understanding.

*Homage To Quan Âm* forms part of arebyte's artistic focus for 2023/26 themed *The Body, The Mind, The Soul* and traverses buried childhood memories, mortality, and identity through animation, CGI, AI-generated imagery, interactive digital works and virtual reality to unfold a personal, but relatable, account of *staying with the trouble* of becoming. *Homage To Quan Âm* suggests an assimilation with other narratives through the lens of Buddhist philosophy,

fostering personal connections that transcend cultural divides and resonate on a deeply human level.

Growing up, Maria's childhood was marked by the dichotomy between familial and religious traditions, and a desire to conform with more mainstream cultural environments, those that felt more like her non-religious peers. Facing external racism and discrimination, Maria "denied her Vietnamese roots, leading to a fractured sense of self". In recognition of this complex journey, *Homage To Quan Âm* unfolds a narrative that mirrors the fragmented nature of identity formation and carries the viewer through the three states mentioned above: refusal, doused in red lighting, marks the fear of isolation from early childhood; understanding, in orange lighting, denotes the compassionate appreciation of family; and acceptance, in yellow, signifies the embracing of heritage.

The exhibition represents the culmination of arebyte's annual hotel generation programme, designed to mentor the next generation of UK digital artists during the critical early stages of their careers and whose 2023 edition was awarded to Maria Than.

*Homage To Quan Âm* is accompanied by a booklet featuring texts by arebyte's curator Rebecca Edwards, artist Maria Than and artist, community activist and curator Cường Minh Bá Phạm.

A programme of talks, online gameplay events and workshops accompanying the exhibition can be viewed [here](#).

---

## Notes to Editors

arebyte press contact:

For further information, images and interview requests please contact Giulia Ponzano at [giulia.ponzano@arebyte.com](mailto:giulia.ponzano@arebyte.com)

arebyte Gallery  
Java House,  
7 Botanic Square  
London City Island  
E14 0LG

Nearest tube: Canning Town (Jubilee / DLR) | Gallery open Tues - Sat 1-6pm

Instagram [@arebyte](#) | Twitter [@arebyte](#) | Facebook [/arebyte.Gallery](#)

**arebyte** leads a pioneering digital art programme at the intersection of new technologies and contemporary culture. From net art's inception in the 90s to more recent innovations in computer technology from VR to AI, the programme invites multiple voices to create multimedia installations at **arebyte Gallery** (London) and online experiences for **arebyte on Screen**.

Alongside the art programme, **arebyte Skills** shares knowledge on creative media technologies with audiences of all ages, through workshops, artist development programmes, university residencies and panel discussions on digital art practices.

arebyte also supports a vibrant community of artists, designers and creative technologists through **arebyte Studios**, an initiative that provides affordable workspaces to 150 creative professionals across London.

**hotel generation** mentors the next generation of UK digital artists during the critical early stages of establishing a career in the arts. Working closely with arebyte's team, four shortlisted digital artists from regional UK cities are provided with professional guidance, studio visits and general mentoring in producing a proposal for a body of work based on arebyte's 2023-2026 theme *The Body, The Mind, The Soul*. At the end of the four months development programme, one of the four proposals is selected by the judging panel to be fully developed into a solo exhibition at arebyte Gallery.

### **Artist Biography**

Maria Than is a UK-based creative technologist, educator, activist and co-founder of Ricebox Studio. Using Augmented Reality, illustration and AI-generated content, she explores themes of fragmented identity, buddhism, over-productivity, internalised racism and mental health and exhibited in London, Paris, New York, South Korea, Amsterdam and Toronto. She lectures in design, creative and ethics of AI and works at Child Rights International Network as a Digital Designer.