

(BE)LONGING



Asian Diasporic Crossings

July 20 - September 22, 2024

Cover

Annette Miae Kim

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER, 2024

Canvas, newspaper, tissue, acrylic, metal clips and nails

64 x 243 inches

(BE)LONGING

Asian Diasporic Crossings

July 20 - September 22, 2024

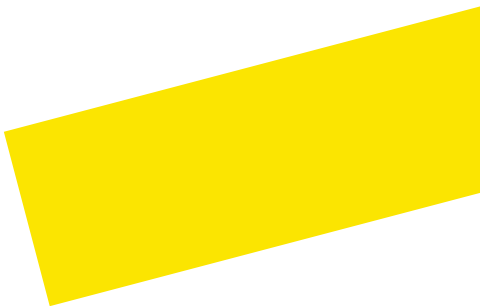
Opening Reception | Saturday, July 27 | 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

Annette Miae Kim | Kyong Boon Oh | Sun Siran | Xia Yan
Gil Woong Kim | Donah Lee | Jennifer Cheh

Curated by Monica Hye Yeon Jun | Ara & Anahid Oshagan

ReflectSpace Gallery | Glendale Central Library
222 E. Harvard Street, Glendale, CA 91205
ReflectSpace.org





(BE)LONGING

Asian Diasporic Crossings

by Ara Oshagan

(Be)Longing: Asian Diasporic Crossings is an exhibition that delves into the multi-generational afterlives of war and displacement and East-West Asian diasporic placemaking through maps, sculptures, photography, archives, video, and layered materiality. It features artists from the US, South Korea and China.

Anchored by the work of Los Angeles-based artists Annette Miae Kim and Kyong Boon Oh, *(Be)Longing* asks us to consider how diasporic histories and spaces are created and narrated. Can you draw the borders of belonging? How do you make a map of a transnational and borderless community? How much do histories of displacement and war enter the contemporary narrative of a community? What is the relationship of a diasporic community to its indigenous lands and history? Kim and Oh have family in both South Korea and North Korea, and these fraught familial histories brings a personal and poignant dimension to their work. They query and challenge our preconceptions about diasporas and borders through maps, archives, sculpture, and tactile materiality.

Four artists from Korea and China—Sun Siran, Xia Yan, Gil Woong Kim, and Donah Lee—meditate their diasporic journeys and relationship to homelands with newly commissioned video work. Los Angeles-based contemporary ceramicist Jennifer Cheh reflects on her diasporic present by reaching back into traditional Korean forms.

All seven artists in the exhibition grapple with their diasporic histories and present-day and strive to articulate their own sense of being and belonging.

(Be)Longing: Asian Diasporic Crossings is curated by Monica Hye Yeon Jun, Ara and Anahid Oshagan

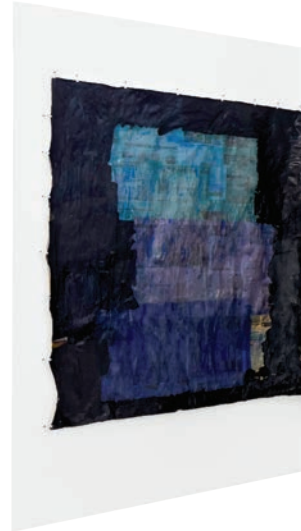
ANNETTE MIAE KIM

Humans make cognitive maps to understand where we are, to find our way in the world, to explore new places. While contemporary cartographic conventions were invented to conquer territories, I seek to de-colonize the map. I map overlooked peoples and places on planes of ephemeral space-time rather than reify borders. I am fascinated to learn that all languages also have a spatial structure, organized with prepositions - before, above, around, beside, etc. We use language to map places with names: we hold memories in spatial scenes.

I started collecting ethnic newspapers from around Los Angeles and Orange County and began a whole new line of research about the linguistic landscape of L.A., the millions of words in different languages in the street and on buildings. I am moved by the jumble of languages and words. To me they signify freedom, messy democracy, and the human will to communicate.

I conduct expeditions to find the words where they exist in the city, in neighborhood markets, restaurants, street corners. My creative process of physically being in places, noticing things, and talking to people informs the landscapes I create.

I have returned to creating scroll maps as the format of my artwork. The maps extend longer, wrapping around building corners, engaging the viewer's body and requiring them to move along the maps and read portions at a time. Newspapers documenting different languages and cultures comprise the grid basemap in my works, on top of which I layer color, lines, texture, and more words. These map language, bodies, places, and human migration.

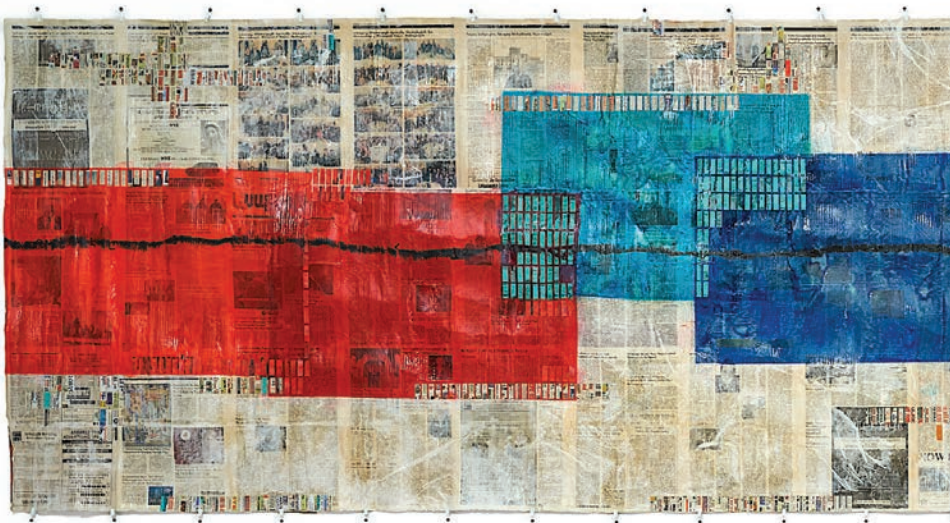


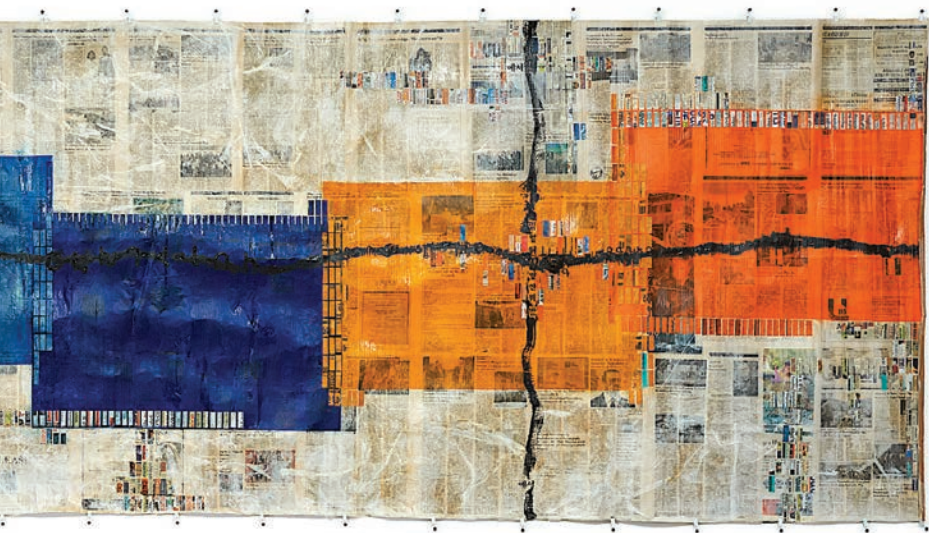


📍 CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER, 2024

Canvas, newspaper, tissue, acrylic, metal clips and nails
64 x 243 inches

While meditating on languages, bodies, and human migration, I realized that this map is very personal to me. My father has Parkinson's and has lost mobility and language. We now communicate mostly through sight and touch. I also realized that because my first language is Korean, I have a deep, visceral reaction to 한글 and my Korean name 미애, unlike my English name, Annette. But I am not as fluent in my mother tongue as I am in English. There is a disconnect between the cerebral and the bodily realms. The scroll map unfurls a landscape, and its physicality and length ask to be read with the body while being a skin itself.





UNTITLED, 2024

Cardboard, newspaper, tissue, acrylic, metal clips and nails
48 x 178 inches

Inspired by Glendale as an Armenian community epicenter and the library's history of solidarity with Korean comfort women, *Untitled* was made for this show.

Often language is the connective tissue of diasporic communities. Western Armenian is an endangered language, but it is key to connecting the Armenian diaspora around the world who have been violently displaced from their homeland. Composed of various Armenian newspapers gathered from Glendale, this map creates a new linguistic landscape while its colors echo the Armenian flag.

Diasporas intersecting in Los Angeles strive for cultural existence through language and placemaking. This piece pushes identity essentialism and counters colonial cartography - where are the boundary lines that separate Europe, West, East, Asia...?

KYONG BOON OH

My father Duk Keun Oh is 90 years old and has been waiting to visit his hometown and meet his family members in North Korea since the Korean War in 1950. He was separated from his family at 16 years old—a wound so deep that he did not want me to study in the US to not fracture the family more.

6.25 *Mapping the Korean War* project, including sculptural installations along with video accompanied by my glossolalia (religious chanting in tongues) is an exploration of the Korean War's aftermath on my father and its resonance with my own diasporic journey as a first-generation immigrant artist. It serves as a personal map that navigates the complex and often uncharted terrain of the displacement and also as a showcase of the geopolitical power struggles, including the colonization and division of Korea shaped by the Cold War and superpower rivalries, highlighting the global interconnectedness of historical events.

Weaving influences from handicrafts, personal and historical narratives, I re-contextualize them with the modernist artistic approaches and narrative deconstructions by means of image cropping, cut-out, and overlapping to contemplate overlooked narratives, while projecting possible identities for the marginalized and providing a commentary on redemptive identity.

Juxtaposing archived Korean War images of 1950 with my old family photos along with my personal narrative including my glossolalia, a spiritual practice and viewing the repetitive handicraft method as a physical pathway for the mind and the continuity of time, I hope this project will be a mapping to reveal a personal history as a communal destiny that transcends time and space with aspirations for redemption, so beyond the melancholia, this unresolved longing for places or communities or ideals, alludes to transcendence of the self and the Yullyeo (the rhythm of the universe).



6.25 - MAPPING, 2024

Archival pigment print on canvas, pin, thread stainless steel/copper/aluminum wire hand-sawn, hand-woven, 76 x 80 x 15 inches

My art practice is like mapping a pathway that was hidden, waiting to be discovered, and defies conventional understanding, a testament of complex and often uncharted terrain of the displacement. By overlaying images of my father's life with archived Korean War images at the top and mine at the bottom, and connecting them at the sides with a hollow center, I created a dialogue between individual and collective memory.



6.25 - THE DISPLACED 8, 2024
Archival pigment print on Lyve canvas



6.25 - THE DISPLACED 5, 2024
Archival pigment print on Lyve canvas

6.25 - THE DISPLACED 6, 2024
Archival pigment print on Lyve canvas

JENNIFER CHEH

When I was seven years old, we moved from Seoul to New York, and like all immigrant children, I started living the intersection of two cultures. My creations respond to that in-between cultural space in which layers of language, not only spoken, intersect; blending and renewing expression; just as clay is extracted from its ground and transformed, it doesn't lose its earthy extraction.

In Full Moon Ceramics I try to channel the principle of beauty in everyday life inspired by my Asian background and the visual richness of ancient global and modern cultures. Drawn to the contrast of textures, concentric simple lines and the beauty of imperfections, my work seeks to blur the boundary between functionality and art. Accidents can result in objects that meld the medium's nature with design purpose; building clay at times seems to have a mind of its own and the fury of the fire can yield unexpected results.

Moon jars, made popular in the Joseon Dynasty, are crafted by joining two hemispheres which serve as an analogy in my work. Two separate beings, two cultures, becoming one unique shared shape - the full moon, which I resize and texture with carvings and repetitive patterns, opposes the smooth porcelain tradition.

The stool series is inspired by the Asian squat, Senufu milking stools and Amazonian thinking stools, cultures in which the ground serves as a table or a shared space, thus requiring squatting or sitting in close proximity for the ground to be within arm's reach.

The Kinship Series resulted from a very personal in-between space, a creative osmotic membrane between profound pain and healing; deep emotion transliterated into vessels containing sorrow as much as an opening to the world; life contorting gently towards the light.





KINSHIP 003, 2023

Stoneware carved, engobe inlay, unglazed, 24 inches height



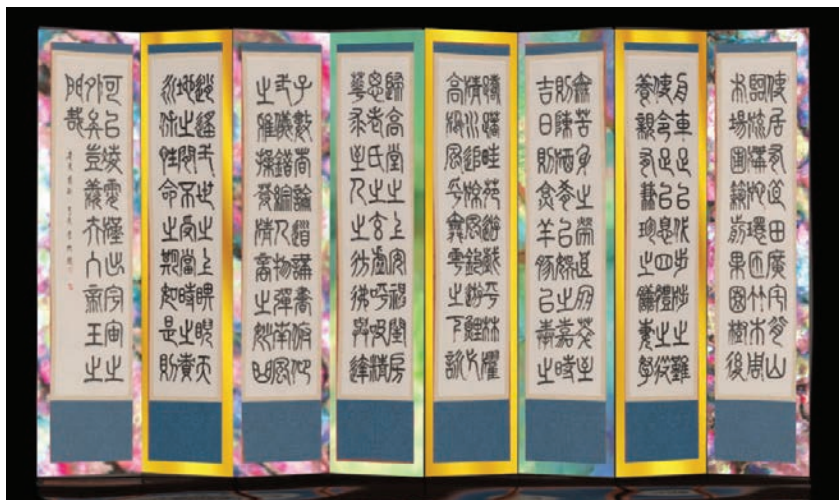
DAL MOON JAR 007, 2024

Stoneware engobe, sgraffito, unglazed 16 inches height

DONAH LEE

I express a journey towards an imagined ideal and transcendent realm, transcending time and space, through various mediums. My use of allegory (寓意, Yùyì) combines differing elements such as past and present, present and future, time and diverse spaces through similarities and metaphors. This approach not only appeals to the imagination based on history and reality but also simultaneously invokes the “real world” and the “imaginary world”. By doing so, I aim to bring the future into the present and the present into the future, achieving a transcendence of spaces. My work is grounded in a continuum that brings the past and different spaces into the current and future moments simultaneously, where I and we become the subjects of imagination.

The inception of my work began 35 years ago, following my siblings’ emigration to the US and later, 30 years ago, my parents’ emigration to New York, which left me feeling alone. While I reside in the Korea of my birth, my spiritual homeland is New York, where my parents live. My recent series, *Omni-Verse: Interstella*, expands on the meaning of a four-dimensional universe, weaving a narrative that includes both reality and imagination. Who is the diaspora? The theme of my work stems from nostalgia, connecting a nostalgic past to a transcendent ideal paradise. To bring this to life, I work across various mediums including video, painting, sculpture, lenticular, and digital works, all of which are organically connected.



AN ODYSSEY TO PARADISE, 2024

Video, 3:20 minutes



SUN SIRAN

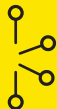
Chinese artist Sun Siran's works tell the story of a world where various ethnicities coexist. While studying abroad in South Korea, the artist experienced what it's like to be a "stranger" living alone in another country. Korea's language is Hangul—though it's similar to Chinese, it's different enough that he could not communicate effectively. He felt marginalized. China is a country of more than 50 ethnic groups and diverse cultures. Many groups actively try to understand each other's unfamiliar cultures and strive to live in harmony. The artist's personal experience allowed him to pay attention to the long history of the relationships of more than 50 different cultures spread over a vast area. The artist believes that human desire to know the unfamiliar is the power of humanity. Through his work, he aims to convey the spirit of understanding and acceptance that is contained in the act of taking a step towards understanding the other.





THE SCENERY ON THE ROAD, 2024

Single channel video
3:31 minutes

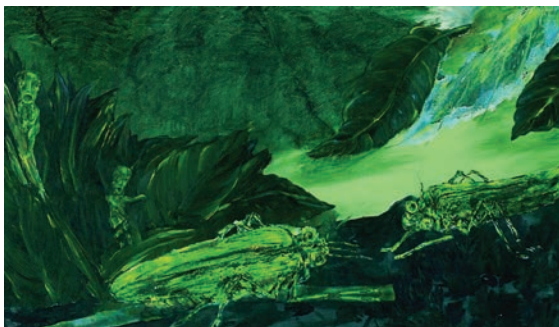


XIA YAN

Xia Yan tells the story of the “missing mountain”. Based on images reconstructed from the mountainous terrain of Guizhou, China, the artist creates a narrative of a mountain that has disappeared. Through this narrative, he addresses the issue of “interference in personal communication” caused by the public network communication used by a large number of people.



—
SOUTHWEST JUNGLE
2024
Single channel video
3:36 minutes



GIL WOONG KIM

La Vie, The relationship between the free movement of dandelion seeds in the wind and the constraints of germinating and growing in a new environment can symbolize the state of freedom and constraints that humans experience in technology and the environment. The movement of the seed but its inability to stay in a specific place can represent the process by which human beings experience both freedom and constraints in a variety of environments.

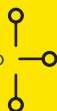




LA VIE, 2024

Single channel video

1:00 minute



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

ANNETTE MIAE KIM

Born in New York, Annette Miae Kim (b.1968) comes from a family of refugees, immigrants, and citizens with family members in North Korea, South Korea, Germany, and Ethiopia. Her lived experiences are foundational to the themes of migration and diaspora in her work. Her maps take the form of collage paintings, cinematic videos, interactive media, and installations, contemplating the tension between the physical, material world and the digital world. Her maps also explore the role and limits of text and language in placemaking. She is a co-founder of RAP, the Race, Arts, and Place collective. Her work has been shown internationally. Kim earned her BA in Studio Art and Architecture from Wellesley College, MA in Public Policy from Harvard University, MA in Visual Studies and PhD in Urban Planning from UC Berkeley. She holds faculty appointments at USC's Roski School of Art and Design and Price School of Public Policy.

KYONG BOON OH

Korean-born Kyong Boon Oh (b.1974) is a multidisciplinary artist working with sculpture, painting, photo/video collages and sculptural installations. She underwent a transformative journey, shifting from creating tall figurative paintings to weaving metal wires, a meditative process inspired by her father's legacy and her own struggles with physical illness. Her art, deeply influenced by her experiences as a first-generation immigrant, serves as a personal map that navigates the complex terrain of assimilation, nostalgia, and belonging, situated between chaos and order. Through her evolving practice, which now includes community engagement initiatives like the "Flow with Medium" workshop, she aspires to reveal personal histories as communal destinies that transcends time and space. Currently, she is represented by Lois Lambert Gallery in Santa Monica Bergamot Station Arts Center and a founding member of SSGOC (Stone Sculptors Guild of Orange County).

JENNIFER CHEH

Jennifer Cheh (b. 1965) was born in Seoul and relocated to New York, when she was seven. She earned her BFA in environmental design at Parsons School of Design. She moved to California and received her M.Arch from Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in 1994. Her multidisciplinary background showcases her commitment to exploring the intersections of art, design, and cultural exchange. Jennifer's work has been commissioned and acquired for private residences, restaurants and interior design showrooms. She currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

DONAH LEE

Donah Lee (b.1967) graduated from the Department of Audiovisual Education at Ewha Womans University in Korea and completed training programs at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) and New York University (NYU) in New York, USA. She has received numerous awards in prestigious media art competitions in Korea, including the Seoul Good Light Award (2023). Her works have been exhibited in various international venues, including the International Media Art Facade (2023) displayed on a 400-meter-wide screen, and in countries such as Korea, China, Vienna, Canada, and Kazakhstan. She was selected for Korea's first media art public architectural artwork, installed at the Olympic Sports Complex.

Sun Siran

Sun Siran (b.1980) is an artist based in Guizhou, China, whose media artworks utilize animation and digital video. Through his works, he aims to convey the spirit of understanding and inclusion that lies in the act of recognizing differences and taking a step toward understanding the other.

Xia Yan

Xia Yan (b.1975) is a professor at Guizhou Normal University in Guizhou, China, founder of the Guiyang Chemical Fiber Factory Art Zone, China, and is active at home and abroad as an artist and curator. Xia Yan has been exploring the relationship between humans, nature, and festivals, and his work contains a sense of innocence and reflection on the environment, the real and virtual worlds.

Gil Woong Kim

Gil Woong Kim (b. 1977) is an artist whose work is based on airplanes constructed from Coca-Cola cans, which he began while studying in France. He has expanded this work to include installation, media art, and kinetic technologies. His recent works include interactive installations and large-scale installations.



REFLECTSPACE

ReflectSpace Gallery, established in 2017, is an inclusive exhibition space designed to explore and reflect on major human atrocities, genocides, civil rights violations, and other social justice issues. Immersive in conception, ReflectSpace is a hybrid space that is both experiential and informative, employing art, technology, and interactive media to reflect on the past and present of Glendale's communal fabric and interrogate current-day global human rights issues. ReflectSpace.org

LIBRARY, ARTS & CULTURE

Founded in 1907, the Glendale Library, Arts & Culture Department includes eight neighborhood libraries including the Brand Library & Art Center, a regional visual arts and music library and performance venue housed in the historic 1904 mansion of Glendale pioneer Leslie C. Brand, and the Central Library, a 93,000 square foot center for individuals and groups to convene, collaborate and create. GlendaleLAC.org

