

# Curatorial Pitch

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eryao blackbox / summerhall

## Project Overview

This curatorial project explores how traditional mythological imagery can operate within contemporary exhibition frameworks—not as preserved heritage, but as an active narrative structure that continues to organise perception, identity, and social expectation.

Drawing from Roland Barthes’s proposition that “*myth is not a story, but a system of communication*,” the exhibition approaches myth not as narrative content, but as an ideological mechanism.

## From Symbol to Structure: Re-reading the Dragon

At the centre of the project is Eryao’s shadow play work , *Wishing Your Child Becomes a Dragon*.

**Traditionally in China, the dragon signifies fortune, authority, and success. However, through Barthes’ framework of second-order signification, the dragon is reinterpreted here not as folklore imagery, but as a cultural structure**

The idiom “望子成龙” becomes more than parental aspiration—it means:

- intergenerational pressure

- mobility anxiety
- identity shaped through expectation

Within the exhibition, the dragon operates as a mechanism that normalises these structures across time.

### **Curating as Cultural Translation**

Extending Carolee Thea's notion of the curator as mediator, this project positions curating as an act of **cultural translation** rather than preservation.

Tradition is not displayed as authenticity—it is re-articulated within a new perceptual and discursive system.

The exhibition does not “present” myth. It **re-structures how myth is experienced.**

### **Spatial Realisation: Summerhall as Site**

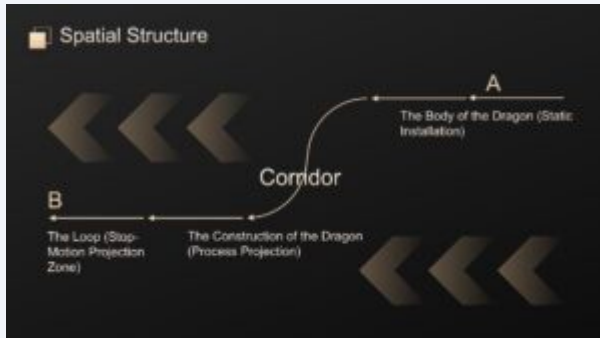
The exhibition is proposed to take place at Summerhall, specifically within a **ground-floor gallery space equipped with an integrated black box environment.**

This site is particularly suitable because:

- It allows **controlled lighting conditions** essential for shadow projection and moving image.
- The existing **black box structure supports immersive temporal installations.**
- Its connection with University of Edinburgh makes it accessible, academically aligned, and financially feasible.

### **Spatial Structure**

Rather than retelling this narrative, the exhibition spatialises it. The exhibition was held in three interconnected areas in the environment.



## SPOT A

At the entrance, the audience will see the shadow dragon created by Er Yao, hanging on the white wall. The materials of the works are clearly visible: leather fragments, joints and other structure. The first meeting was quiet, almost like a museum. The curatorial text at the entrance introduces the cultural meaning of the dragon and the idiom “龙马精神”, which provides an easy entrance for international audiences. The tradition here is readable.



## Corridors

From this still dragon body project, the audience enters a narrow corridor. In this transitional space, the single-channel projection displays the stop-motion animation sequence frame by frame. Dragons slowly assemble themselves through obvious repetition. Limbs can change. The body will get longer. Movement is mechanical, not smooth. The projection scale is slightly enlarged, so that the shadow goes beyond the picture and overflows the wall and floor. The corridor acts as a compression. The audience must personally experience the transformation of the dragon. Here, myth becomes a process. Scattered phrases appeared faintly on the wall, almost illegible:

“Expectation.” “Success.” “Obedience.” “Future.”



## SPOT B

The last area leads to a darker projection space. This one-minute stop-motion animation is played continuously and circularly on a big screen. There are no seats. Visitors are free to come in and out. The dragon's movements are unstable. Its segmented body bends awkwardly, becoming less proud and more like a monster. There is no narrative climax. No transformation is complete. The cycle starts again.

The time of this exhibition is cyclical and nonlinear. The lack of a fixed starting point reinforces the concept that cultural expectations are inheritance rather than choice.

Engaging with moving image exhibition theory, particularly the writings of Erika Balsom, this project imagines the exhibition space as a temporal architecture rather than a static display.



Time in this exhibition is not only media duration. It is cultural persistence—the long repetition of expectation across generations.

## **Ethical Scale**

If myth influences how we understand the world, and exhibitions influence how we understand myth, then curating is never neutral.

Instead of celebrating the dragon as cultural heritage, this exhibition questions how such narratives shape identity and expectation in contemporary society.

The project, therefore, operates not as cultural nostalgia but as a speculative curatorial method testing how traditional narrative forms continue to organise contemporary life.

### **Further Research**

Expanding the Theme: Myth and Power Across Cultures