NC QIN

b. Nancy Qin Yu

Nancy Qin is an Australian artist living and working in Sydney, she was fortunate enough to have a duo art education into both strategies of East and West. Studying the traditional arts at the Central Academy of Fine Arts imbued in her a sense of discipline, but it was glass she was in search of, so she journeyed back to Australia and finished her art education in Sydney College of the Arts. Nancy has recently completed her MFA at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and the master glass Artist Jiyong Lee, and she has returned back to Sydney to establish her own studio.

Nancy's artworks are objects of unstable beauty.
Glass is one of the few materials that communicates a vulnerability and permanent at the same time. It holds its form under enormous pressure and shatters, catastrophically, under the wrong kind. Nancy Quinn knows this. She works with it not as a limitation but as a philosophical position.

Qin had an affinity for glass even before she knew it was an art form. In high school for her graduation Sculpture she imagined a glass woman emerging from Water, a kind of rebirth scene. Her teacher hadn't even heard that you could cast glass, but she had learnt about the lost wax process and assumed it would work the same way. It was half right. The idea she had was completely beyond her technical abilities at the time. Even now, with all the experience she has it is still a challenge.
Cast glass lens itself to sculptural form in a way blown glass doesn't, it's not entirely transparent because of the textures it picks up from the mould, and then add gravitas. But beyond the visual, cast glass has shaped her as a person as much as an artist. It has a high failure rate. At the beginning, she was failing almost 70% of the time. It drilled her into caution, systems, and persistence.
When you work with cast glass, you have to know what you want to make from the very beginning. It's very hard to change your mind midway through once you've already made a master mould. For Qin visiting what she wants to make is probably the most exciting part of the process. The rest is problem-solving– understanding your materials, making the journey towards the vision. She generally get pretty close to where she started.

After her bachelor of Arts finished in Beijing, she was back in Australia, and weighed down with heartbreak and depression. She suffered anxiety on the idea of entering the real world as an artist, no security, no clear path. She journaled that she felt she had been carrying a pseudo glass suit of armour. And the key was the material, if it shatters, it hurts the wear rather than protecting them. The armour itself becomes dysfunctional.

Influenced by Chinese mythology, and her dad's favourite character, Guangyu from the three kingdoms – the 14th century historical novel and foundational text of East Asian literature that Chronicles the power struggles of competing dynasties. He is the archetypal hero that older Asian men aspire to, a figure of loyalty, a brother. As bedtime stories, her dad told her about these ancient heroes. Nancy's mum was absorbed in the dramas of the Qing dynasty. This was the Air of her childhood.
She is from an intersection culture – Chinese at home, Australian in the world. She read the stories differently from her father, when he looks at Guangyu, he sees the most loyal of soldiers. When she read the same story, she saw his fatal Floor, a man who placed his pride and arrogance above all else. That's why he is in the armour. She was thinking of pride not as the opposite of shame, but as it's source.

Glass is transparent, breakable and permanent all at once. For Qin the obvious associates are there – fragile, vulnerable, precious. But there's an added layer, when glass breaks it forms a Concordia fracture so sharp it can reach molecular thinness. So when you pair glass with the body, you're not

just afraid of a beautiful object breaking you're afraid of what happens to the person who is wearing it. In her work there is the element of excitement about the future tempered by fear, charged by an interplay of fierceness and fragility.

Cast glass, different from blown or lamp-worked glass which many may be familiar with, has a more somber voice. Unlike its delicate and elegant siblings which work with an instantaneous, quick-handed craftsmanship; Cast glass is an exacting, time-consuming and labour intensive process with a very delayed gratification point. But its mysterious gravitas makes it worthwhile, the result is a beauty with a soft but profound song of its own.

The body of work for the Helmets is based on pride and ego; Qin explores the tension between the image we think we project and the reality of our experiences donning the armour of pride. Something that is ornamental and fragile rather than strong and solid, something heavy and burdensome rather than functional and light. Qin uses glass to create a phantom of ego we wrap around ourselves for protection, letting its translucency show its lack of substance, and beauty to show how high we elevate its importance privileged to experience both, as they have allowed her to think both freely but with discipline in her life and art.

Following her MFA in the USA she is also now working with Flameworked Borosilicate Glass which is a shift from the cast glass. For example the Crowns of Glass : Yang Guifei, glass headdresses hold a dreamlike, illusory quality with its fragile presence. Even a photo of it feels as though it requires gentle handling, each night when I leave the studio, I am half-worried that it may melt away with the morning dew. This fragility has a powerful effect on my models; initially, they're thrilled to wear it, imagining themselves as princesses. Yet, once worn, they stiffen, subtly overtaken by a quiet, psychological weight due to the fear it may slide off, fall and shatter into a thousand pieces. It brings to mind the concept of "Arrival Fallacy"—the belief that achieving a goal will bring lasting happiness, only for the happiness to dissolve to dust once they achieve their goal.

Each headdress is inspired by the headdresses worn by women of rank in ancient China. Headgear traditionally indicated social status and power, and formal ceremonies like the Guan Li celebrated one's maturity and readiness to take on societal roles. For elite women, the headdress embodied authority but also fragility, reminding us that this privilege came with the constant threat of losing favour. The delicate designs on the Crowns of Glass shows the precarious balance between beauty and constraint, as if the wearer's identity and value are bound to the object itself, evoking reverence but also a latent unease.

Qin was recently the winner of EVOLUTION 2025, GAS Student exhibition, Texas USA, in 2021 she won the Vicki Torr Emerging Artist Prize 2021, and in 2020 she was awarded the National Emerging Art Glass Prize, Australia and her work has been included into the National Glass Collection.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME by Nancy

I grew up in Sydney with a typical Asian family (you know what I'm talking about; where A is for average, and B is for bad - thank you Kevjumba for this lasting quote), my parents like many others wanted me to be one of the trio of career prestige: a lawyer, doctor or accountant. And why not? My maths was good. If I had been thinking entirely objectively at the time I would have realized they would have afforded me a modest and stable wealth.

But my heart was seized by passion, and I could not hear of it. I, I decided, was going to rise to the ranks of the Old Masters whom I idolised. And for all my imagination, I could not see myself as anything else other than an artist. So strong was the pull to become one.

What did I know, I was just a highschooler still struggling with a sea of hormones and emotions. But it wasn't me who decided. The voice came from somewhere deep within, I just listened. The voice lead me somewhere beautiful, and with beauty came toil, but with toil came a deeper resonance to something timeless.

“Nothing is hopeless, we must hope for everything”

— Madeleine L’Engle

“Four years ago I met a rising artist, NC Qin, she was quiet, yet competitive. It’s fascinating to watch her grow and discover more depth in this young artist. She is always aiming higher every time, tackling challenges that come her way in order to achieve what she envisions in her artwork. Nancy has been showing with the Love Letter since 2015. Curating her is always inspiring; she has the courage to try something new that influences the people around her, instigating a collective growth. When a work doesn’t turn out as planned, she rebounds quickly, taking in the failure and tries again. Nancy understands that success comes with persistence, which is why I admire Nancy both as an artist and a person.”

— Yves Lee, Curator

CURRENT & UPCOMING

16 January - 27 February 2026 Serious Play: Explorations in Contemporary Craft, Craft Alliance Staenberg Gallery, St Louis MO USA

7 February - 16 May 2026 Case Study, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Houston TX USA

23 - 27 March 2026 The Tragedy of Dreams, Surplus Gallery, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL USA

AWARDS

2025 WINNER of EVOLUTION 2025, GAS Student exhibition, Texas USA

2021 WINNER of Vicki Torr Emerging Artist Prize, Australia

2020 WINNER of National Emerging Art Glass Prize, Australia

2023 Finalist of Rookwood Cemetery Sculpture Award, Australia

2023 Finalist of EMERGING Gosford, Australia

2022 Finalist of National Capital Art Prize, Australia

2022 Finalist of Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize, Australia

2022 Finalist of North Sydney Art Prize, Australia

2019 Finalist of IDENTITY - Art & Design Prize, Handmade in Britain UK

2019 Finalist of ARTBANK ROADSHOW, Lismore NSW Australia

2018 Finalist of National Emerging Art Glass Prize, Australia.

2017 Finalist of Rookwood Cemetery Sculpture Award, Australia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026 The Wearer Worn, Third Degree Glass Factory, 18 September - 9 October, St Louis MO USA

2026 The Tragedy of Dreams, Surplus Gallery, 23 - 27 March, Carbondale IL USA

2022 Kings, Dukes, Generals, Ministers, Art Atrium, 11 - 25 June, Botany NSW Australia

2021 Glass Armours (Commissioned Solo Exhibition), Lunar North Confluence, Gallery Lane Cove, 3 - 27 Feb., Lane Cove NSW Australia

TWO MAN EXHIBITIONS

2024 History Reimagined: Shen Jiawei and NC Qin, Institute for Australian and Chinese Art and Culture, 27 May - 16 August, Western Sydney University, Parramatta NSW Australia

2024 FROM FIRE: NC QIN & ALI TAHAYORI, Casula Powerhouse, 9 Dec. – 3 March, Casula NSW Australia

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026 Connections 2026 : Glass from Every Angle, Corning Museum of Glass, Gather Gallery, 1 - 6 June, Corning NY USA

2026 Case Study, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 7 Feb. - 16 May, Houston TX USA

2026 Serious Play: Explorations in Contemporary Craft, Craft Alliance Staenberg Gallery, 16 Jan. - 27 Feb., St Louis MO USA

2025 Season 21: Wear, Manifest Gallery, 14 Aug. - 12 Dec., Cincinnati OH USA

2025 EVOLUTION 2025 - GAS Exhibition of Emerging, International Talent, UTA Fine Arts Gallery, 15 - 18 May, Arlington TX USA

2024 The 20th Anniversary of the Aus-China Interchange (curated by Chen Ping), Glengarry Jinwen Gallery, 6 Dec. - 6 Feb., Turramurra NSW Australia

2024 InVISIBLE, Wildfruit Projects Gallery, 17 - 19 May, St. Louis MO USA

2024 Shattering the Glass Ceiling – Women Artists in the National Art Glass Collection, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 17 Feb. - 16 June, Wagga Wagga NSW Australia

2024 Home and Away (curated by Luise Guest & Jennifer Yang), 16Albermarle Project Space, 22 Nov. – 16 Dec., Newtown NSW Australia

2023 HIDDEN SCULPTURE WALK (curated by Kath Fries), Rookwood Cemetery, 21 Oct. - 19 Nov., Rookwood NSW Australia

2023 Nationalism in the Wake of COVID, Cowra Regional Art Gallery, 8 July - 20 August, Cowra NSW Australia

2023 TABOO, Bankstown Arts Centre, 13 May-24 June, Bankstown NSW Australia

2023 Okkoota ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ (curated by Vishal Kumaraswamy), Arts House Melbourne, 12 - 23 April, North Melbourne VIC Australia

2023 Rituals of Resistance, Thirning Villa, 9 - 25 March, Ashfield NSW Australia

2023 EMERGING 2023, Gosford Regional Gallery, 3 Feb. - 26 March, Central Coast NSW Australia

2023 Inner Edge Drifting, Art Space on the Concourse, 18 Jan. - 12 Feb., Chatswood NSW Australia

2022 New Contemporaries, SCA Gallery, University of Sydney, 1 - 10 Dec., Sydney NSW Australia

2022 Glass Chrysalis, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 21 Oct. - 22 Jan., Wagga Wagga NSW Australia

2022 Personal Mythologies (curated by Sophia Cai), La Trobe Institute of Art, 14 July - 16 Oct., Bendigo VIC Australia

2022 National Capital Art Prize Exhibition, 22 Sept. – 12 Oct., Canberra ACT Australia

2022 Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize (SWAP) Exhibition, See Street Gallery, 2 - 15 Sept., Meadowbank NSW Australia

2022 Nationalism in the Wake of COVID, Macquarie University Art Gallery, 16 June – 24 August, Macquarie Park NSW Australia

2022 The North Sydney Art Prize Biennial, The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability, 14 - 29 May, Waverton NSW Australia

2022 ROOTS: Rituals and Reclamations, Pari Ari, 10 April –22 May, Parramatta NSW Australia

2022 Cultural Cartography: Creating Art at the Intersection of Cultures (curated by Guan Wei), Bankstown Art Centre, 13 Jan. - 20 Feb., Bankstown NSW Australia
2022 Cultural Cartography: Creating Art at the Intersection of Cultures (curated by Guan Wei), Institute for Australian and Chinese Art and Culture, 24 Feb. - 12 May, Western Sydney University, Parramatta NSW Australia

2021 Home is more than a place (curated by Sophia Cai), Hamilton Gallery and NETS Victoria Digital Exhibition, Australia

2020 National Emerging Art Glass Prize Exhibition, National Glass Art Gallery, 2 April - 20 Sept., Wagga Wagga NSW Australia

2020 BREAK (with Folk Magazine), 107 Projects, 28 March, Redfern NSW Australia

2019 Summer Sojourn, Art Atrium, 30 Nov. - 14 Dec., Botany NSW Australia

2019 Sydney Contemporary Art Fair (with Art Atrium), Carriageworks, 12 - 15 Sept., Redfern NSW Australia

2019 IDENTITY - Art & Design (Handmade in Britain), Ashmolean Museum of Art & Architecture, 14 -26 June, Oxford UK
2019 IDENTITY - Art & Design (Handmade in Britain), Handmade Oxford (Waterperry Gardens), 27 June, Oxford UK

2019 Peach Blossom Spring (curated by Naomi Segal), FirstDraft Gallery, 3 - 25 April, Woolloomooloo NSW Australia

2019 The Selfie (curated by James Varley-Ross), Ten Forty Seven Gallery, 11 - 26 May, Mascot NSW Australia

2019 Vitreous, Herring Island Summer Arts Festival, Herring Island Gallery, 9 Feb. - 17 March, Melbourne VIC Australia

2018 Summer Sojourn, Live in Art Gallery (in collab with Art Atrium Gallery), 5 - 23 Dec., Surry Hills NSW Australia

2018 National Emerging Art Glass Prize Exhibition, National Glass Art Gallery, 5 May - 29 July, Wagga Wagga NSW Australia
2018 National Emerging Art Glass Prize Exhibition, Griffith Regional Art Gallery, 10 August - 23 Sept., Griffith NSW Australia

2017 HIDDEN SCULPTURE WALK, Rookwood Cemetery, 26 August - 24 Sept., Rookwood NSW Australia

2017 Love Letter : Be With You, 541 Art Space, 5 - 17 May, Sydney NSW Australia

2017 ART CRAWL, Fisher Library (University of Sydney), 3 - 7 March Sydney NSW Australia

2017 Ausglass Conference Exhibition, ANU Gallery, 18 - 28 Jan., Canberra ACT Australia

2016 Makers Matter, Gaffa Gallery, 24 Nov. - 5 Dec., Sydney NSW Australia

2016 Love Letter : I believe in Second Chances , 541 Art Space, 2 - 25 Sept., Sydney NSW Australia

2015 Love Letter, Articulate Space, 9 - 24 May, Leichhardt NSW Australia

2015 Undergraduate Degree Show, Sydney College of the Art, 7 - 17 Feb., Rozelle NSW Australia

2010 ArtExpress, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Art Centre, Hazelhurst NSW Australia

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

2023 TABOO, Bankstown Art Centre, 13 May-24 June, Bankstown NSW Australia

PRESENTER/SPEAKER

Dress and Body Association Conference, 'Creativity, Care and Communities: Making Visible Connections', 2 November 2024, Online

GLASS MADISON CONFERENCE, 6 October 2023, Madison WI USA

CAM Flashtalks, 18 April 2023, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL USA

FORMAL EDUCATION

College of Arts and Media, Southern Illinois University, Masters of Fine Arts (GLASS), 2023 - 2026
Carbondale, IL USA

Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, Bachelor of Visual Arts Honours (Class I), 2021 - 2022
Sydney, NSW Australia

Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, Bachelor of Visual Arts, 2013 - 2015
Sydney, NSW Australia

Central Academy of Fine Art, Traditional Arts, 2012
Beijing, Hebei China

MENTORSHIPS

The Women's Club Professional Practice Mentorship with Isabel Deeble, 2023

NAVA Mentorship with Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, 2021

Glass Internship/Assistant with Kate Baker, Studio 4, 2016 - 2023

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

2026 Studio Casting Symposium Scholarships, Corning Museum of Glass, New York USA

2025 Eddie and Angela Bernard Scholarship, Glass Art Society, Texas USA

2025 Penland Summer Scholarship, Penland School of Craft, Northern Carolina USA

2024 The Windgate Research Grant, School of Art and Design, Southern Illinois University, IL USA

2024 The Chey Fellowship, Institute of Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture, Western Sydney University, NSW Australia

COLLECTIONS

"Head Case I" (3/5), "Head Case II" (2/5), "Headcase III" (2/5) National Art Glass Collection, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery NSW Australia

"Head Case I" (1/5) Private collection of Mike & Sandi Faulkner

"Head Case III" (2/5) Private collection in Oxford, UK

Potential Private collection in Melbourne

NOTABLE COMMISSIONS

Network Infinity Temporary Public Artwork commissioned by Willoughby City Council for Inner Edge Drifting 2023

Birdsong Installation commissioned by Diversity Arts Australia for 'I AM NOT A VIRUS' PROJECT 2021

Glass Armours Exhibition commissioned by Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios for the Lunar North Confluence 2021

SANA INCENSE product line commissioned by award winning Australian designer Tom Fereday 2021

MEDIA

Our Narratives Feature by Adelina Gowdy: The Weight of Glass , Review by Jiyong Lee: Before the Work Knew What It Was

MICRO DOCS Episode with Eastern Standard Times (EST) Media : Weapons Made of Glass: Meet Chinese-Australian Sculptor NC Qin

ArtsHub review of Nationalism in the Wake of COVID exhibition by Gina Fairley : Rethinking nationalism in the wake of COVID

Level: Asian Podcast Episode 18: NC QIN - Earning a living as an Asian Australian artist & Mastering Glass Art

Sydney Morning Herald : Vice attitude with NYT rigour: The Eastern Standard Times targets diaspora audience

Indianlink (ArtsHouse Melbourne, Okkoota ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ Review) : Okkoota ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ is re-assembling the contemporary arts space

ROOTS Pari Exhibition Review (MeMo Review) : ROOTS by June Miskell

Interview with Objetos con Vidrio (Art Glass Publication): Entrevista a la joven escultora en vidrio NC QIN

Feature with 詩人映霞 on the exhibition Glass Armours: 华裔姑娘荣获澳洲国家年度新兴玻璃艺术奖

Feature with udee.co (online publisher) on The Persistence Series : NC QIN BRINGS US 'PERSISTENCE'

TALKS & SYMPOSIUMS

Dress Body Association 2024, 'Creativity, Care, and Communities: Making Visible Connections'

Glass Madison 2023, GEEX Educational Gathering Artist Talks

CAM Flash Talks 2024, Guyon Auditorium, Southern Illinois University

RESEARCH/ACADEMIC PAPERS

Bearing the Weight of Heritage - A Practice Based Art Enquiry into Intersection Cultures through Value Dislocation by Nancy Qin Yu

In Lieu of Thesis : The Tragedy of Dreams by Nancy Qin Yu

PUBLICATIONS & CATALOGUES

2026, New Glass Review 46, Corning Museum of Glass

2024, GASnews Fall 2024, Glass Art Society, MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: NC QIN pp.28-30

2024, New Glass Review 44, Corning Museum of Glass

2023, TAASA Review March, Interview with Yin Cao curator of Chinese Art AGNSW

2022, Nationalism in the Wake of COVID, Macquarie University, ISBN 978-1-74138-487-1

2020, National Emerging Art Glass Prize 2020, Michael Scarrone, ISBN 978-1-875247-08-0

2019, NC QIN : On the Precipice, Nancy Yu

2019, Peach Blossom Spring, Naomi Segal

2018, National Emerging Art Glass Prize 2018, Michael Scarrone, ISBN 978-1-875247-07-3

2017, HIDDEN Rookwood Cemetery Sculpture Walk 2017, Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Trust

2015, Sydney College of the Arts 2015 Graduation Catalogue, Liam Garstang, ISBN 978-1-921558-03-0