March 2022 Issue 7

WHAT WE EXPERIENCE | PIECES OF US

Artist Reflection:
Gabriella Ignacio

As an artist myself, this issue was one of my favorites to help write for and develop. Despite a love for art, however, I had somewhat of a difficult time coming up with how to reflect it in the cover. Should I represent a variety of art in a collage-like format similar to the women's issue? Or should I hone into a specific form of art similar to the sports issue? These questions stayed in the back of my mind for weeks while I procrastinated the process of drawing. In the end, I decided to center the cover around an "artist's corner" situation – a space I felt that many artists can relate to. Whether one's art form is visual arts, dance, music, or even literature, artists often have a designated area to perfect their craft. In the cover, I wanted to pay homage to these spaces that are of utmost importance to many artists.

Letter from the Founders

Dear reader,

Welcome to our seventh quarterly issue! We are proud to present an issue dedicated to showcasing the stories and works of AAPI identifying artists from across the nation. As always, thank you for taking the time to read our magazine. We are so grateful for all of your support.

If you are new to our magazine, our names are Jeenah Gwak and Hope Yu, and we are two high school seniors from the greater Seattle area. Our project began as one of our many ideas. As Asian adolescents living in American society, we have witnessed countless instances of discrimination and xenophobia against people of Asian descent within our communities. Despite living in a relatively Asian-dense region, we have been exposed to various forms of social injustice against Asian Americans, such as the lack of Asian representation in academic curricula and recent COVID-19 related events. These occurrences galvanized us to take action.

Taking into consideration our abilities, we decided that promoting awareness through written works would be the most appropriate for our course of action. Through our magazine, we seek to share the untold stories of Asian-American experiences surrounding racism and societal pressures that are often overlooked in society. We hope to educate and inspire you to take action.

Our magazine, *What We Experience*, is released quarterly, on the last Sunday of every March, June, September, and December, covering the experiences of various Asian identities. This seventh issue, titled “Pieces of Us,” explores the experiences of various Asian-American artists and the nuances of their work, ranging from tattoos and sculptures to traditional calligraphy and film-making. Our team members have researched and written in-depth articles that span the very definition of the term "art", including the exploration of representation in children's picture books to the stories of the first few Asian-American dancers. This seventh issue will continue our series on AAPI individuals in various aspects of society.

Thank you for supporting us in our journey to advocate for the Asian-American community. We hope you enjoy our magazine and feel inspired to share it with others.

Sincerely,
Jeenah Gwak & Hope Yu

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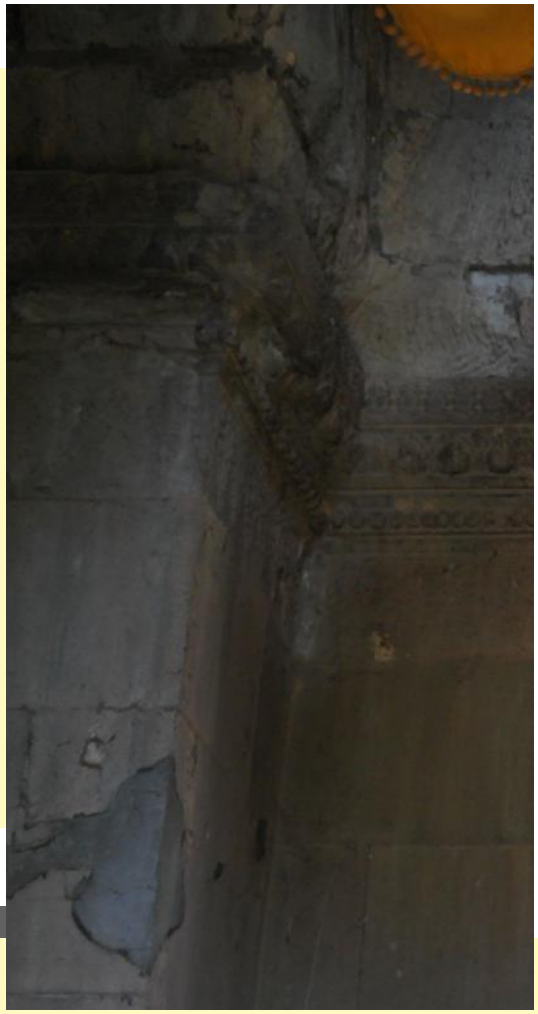

Jade Snow Wang. Photo Courtesy of *SFGate.*

Photo Courtesy of *The Seattle Globalist*

Dancing Across the world

by Meilan Uyeno

"Everyone has his own feeling and his own expression; dance as you feel and as you want." - Michio Ito

To many, dance is an expression of passion and emotion; it tells a story that cannot necessarily be expressed through words. For centuries, dancers have retold old stories and shared their own through their movements, painting pictures that are often reflected in society. From waltz to ballet to Chinese ribbon dancing, each cultural production expresses something different and reflects their own unique society. When these stories are shared with international audiences, they can be interpreted within the context of other cultures, and lead others to gain greater understanding of societies beyond their own.

While every dancer has an image to paint or a vendetta to explore, many Asian-American dancers have produced choreography to show their experiences in America. Many of these dances repeat what appears to be the same narrative through different perspectives, showing the history of separation and convergence of Asian and Western cultures.

Michio Ito, a worldly famed "pioneer of modern Eurasian dance," was one of the first dancers to merge some European style choreography and traditional Japanese dance, creating an entirely new showcase which reflected not only his passions as a dancer, but also his experience as an Asian American. Born in Tokyo, Japan, Ito grew up studying dance and choreography. He learned to dance in Tokyo and later moved through Paris, Germany and the United States to study music and theater as well. Ito was well known for his unique eurythmic choreography that combined Western European and Japanese styles, and he brought his dance to a broad audience from London, the U.S., Germany, and Japan.

Eurythmic choreography is the overall harmonious combination of different dance steps from many different places. Ito connected Japanese arm movements with French footwork, German steps with Japanese music. He produced numbers of intricate

dances, harmonizing different elements with each other.

From a young age, Ito was inspired by many famous dancers such as Isadora Duncan, and though he performed traditional dances such as the tango, he began to add some Japanese movements. Ito studied in Germany before bringing his earlier productions to theater in London and eventually Los Angeles where he influenced modern American commercial dance.

In Los Angeles, Ito taught several classes in which students trained to learn the gestures that "embody his personal aesthetic" (Cowell). Ito's choreography was growing more and more popular in American theaters, and the Japanese techniques he incorporated into his dance influenced other American productions. At the Hollywood Bowl, Ito performed several symphonic dance poems such as Prince Egor and Sheherazade, both of which featured over 100 dancers along with a hundred musicians harmonizing different instruments.

During this time, racial tensions in America were growing regarding World War 2, and immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Ito was interned along with countless other Japanese Americans. The intense rising anti-Japanese sentiment, however, did not diminish the respect Ito's work gained in LA and throughout California; people loved his work and continued to use it for entertainment. Popular choreographers were bringing many of the unique eurythmic elements Ito had introduced into their own productions, and more Euro-Japanese dance productions gained popularity.

After Ito was arrested as an American enemy and interned at a camp in New Mexico, he was deported back to Japan where he continued his life's work as a choreographer. Japanese infused American dance was becoming so popular because of Ito's unique style, the US government decided to hire Ito to direct and choreograph performances for American troops in Tokyo. Ito picked musicians he thought would create unique, harmonious music for his new dances, and constructed productions combining Japanese aspects with other European and American movements.

However, Ito was not the only dancer to incorporate Asian performances into American mainstream entertainment. Devi Dja, a Balinese dancer born on Java Island, Indonesia grew up practicing temple dances (Legong). At the age of 16, she began to spread this form of dance- generally unfamiliar and unknown to Western eyes - beyond the borders of her country. She quickly caught the eye of non-Indonesian producers, and later went on to perform in places across Europe as well as in America.

Photo Courtesy of *The Seattle Globalist*

Legong Dance is traditionally characterized by intricate footwork, detailed finger movements, and expressive gestures. It is considered "one of Bali's most visually alluring royal court performances," depicting angels, adorned in fine jewels and headdresses dancing in heaven. Legong consists of various intricate steps choreographed to a traditional pattern meant to showcase the dancer's flexibility and agility.

Traditionally, Legong dancers typically dance only at young ages and retire by puberty, but Dja continued to dance past the age of 16. Her style of dance was unfamiliar to most Europeans, so she began to pursue productions such as The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Dja choreographed and consulted for films set in Indo-China, and she often appeared as the lead dancer in Hollywood films to implement Indonesian dance into pop culture productions.

As Michio Ito once said, "everyone has his own feeling and his own expression; dance as you feel and as you want." By studying the techniques and movements they were passionate about, both Ito and Dja brought aspects of their homeland into mainstream American entertainment and performed worldwide. We see more and more Asian-American incorporated dance productions in our film and media today, which often influences our perception of various cultural narratives.

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IKEBANA: THE ASYMMETRICAL LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

By Ashley Chen

ABOUT

IKEBANA. For most people, this foreign language word will introduce you to a new realm of art: the art of Japanese floral design.

Ikebana（生け花）means living flowers in Japanese. Aside from the literal meaning of using fresh and live flowers, ikebana also seeks to capture the essence of the life of the flowers that go into an arrangement. The result of capturing the shape and form of the flowers is a style of arrangement that differs widely from Western styles.

Most of us have interacted with Western floral design in some way, shape, or form. At weddings, we have seen white rose bouquets that the bride throws behind her. At big dinner events, a large centerpiece often spices up the table setting with colorful flowers that complement the entire event. But ikebana is different from typical Western floral design – the difference lies in the symmetry, and in the case of ikebana, its asymmetry.

During the fifteenth century, when Buddhism had grounded itself within Japan, ikebana was formed. Both Shinto, an indigenous religion to Japan, and Buddhism stressed the importance of living in harmony with nature, a principle that grounds ikebana to this day (Moriyama and Moriyama 357). Ikebana arrangements reflect this principle as many show the stems of their plants instead of hiding them within a vase.

In contrast, Western culture and religion focuses on one central figure, God, the one deity of Christianity (Moriyama and Moriyama 358). The roundedness and symmetry of Western floral design reflect the concept of centrality as there is one special form flower in the middle, and other filler flowers are designed to support the one central flower.

TYPES OF IKEBANA

Within ikebana, there are different schools, and within some schools are different styles. Some of the most important forms of ikebana include rikka, shoka, moribana, and ichiyo. Each form reflects a different era of ikebana and conveys a different meaning.

RIKKA

Rikka, a part of the Ikenobo School, was the first ikebana style created by Senkei Ikenobo in the Muromachi Period (1338-1573). With its formal upright style, rikka was used in religious offerings. The designs capture the beauty of natural landscapes (Ikebana International) and the four seasons (Ikenobo), going beyond the limits of just flowers to portray a beautiful forest.

"Rikka Flower Arrangement by Shozo Sato (Courtesy of Japan Object)

From Shozo Sato's design, we see the wide variety of flowers and leaves that are used to create an effect of a full space. The stem of green that was picked picked almost looks like its own, individual tree, while flowers of different colors are harmonized with the tree. Out of all styles of ikebana, rikka might be the most complex because of its purpose to reflect all life instead of one portion of it.

SHOKA (aka, SEIKA)

Shoka, also a part of the Ikenobo School, is a more simple and graceful style of arranging. Senjo Ikebono mastered shoka in the 17th century. Generations upon generations have evolved shoka to reflect the characteristics of their own times. Shoka, along with rikka, contain the principles that modern arrangements are based off of, leading to ikebana being an essential part of Japanese culture (Ikebana International).

"Kenzan Seika" by Shozo Sato (Courtesy Japan Objects)

From Shozo Sato's design, we see the wide variety of flowers and leaves that are used to create an effect of a full space. The stem of green that was picked picked almost looks like its own, individual tree, while flowers of different colors are harmonized with the tree. Out of all styles of ikebana, rikka might be the most complex because of its purpose to reflect all life instead of one portion of it.

MORIBANA

One of the more modern styles of ikebana is moribana, or piled-up flowers, taught by the Ohara School. Unshin Ohara, the founder of moribana, broke away from the Ikenobo School in the 19th century, creating a new style influenced by Western-based design (Japan Zone). Unlike most designs that have an intended direction that they are supposed to be viewed from, moribana is an art viewed from all sides, giving a more three-dimensional experience for the viewer (Sato). Furthermore, moribana arrangements tend to be more horizontal than vertical (Ikebana International).

Ohara Moribana (Courtesy of Ikebana HQ)

In this design from Ikebana International, the arrangement is done on the left side of the plate, with an extension to the right side of the plate. The section on the left looks more voluminous compared to earlier arrangements, with a more rounded shape compared to the straight lines and upward direction from rikka and shoka.

ICHIYO

The Ichiyo School of Ikebana is a more contemporary form of ikebana with plenty of resources such as lectures and textbooks. Ichiyo's direction follows the senses, provoking a viewer's sense of nature that is stimulating and profound. This differs from other forms of ikebana that have a specific meaning to their pieces already. Ichiyo depends on the viewer's reaction more than anything else. The current iemoto, Naohiro Kasuya, seeks to balance the elements – flowers and containers – instead of using fastening tools (Ikebana International).

Top: Courtesy of Ichiyo Art
Left: Courtesy of Ikebana International

The two ichiyo pieces provided from Ikebana International and Ichiyo Art are more free-form compared to the three pieces above. They still have identifying features that make them distinctly ikebana. The specific choice of materials based off of the shape and color along with the simple emphasis of natural beauty.

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Photographic Justice: Remembering Corky Lee

By Jeenah Gwak

To many, the development of Asian-American history in New York City is synonymous with the name Corky Lee. After all, as his friend Emil Guillermo recalls, Lee's "bread and butter was simply to be the eyes of the Asian American community." At a time when Asian Americans were excluded from society in essentially every institution, Lee demanded racial justice through a new lens: photography.

The original photograph of the completion of the first transcontinental railroad (1869). Courtesy of National Archives.

Descendants of the Chinese laborers and supporters at the same location, recreating the photograph as a symbolic effort. Courtesy of Corky Lee.

Young Kwok Lee, known to most as Corky Lee, was born on September 5th, 1947, in Queens, New York City as a second-generation Chinese American to immigrant parents, Lee Yin Chuck and Jung See Lee. He was raised in Queens along with his four siblings and attended Queens College to study American history in the 1960s, at a time when the "Asian-American identity" remained unclear to many young people. As Lee would tell others, it all started in junior high school, when he ran across a photograph of the completed transcontinental railroad from 1869 in his textbook. He noticed that although there was a large crowd in the photograph, no one in it was Asian, almost disregarding the labor of over 12,000 Chinese immigrants who were hired by the Central Pacific Railroad. Lee carefully examined the historic photograph with two different magnifying glasses, searching for the Chinese laborers. He didn't find any. Reflecting upon this event, he told NPR, "History – at least,

photographically – says that the Chinese were not present." Having been exposed to such realities of the time, Lee was determined to amend this aspect of the United States' history. He took his first step to rectifying such omissions by gathering descendants of the Chinese laborers and supporters to recreate the photograph at the same location.

Lee's work, however, did not stop here. His drive to ensure the inclusion of Asians in American history where they were left out blossomed while studying Chinese American and other ethnic studies courses at Queens College in the 1960s, when these courses were just beginning to be offered. Ethnic studies professors further fueled his love and respect for Asian-American history, further inspiring him to stand up for the voices of his community. Upon recognizing that his mission in life was racial and cultural justice for Asian Americans, Lee began to carry around a camera everywhere he went, capturing everyday life in the streets, festivals and sporting events, demonstrations and rallies, workplaces, and restaurants. He sought to document the stories and experiences of the Asian-American community through his photography, considering his camera to be a "sword wielded against stereotypes and justice" (CAAM). The filmmaker and producer of the Asian Americans series, Renee Tajima-Pena, commented that Lee photographed Asian-American life at a time when Asian Americans were "virtually invisible."

Asian-American immigration can be traced all the way back to the mid-1800s, when the first wave of Chinese laborers immigrated to the states in search of improved living conditions. In a foreign country with an evident language barrier, these immigrants were willing to receive low wages as compensation for labor. As a result, employers such as the Central Pacific Railroad Company hired these Chinese laborers over White Americans. However, as Lee had found in his school's textbook, although these Chinese workers played a significant role in the construction and development of monumental creations, they were often discredited and racially discriminated against. White Americans accused them of stealing their jobs and taking over their country. And with this, the U.S. Congress eventually set immigration restrictions, first with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 that halted Chinese laborer immigration for ten years, next with the Immigration Act of 1917 (also known as the Asiatic Barred Zones Act) which banned immigrants from other Asian nationalities and required immigrants over the age of 16 to pass literacy tests, followed by the Immigration Act of 1924 that completely prohibited Asian immigrants. The purpose of these legislation, summarized, was to "preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity" (Office of the Historian).

Hostile attitudes against the Asian community only worsened with the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and the introduction of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. The latter legislation allowed immigration from Asian nations; however, only those of high skill were provided entrance to the country as the number of immigrants from a particular country was limited to the numbers of immigrants from that country already living in the U.S. at the time. According to federally-funded eugenicists at the time, "'social inadequates' were polluting the American gene pool" and wasting resources (A History of Racial Injustice).

Especially in Manhattan, New York, where Chinese immigrants settled in ethnic enclaves, the Asian population skyrocketed when strict immigration quotas were lifted in 1965. In turn, neighborhoods became overcrowded and even further exploited by employers. Manhattan's city hall continued to neglect the Asian community, inhibiting all institutional participation in society. In response to the growing anti-Asian sentiments, the Asian Civil Rights movement began to gain momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, which can partially be attributed to inspiration from the Black civil rights movements in the 1960s. Youthful activists, known back then as Asian Americans for Equal Employment, demanded justice

that had been long overdue. They held up signs with slogans, such as the well-known "The Asians built the railroad; Why not Confucius Plaza?" Despite the violent arrests of many protestors, the enraged Asian-American community fought on.

Corky Lee's unique way of capturing the Asian-American life and conditions during these unsettling times served as recognition and acknowledgement of the Asians' fight for justice. Lee considered his photography to just be "an extension of his activism," but it certainly served a far more significant purpose (The New Yorker). For one, his work allowed Asian Americans to come together and recognize their common struggles and yearnings, creating a tight-knit community built on each other's experiences. In 1975 for example, Lee caught on camera Peter Yew, a Chinese-American man, with blood running down his face and being dragged away by the police. The police had beaten him for attempting to stop them from assaulting a teen. This photo eventually appeared on the front page of the New York Post, sparking many discussions regarding anti-Asian sentiment and racial justice for the Asian-American community. Although these photographs inevitably provoked anger, it also brought solace to immigrants, as they came to the realization that they were not in this fight alone.

At a time when immigrants of Asian descent felt invisible in society, Lee helped the Asian-American community see themselves for who they are. Not only did he capture brutal moments, but he also captured daily life, from "the picketer, glaring in the direction of their bosses," to "young couples gazing off into the distance, wondering what the future might hold" (The New Yorker). These photos that captured the everyday life of Asian Americans, in the same way, gave a voice to the Asian-American population. Lee's friends and acquaintances alike spoke about how Lee "helped us see ourselves." As Lee emphasized, the relationship between photography and historical memory proved to be powerful.

Picture of Peter Yew being dragged away by police. Photographed by Corky Lee.

With the increase in anti-Asian sentiments that arose with the COVID-19 pandemic, Lee focused his efforts on justice for racially motivated attacks against the Asian-American community, especially in the Lower East Side of New York. Corky Lee carried his fight for justice until his very last day, when he passed away from COVID-19 on January 27th, 2021.

In ways that strayed away from conventional methods, he was an inspiration to many, and a sliver of hope. Corky Lee gave the Asian-American community a voice, and he left behind a legacy far too monumental for our community to forget.

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Editors Review: AAPI Artists of Contemporary Visual Art

By Hope Yu & Jeenah Gwak

Ai Weiwei

Born in 1957 to the rightest poet Ai Qing, Ai's family was quickly sent to a labor camp and then exiled for the majority of his adolescence. They returned at the end of the Cultural Revolution and Ai enrolled in the Beijing Film academy to study animation. After his education, he moved to the United States as part of the first generation of Chinese students to study abroad. Initially, he studied at UPenn and Berkeley, but he later attended and dropped out of Parsons School of Design and the Art Students League of New York (1983-86). Life in New York exposed him to some of the greatest American artists of the time and, simultaneously, the regular lives of thousands of people. He later returned to China to be imprisoned for tax evasion, and has now lived in Berlin, England, and Portugal.

Ye Haiyan's Belongings (2013)

Much of his physical artwork revolves around quantity and repetition. Still Life (1993-200) is an installation of thousands of stone ax-heads laid out on the floor dating back until around 6000 BC. Sunflower Seeds (2010) is an exhibition where 100 million sunflower seeds were poured into the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern. Lastly, the 2013 exhibit, Ye Haiyan's Belongings, showcases the belongings of a woman evicted by the Chinese from her home with only her hastily packed things and her daughter. She was a women's rights activist and Ai financially supported her after her eviction.

Pacita Abad

Born as a daughter of a Filipino congressman, who hoped that she would go down a similar path in the world of politics, Pacita Abad initially studied law. However, as she traveled across Asia to the Philippines, encountering countries such as Turkey, Iran, Sri Lanka, Laos, and Thailand, she decided to pursue art, drastically changing her career plans. Since her spouse, Jack Garrity, was a development economist, they traveled often; this greatly inspired much of Abad's work. She studied painting at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. and The Art Students League in New York City. In her artwork, she introduced many traditional art practices, such as Korean ink-brush painting, Indonesian batik painting, and Papua New Guinea's shells, as well as raised awareness of political and social issues. Her vibrant, large-scale paintings span a great range of topics from experiences and encounters during her travels. She describes herself as a painter "who paints from the gut," and has a "social responsibility for [her] painting."

L.A. Liberty (1992)

If My Friends Could See Me Now

Haegue Yang

Haegue Yang, born to a journalist and writer in 1971, is a South Korean artist who received a Bachelor's in Fine Arts Degree at Seoul University. She later moved to Germany to further her education. She is now based in Berlin and Seoul and is a professor of Fine Arts at Städelschule. Her artistic style is diverse, but lies within the realm of household objects; she also partakes in performance art and other physical artistic manifestations. Her work is known to be multisensory both by the nature of its creation and the experience of the viewer. The topics covered by her art range from heavy societal commentary regarding faith and technology to philosophical discussions. Much of which is, "empowered by underlying references to art history, literature and political history, through which she re-interprets some of her recurrent themes: migration, postcolonial diasporas, enforced exile and social mobility.".

Installation view of Haegue Yang: When The Year 2000 Comes, Kukje Gallery, South Korea, 2019. Studio Haegue Yang

Christine Ay Tjoe

Born in 1973 in Bandung, Indonesia, Tjoe is an artist of human experiences and emotion. Her broad repertoire encompasses painting, printmaking, textiles, sculpture, and other graphic works. She studied printmaking and graphic art at the Bandung Institute of Technology and is now considered one of the most acclaimed artists in Indonesia with installations worldwide. Not one to be confined to one art form, her artistic style allows for her to transition between mediums without losing her presence and message. A great deal of her work explores the potential and qualities of humankind;

Floating Never Too High

her paintings are filled with harsh and dark but precise strokes that create a three-dimensional effect for the viewer. Initially, she worked within the fashion industry as an assistant designer before transitioning to her current art forms. Her work has been shown across Asia and continues to grow internationally.

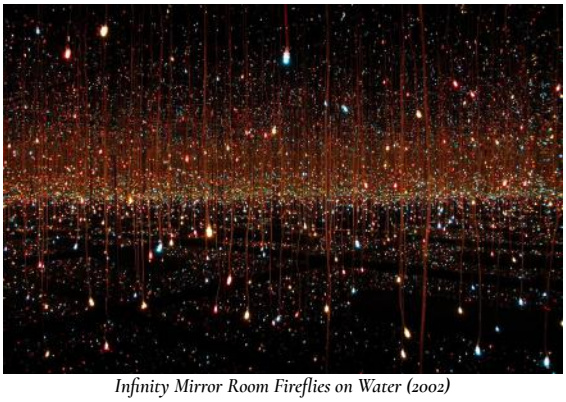
Han Sai Por

Born in Singapore during Japanese colonization in 1943, Han lived in Changi in deep poverty. She was introduced to art and nature at a young age and initially attended school at Yock Eng High School, going on to become a teacher. She then took part-time classes at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts while teaching and eventually was able to save up enough money to move to the UK. While working many odd jobs, she attended Eat Ham College of Art and the Wolverhampton College of Art. In 1983, she returned to Singapore and has been teaching in high level positions and pursuing further studies since. Her artwork reflects the connections of life within nature and she strives to "eliminate everything superfluous to create pure and essential form, rather than a mere superficial imitation of nature." The nature of her childhood had a large effect on her art today and much of her work comments on environmental issues and loss of natural environments.

Black Forest (2016)

Yayoi Kusama

Yayoi Kusama is a Japanese artist known best for her infinity installations and her use of polka dots in her work. She began painting as a child, as she frequently had hallucinations. Many of these often involved fields of dots, which is shown in her art throughout her career. Kusama studied art briefly at the Kyoto city Specialist School of Arts from 1948 to 1949, and moved to New York City in 1957. In addition to painting and sculpting, she explored ideas of anti-war, anti-establishment, and free-love through her performance art, intending to disassemble boundaries for identity and sexuality. Likewise, much of her "infinity" work explored aspects of painting that have never been explored before, exploring physical and psychological boundaries, hypnotic sensation, and obsessive repetition, which can be seen in her mirror rooms that allowed her to create infinite planes. She currently lives in a mental hospital by choice from 1977 after returning to Japan in 1973 and publishing a handful of novels and anthologies.



Infinity Mirror Room Fireflies on Water (2002)

Cosmic Nature (2021 Exhibit)

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Image Courtesy of smokingsamurai.com.

History of Sculpting

By Allison Chan

Many different artists in our world use enameling and bronze sculpting as forms of art. Enameling can be described as an ancient jewelry and decorative art, but there are various types of enamel and it can also be used for ceramics. Enameling is "usually opaque vitreous composition applied by fusion to the surface of metal, glass, or pottery" (Merriam-Webster). On the other hand, bronze sculpting is a three-dimensional art style made out of molten bronze that is shaped then solidified.

Enameling was created in the 13th century BC in Cyprus, and it was soon later introduced to Western Asia through ganoksin jewelry making resources. It is a style mainly used for goldsmithing and jewelry-making. It can also be used for pottery and ceramics. In the past, enamel paint was used to help jewelry shine like jewels. However, enamel paint is now a hard drying solvent-based (also known as oil-based) paint that gives a glossy or glass-like finish to the artwork. There are many different types of techniques for enameling, such as Le Cloisonné, le Champlevé, and la Basse-taille.

Jade Snow Wong was an inspiring enameling artist who also created ceramics to create beautiful, eye-catching art pieces. Wong was born in the year of 1922; she first attended San Francisco Junior College, then later Mills College for higher education. She was one of the first Chinese-American experience writers in the 20th century, drawing inspiration from watching her immigrant parents working in their garment factory. Wong worked as a maid and cook at first to help herself pay for college education, and with this experience, she was able to publish many famous memoirs, such as Fifth Chinese Daughter (1950). Wong loved doing "hands-on" work, such as ceramics. While writing her memoirs, she also worked on ceramic pieces.

Similarly, Namikawa Yasuyuki, who was born in 1845, was an enameling artist who was adopted at the age of eleven from the Namikawa samurai family in Kyoto. He was first trained to become a samurai and later on, he personally attended to the prince-abbot Kuni Asahiko. The prince ended up losing power, so Namikawa returned to Kyoto to study and become a cloisonné artist. He had many famous art pieces, but one was able to capture many audience members' eyes: the 1899 Vase with Flowers and Birds of the Four Seasons (四季花鳥図花瓶).

Bronze sculpting, on the other hand, is a dimensional art piece made out of metal. The art of bronze sculpting was once almost forgotten but then rediscovered. Bronze is made up of different properties: 88 percent copper, and 12 percent tin (widewalls). Oftentimes, many bronze workers just used scrap materials they had (widewalls).

Luo Li Rong is a famous bronze sculptor who was born in 1980 in China. At the age of 20, she participated in many art projects in the Central Academy of Fine Arts. She later graduated with high honors from CAFA in Beijing in 2005. After, she moved to Europe, and is currently making more sculptures. She made many sculptures such as Coup de vent, 2019, and Esprit du guerrier (Spirit of warrior), 2018, art pieces, and much more.

There are many historical artifacts that use these techniques, and because many artists have worked hard to be where they are in art, they were able to make beautiful forms of art that have powerfully affected others.

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Home Within Home Within Home Within Home Within Home (2013).

Do Ho Suh

hope yu

"It's an existential question of what we believe in this world—there are a lot of holes, but we try to believe it's whole, the way a lot of people see the house [sculpture] as an exact replica. There's a lot of rupture and gap. The role of the artist is to see those ruptures."

When Jeenah and I went to the Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM) a couple months ago, we were immediately drawn to Suh's installations. They fit within that category of art that makes you walk around the room to stare at it from all angles. And, while you're hurriedly captivated, it just sits, as if at peace with the ways of the world.

The main installation Suh has in the SAM – centered in the middle of a dimly lit room – is titled *Some/One* (Image 2) and consists of thousands of unique dog tags layered to form a coat of armor. It is Suh's commentary on his experience with mandatory conscription within the Korean military and his thoughts on the individual versus the collective.

This specific art piece has been a constant throughout my entire life. Museum trips for school or for familial enjoyment have been commonplace throughout my childhood. Every time I visited the SAM, this piece caught my eye.

Finally old enough to understand the history behind Suh's creations, I can now begin appreciate how my understanding of this art piece has grown and changed with every one of my visits.

Suh creates timeless art that is consistent in grandeur, but forever changing based on the knowledge of the viewer.

Suh was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1962. His father, Suh Se-Ok, was a critically acclaimed painter who helped lead one of Korea's artistic movements in the 1960's. More of a scholar than our modern day interpretations of an artist, he studied "poetry, literature, calligraphy, ...as part of their [Suh Se-Ok's] virtue," and was considered a true "renaissance man." His mother, a housewife, had, "a tremendous amount of knowledge about traditional art, costumes, and architecture" and a true love for art. Although his parents did not have a direct effect on Suh's profession, he credits his father's aesthetic and their general lifestyle for creating an adolescence surrounded by the world of art (1).

Up until 11th grade, Suh's initial passion was marine biology. However, he didn't have the necessary math scores to enter that degree program in university and instead made the last minute switch to art. To this day, he still reads books about fish and cites how they are "quite relaxing" and help him fall asleep (1).

Suh attended the prestigious Seoul National University where he acquired a BFA (1985) and MFA (1987) in Oriental painting. After fulfilling his mandatory military service, Suh followed his first wife to New York in 1991. The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) was the only institution to accept him, even though he had a master's degree from one of the top universities in Korea. He went on to earn a BFA in painting from RISD and an MFA in sculpture from Yale.

Suh attributes his sculpture origins to a lack of class availability. At RISD, he wasn't able to get into one of his first choice electives (glassblowing class) and instead took "The Figure in Contemporary Sculpture". Jay Coogan, the professor for the sculpture class at the time, recalls how, "His work was so fantastic. It was ambitious in scale and in the kind of global ideas he was working with," (2). Thanks to a clothing related school assignment, Suh's *Some/One* sculpture was created, introducing U.S. viewers to ideas many deem ancient, such as military conscription. The mirroring nature of the piece invites anyone who participates in society into a

conversation pondering the collective versus the individual. He notes that, "That was also right after the L.A. riots, and I think there were some issues related to the Korean-American communities in L.A. during the riots. That was what really allowed me to think about my identity as a Korean in the United States, through that project," (3). His original design for the assignment, titled *Metal Jacket*, was created only a semester after he immigrated from Korea; both pieces represent and comment on the intersectionality between immigration, personal space, and societal structure.

Some/One (SAAM)

After attending Yale for his second MFA, he moved to Manhattan. At the time, he had already scored prestigious showings for his installations including the New York Galvin Brown Enterprise art gallery (1997). His first solo exhibition, named *Floor*, was at Lehmann Maupin in Soho (NYC) in 2000. In 2001, he represented Korea at the Venice Biennale. He moved to London with his second wife in 2010 and had a daughter. In 2011, he began to present film based projects in conjunction and complementary to his sculptures. In fact, *Gate*, "was presented as a contemporary introduction to the Seattle Art Museum's historical collection of Asian Art. For it, Suh used one of his existing fabric pieces and created an animated video drawn from the objects and projected it onto the piece," (4).

Floor

As Suh has moved throughout New York, London, and Seoul, his art fluctuates between ways of existence. Not one to ever fully move past an idea, it is evident how his art builds on itself and creates patterns over the years. The inspiration for *Some/One* came from *Metal Jacket* but even that's a small example. *Public Figures* (1998), a pedestal held up by hundreds of small bronze people, appears to be his first, but certainly not last, public installation that uses figurines to comment on personal space and the credit given to the masses; for example: *Floor* (thousands of small semi-homogenous figurines holding up a clear floor for viewers to walk on) was presented to the world in 2000 (5); *Unsung Founders* was presented in 2005 as a memorial attributed to "the contributions of African American servants and slaves were crucial to its [UNC's] success," (6) at UNC Chapel Hill; *Net-Work* (2010) is a fishing net consisting of thousands of tiny figures draped on an ever changing structure near a sea. This part of his art is seen even in Seattle's beloved SAAM: *Screen* (2007), where hundreds of connected ABS figures in multiple colors are attached to one another in a rectangle sort of wall.

Fallen Star (angle 1)

Fallen Star (angle 2)

These forever evolving installations are consistent over his entire public output of art. His fabric and solid houses are arguably on an even larger scale; sometimes stationary solid objects but other times perpetually frozen in motion. Additionally, his films have changed from additions for fully formed sculptures to new ways to preserve memories.

Sometimes, it seems that we expect artists to stick to one art form with a singular emotion or idea for their entire lives. We – as consumers – all too often condemn musicians for putting out art that strays away from their previous genres, going as far as to critique its authenticity and project our own emotions about our own lives into the way they make and produce music. Historically acclaimed artists are constrained in general high school level education to their most famous works and styles; only the footnotes of school textbooks sparsely explain how these artists evolved as human beings. Suh's artistic evolution reminds me of how musicians sample and reimagine bits of their older work in new music; his identity and experiences with the world are always evolving, but it's still him creating these installations. From how we learn new concepts and ideas to our relationships with one another, human life relies on how we choose to build and connect past experiences and events to form new ways of existence. In that sense, Suh's art is the ultimate manifestation of the human condition (but so is every artists so now what).

Reviews

"Beautiful but sinister, it makes the gallery look like a just-opened tomb, but also evokes the 20th-century military history of Korea. And as if to bring the meaning into the present, the piece is left hollow and open at the back: it has an interior lined with mirrors to reflect the viewer who may want to try this imperious monument on for size." - NYT (2001)

"There is no one place like home in Do Ho Suh's exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. There are many. The variety represents the artist's experience of relocation, transience and rootlessness. It also suggests, less directly, the contemporary age of mass migration, whether forced or voluntary." - The Washington Post (2018)

"During a recent encounter my head was spinning, my stomach felt queasy, my focus blurred. The experience wasn't stark or dramatic but instead came in gentle waves. "Fallen Star" is frankly nauseating. I hasten to add that the nausea is a good thing — an unexpected disorientation that is indicative of the way art can move the body as a way to move the heart and mind." - LA Times (2012)

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Words With Whom I Found Belonging To

By Kaila Karns

When people think of representation in the media, our first thoughts tend to turn to what's on the big screen, on television, or on the radio. However, another avenue of representation stems from the art forms we create, weaving together stories that can only come from Asian-American experiences. Literature provides a space for representation. According to the United States Pew Research Center, the most avid readers within the United States tend to be children, not adults. So that means that many young Asian-American readers are left without positive representation in written media, right? I can recall from my adolescence that there were very few times I have ever encountered anything even remotely related to my ethnicity within the books I often divulged in. There was the bad of course, such as the inherently racist 1938 children's book called *The Five Chinese Brothers* written by two White men, a book that an elementary school teacher of mine thought I might enjoy by default as in her words I was "a fellow yellow Asian." Books like these only harmed Asian children's self-image as well as contributed to an increase in internalized racism and yet somehow they continually topped lists for recommended children's literature, furthering the extent of their damage. That being said, the good ones did stick with me as some of the only moments in time as a child that I ever found any stories of relatability or positive Asian-American representation within a book. It wasn't just me either; children everywhere like to read books they could both identify with and grow their imagination alongside, to dream of worlds unlike their own and to escape into something different – yet still familiar. I recall thinking how unfair it was that Asian Americans were often relegated to side-charactorial positions, deemed too uninteresting and unfit to be the centerpiece of a story too great for them to carry on their own. It was those thoughts I had then that led me to writing, and wanting to share stories that only I could tell to an audience that struggled to find a place of belonging. Thankfully, I was not alone in having those thoughts. These days, there is a much more expansive pool of children's literature available for Asian Americans to peruse. From picture books for the youngest of readers, to novellas and more, for the first time Asian-American children can find more grand tales outside of popular media to come home to, escape into, and to help them feel as if they finally do belong in America.

One of the most prominent immediate examples that comes to mind is that of the children's fictional picture book called *Eyes That Kiss In The Corners*, by Chinese-Taiwanese American author Joanna Ho. This book was published recently in 2021, and features breathtakingly beautiful art by Dung Ho. To summarize, after realizing her eyes are different from her non-Asian peers, a young Asian girl comes to find self acceptance, empowerment, and self love through the strength from powerful Asian women in her life. The book takes an unfortunate common occurrence many Asian Americans face and helps transform what might've been lasting pain into an experience that impressionable young Asian readers can hold tightly onto for self support. Another similar type of children's literature comes from a picture book called *The Name Jar*, by Yangsook Choi. In it, the protagonist Unhei, a young Korean girl, moves to America with her family to go to a new school and begins to wonder if she should also choose a new name after her own comes under fire from non-Asian classmates. Through Unhei's story at a new school, *The Name Jar* ponders about difference, identity, and cultural assimilation as an Asian American. Is it good or bad to be different? What does our name have to do with our cultural identity? And what are the implications of changing one's name in the long term? Ultimately Unhei comes to love her name for what it is, the culture behind it, and what it means both in definition and to her as a person who deviates from the "American" norm, and the book sets a tone that Asian Americans at any age

can relate to. There's also more specific Asian stories to be told now as well, such as the Indian-American story called *Laxmi's Mooch* by Shelly Anand and Nabi H. Ali. This tale shares a young Indian American girl's journey of accepting her body hair after she is teased about her mustache and body hair. After she is compared to an animal by her non-Indian American classmates, her parents help her realize that hair isn't just for heads, but that it grows everywhere regardless of gender or ethnic background and is not something to be shamed for having naturally. Many Indian women grew up shamed for their body hair, with children being pushed into hair removal and young adults told that it's just a matter of hygiene for something incredibly normal and natural. Such stories are often a game changer for many. Imagine growing up "the forever foreigner," always having your differences pointed out and ridiculed instead of celebrated or complimented without characters like these to see yourself in and to feel uplifted by. Stories like these, however insignificant they seem to a non-Asian audience, do so much good – especially at that young and impressionable age.

Image Courtesy of Asia Society

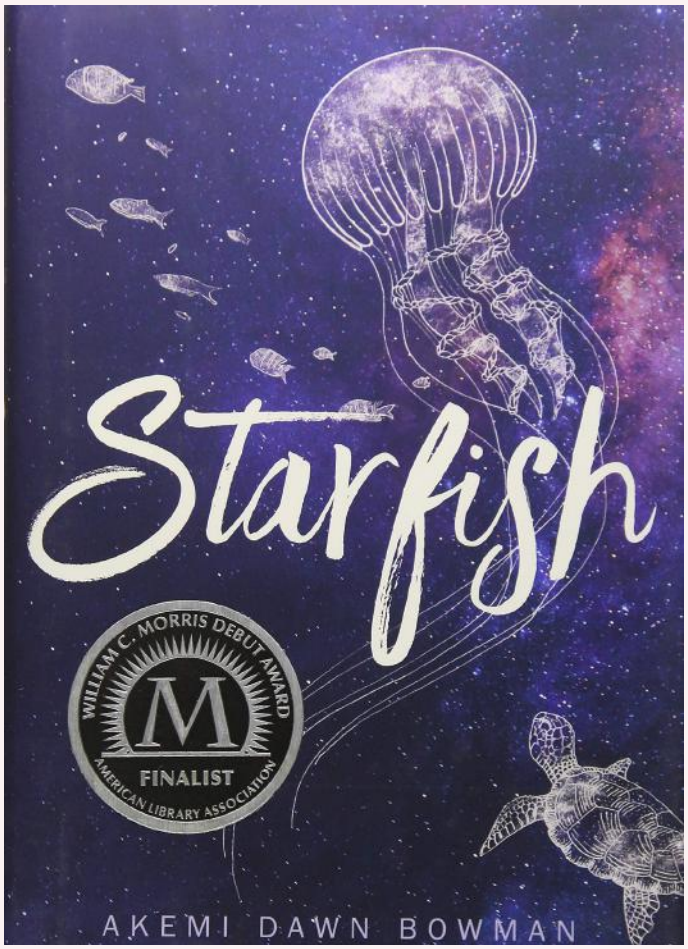
There are more complex Asian-American tales to be told for readers at older ages for children. Certified classics come to mind, such as a novel called *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, by Bette Bao Lord. This tells the story of Chinese Shirley Temple Wong who leaves a secure life in China for America with her parents following World War II. This is a culturally comparative book due to parallels drawn from both Shirley's life in China and in the United States, but there is no push for anyone to decide which is superior to the other. There is no end goal for Shirley to ever give up her Chinese culture in order to completely assimilate to adapt to American culture, which is a positive spin on the topic that not all novels do, even in those written by Asian Americans. It also shares a sense of POC unity by her

Right: The cover of *A Single Shard.* Left: Linda Sue Park.

being a fan of Jackie Robinson, a prolific Black American baseball player who might have also shared some similar life experiences to Shirley's life growing up different from the "American norm." There are also more recent stories that share a different aspect of Asian-American culture through its history, utilizing folk tales to draw up a world much like our own but set in a different time and culture entirely. Some books like these that come to mind are written by Korean-American author Linda Sue Park: *The Kite Fighters,* and *A Single Shard*. Both focus on stories told from ages past, utilizing vibrant and rich Korean history to tell stories that children of today can still relate to, using aspects of their lives often ridiculed in the modern era in a positive way. *The Kite Fighters* depicts the relationship of two brothers in an age and tradition-bound family not unlike one you might find today. *A Single Shard* tells the tale of a ten-year-old orphan boy and his disabled friend, who find their way through traditional Korean pottery, as well as an overarching belief that one should never give up in life, no matter what cards one might be dealt. Both depict historical Korean culture in ways that do not reinforce negative stereotypes, nor do they illustrate the characters as one dimensional tokens. In one, you can relate to the trials and tribulations that come from growing up as Asian with sibling rivalry and sometimes harsh traditions and what that can entail. In the other, you find strength through the protagonist's ability to overcome all – including his own self doubt.

And then of course, are the stories to come. Even outside of children's literature, we have seen a boom in Asian-American writers, filling their own gaps in genres to introduce diverse stories that reflect their own experiences or to expose readers new and old to a wider world unbeknownst to them. For the youth,

Linda Sue Park released another book just this past year which was granted the AAPI Literature Award, called *Prairie Lotus.* It is a retelling of the American classic *Little House on the Prairie*, but from the view of an Asian American living in the same time period and the implications of what that might've been like. *Prairie Lotus* fills a gap that many young Asians in America might have felt for being left out of for not being represented in historical fiction and non-fiction for centuries. This can also be seen in a retelling of the Titanic disaster in *Luck of the Titanic* by Stacey Lee, in which two Chinese acrobats stowaway in the ill-fated trip to New York City in hopes of a better life, as there were eight Chinese passengers aboard the real Titanic's final voyage who had been left unreported on due to them being Chinese. For the biracial Asian-American reader, there are numerous novels to peruse, but one such that comes to mind is *Starfish* by Akemi Dawn Bowman. It weaves the story of a half-Japanese, half-White American art student navigating a dysfunctional and oppressive parental relationship alongside her increasing confusion of her biracial Japanese identity, which is a reality that



The cover of *Starfish* by Akemi Dawn Bowman.

biracial Asian Americans can identify with as many are told to either choose a side or are rejected from both ends entirely. There's also romantic comedies with Asian leads, where neither are being fetishized or having their culture be the only aspect in their identity, such as in *The Dating Plan* by Sara Desai, in which two people plot a fake engagement and may or may not end up falling for each other. And even biographies of prominent Asian Americans, such as *Heart of Fire* by Mazie K. Hirono, written to tell her journey in becoming the first Asian-American woman in the U.S. Senate, while simultaneously relating to stories of many generations in a heartwarming ode to her mother and grandmother. The stories of those who grow up with a much harder truth to share, such as finding out that the "American Dream" that they worked so hard for as a student just cannot be due to the protagonist's parents being undocumented American immigrants risking deportation in the Filipino-American novel *Something In Between* by Melissa de la Cruz.

The Asian-American experience can be any number of things, at times, harrowing and nerve wracking, and at others, joyous and full of love and life. For generations there hasn't been much representation in written media for us. But times have surely changed as now it's gone from barely seeing anything like oneself aside from harmful caricatures we simply took just to claim relation to something, to having individual cultures within Asia represented on a grand scale in a positive and uplifting way; not to say that we still can't just relate to every Asian in America, but to reiterate that Asians in America are not a monolith. Much like the individual stories we carry and we tell, there are things that one Asian family may carry and uphold that another may not. And at long last, there may finally be that representation found in the fresh printed pages in newly made novels lining your favorite local bookstore's shelves. The time to read as an Asian American is now, as more than ever in the times we live in require us to stand strong against any derision or hate flung our way for simply existing and being different. Those differences should unite us, and if it's any indication for future generations that will be exposed to more and more stories from diverse backgrounds, chances are that change for a better future for all is surely upon us. For it is to the words with whom I found belonging to that shaped me into

the kind of person I am today, and I am certain that I am far from being the last to be impacted by the written stories of fellow Asian Americans.

Melissa de la Cruz - *Something In Between*

Akemi Dawn Bowman - *Starfish*

Bette Bao Lord - *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*

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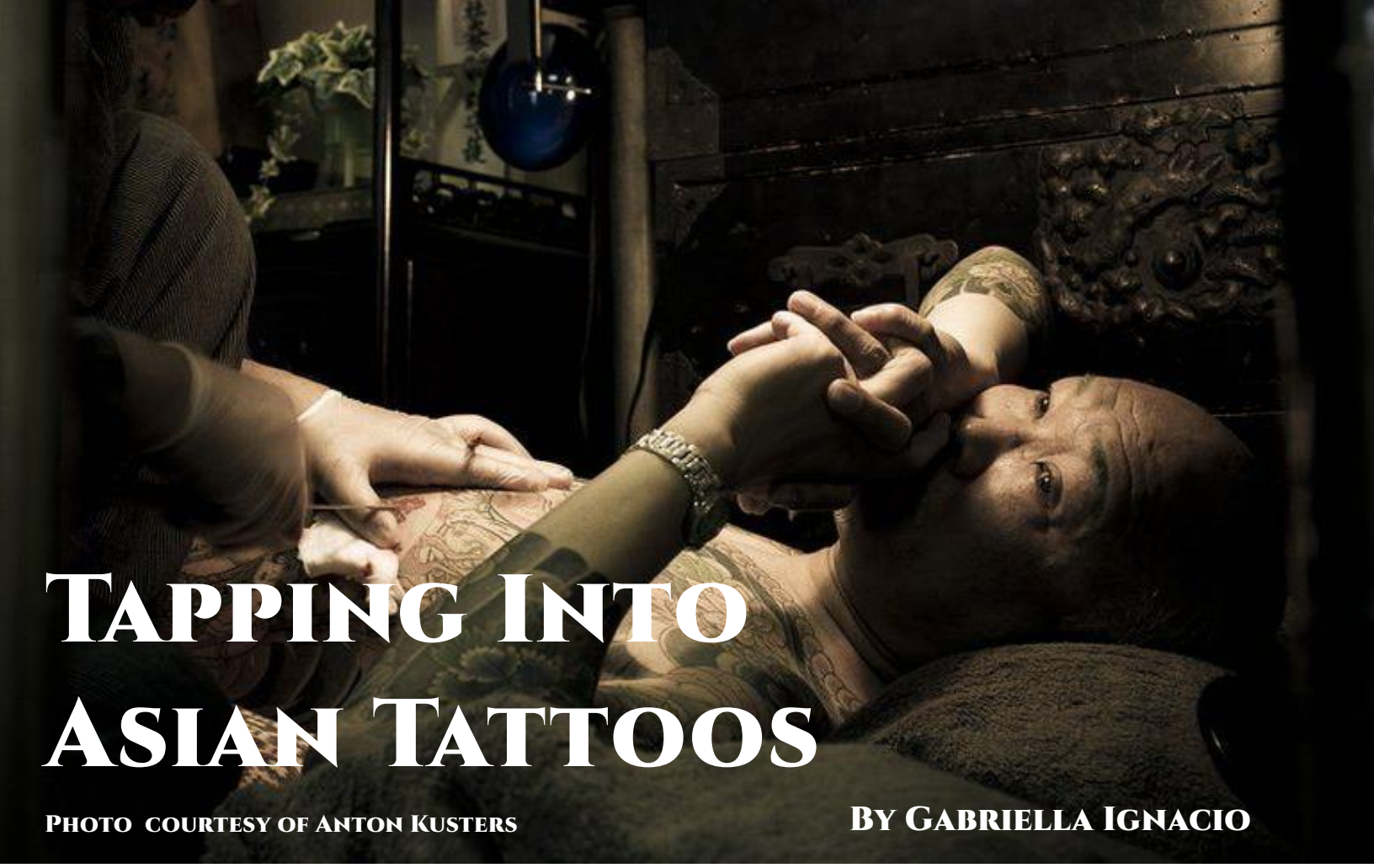

Tapping Into Asian Tattoos

Photo courtesy of Anton Kusters

By Gabriella Ignacio

"For me, a tattoo is an art installation that I get to wear all the time. It's all about self-expression. You get to wear your insides on your outsides." – Malia Jones

As an artist, Asian-American, and avid consumer of reality television, I was intrigued when I came across an episode of the show Inkmaster – one where competitors were prompted to create an Asian-themed tattoo for their clients. Surprisingly, many tattoo artists were eager to take on the challenge, and several of them – including two of the judges – specialized in Asian tattoos outside of the competition. As I continued binge watching later seasons, I couldn't help but notice the recurring mention of Asian artistry throughout the show, which, to this day, has hosted various challenges and guest judges dedicated to Asian styles.

Prior to watching Inkmaster, I had never given much thought towards the impact that Asian art has specifically had on tattoos, and to some, it may seem counterintuitive to think that it exerts any influence at all.

Given the conservative, anti-tattoo mindset that many Asian countries have held onto for decades, it feels only logical for similar attitudes towards Asian tattoos to be reflected domestically. Even so, American tattoo culture has become saturated with Asian influence, ranging from traditional imagery, styles, and characters that all originate from Asian countries. The recent rise of Asian tattoos in the West is largely credited to the tattoo scene of the 1990's, in which Asian and Polynesian tribal tattoos were among some of the most popular styles with Americans ("100 Years of Ink: Tattoo Fads By The Decade."). Since then, the prevalence of these tattoos has only grown, with a vast amount of widely known tattoo artists honing their craft to focus primarily on Asian styles.

While the West has embraced tattoos, Eastern countries today typically associate them with deviance due to their historical symbolism of gang membership, criminality, and slavery. According to Gareth Davey, an anthropologist at Webster University Thailand, tattoos were "used to denigrate ethnic minorities, punish criminals, and brand slaves" throughout Chinese history (Heng). The practice also opposes traditional Confucian values of filial piety and avoidance of injury to the body, which are beliefs not only limited to China, but to countries such as Japan and Korea as well. Japan is particularly against tattoos not only due to religious stigmas, but mainly because they act as a link among members of the Yakuza, a Japanese organized crime syndicate. Anton Kusters, a Belgian photographer who documented Yakuza activity from 2009-2011, states that tattooing is "crucial to Yakuza members", and that "they're the ones who brought upon [the frowning of tattoos], obviously, because they started tattooing themselves" (Virk).

A Yakuza member revealing his chest tattoos // Photo Courtesy of Anton Kusters

For Asian Americans, the contrast between the popularity of Asian-inspired tattoos in the United States and the shunning of tattoos in Asia can exhibit an all-too frequent sense of unbelonging. While an individual may face societal pressures of getting a tattoo in the US (approximately 47% of American millennials have at least one tattoo), the likely disapproval from their Asian elders is often enough for Asian-Americans to reject tattoos or hide the ones they get, even if a desired tattoo is a direct homage to their native culture.

In a capstone project for the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, for instance, intern Jaclyn Sakura Knitter interviewed various Asian-Americans, including an anonymous Cantonese woman who has gotten multiple tattoos relating to her heritage. Her first "ethnically-driven" tattoo, which paid tribute to her grandmother, depicted the colon cancer ribbon alongside the Chinese character for the word "strength". When asked about said tattoo, she acknowledged that her parents were kept in the dark for five years, mainly "because [she] made a point to hide [her tattoos] from them as an undergrad" (Sakura Knitter). "For a long time", the woman admitted, "I was afraid to tell them. Initially it was negatively affecting my relationship with them because I was hiding something" (ibid).

Though some may look down on the practice, Asian cultures are not always so strongly opposed to tattooing; in fact, various countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, are well known for their rich tattoo history. In Thailand, the traditional Sak Yant tattoo – a geometric, mystical representation of Thai Buddhism – has thrived for hundreds of years, and is believed to bestow luck, powers, and protection onto the receiver. The art form has gained international recognition from celebrities such as Angelina Jolie as well as Muay Thai fighters, and is widely adored by Thai locals and foreigners alike.

Traditional Sak Yant Tattoo // Photo Courtesy of Panumart Tattoo

Despite the widespread acceptance of Thai tattoos, other nations have not been lucky enough to share the same fate. With the rise of colonialism in the 16th-17th century, key aspects of indigenous identities (tattoos among them) quickly diminished in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. The eradication of Filipino tattoo culture is particularly notable, as the ancient practice was "once so widespread that when the Spanish arrived, the Visayans* were called los pintados or "the painted ones" (Roda). After centuries of colonial oppression from the Catholic Church, however, the tradition of Filipino tattooing (also called batok or tatak) became demonized and nearly went extinct.

Fortunately, Filipinos across the globe are beginning to embrace the artistic traditions of their ancestors, and the reemergence of tattoos is coming along with it. Younger generations are especially drawn to traditional tattoos, as the invention of social media and modern communication has made it easier than ever for their discovery. For Filipino-American Zelina, for example, simply scrolling through Instagram was the key for finding her tatak artist Ayla Roda. After several years of following Ayla on social media, Zelina was finally able to get tattooed after the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, and luckily, I had the privilege to interview her regarding the tattoo. Overall, her experience was both overwhelmingly positive and informative, as she states just how "culturally aware, respectful, and dedicated to honoring the old ways" Ayla is. When getting a traditional tattoo, it is essential to recognize the significance of each line and symbol, Zelina recalls. In her words, "It's important to receive your tatak/batok from someone who is knowledgeable and has dedicated their work to respectfully learn the culture and traditions." In terms of the personal significance of the tatak, Zelina recalls how she "[has] always had a deep and profound love for [her] culture and [her] roots." To see her ancestry and culture physically marked on her body was "an unforgettable and emotional experience."

Traditional filipino tatak // Photos Courtesy of Ayla Roda

In most cases, it can be said that tattoos are interconnected with one's identity. For Zelina, as well as many other receivers of traditional tattoos, this is certainly the case. "My tatak is my identity, it's a reminder to myself and the world," Zelina reflects. "It shows the world who I am and where I come from. It is no light thing to choose to be marked – once the path has been taken it will forever change you. I hope to inspire others to take that first step."

Because of tattoo artists such as Ayla, the art of traditional tattooing and the undoing of Asian tattoo stigmas are slowly becoming eliminated. Though Asian tattoos will never make a true comeback for the most part, it is exciting to observe even the smallest degree of revitalization nonetheless. In the US, the art of tattooing is deeply entwined in culture, and recognizing the significance of Asian tattoos is important in maintaining the art form going forward. In doing so, the relevance of Asian tattoos will not only rise, but will leave a lasting impact on American society, Asian-American culture, and the history of tattoos overall.

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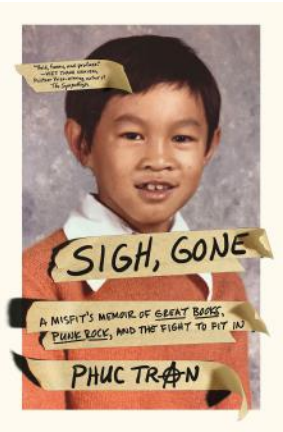
22 Book Recommendations For 2022

By Hannah Dy

Life is never too busy for a book, especially since the best novels offer insight and perspective into different experiences and lives. Whether you're an avid bookworm or looking to kickstart your literary habits, these twenty-two novels (featuring curses, fake relationships, heists, enemies-to-lovers, historical retellings, and more) from Asian-American authors will have you laughing, crying, and turning pages until the very end.

Memoirs

01 Sigh, Gone by Phuc Tran

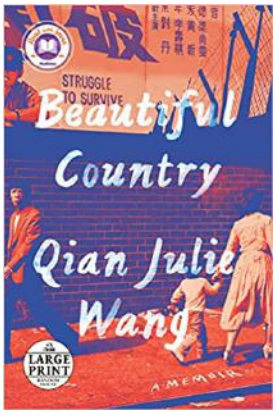


"I felt like myself — and that was what punk was. The freedom to be who I was unapologetically, even if I hadn't chosen it."

Tran details a witty and honest coming-of-age memoir detailing a Vietnamese family's immigration to America and a boy's search for belonging.

02 Beautiful Country by Qian Julie Wang

"Half a century and a migration across the world later, it would take therapy's slow and arduous unraveling for me to see that the thread of trauma was woven into every fiber of my family, my childhood."

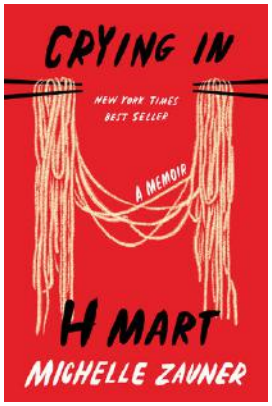


Wang artfully writes coming-of-age memoir about a Chinese family's struggles as they immigrate to New York, navigate culture shocks, and endure family hardships.

Crying in H Mart by Michelle Zauner 03

"It was a love that saw what was best for you ten steps ahead, and didn't care if it hurt like hell in the meantime."

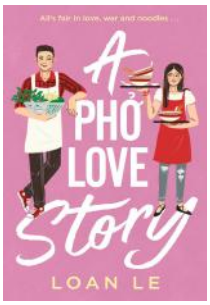
Zauner writes about her childhood struggles, her growth away from home, and reconciling with her Korean identity and mother.



CONTEMPORARY

04 A Pho Love Story by Loan Le

"The light falls on our family's black-and-white photos, which have watched over me as long as memory serves me. The sight of them sends me some hope. Whatever happens today, they will be our witnesses."



Bao and Linh's families own competing pho restaurants and find themselves in a star-crossed romance that threatens to uncover the true source of their families' complex past.

05 XOXO by Axie Oh

"Because the people who live for tomorrow don't take risks. They're afraid of the consequences. While the people who live for today have nothing to lose, so they fight tooth and nail."

When the boy Jenny bonded with in LA disappears and suddenly reappears, she never expected he would be a member of a popular K-pop band, nor that their romance risks both of their futures and careers.

06 The Dating Plan by Sara Desai

"Even if she agreed to his crazy plan, it would never work. They'd destroy each other before they could say 'I do.'"

A software engineer with plans to please her family and save her company. A boy from her past trying to satisfy his grandfather's will and make amends. Will their fake marriage survive their rough history, or the real feelings that emerge from it?

Arsenic and Adobo by Mia P. Manansala 07

"My name is Lila Macapagal and my life has become a rom-com cliche."

Lila investigates the death of her ex-boyfriend in her family's struggling restaurant when the authorities are convinced she killed him herself.

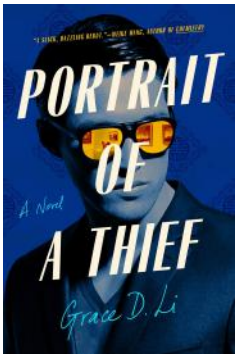
Heiress, Apparently by Diana Ma 08

"My parents have not only never been back to China themselves — but they've forbidden me to go myself. And I have no idea why."

When getting her dream break-out role as a lead actress contradicts her parents' lifelong rule, Gemma flies to Beijing in secret and discovers the family secrets buried away in a country she's never stepped foot in.

Portrait of a Thief by Grace D. Li 09

"China and its art, its history, would always be a story of greatness. It would always be a story of loss."



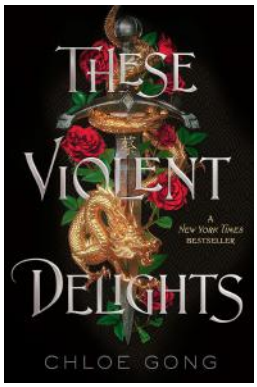
Five Asian-American college students are commissioned by a mysterious company to reclaim five Chinese sculptures from European museums for a chance to earn 50 million dollars.

Historical Fiction

10 These Violent Delights by Chloe Gong

Despite the toxin trickling from every dead-ended alleyway, this place is so, so very alive. And the monster, too, is birthed anew."

These Violent Delights features a romance between two rival gang members who must overcome their history of betrayal to uncover the lethal conspiracy threatening 20th century Shanghai.



11 The Gilded Wolves by Roshani Chokshi

"He might help Severin steal, but the greatest thief of all was the Order of Babel, for they stole more than just objects . . ."

A motley crew led by the charismatic Severin Montagnet-Alarie is commissioned by a 19th century Parisian magic society to locate a powerful artifact lost in time.

12 She Who Became the Sun by Shelley Parker-Chan

"If he took my fate and died . . . then perhaps I can take his, and live."

Set in 14th century China, a girl masquerades as her deceased brother to escape her desolate future and risks everything to claim the Mandate of Heaven within a conflict-stricken state.

Contemporary Fantasy

You've Reached Sam by Dustin Thao 13

"Anyway, I love you, Julie, and always will. Yours forever, Sam."

Julie grapples with grief, love, and letting go as she discovers a telephone connection to her deceased lover.

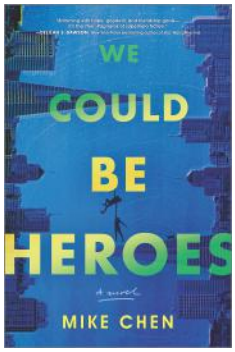
Only a Monster by Vanessa Len 14

"'It means that no one can know what the Hunts are,' she said. 'What you are.' She lowered her voice. 'You must never tell anyone about monsters.'"

With her deceased mother's family being literal monsters and her summer crush renowned for hunting them, Joan navigates romance, time travel, and the thin moral line between heroics and monstrosity.

We Could Be Heroes by Mike Chen 15

"Shoulders bumped into her as men and women tried to ram forward, all too busy staring at their phones or looking at their feet to notice that the city's extraordinary vigilante stood right there. Zoe was kind of offended."



Zoe, a food delivery person with a part-time job as a superhero, partners with Jamie, a bank robber raising the funds for his cat and to move somewhere tropical, to uncover the true history behind their powers and amnesia.

High Fantasy

16 The Jasmine Throne by Tasha Suri

"There had been no throats cut or bodies laid outside temples. No rebel killings. Just a princess, arriving early for her imprisonment."

As the first book in the Burning Kingdoms trilogy, The Jasmine Throne follows Malini, an imprisoned princess, and Priya, one of her servants who is escaping her magical past, as they rebel against a tyrannical empire.

17 The Ivory Key by Akshaya Raman

"'You're being stubborn.' 'You mean passionate.'"

With the search for the Ivory Key – a magical relic that could save a threatened nation losing its magic– uniting them and their conflicting agendas dividing them apart, four estranged siblings test their loyalties and bonds as war threatens their kingdom.

18 Daughter of the Moon Goddess by Sue Lynn Tan

"Whichever story you believe, my mother, Chang'e, became immortal. As did I."

When Xinying, the child of the banished Moon Goddess, Chang'e, is discovered by the Celestial Emperor, she flees, conceals her true identity, falls in love with the emperor's son, and risks everything to rescue her mother.

19 Huntress by Malinda Lo

"But she felt no satisfaction, for she could not rejoice in the vision of someone she apparently loved departing on a journey to her death."

Kaede and Taisin bond over their shared fate of saving humanity while searching for a fabled city ruled by fairies, even when the prophecy dictates only a single huntress will survive to save the realm.

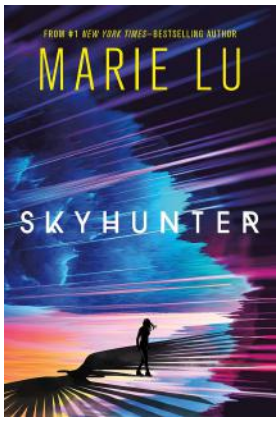
Six Crimson Cranes by Elizabeth Lim 20

"My secret: that I'd conjured a paper bird to life with magic. Forbidden magic."

The banished princess, Shiori'anma, is cursed; everytime she utters a word, one of her brothers perishes. Armed with unquestionable allies and illegal magic, she unravels royal mysteries as she tries to rescue her brothers.

Skyhunter by Marie Lu 21

"The forest's silence gives way. The crack of twigs against rotting feet. The crumble of sodden leaves. Then, finally, I hear it. The gnashing of fangs wet with blood."



Talin, a soldier struggling for her nation's independence against the growing Karensa Federation, is intrigued by a war prisoner who she believes may determine the fate of the war.

Shadow of the Fox by Julie Kaagawa 22

"It was raining the day Suki came to the Palace of the Sun, and it was raining the night that she died."

A yokai and a samurai partner together to find the Scroll of a Thousand Prayers before their enemies use it to worsen the curse already strangling the land.

PI ECES

by Grace Park

"One of my favorite aspects of art is that it enables me to synthesize diverse mediums with my most intricate thoughts and experiences, no matter how spontaneous or ambiguous the process may be. When I was sketching the basic outline of myself, I never imagined I would fill in that sketch with collage pieces. When I was gluing the collage pieces, I never imagined I would paint the background black. This artwork is not only filled with spontaneity but also uncertainty; if you asked me what this artwork is supposed to represent, I would probably answer, “I don’t know”. One thing I know for sure, however, is that I embedded countless pieces of myself — bits of a local Korean-American newspaper, my most-worn jeans, and my favorite hue of pink — that all somehow fit together to show who I am."

Face to Face

by Grace Park

"Now past its two-year mark, the pandemic has reminded me how valuable and exciting in-person interactions can be. The diverse facial expressions that cover my own face depict how those interactions fill me with colorful emotions and insights of others. Zooming out from the artwork itself, I specifically chose to include my art desk as a background because the paint stains and pencil marks add a more realistic, “face-to-face” touch to this piece that shows my art-making process rather than a polished end-result in some exhibition space."

Usagi

By Shelby Yin

"I am Shelby Yin, a second-generation Asian American. My mother is Japanese and grew up on Mercer Island, Washington, and my father immigrated to Seattle from Hong Kong as a child. I have two lionhead bunnies, YumYum (black fur) and Lola (white and gray fur) who roam around freely in our house and often relax in a variety of poses such as bread loaf and mochi like shapes. There is a Japanese folktale about a bunny on the moon pounding mochi. When they lay on their stomach with their legs tucked in, they look like mochi. Bunnies are domesticated rabbits, and rabbits are significant in Chinese culture as well since they are one of the Chinese zodiac animals. Rabbits are a part of both of my cultures. They look extremely cute. I drew my own bunnies with oil pastels."

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