

**“Facing Grace” (忘卻優雅) Project  
by Michel AW**

Mainstream media often portrays sharks as mindless man-eaters. This characterization is absolutely unsubstantiated and threatens the demise of these species by promoting a false message of fear, misunderstanding, and apathy. It all started eons ago, in 1758 when Swedish scientist, Carl Linneaus, gave sharks the “man-eater” label. Then in 1933, an ignorant surgeon in Sydney further perpetuated this myth by suggesting evidence that confirmed “sharks will attack men.” The movie “Jaws” successfully turned sharks into monsters when it was released in 1975. If all this were true, the production of Facing Grace would not be possible.

Capturing people’s attention in this unique way will hopefully allow the audience to see and appreciate the ocean and its inhabitants in a new light and develop a curiosity that will drive all of us to discover more. The unifying message of this project is to overcome fear and inspire greater appreciation of the beauty of sharks. Beneath their outward strength lies fragility. Showcasing the grace of these animals contrasted against human threats is something we portray in our pictures in order to reveal the plight of these animals.

With Facing Grace, we aspire to change the image of sharks. The film aims to captivate the audience to stop, admire and think. Engagement is the key. With poise and elegant, Hidy Yu is seen throughout the film engaging and reaching out to these apex predators in their home

**About *Facing Grace***

*Facing Grace* is a novel concept meant to capture the attention of people in a way that connects them with the wonder of our natural world and the vulnerability of some of the most important sentinel animals of the ocean. Many people misunderstand these animals and fear their carnivorous nature, immense scale, and raw power. The biggest issue with this mindset of fear is that it drives people to believe that killing them is okay. This is the behaviour the *Facing Grace* project addresses and aims to change.

Fear is often a simple anxiety of the unknown. As such, a fundamental goal of this project is to tackle this fear by showcasing these extraordinary animals in a manner never seen before: up close and personal in their habitat. Our mission is to inspire and educate about the realities of these animals. It is important for everyone to understand the fragility of shark populations, and that they are barometers of the health of our oceans that should be respected, not slaughtered.

Despite their strength and agility, these animals are ultimately defenceless against human exploitation. We have disregarded the importance of sharks for decades, even

centuries, and it has now reached a critical stage where we can no longer afford excuses. We know the harm over-fishing is doing to the ocean and see the consequences unravelling right before our very eyes. In addition to reimagining the way we see sharks; the *Facing Grace* project also aims to highlight the effects of anthropogenic climate change on our marine environments and the animals that call them home.

Addressing these subjects by making a strong initial visual and emotional connection with the public instead of bombarding them with facts and figures is the way forward, or at least, the way to begin. Understanding the science is essential, but people need to become familiar with these animals first and develop an affinity for them before feeling the urge to protect them. A graceful female standing or swimming beside these apex predators helps present the idea that sharks are creatures of dignity and we as humans should treat them with poise and respect. *Facing Grace* began the process of making people more familiar with sharks and show them that these animals are not to be feared, but cherished.

***Facing Grace aims to convey the harsh reality of how human exploitation of our planet is the reason sharks are in peril.*** People need to understand and appreciate the critical role large marine animals play in maintaining balanced marine ecosystems in order to realise why their survival in our oceans is of vital importance. All of apex animals are key species in food webs throughout the world's oceans and are necessary parts of a finely tuned ecosystem. Our exploitation of the oceans is tipping this balance towards an ever less diverse and productive environment.