New Narratives: Reclaiming Asian Identity Through Story

July 22 - September 8, 2020

buen provecho/hou mei, ink, acrylic and collage on canvas, 48 x 84"

Virtual 360 Degree Exhibition

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EXHIBITION ARTISTS

IJ Chan
Rachael Chen
Zoila Coc-Chang
Maria Fong
Melody (Yu-Hsuan) Hsu
Claudia Yeejae Kim
Eugene La Rochelle
Brenda Lau
Heidi Lee
Madeline Lee
Niki Li
Julia Madden
Jaspreeet Mahal
Yuko Okabe
Matthew Okazaki
Jennifer Jean Okumura
Ponnapa Prakkamakul
Christina Qi
Neha Rayamajhi
M. A. Rosegrant
Mel Taing
Melissa Teng
Jessica TranVo
Tran Vu Arts
Lily Xie

Unbound Visual Arts (UVA) is a 7-year-old local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of artists and art enthusiasts based in Allston-Brighton. UVA enriches the community with educational and inspiring art exhibitions and programs. UVA has completed over 70 curated educational art exhibitions in 11 locations across 8 communities and has over 200 members and supporters. To learn more, visit www.UnboundVisualArts.org or call 617.657.4278. This is UVA’s 3rd 360 degree virtual exhibition.

Unbound Visual Arts, Inc.
320 Washington Street • Suite 200 • Brighton, MA 02135
Thank you to our promotional and organizational partners!
How we define the terms “Asian” and “Asian American” in the United States is often driven by our visual and popular culture. Over the span of only a few generations, the meaning of these terms has continued to evolve, heavily influenced by changing immigration patterns, academic scholarship, the National Census Bureau, and domestic policy. The unique histories of our respective ancestral lands (East, South, and Southeast Asia), shaped by war, Imperialism, Colonialism, and more recent tensions, further complicate the concept of identity within our communities. Many of us, our parents, and our grandparents, came to the States seeking new opportunities, only to face racism, xenophobia, anti-Asian rhetoric, and discriminatory legal practices. While much progress has been made in recent decades to overcome such notions as the Model Minority Myth, we continue to push for more authentic, comprehensive, and nuanced representation within all facets of American society. Through this reclamation, we actively empower ourselves and reinforce our sense of agency within the greater community. New Narratives: Reclaiming Asian Identity Through Story features forty artworks by twenty-five Boston-area Asian artists who are exploring aspects of their identity through their art, as well as Asian culture and narrative informed by personal experience. Whether the work is referencing the self and body, sexuality and gender, or intergenerational conflict and healing within the Asian community, each artist brings their distinctive perspective to the exhibition through unexpected visuals and contemporary techniques. Collectively, the exhibition offers a partial glimpse rather than a sweeping overview of the many complex issues that Asians and Asian Americans navigate daily as part of our lived realities. It also reflects, in some part, the complex and evergrowing iterations of Asian identity that continue to emerge from every corner of the Greater Boston area. These creative gestures are at once expressions of pain and resiliency, resistance, and celebration.

– Leslie Anne Condon

Curator’s Statement
I was an artist first. Then, I was a writer. But then I realized that dance was the best way that I could communicate, and the best way that I could narrate. Dance allows me to use the best aspects of both — to draw infinite pictures, to tell infinite narratives — through body and voice. Throughout the years my teachers and mentors have given me infinite pathways to communicate and connect in a way that is both succinct and visceral. In my own work, I am dedicated to exploring the nuances and layers of the Asian-American experience.

I.J. Chan is a dance artist and educator born, raised and now based in Boston. In 2015 she graduated from James Madison University with a B.A. in Dance and journalism. Since then she has dedicated her life to training and performing intensively in multiple dance genres, for multiple local and international dance masters. She has worked with a variety of Boston-based dance artists, including KAIROS Dance Theater, McKersin Previlus/Lakai Dance Theatre, Jennifer Lin, Jean Appolon Expressions, and Chavi Bansal. In her own choreographic work, I.J. is interested in intersecting and exploring the Asian-American narrative. In addition to performing, she is passionate about bringing quality dance instruction to low-income and minority youth populations within the city. She also works as freelance graphic designer and visual artist, with a specific focus on creating marketing materials for other dance artists in the community.
Rachael Chen

Rachael Chen is a rising junior at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst who is pursuing a degree in Music Performance, an Arts Management Certificate, and an Asian American Studies Certificate. She is a marketing intern with the Arts Extension Service at UMass Amherst throughout the summer of 2020. Some of her experiences as a musician include playing as principal flute with the UMass Symphony Orchestra during the 2019-2020 season, playing piccolo with the Music House International Orchestra under the direction of Kensho Watanabe in the summer of 2019, and performing with the Boston Youth Symphony during the 2017-2018 season. Rachael’s accomplishments include winning Honorable Mention at the 2019 UMass Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition and earning gold and silver keys from the 2016 and 2017 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards for her drawings. When Rachael is not busy with music, course work, and advocating for social justice, she enjoys spending time bird watching, reading, and drawing.

Creating artwork has always been an avenue for me to cope with the hardships in my life. Growing up as an Asian American has not been easy for me and often, I tried to distance myself from my Taiwanese heritage. The worst moments of my life have been marked by feeling alienated and being discriminated against. From kindergarten to present day, there have been countless times where I have felt emotionally damaged. That pain still lingers. It continues to fester, but it prompts me to create artwork that reveals the biased ways in which the world has discriminated against me. I create artwork so it can serve as meeting ground for others to relate to the pain. It’s a place for lonely people to not feel alone.

Eyes
Graphite and colored pencil on Bristol paper
9 x 11"
Zoila Coc-Chang

My work creates spaces addressing my curiosities and anxieties regarding migration, generational displacement, and multiculturalism. From studying afro-futurism, I’ve learned a valuable lesson that people need to not only understand the world around them, but also to see themselves in the things they learn. I didn’t always see myself represented in environments, so I began to make my own. World building is crucial and comes naturally as we try to understand ourselves and the roles we wish to play. I create hybrid worlds that have transplanted species from Guatemala and Hong Kong, intermingled with Floridian plants. As a Chinese-Guatemalan living in America, my practice embodies the notions of hybridity within culture and home. My work challenges the representation of culture and identity by using ecology to demonstrate the fluidity of exchange.
Maria Fong

Maria Fong is an artist from Berkeley, California. This fall, she will enter her fourth year in the BFA program at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. Maria works in hand drawn and stop motion animation, drawing, performance art, and bookmaking. She is dedicated to making work that tells silenced stories and fosters interaction between people. Her collaborative artworks explore racialized and politicized spaces, community building, and expansive Asian American identities. She is currently an artist in Pao Art Center’s Residence Lab program, which connects artists and Boston Chinatown residents to create public art.

I make art that requires or precipitates some kind of interaction between people. Through zines, mail art drawings, animations, installations, and performances, I connect people by sharing stories, lived realities. Creating and communicating in the face of silencing and homogenizing is an act of resistance. By combining text and image I am able to communicate in multifaceted ways.

I want to bring joy and playfulness to create an exchange between viewers or between artist and participant. I'm inspired by public artists who upend gallery norms to create interventions that involve people outside of a museum context. I aim to make work that is welcoming enough to be touched and played with. Relying on the language of childhood and toys, I've experimented with puzzles, mail art, doll clothes, and books/zines. I use reclaimed or everyday materials like cardboard, magazines, and ubiquitous computer paper to make my art accessible and not too precious to manipulate.

I frequently collect images by people who may or may not identify as artists, but who have some relationship with each other. I compile them through animation morphs or replacement animation, artist books, community magazines, and photo series. Following a history of ambiguous authorship in public art, I hope this practice empowers people to join in the making.
Melody (Yu-Hsuan) Hsu is a multidisciplinary creator from Taiwan. Melody is soulfully inspired by both her cross-cultural identity and her background in visual arts. Before Boston, she grew up in Beijing and went to a British international school where she expressed herself in fine arts. At Emerson College, Melody explored her artistic identity and found herself as a multidisciplinary artist with interests in production design for stage and screen, concept development for installations, model building, and painting. She graduated in 2019 with her BFA in Theatre Design and Technology.

Melody is a curator of works that strive to express, educate, and entertain. She has led a wide array of projects from ideation to execution. Having designed for plays like “Abortion Road Trip,” which was nominated for the 38EVY’s award for Outstanding Scenic Design, she has also been invited to design a collection of short films, including music videos like “Get Out of My Head” by Four Years Strong, recently premiered on Billboard.

During Melody’s final year of college, she was the proud recipient of the Student Award of Distinction, recognized for her exceptional impact within the college community. Melody looks forward to continuing to grow into the empathetic and impactful designer that she knows herself to be as she returns to Emerson in the fall to pursue her Master’s degree in Media Design.

“The body remembers what the mind forgets.” My art is personal; it is a process of self-discovery. I create in an attempt to recall and explore the intricacies of my identities embedded within my subconscious.

When I paint, I unpack and examine memories that are brought to light. As I watch my childhood innocence intertwine with the complexity of being a multicultural adult, I have learned to love my unique identity unconditionally.

To me, experiences bring dimensions to memory the same way light and shadow reveals the form of an object. So I paint in black and white as it lets me see details clearly and brings peace to my chaotic mind.

Walking with Grandma, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 36”

Walking with Grandpa, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 36”
Claudia YeeJae Kim

Through my artistic practice, I bring out the content of family conflicts, racial microaggressions, and oriental fantasy that are present on the screen to the physical space. My research is based on conversations through text messages, video calls, and online dating apps. Screenshots and recordings of my family and home allow me to envision trauma, miscommunication, and lack of boundaries. Such misrepresentation of Korean society. Meanwhile, online dating apps have become a safe place where strangers can openly indulge their fantasizes about me as an Asian woman. By letting the strangers have an agency to assume my nationality and choose to wear, I construct images out of the conversations with the strangers. Through the use of Korean traditional fabrics, called “Hanbok,” my Korean heritage and roots are represented in my body of work. Hanbok fabrics also play a vital role in reclaiming “Asianness” that is often misrepresented and stereotyped in Western culture. Act of sewing serves as a tool to reconstruct the conflicts and traumas that are derived from the differences in generations, values, and pursuits among family members. Moreover, sewing enables the juxtaposition of Western fantasy towards Asian women with the fabrics that are perceived to be oriental. I continue to open up space to the public to have discussions on the discomfort that is provoked by the exposure of privacy.
Eugene La Rochelle was born in Fulda, West Germany in 1987. As the son of an American soldier, he spent his formative years traveling between military installations. Through military culture, he examined and learned the effects of US military colonialism and its effects on the surrounding country. This experience has directly informed his work on miscegenation and identity. After graduating with a Masters degree from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in 2013, he has been focusing on identity politics in South Korea and how American foreign policy has directly affected the treatment of mixed race Koreans today.

“Where are you REALLY from?” – a question dreaded by multiracial Americans like myself – is many mixed children’s initiation into a lifetime of navigating their identity, planting a seed of awakening that how they perceive themselves is often at a great disconnect from how they are perceived by others.

But how is one to navigate racial identity if claims of ownership and belonging can be denied from multiple perspectives in parallel? As much as my claims to an American identity have been approached with suspicion by those who consider it inexorably linked to whiteness, my claims to an Asian identity have simultaneously been interrogated by others who link “Asian-ness” to an idea of racial purity.

My work exists at the intersection of two races, trapping me in an uncomfortable liminal space providing access to both, but entry to neither. I explore the themes of Racial Impostor Syndrome, and the resulting isolating effect of being repeatedly Otherized, whether in the States, or in my mother’s homeland of Korea. My pieces contemplate the struggle to self-define my identity in a world where those definitions are imposed on me without my consultation, negotiation, or involvement. And yet, amidst the sharp yearning to find escape from the shackles and confinement of Otherness, my work finds a glimmer of hope in the possibility that my fellow mixed-race travelers on this ceaseless, tiresome journey of identity-navigating may confer membership to a special family of our own.
Feeling inspired by the spirit of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, I started this series as a means to look inward. Not to demand anything of or to make any assumptions for myself. I simply sought to check in on what, how, and where I was experiencing thoughts and emotions pertaining to my identity in that present moment.

What surfaced from this was great polarization. I’m more out and proud to be queer than ever before, and yet I still feel unsettled in claiming that truth. I’m the farthest I’ve ever lived from my family, my roots, and yet I feel more connected to my Chinese heritage now than ever.

My Chinese heritage is intrinsically linked with much of my childhood trauma and the many harmful ideas I’ve been working to unlearn. And yet, it is also a dimension to my being that I wouldn’t ever wish to not exist because I have found so much incredible connection and comfort in its space.

The drawings in this series present indeterminate parts of a complete whole. They are my nuance. They are reassurances for others.

Brenda Lau is a Boston-based visual artist utilizing her creative process as a mindfulness practice. She is primarily inspired by the relationships between and surrounding existence within our flesh and the rest of the natural world. Her work is an intimate projection of her seeking, yearning, accepting, as well as learning.
Heidi Lee, Unbound Visual Arts (UVA) Vice-President, resides in Jamaica Plain. She worked as the Artist in Residence for the Common Art program for seven years, where she guided and instructed unhoused community members. She coordinated many exhibits for the program throughout the Boston area, including Common Art’s involvement in City Heart, a citywide art exhibit and sale for homeless and low-income artists. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts with a concentration in Painting from Gordon College and a Master of Education with a concentration in Visual Arts from Lesley University. She founded the art program at an inner city middle and high school in Hyde Park, taught there for nine years, and has since been teaching students of all ages independently. She works in mixed media, acrylic, and oils at her studio in Newton.

Many years through many tears
Seen not for who I am
Rather the smallness of my eyes
Mirror mirror
Cannot see you
Look away
Your image pains me
Mirror mirror
Look at me
Cannot run, Cannot hide
Mirror mirror
Don’t kill me
Forgiveness heals not time
Mirror mirror
Now you are safe
No need to smile
Mirror mirror
Can you see
Finally, I can receive me

Heidi Lee

Finally I see you
Acrylic on panel
20 x 16”
Madeline Lee

My paintings reference old family photos during my father’s childhood as a first-generation Korean American that I will never get to ask him about. I reflect on the silently missing pieces of my family history, noticing the gestures of joy, intimacy, and familiarity that appear their images from the late 1960’s. I see my family’s gentle gazes and hands intertwined, underplayed like the decades of their lives they hardly mention. I wonder about the America they first came to. Being Asian and American has meant leaving parts of our stories behind, but to be Asian American- we find ways to tell our stories more fully with colors, layers, and contradictions, acknowledging the tremendous loss and resilience that it took to become ourselves.

Madeline Lee is a visual artist who explores the intersections of identity and place. She studied at Tufts University, and has a deep curiosity for changing landscapes and the stories we tell through sharing food and spaces. Madeline has had recent work in The Waste Land on Earth? (UVA+Harvard Ed Portal Gallery, 2019) and The Emotion Revolution (Dorchester Art Project, 2020).

Foxfield II, oil paint on canvas, 36 x 48"

Missing Pieces, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 20"
Niki Li

Niki Li is a Chinese artist and designer who works primarily in graphic arts. Li’s work is based on the reflection of globalization on people’s mindsets and contemporary ideologies. Li mainly uses the language of graphics to create an open dialogue on cultural appropriation, cross-cultural misinterpretation and consumerism. Her artwork initiates a conversation with the audience and arouses their contemplation on the social issues that permeate our daily life.

Currently working passionately as a graphic designer in New York City, Niki holds an MFA degree from The School of The Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University.

The overall graphics of this screen print mimic the brush-strokes of the Chinese character ‘搗’, which means ‘FUCK’. The burger and donuts symbolize the critique on capitalism and consumerism; The dollar sign placed on the woman figure’s vagina creates a conversation on the objectification and fetish of Asian women, Asian women stereotypes, and also on the relationship between money and love.
Julia Madden has lived all of her life on the east coast, and received her BFA in illustration from Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Her passion has always gravitated towards the arts and expressing herself through the creative process. Julia loves to utilize bright and unnatural color palettes to evoke feelings and moods for her pieces. Her travels and adventures abroad inspire much of her artwork. Her fluency in design and illustration create unique artworks that reveal the human hand.

Everyone has felt a sense of ‘otherness’ in his or her lifetime. Otherness is defined as the fact or quality of being different. The term otherness is based on the representation of different people in a society controlled by groups that have greater power. Identity is thought to be natural or innate, however it is intrinsic and not seen by all. For me, very strongly about being accepted as an Asian American woman. My identity of being American is frequently questioned. It starts with the question of “Where do I come from?” When I say America they continue with “Where is your family from?” Calling myself American does not suffice as an answer for people. Coming to terms with not being truly seen by society as either ethnicity, I am trapped between two worlds of not fitting into either race. From the years of bullying because of my appearance, I have denied my identity for most of my life, but I cannot ignore it. I have been in denial of my otherness from my community by avoiding anything having to do with Chinese culture. I have looked in the mirror with no connection to my appearance. Growing up in a majority white Caucasian community, I don’t realize my ethnicity until I’m confronted with the question “Where are you from?” It leads to the disconnect of my identity of where am I from and how I fit into this society, this country of America.
Jaspreet Mahal

I work at Brandeis University with Student Accessibility Support, working with students with disabilities. My education is in Sustainable Development and Women, Gender and Sexuality studies. I follow Ambedkarite philosophy and have been actively working to understand and dismantle caste as a system of oppression. I have worked with different mediums in the past and am currently working in mixed medium acrylics. I have been in multiple exhibitions in the last year around Somerville/Watertown and am interested in sharing my artwork for the advocacy of anti-caste movement. I received an Arts Grant from Brandeis earlier this year for creating some parts of the art project called ‘Reclamation of Humanity’ that I am sharing in this exhibition.

This series of paintings are called ‘Reclamation of Humanity’ which are based on Dr. Ambedkar’s work on the anti-caste movement. Through these paintings I want to bring the various aspects of caste discrimination and bring the historical struggle of the anti-caste movement to the forefront. The paintings also aim to break the dominant narratives from South Asian communities everywhere which often silences ‘caste’ as a means of oppression existing today. Recognition that caste oppression exists and manifests in lives of South-Asian communities is integral to breaking the oppression.

Right to Water, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20
My grandfather trained as a soldier in a junior military academy in Hiroshima and was one of the first responders to the atomic bombing on August 6th, 1945. This is one of many vignettes my mother has told me of her family’s endurance and fatigue with imperialist Japan. As a scrolling comic, I wanted to interpret my mother’s narrative of her late father and how his ideals, both personally and nationally, led him and his family to a breaking point. Nationalism was this obsessive cult - citizens revered their emperor as a literal God and were willing to make ultimate sacrifices. However, these illusions shattered with the end of the war and subsequent exposure of the emperor as a frail, small human. People felt betrayed and mourned all they had lost. This is the first part of the comic.
Matthew Okazaki

What are you? The question I have been asked my whole life. They ask because to them, I am both foreign and familiar. I am close, but not quite; I am other, but not so other. I am half-white, and I am half-Japanese. Always half of a whole. I am the half that is convenient for you; predicated by the context in which we are in. I talk about race. They say, you’re not really a minority; you’re white just like us. Privileged like us too. I eat shrimp chips. They say, oh that stinks; that’s so Asian. Always a foreigner, the reclamation of my identity lies in the in-between of cultures, in the blur between both. The border becomes territory; this is where I stake my ground.

My grandfather spent his youth in the internment camps during World War II. They stayed in horse stables and campground barracks. In the middle of war, in the middle of the desert, surrounded by barbed wire fences and outposts and armed guards, some of my grandfather’s fondest moments happened while he was in camp. How could such a horrific place be filled with such happy memories?

For my grandfather, despite the incredible hardships, it’s possible he took comfort in this place. Perhaps he took comfort in the blur, because he too couldn’t firmly ground himself anywhere else, as he struggled his whole life constantly being torn between being Japanese, and being American. I dedicate my work to him.

Matthew Okazaki is an artist, architect, and educator born in Oakland, California, and currently based out of Boston, Massachusetts. His interest lies in spaces of the in-between: territories of ambiguous identity, cultural thresholds, and places of convergent identities and histories. His work investigates the dynamics of power, influence, and exchange that occur in the threshold, and the reconciliation of identity in places of manifold authorships. Matthew received a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from UCLA and a Master of Architecture from Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. He currently teaches undergraduate architecture and design studios at Northeastern University and Brandeis University.

Ojichan’s Home, Crystal City, Texas, 1945, mixed media: digital collage with acrylic paint and wooden model, 11 x 14
Jennifer Jean Okumura

Jennifer grew up in Philadelphia and has been creating art for over 15 years. She attended Syracuse University in addition to receiving her MFA from Boston University. She has a strong comprehensive knowledge of the Art Market: Modern and Contemporary Art with diverse and extensive Fine Art experiences such as Operations Manager, Fine Art Consultant, Design Associate, Adjunct Educator at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and currently sits on the board as President and founding Exhibition Chair for National Association of Women Artists, Inc. MA chapter.

Featured works in Massachusetts State Senate (State Senator Will Brownsberger), Kayak, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Boston College Office of Marketing Communications, Morgan Stanley, Acadian Asset, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Worcester Polytechnic Institute Collection, Aetna Corp. Collection, Richard Flood Educational Services LLC and several Private Collections.


In the NOW, provocative in a decorous way, optimistic—these terms characterize me as an Artist. I believe art and its ability to elevate people are what inspire me every day. My new series ‘Knots of the mind’ explores the ongoing melee between the heart and the mind, complicated by love, hunger, power, doubt. Knots bind—like an embrace? as a restraint? Twisted strands of thought and feeling in our souls. Should we leap or remain motionless?

Everyday Thoughts, oil on canvas, 38 x 50
Thai contemporary artist and landscape architect, Ponnapa Prakkamakul uses painting as a tool to experience and understand her surrounding environment. Her work explores both physical and social boundary of landscape in order to understand cultural displacement and isolation issues among immigrants. Ponnapa holds a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture with honors from the Rhode Island School of Design where she received Lowthorpe Fellowship Award upon graduation. She is also a recipient of David Bethuel Jamieson Artist of Color Residency & Fellowship at C-Scape Dune Shack in Provincetown, Vermont Studio Center Artist Fellowship and Residency, Residence Lab’s artist-in-residence program at the Pao Arts Center in Boston, and Manoog Family Artist Residency program at the Plumbing Museum in Watertown with four paintings in the museum’s permanent collection. Her work has also been exhibited in several galleries in the greater Boston area including Fountain Street Gallery, Beacon Gallery, Boston Center for the Arts, Mosesian Center for the Arts, Boston Society of Architecture, the Brookline Art Center, and Gallery 263. Additionally, Ponnapa’s hybrid digital drawings have been published in the book Representing Landscapes by Nadia Amoroso, the international Journal Landscape Architecture Frontiers, and featured on the cover of the international peer-reviewed design magazine Topos.

As a painter and a landscape architect, site investigation and immersion play an important role in Ponnapa’s work. She explores sites and environments using the painting process as a tool to experience, understand, and form connections with her surroundings. Ponnapa’s art reflects her immersive experience engaging with the landscape through the performative acts of searching, studying, and collecting natural materials to paint with, as well as sketching in situ. In the studio, the collected materials such as soil, plant, groundwater, and rust from found objects are applied on paper as the painting medium depicting the landscape scenes where they were assembled from. These natural materials represent the real colors of the earth and texture of the leaves connecting the viewers back to the site. This painting process not only creates a connection between Ponnapa and the site but also fosters a deeper connection to new places as an immigrant – through art she cultivate her sense of place in this new land.

Sampan, laser cut engraving on painted plywood (3D), 1.5 x 3’

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Sampan explores the function of Chinatown as a figurative oasis for the lives, history, and culture of the Chinese people. The words of community members are inscribed on the benches, translated into English, Chinese and Braille in an effort to give these stories access to a broader audience. Inspired by the form of the boat, the rocking motion at the fulcrum of each bench evokes universal feelings of support, bringing to mind the nurturing cradle of the womb.
These pieces are part of a larger series depicting ordinary locations in Hong Kong and re-imagining them through the eyes of a kid fascinated with the fantastical folklore I grew up with. Displayed here are four illustrations of the series showing the discovery of a baby qilin in the neon streets of Tsim Sha Tsui, the famous ‘Goldfish Street’ of Mong Kok where koi are sold in giant luminescent tanks, the densely packed apartments of ‘Chungking Mansions’ wracked by summer typhoons like dragons, and the fishing boats full of fresh seafood at Sai Kung Harbour where the deep green waters hide coral reefs and creatures alike.

Hailing from Hong Kong and Singapore, Christina Qi recently graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design and is now working in Boston as a concept artist at OtherSide Entertainment and illustrator for various other game projects. She paints big monsters for a living now and is very grateful for all the distances she’s traveled to get here. Her accolades include recent scholarships from Pixelles, the International Game Developers Association, and GLITCH.
Nepali cinema is popular among working class folks only. This trend may be changing now, but during the nineties and even early two-thousands, it was extremely rare to see affluent and educated citizens of Kathmandu or Nepali-Americans as consumers of Nepali films. While Hollywood was an entertainment entity reserved for a very limited upper-class Nepali audience, Bollywood or the Indian media remained the in demand choice for most middle and upper-middle class Nepalis. These trends are a result of both, internalized white supremacy as a legacy of European colonial history and India’s current imperial hold in South Asia. Nepali film posters symbolize an identity that often gets overshadowed in Nepali-American spaces either by new immigrants who are financially (more) privileged or by second/third generation immigrants who usually have more access to resources, as well as in Desi spaces by Indian representations and their narratives.

The project’s title is an eponym of Rajesh Hamal, who arguably is the biggest actor that Nepal has had. Hamal’s career was based on playing hyper-masculine characters that served as role models for an entire generation of men. Contrasting his images and similar film posters with portraits of a queer person and poems that question the limitation of those depictions, give light to the many other ways of being a Nepali “man.” It also reminds the audience of our overlooked yet resistful existence as Queer-Nepali-Immigrants.

Neha Rayamajhi is a part-time storyteller, a socioeconomic justice based philanthropy worker and a Pisces, based in Boston. Kshitiz K.C. is a programmer, a football enthusiast and an astrology naysayer, based in Austin. The two met in the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal many years ago and continue to grow as friends and collaborators since then. Both were born and raised in Nepal and are currently non-citizen immigrants in the US.
M. A. Rosegrant

M. A. Rosegrant tells stories from the crossroads/intersections/spiral of space and time to manifest worlds through words. Urgently driven by communing with ancestors, they make art through excavation. As a descendent of transmuted/erased/colonized histories, Rosegrant stares at the blood and bones of memory; of their/our history; of how we have come to see ourselves and each other in order to imagine futures centered in vulnerability, community, and a radical tethering to time (where we have been and where we can be). Through theatre (ANG UNANG PINYA AT KAALAMANG-BAYAN), poetry (MY ISLAND OF MANY GODS), and teaching, they explore language as a site of reclamation and possibility. And in community organizing and education, Rosegrant works to invoke communities’ individual abilities to forge narrative autonomy through storytelling.
Mel Taing

Mel Taing is a Cambodian-American photographer & experimental filmmak-er based in Boston. She received her BFA in Film/Video at the Massachusetts College of Art & Design in 2016 and graduated with Departmental Honors. Mel creates portraiture that expresses the beauty of resilience. Her personal aesthetic is rooted in creating colorful environments that are filmic, dreamy and slightly surreal.

As a child of Cambodian refugees in America, Mel is deeply interested in vi-sually exploring concepts of intergenerational trauma, racial identity, spiritual-ity, and resilience in community. Mel's notable collaborations include a project called BLACK, BROWN, OTHER -- a photo essay on the alienation of queer artists of color within their communi-
ties featured in Nylon Magazine, and PREJUDICE IS A DISEASE, a photo series embodying concepts of Yellow Peril in the time of COVID-19 featured in The Boston Globe and Artscope Magazine. Mel has exhibited her photography in Brooklyn, NY, Boston, MA and Lowell, MA.

She also works as a photographer and Project Media Coordinator for the Co-mida Casera Project, an ongoing, multi-generational event using food and stor-ytelling to connect women and create community. Mel is an exhibition and event photographer for institutions such as ICA Boston, MIT List Visual Arts Center and the Peabody Essex Muse-um. Her museum work has been fea-tured in The Boston Globe, ArtNet, Ga-rage Magazine, and edibleBOSTON.

I have always struggled to trace the nar-rative of my racial identity as Cambodi-an-American. Thousands of years of Cam-bodian art and culture was almost entirely destroyed. An entire generation of artists and makers were killed in just four years. The time of the Khmer Rouge regime remains a dark cloud that is too morbid to speak about yet too tragic not to mention.

There is a profound absence where Khmer voices should be -- and it is in this space that I want my art to exist. My parents' generation focused on survival; they did not have time or resources to create and process their experiences. As I went on my own journey to educate myself on the his-tory of Cambodia, I found a new genera-tion of Khmer artists and writers. These are the makers who continue to preserve the ancient art of Khmer classical dance and write incredible poetry that isn't centered only on trauma. Their ability to transform ghosts and pain into beautiful, new stories is where I draw my inspiration. My work, until recently, has avoided the history and truths of my upbringing. It is incredibly important that I make my work not as a victim, but as a witness.

I create portraiture that celebrates the beauty of resilience. My personal aesthetic is rooted in colorful portraiture that is filmic, dreamy and slightly surreal. My work seeks to explore concepts of intergenerational trauma, racial identi-
ty, spirituality and transformational resilience.
Melissa Teng

Melissa Teng is a designer, artist, and researcher who creates processes and events using new media to explore social issues collectively. She is particularly interested in memory and imagination within carceral and computational systems. She recently co-produced a virtual reality film series with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated folks for a prison reentry program and designed a data literacy curriculum for teens for the City of Boston.

Previously, she was an Adjunct Faculty at Emerson College and taught a course on participatory design and research. She worked as a data visualization designer, working on open data websites for North and South America governments. Her design work has been featured in the New York Times and the Atlantic, with awards from the Webby’s, Kantar’s Information is Beautiful, FastCompany, and Awwwards. Melissa has presented her research at international conferences, the Games For Change Festival, and local classrooms. She served as the co-director of the gallery at EMW Community Space, a non-profit focused on building up local, early-career artists of color.

Melissa received her MA in Civic Media from Emerson College and BA in Economics from Rice University.

How do we approximate intimacy with technology? In what ways do we apply surveillance as a form of care?

As a child of diaspora, my memories are scattered across oceans, decades, and unfamiliar places I did not choose to visit. My identity and heritage become non-linear timelines, revolving with gravitational force around embodied memories of spaces I have called home — like my grandparents’ small apartment in Chengdu, with its light bouncing off walls, shapes of comfort objects, views outside windows, and smells of herbal medicine.

In the absence of shared physical space with my families, I am interested in the ways that we strive to create “mediated intimate spaces” through technology. I share GIFs on WeChat with family members I have never hugged. I send articles to my parents about political topics we can’t discuss in person. I can stream surveillance footage of my grandparents in their bedroom, ostensibly for their safety but more often for my comfort.
Jessica TranVo

Jessica is a Boston, Massachusetts based artist that works in collages/mixed media. She has Bachelor degrees in Fine Art, English Literature, and a minor in Art History. She collages digitally or on paper with found images, sometimes using paints. Anxiety and escapism is a recurrent theme through her surrealist collages. As a bilingual and bisexual Vietnamese American artist, she finds space for first-generation anachronisms from neither here nor there.

My collages and photo montages are surreal narrative in a feminine asian identity. Found images, like new words, are reworked into nature, desserts, and galaxies. I wanted to see vintage asian, Vietnamese women in collages art, the same way other vintage women travel across time and reality in the medium. So I collage my great-grandma into a few of them.
I am a storyteller, connector and an interpreter. My work evokes themes of familial ties, memories, and rituals amongst issues of social justice and intersectionality. As a 1.5-generation Vietnamese American interdisciplinary artist and organizer, I am passionate in creating spaces and platforms for cross-cultural storytelling and critical discourse that challenges inequity. I thread my social practice through photography, painting, and sculpture so that my art can resonate and engage audience with intentionality. My experiences as a person of color working with communities inside, outside and beyond the United States have informed my framing of realities, visions and possibilities. My deepest influences include my family and friends as well as fellow artists and changemakers from the past, present, and beyond.

I am driven to visually preserve the stories and experiences from communities of color, refugees and immigrants. Through this documentation, I hope to establish new modes of resistance to interrogate and counteract the dominant narrative. I am particularly invested in the intersections of storytelling, cultures, and activism, spotlighting those who are willing to step out of bounds to advance social change. The arts serve as portals into realms of re-imaginations pivotal to restructuring the status quo and speaking truth to power. I embrace my responsibility to facilitate work that contributes positively to my local and global community.

Ngoc-Tran Vu (she/her) is a Vietnamese-American interdisciplinary artist and organizer whose socially engaged work draws from her experience as a community organizer, facilitator, and healer. Tran moves between mediums and materials to work in photography, painting, sculpture and social practice so that her art can best resonate and engage with its audience intentionally. Born in Vietnam, Tran came to the United States with her family as political refugees and grew up in Boston’s Dorchester and South Boston working-class neighborhoods. She received her MA in Arts and Politics at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and her BA in Ethnic Studies and Visual Arts at Brown University. Tran works across borders and is based in Boston’s Dorchester community. www.tranvuarts.com
As Chinese Americans, what have we inherited from our past generations? What are the things we decide to bury, and what do we pass on? "The Threads that Bind" investigates how we activate, understand, and heal the legacies of our past. This painting is a portrait of my grandmother - a Chinese biologist and pianist who grew up during the Mao era - and also a portrait of me.

Growing up, I was often told by my family that I look exactly like my 內內 She was many admirable things - an orphan who survived the Nanjing Massacre, who became a scientist and musician, who came out of the reeducation camps. She was also a mother who raised her child during the Cultural Revolution "lost generation", and could not provide the love and kindness that her son (my father) needed. Faces sometimes skip a generation, and my father, who was the subject of violence from his mother, would return the violence to me.

Making "The Threads That Bind" caused me to reflect on the cyclical behaviors of intergenerational traumas that become embedded in Chinese American culture: reenacting violence as an attempt to heal, remaining silent as an attempt to be strong. The initial version of this piece had cloth fully covering the painting, but as I thought about how my family has silenced pain as a (futile) way to not pass it on, I realized that the shroud needed to be split: the only way to break the cycle of trauma is to draw that curtain, remember our pain, and speak it out loud.

Lily Xie is a Chinese-American artist and educator whose socially engaged work explores radical imagination, reimagined histories, and other routes to collective resilience. Lily shares strategies adapted from her drawing and bookmaking practices as tools for community empowerment and justice.

Lily is the co-founder of Moon Eaters, a Boston-based collective of queer Asian-American artists. Most recently, she was an artist-in-residence in the Boston Chinatown community as part of a creative placemaking residency with the Asian Community Development Corporation and Pao Arts Center. Lily is part of New England Foundation for the Arts’ Creative City 2020 cohort for artists creating socially-engaged public art, and has received funding for her work from the Boston Foundation and the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture. Lily’s work has been displayed at the Boston Center for the Arts and Pink Noise Studios.

Lily is currently a researcher at the MIT Media Lab’s Lab for Social Machines. She resides in Jamaica Plain, MA.
Unbound Visual Arts (UVA), incorporated in 2012, is a 501(c)(3) contemporary visual arts non-profit organization. UVA, based in Allston-Brighton, creates curated exhibitions and provides opportunities for its member artists. UVA’s educational exhibitions and programs emphasize fair opportunity, accessibility, and understanding. As such, UVA’s programmatic, financial, and informational resources pro-actively encourage equity and inclusion. A major part of Unbound Visual Arts’ mission is to present curated educational art exhibitions on important cultural and social topics, such as wellness, non-violence, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. That mission is a unique means of presenting contemporary art exhibitions.

All of UVA’s exhibitions are created to be beneficial to all audiences. UVA has over 200 members and supporters, a combination of artists and art enthusiasts. It has organized over 70 curated exhibitions in nine communities. UVA has organizational memberships in the Americans for the Arts, New England Museum Association, Boston Preservation Alliance, and MASSCreative and has received competitive grants from the Boston Cultural Council the last five years. It also received three Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) Festival Grants to support its annual Mardi Gras & Carnival Celebration of the Arts and its Art Expo/City Heart Show at the Prudential Center. Other funders include Boston College, Harvard University and Berkshire Bank.