

Objects Without (Home)
April 17th to April 28th, 2024

3nter.org x :iidrr Gallery
162 Allen Street, New York

Artists:

Jiyu An, George Bezani, OlaDapo TheVinci Haroun, Cecile Hirschler, Yuhan Hu, Jeffrey Melo, Megan Cunanan Murphy, Rawnak Rahman, Bethany Yeap, Jimmy Zhao, A/bel Andrade, Carlos Becerra, Silverio Castillo, Siyu Chen, Amos Kang, Yajé Popson, Maja Mamak, and Annu Yadav.

Curated by Annie Chen Ziyao and Bebe Uddin

3nter.org is pleased to announce the collaboration with :iidrr Gallery, the group exhibition *Objects Without (Home)* curated by Annie Chen Ziyao and Bebe Uddin, running from April 17th to April 28th, 2024. Featuring artworks and objects from 21 artists, this exhibition delved into the lived experiences of immigrant artists in NYC. The exhibit highlights poignant narratives behind personal objects artists have brought from their homelands or have inherited as second-generation immigrants. *Objects Without (Home)* also exhibits the artworks these artists have created, as both object and art narrate stories of loss, adaptation, and rebirth of identity, while redefining our relationship to the word “home”.

Inspired by the curators' own experiences as first- and second-generation immigrants, the exhibition invites the audience to explore the complex interplay between identity, memory, and belonging through the artworks and the stories these silent objects convey. The concept of the exhibition was inspired by Annie Chen Ziyao's forgotten, but faithfully nomadic red sweater. Among her belongings was a red sweater that had once belonged to her mother in China. It was accidentally packed with her other stuff for the journey to the United States. Despite never having worn it, the sweater has lived an itinerant life, moving with Annie from place to place, serving as a silent witness to her evolving journey to her current home in New York. With each move, Annie was forced to confront the dilemma of whether to keep or discard the item, similar to many other immigrant artists' struggle when contemplating the pursuit, and subsequently, the viability of the American dream, concomitant becomes the nostalgia for a time that didn't require as much effort and energy to forge a sense of belonging to 'home'. These objects, though seemingly mundane at the surface, encapsulate memories and disparate connections to each artists' familial, artistic, and cultural origins.

Bebe Uddin is a second-generation Pakistani-American living in NYC. “Inspired by conversations I've had with Annie in commiserating as well as distinguishing the paths and

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perspectives of the first and second-generation immigrant lens, *Objects Without (Home)* was conceived out of a shared need to expand the potential for dialogue in realizing the diverse tapestry of immigrant narratives that compose New York City's polychromatic ecosystem."

The exhibition features artworks and objects from both first and second gen immigrant artists, all of which reveal the silent struggles and the unseen bravery of immigrant artists - their journey of letting go, and the art of holding on, tells the story of transition, resilience, and the redefinition of home. As first-generation immigrants, they pursue not only the American Dream but also grapple with the intricate relationship that immigrant artists have with leaving their homeland. This separation is crucial for developing a new understanding of "home" in the United States. Achieving the American Dream inevitably involves sacrifice. These sacrifices manifest not only in the compromises made in assimilating to a new environment, but also in the inevitable sense of longing and nostalgia that sooner or later follows.

George Bezani's "Corrosion of My Dream" uses the metaphor of a tree—its roots both strengthened and corroded—to depict the immigrant's nomadic quest for belonging amidst cultural dislocation and social exile. This imagery of entwined roots ascending towards the sun parallels Jiyu An's depiction of emotional and societal entrapment, where feelings accumulate under pressure, symbolized by a head burdened with a "pile of trash," reflective of the invasive impact of social expectations, akin to the polarized lanternflies in an unwelcoming ecosystem. Yuhua Hu's fragmented house represented through spring green panels, combined with poetry and vivid imagery of a tumultuous past, speaks to a precarious yet hopeful present, attempting to stabilize itself with personal growth and internal warmth, as reminders of the possibility of her foundation as an American expat to fall apart, remains omnipresent. OlaDapo The Vinci Haroun adds another layer to this collective narrative, bridging Yoruba heritage with the immigrant experience in NYC, using art to connect as well reconcile past and present, tradition and innovation in enabling the exploration into his personal study of artwork as discipline and research, resulting in "AfroPop"-- a genre that espouses Dapo's roots in Nigeria with contemporary American pop cultural iconography.

Rawnak Rahman investigates the fragile ties of one's love and intimacy with the richness and beauty of Bangladeshi culture, while wrestling with the irreconcilability of cultural restraints with her own sense of identity and individuality as an artist insistent on maintaining connection to not only her homeland, but maintaining affective, artistic tribute to the strong women that compose her lineage. Together, these artists portray a mosaic of resilience and differing acts of turmoil—each exploring distinct facets of identity and belonging, yet collectively each respective narrative underscores the constant reconstruction of "home", as the source of "home" continues to evolve with each life and work endeavor.

Bethany, Jimmy, Megan, and Ceci use their art to delve into the complexities of identity and heritage. As second generation immigrants, with the passage of time, each artist incorporates personal and cultural narratives in unique, meaningful, and intellectually critical ways. Bethany's paintings on batik fabric merge traditional Southeast Asian textile arts with modern abstraction, Malay folklore, and (being raised Christian by reformed parents), surreptitious endeavors to investigate familial roots in Buddhism to bridge the understanding between her present self and the ancestral legacy lost upon growing up in Texas. Yeap will rely on striking, but abstruse colors like celadon and coral to explore the friction between old and new identities, while struggling with the fatigue of visibility advocacy as a Malay-Chinese American. Jimmy's sculpture, "Spares, Just in Case," congeals culturally Chinese quotidian objects with a rice and monosodium glutamate binder, echoing ancient preservation methods and questioning modern consumption habits, as he investigates the historical interrelationship between family, tradition, and vocation, critically tying transgenerational Chinese sources of living to the immigrant experience of adapting and reconciling tradition with American consumerism.

Megan Murphy's artwork, "Where The Wind Blows," utilizes the materiality of ceramic dynamism to visualize homesickness by blossoming imagined landscapes that hybridize the natural world with remnant memories of her childhood in the Philippines, symbolizing a yearning for unbroken, familial connections. In a muted, monochromatic choice, Murphy colors over the ecological vibrancy and apprehension of her dichotomous upbringing to affirm the fluidity of her hybridized Philippina–American identity. Ceci Hirschler Alberti imbricates a diverse layer of iconography and historical fragmentation in "Up; Down; All Around".

Employing primary colors generously, Alberti explores a deconstructed, yet allegorical meditation on the

reconciliation of religion, violence, ecology, and the enduring, lamentable legacy of conquistador-led colonialist rule. As her body of work is partially informed by, but not limited to, her own mixed Ashkenazi and Peruvian-Italian heritage, Alberti explores themes of displacement, post-colonial dislodging, and cultural assimilation. Both Megan and Ceci convey personal stories of migration and the ongoing negotiation of identity in newly exposed environments, radically demonstrating how cultural backgrounds shape and redefine personal as well as ancestral spaces, as a counter-visual lens is directed at the historical discrepancies of the romantic narratives of the colonial and post-colonial world.

Jeffrey Melo's installation piece, inspired by Dominican superstition and his mother's tacit wisdom, brings his heritage to life through the mediums of coffee and paint to enliven a decades old, but expressive pocket photograph of his mother in her youth. Melo invites viewers to connect with his story and reflect on the power of tradition in shaping identity, while revealing our predilection to subtly heed cultural superstitions within the inflexibly rapid day-to-day of NYC, as the phenomena of spilled coffee, rather than conjects, serves as an implicit apparatus in pausing, observing, and living in the present, while reinforcing hopes of a future.

Objects Without (Home) curates material items that narrate the story of each artist's journey from either their homeland or homeland of their parents to New York, exhibiting the profound impact of cultural transitions and the evolution in both personal and professional trajectories instigated by the initial migration. New Zealander, A/bel Andrade's perpetually collects keys with eclectic patterns and designs, serving as symbolic reminders of new opportunities and forgotten pasts, augmented by crucifixes reflecting spiritual ties amid migration, and the time-distanciation burden of no longer having tangible access to a place that was preternaturally called 'home'. Indian-born artist, Annu Yadav presents secular eyes collected from across Ahmedabad and Gujarat—having spent her esteemed career as designer and art director, she has maintained her visual practice as a complex surrealist painter exploring control and observer relations. By intimately subverting the patriarchal and transgenerational gaze of India and beyond, Yadav explores a concerted effort to reclaim power over the indictment of the very same gaze. Polish

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American artist, Maja Mamak presents a handmade book encased by two found wooden panels serving as front and back covers. Captured by her brother Maksymilian, the pages are dense with a photographic chronicle of her family's home in Brooklyn, built by the Mamak family as a unified tribe – demonstrating the sacrifices and undefeated work ethic of immigrants pursuant of building the foundation for a better life in America. East Village native artist and skateboarder, Yajé Popson, heavily incorporates the image of the avocado in his work, symbolic to Popson of health as well as his Brazilian roots, with the avocado later evolving into his New York City graffiti signature tag, ubiquitously seen across Manhattan. A clay life-sized model of an avocado created in highschool anchors atop a piece of decaying bark, found and painted by Popson within the last year. In the dissonant memory of a life divided by land and time, and largely colored by the force of Brazilian maternalism, the bark carries the burden of the past, while Yajé attempts to relinquish himself from both.

Carlos Becerra's traditional games from his Colombian family cabin narrate the undulations of cultural shifts against the backdrop of the American idealization of a prosperous, but ostensibly permanent home. Siyu Chen's memories of lockdown in their Shanghai studio linger as haunting reminders of memories past and intangible, while living in continuous adjustment to a new life in Brooklyn. Amos Kang's key from South Korea, once a cherished tool of regular affection, now reflects the diminished sentimental value one naturally experiences en route to American adaptation.

Dominican artist and designer, Silverio Castillo, shares an intimate and sweet, but inherently tragic two-piece object crafted and painted in homage to her grandmother's retention of innocence amidst being catapulted into the delirium of teenage motherhood, while conveying the survivability, strength, and vulnerability of her great grandmother's courage in the face of unwarranted violence and political upheaval, as sleeping with a knife beneath her pillow had become not only second nature, but a regrettable rite of passage.

These objects not only document the artists' physical journeys but also serve as pivotal testaments to the dramatic transformative power of surrendering one's source of home for another.

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