

# Zadie Xa

## Long ago when tigers smoked

2 April

– 5 June 2022

This exhibition features new textiles, paintings and sculptures, including works made in collaboration with the artist Benito Mayor Vallejo. 'Long ago when tigers smoked' is conceived as a theatre and visitors are invited to step onto the stage and connect with the objects and artworks.

Xa has crafted the exhibition around two objects in The Box's world cultures collection: an 1800s tiger puppet from Myanmar and a bamboo pipe from Korea acquired in 1910. The objects are from different countries but are connected by Korean folk tales involving tigers smoking on long pipes. This suggests something that may have happened a long time ago in myths and legends, but also invokes an idea of a time when humans and animals had equal status.

The dialogue with The Box's collection expands on Xa's exploration of the trickster archetype and its manifestation within animals as they appear in Western and Asian mythology and folklore. Over the centuries, and depending on the geographical location and culture, tigers have come to represent a range of human emotions, attributes, behaviours and social status. In much of South East Asian culture tigers are sacred and a symbol of keeping various demons at bay. Today they are endangered animals and the tiger population has declined by around 95% since the beginning of the 1900s.

Xa works across performance, textiles, sound and painting. Based in London, her work is informed by her experience within the Korean population living across the world, as well as the environmental and cultural context of the Pacific Northwest in North America/Canada, where she was born.

Two works by Xa, recently acquired for The Box collection, are on display in the upper North Hall.